

MORE STORIES BY R.A. LAFFERTY

- \*153. Bright Coins In Never-Ending Stream
- \*154. Selenium Ghosts of the Eighteen-Seventies
- 155. Splinters
- 165. Lord Torpedo, Lord Gyroscope
- 170. The Only Tune That He Could Play
- \*175. You Can't Go Back
- 179. Square and Above Board
- 180. Ifrit
- 185. Golden Gate
- \*186. This Boding Itch
- 187. Tongues of the Madagora
- \*188. Make Sure the Eyes Are Big Enough
- 189. Marsilia V.
- \*190. One-Eyed Mocking-Bird
- 214. And Some In Velvet Gowns
- 215. The Doggone Highly Scientific Door
- \*216. Oh, Whatta You Do When the Well Runs Dry?
- 227. Magazine Section
- 240. Grey Ghost: A Reminiscence
- 245. Le Hot Sport

BRIGHT COINS IN NEVER-ENDING STREAM

People sometimes became exasperated with Matthew Quoin, that tedious old shuffler. Sometimes? Well, they were exasperated with him almost all the time. It isn't that people aren't patient and kind-hearted. All of them in our town are invariably so. But Matthew could sure ruffle a kind-hearted surface.

"Oh, he is so slow about it!" people said of him. That wasn't true, Matthew's fingers flew lightninglike when he was involved in a transaction. It was just that so very many movements were required of him to get anything at all transacted.

And then the stories that he told about his past, a very far-distant past according to him, were worn out by repetition.

"Oh, was I ever the cock of the walk!" he would say. "I left a trail of twenty-dollar gold pieces around the world three times, and that was when twenty dollars was still worth something. I always paid everything with twenty-dollar gold pieces, and there was no way that I could ever run out of them. Ten of them, a hundred of them, a thousand of them, I could lay them out whenever they were needed. I had a cruse of oil that would never be empty, as the Bible says. I had a pocketbook that would never be without coin. I was the cock of the walk. Plague take it all, I still am! Has anybody ever seen me without money?"

No, nobody had. It was just that, of late years, it took Matthew's money so long to add up. And often people had to wait behind him for a long time while he counted it out, and they became Sulky and even furious.

When people became weary of listening to Matthew's stories (and of late years he could feel their weariness for him like a hot blast) he went and talked to the pigeons. They, at least, had manners.

"The bloom is off the plum now," he would tell those red-footed peckers, "and the roses of life have become a little ratty for me. But I will not run out of coin. I have the promise that I will not. I got that promise as part of a dubious transaction, but the promise has held up now for more years and decades than you would believe. And I will not die till I am death-weary of taking coin out of my pocketbook: I have that promise also. How would I ever be weary of drawing coins out of my pocketbook?"

"This began a long time ago, you see, when the pigeons were no bigger than the jenny-wrens are now. They had just started to mint the American

twenty-dollar gold piece, and I had them in full and never-ending flow. I tell you that a man can make an impression if he has enough gold pieces. Ah, the ladies who were my friends! Lola Montez, Squirrel Alice, Marie Laveau, Sarah Bernhardt, Empress Elizabeth of Austria. And the high ladies were attracted to me for myself as well as for my money. I was the golden cock of the golden walk.

"You ask what happened to those golden days?" Matthew said to the pigeons, who hadn't asked anything except maybe, "How about springing for another box of Cracker Jacks?"

"Oh, the golden days are still with me, though technically they are the copper days now. I was promised eight bright eons of ever-flowing money, and the eight of the eons could last (along with my life) as long as I wished it to last.

"And, when the first eon of flowing money slipped into the second, it didn't diminish my fortune much. It was still an unending stream of gold. Now they were five-dollar gold pieces instead of twenty-dollar gold pieces, but when there is no limit to the number of them, what difference does that make? I would take one out of my pocketbook, and immediately there would be another one in it waiting to be taken."

"I suppose I really had the most fun when I was known as the Silver Dollar Kid," Matthew Quoin told them. He was talking to squirrels rather than pigeons now, and it was a different day. But one day was very much like another.

"I never cared overly for money. I just don't want to run out of it. And I have the promise that my pocketbook will always have one more coin in it. I liked that sound of silver dollars on a counter, and I'd ring them down as fast as one a second when I wished to make all impression. And they rang like bells. I was in my pleasant maturity then, and life was good to me. I was the guy they all noticed. They called me 'Show Boat' and 'the Silver Dollar Sport.' I always tipped a dollar for everything. That was when money was worth ten times what it is now and a dollar was really something. What, squirrels, another sack of peanuts, you say? Sure I can afford it! The girl at the kiosk will be a little impatient with me because it takes the so long to get enough coins out, but we don't care about that, do we?"

The fact was that Mitiliew Quoin, though he still commanded a shining and unending stream of money, had a poor and shabby look about him in these days of the eighth coin. As part of an old and dubious transaction, he had the promise that he could live as long as he wished, but that didn't prevent him from becoming quite old. He had a grubby little room. He would get up at three o'clock every Friday morning and begin to pull coins one at a time (there was no possible way except one at a time) out of his pocketbook. It was one of those small, three-section, snap-jaw pocketbooks such as men used to carry to keep their coins and bills in. It was old, but it was never-failing. Matthew would draw the coins out one at a time. He would count them into piles. He would roll them into rolls. And at eight o'clock in the morning, when his weekly rent was due, he would pay it proudly, twenty-seven dollars and fifty cents. So he would be fixed for another week. It took him from three until eight o'clock every Friday morning to do this; but he cat-napped quite a bit during that time. All oldsters cat-nap a lot.

And it didn't really take him very long (no more than five or six minutes) to draw out enough coins for one of his simple lunch-counter meals. But some people are a little bit testy at having to wait even five or six minutes behind an old man at the cashier's stand.

"I was known as the Four-Bit Man for a few years, and that was all right," Matthew Quoin said. "Then I was known as the Two-Bit Man for a few other years, and that was all right too." This was a different day, and Matthew was talking to a flock of grackle-birds who were committing slaughter on worms, slugs, and other crawlers in the grass of City Park. "It didn't

begin to hurt till I was known as the Dime-a-Time Man," Matthew said, "and that stuck in the throat of my pride a little bit, although it shouldn't have. I was still the cock of the grassy walk even though I didn't have as many hens as I had once. I had good lodgings, and I had plenty to eat and drink. I could buy such clothes as I needed, though it flustered me a bit to make a major purchase. We had come into the era of the hundred-dollar overcoat then, and to draw out one thousand coins, one by one, with people perhaps waiting, can be a nervous thing.

"I began to see that there was an element of humor in that dubious transaction that I had made so many years ago, and that part of the joke was on me. Oh, I had won every point of argument when we had made that deal. The pocketbook was calfskin, triple-stitched, and with German silver snap-latch. It was absolutely guaranteed never to be clear empty of coin, and it should last forever. Each coin appeared in the very bottom of the pocketbook, that's true, and the contrivance was rather deep and with a narrow mouth, so it did take several seconds to fish each dime out. But it was a good bargain that I made, and all parties still abide by it. The Dime-a-Time years weren't bad.

"Nor were the nickel years really. There is nothing wrong with nickels. Dammit, the nickel is the backbone of commerce! It was in the nickel years that I began to get rheumatism in my fingers, and that slowed me down. But it had nothing to do with the bargain, which was still a good one."

When the penny years rolled around, Matthew Quoin was quite old. Likely he was not as old as he claimed to be, but he was the oldest and stringiest cock around.

"But it's all as bright as one of my new pennies," he said to a multitude of army caterpillars that was destroying the fine grass in City Park. "And this is the eighth and final eon of the overflowing money, and it will go on forever for me unless I tell it to stop. Why should I tell it to stop? The flow of money from my pocketbook is is vital to me as the flow of blood through my veins. And the denomination cannot be diminished further. There is no smaller coin than the copper penny.

"It didn't go all that bright and shining with Mattlicw Quoin in the penny years, though. The rheumatism had bitten deeper into his hands and fingers, and now his lightning fingers were slow lightning indeed. The "time is money" saying applied to Matthew more explicitly than it had ever applied to anyone else, and there were quite a few slownesses conspiring to eat up his valuable time.

And every time that prices went up, by the same degree was he driven down. After five years in the penny eon he was driven down plenty.

"If it takes me five hours just to draw out and count the money for my week's rent, then things are coming to an intolerable stage with me," he said. "Something is going to have to give." Something gave.

The government decreed that, due to the general inflation of the economy and the near-worthlessness of the one-cent piece, or penny, that coin would no longer be minted. And, after a cutoff date in the near future, it would no longer be legal tender either.

"What will I do now?" Matthew Quoin asked himself.

He went to talk to the people at the Elite Metal Salvage Company, Scavenger Department.

"How much a pound will you give me for copper pennies?" he asked.

"Two cents a pound," the man said. "There hasn't been very much copper in copper pennies for years and years."

"There is in these," Matthew said. "They follow the specifications of the earliest minting." He showed several of them to the man.

"Amazing, amazing!" the man said. "They're almost pure copper. Five cents a pound."

"I don't know if I can live on that or not," Matthew Quoin said, "but I've no choice except to try."

Matthew Quoin changed his life style a bit. He gave up his lodging room.

He slept in a seldom-flooded storm sewer instead. But it was still a hard go.

A nickel a pound! Do you know how many pennies, pulled out rheumatically one by one, it takes to make a pound? Do you know how many nickels it takes now just to get a cup of coffee and an apple fritter for breakfast? Matthew Quoin had started at three-thirty that morning. It would be ten o'clock before he had enough to take to the Elite Metal Salvage Company to sell for legal tender. It would be ten-thirty before he had his scanty breakfast. And then back to the old penny-fishing again. His fingers were scabbed and bleeding. It would be almost midnight before he had enough (yes, the Elite Metal Salvage Company did do business at night; that's when they did a lot of their purchasing of stolen metal) to trade in for supper money. And that would represent only one hamburger with everything on it, and one small glass of spitzo. But Matthew would never be clear broke. He was still cock of the walk.

"Now here is where it gets rough," Matthew Quoin said. "Suppose that I give up and am not able to live on the bright flow of coins, and I die (for I cannot die until I do give up); suppose that I die, then I will have lost the dubious transaction that I made so long ago. I'll have been outsmarted on the deal, and I cannot have that. That fellow bragged that he'd never lost on a transaction of this sort, and he rubbed it in with a smirk. We'll just see about that. I've not given up yet, though I do need one more small morsel of food if I'm to live through the day. Do you yourself ever get discouraged, robin?"

Matthew Quoin was talking to a lone robin that was pulling worms out of the browned grass that was beginning to be crusted with the first snow of the season. But the robin didn't answer.

"You live on the promise of spring, robin, though you do well even now," Quoin said. "I also have a new promise to live for. I have been given a fresh lease on life today, though it will be about seven years before I can put that lease into effect. But, after you're old, seven years go by just like nothing. A person in the Imperial Coin Nook (it's in a corner of the Empire Cigar and Hash Store) says that in about seven years my coins will have value, and eventually he will be able to pay a nickel or dime or even fifteen cents for each of them. And that is only the beginning, he says: in fifty years they may be worth eighty cents or even a dollar each. I am starting to put one coin out of every three into a little cranny in my sewer to save them. Of course, for those seven years that I wait, I will go hungrier by one third. But this promise is like a second sun coming up in the morning. I will rise and shine with it."

"Bully for you," the robin said.

"So I have no reason to be discouraged," Quoin went on. "I have a warm and sheltered sewer to go to. And I have had a little bit, though not enough, to eat today. I hallucinate, and I'm a trifle delirious and silly, I know. I'm lighthearted, but I believe I could make it if I had just one more morsel to eat. This has been the worst of my days foodwise, but they may get a little bit better if I live through this one. It will be a sort of turning of the worm for me now. Hey, robin, that was pretty good, the turning of the worm. Did you get it?"

"I got it," said the robin. "It was pretty good."

"And how is it going with yourself?" Matthew Quoin asked.

"There's good days and bad ones," the robin said. "This is a pretty good one. After the other robins have all gone south, I have pretty good worm-hunting."

"Do you ever get discouraged?"

"I don't let myself," the robin said. "Fight on, I say. It's all right today. I'm about full now."

"Then I'll fight on too," Matthew swore. "One extra morsel would save my life, I believe. And you, perhaps, robin --"

"What do you have in mind?" the robin asked.

"Ah, robin, if you're not going to eat the other half of that worm --"

"No, I've had plenty. Go ahead," the robin said.

#### SELENIUM GHOSTS OF THE EIGHTEEN SEVENTIES

Even today, the "invention" of television is usually ascribed to Paul Nipkow of Germany, and the year is given as 1884. Nipkow used the principle of the variation in the electrical conductivity of selenium when exposed to light, and he used scanning discs as mechanical effectors. What else was there for him to use before the development of the photo tube and the current-amplifying electron tube? The resolution of Nipkow's television was very poor due to the "slow light" characteristics of selenium response and the lack of amplification. There were, however, several men in the United States who transmitted a sort of television before Nipkow did so in Germany.

Resolution of the images of these even earlier experimenters in the field (Aurelian Bentley, Jessy Polk, Samuel J. Perry, Gifford Hudgeons) was even poorer than was the case with Nipkow. Indeed, none of these pre-Nipkow inventors in the television field is worthy of much attention, except Bentley. And the interest in Bentley is in the content of his transmissions and not in his technical ineptitude.

It is not our object to enter into the argument of who really did first "invent" television (it was not Paul Nipkow, and it probably was not Aurelian Bentley or Jessy Polk either); our object is to examine some of the earliest true television dramas in their own queer "slow light" context. And the first of those "slow light" or selenium ("moonshine") dramas were put together by Aurelian Bentley in the year 1873.

The earliest art in a new field is always the freshest and is often the best. Homer composed the first and freshest, and probably the best, epic poetry. Whatever cave man did the first painting, it remains among the freshest as well as the best paintings ever done. Aeschylus composed the first and best tragic dramas, Euclid invented the first and best of the artful mathematics (we speak here of mathematics as an art without being concerned with its accuracy or practicality). And it may be that Aurelian Bentley produced the best of all television dramas in spite of their primitive aspect.

Bentley's television enterprise was not very successful despite his fee of one thousand dollars per day for each subscriber. In his heyday (or his hey-month, November of 1873), Bentley had fifty-nine subscribers in New York City, seventeen in Boston, fourteen in Philadelphia, and one in Hoboken. This gave him an income of ninety-one thousand dollars a day (which would be the equivalent of about a million dollars a day in today's terms), but Bentley was extravagant and prodigal, and he always insisted that he had expenses that the world wotted not of. In any case, Bentley was broke and out of business by the beginning of the year 1874. He was also dead by that time.

The only things surviving from The Wonderful World of Aurelian Bentley are thirteen of the "slow light" dramas, the master projector, and nineteen of the old television receivers. There are probably others of the receivers around somewhere, and person coming onto them might not know what they are for. They do not look much like the television sets of later years.

The one we use for playing the old dramas is a good kerosene powered model which we found and bought for eighteen dollars two years ago. If the old sets are ever properly identified and become collectors' items, the price on them may double or even triple. We told the owner of the antique that it was a chestnut roaster, and with a proper rack installed it could likely be made to serve as that.

We bought the master projector for twenty-six dollars. We told the owner of that monster that it was a chicken incubator. The thirteen dramas in their canisters we had for thirty-nine dollars total. We had to add formaldehyde to activate the dramas, however, and we had to add it to both the projector and the receiver; the formaldehyde itself came to fifty-two dollars. I discovered soon that the canisters with their dramas were not really needed, not was the master projector. The receiver itself would repeat everything that it had ever

received. Still and all, it was money well spent.

The kerosene burner activated a small dynamo that imposed an electrical grid on the selenium matrix and awakened the memories of the dramas.

There was, however, an oddity in all the playbacks. The film-fix of the receiver continued to receive impressions so that every time a "slow light" drama is presented it is different, because of the feedback. The resolution of the pictures improves with use and is now much clearer and more enjoyable than originally.

The librettos of the first twelve of the thirteen Bentley dramas are not good, not nearly as good as the librettos of the Jessy Polk and the Samuel J. Perry dramas later in the decade. Aurelian Bentley was not a literary man; he was not even a completely literate man. His genius had many gaping holes in it. But he was a passionately dramatic man, and these dramas which he himself devised and directed have a great sweep and action to them. And even the librettos from which he worked are valuable for one reason. They tell us, though sometimes rather ineptly and vaguely, what the dramas themselves are all about. Without these outlines, we would have no idea in the world of the meaning of the powerful dramas.

There was an unreality, a "ghostliness", about all the dramas, as though they were made by sewer light underground; or as if they were made by poor quality moonlight. Remember that the element selenium (the metal that is not a metal), the chemical basis of the dramas, is named from Selene, the moon.

Bentley did not use "moving pictures" of quickly succeeding frames to capture and transmit his live presentation dramas. Although Muybridge was in fact working on the zoopraxi scope (the first "moving picture" device) at that very time, his still incomplete work was not known to Aurelian Bentley. Samuel J. Perry and Gifford Hudgeons did use "moving picture" techniques for their primitive television dramas later in the decade; but Bentley, fortunately perhaps, did not. Each of Bentley's thirty-minute live dramas, however it appeared for the first time in the first television receiver, was recorded in one single matrix or frame: and, thereafter, that picture took on a life and growth of its own. It was to some extent independent of sequence (an effect that has been attempted and failed of in several of the other arts); and it had a free way with time and space generally. This is part of the "ghostliness" of the dramas, and it is a large part of their power and charm. Each drama was one evolving moment outside of time and space (though mostly the scenes were in New York City and the Barrens of New Jersey).

Of course there was no sound in these early Bentley dramas, but let us not go too far astray with that particular "of course". "Slow sound" as well as "slow light" is a characteristic of selenium response, and we will soon see that sound did in fact creep into some of the dramas after much replaying. Whether their total effects were accidental or by design, these early television dramas were absolutely unique.

The thirteen "slow light" dramas produced by Aurelian Bentley in the year 1873 (the thirteenth of them, the mysterious Pettifoggers of Philadelphia, lacks Bentley's "Seal of Production", and indeed it was done after his death: and yet he appears as a major character in it) the thirteen were these:

1. The Perils of Patience, a Damnable Chase. In this, Clarinda Calliope, who was possibly one of the greatest actresses of American or world drama, played the part of Patience Palmer in the title role. Leslie Whitemansion played the role of Simon Legree. Kirbac Fouet played the part of "the Whip", a sinister character. X. Paul McCoffin played the role of "the Embalmer". Jaime del Diablo played "the Jesuit", one of the most menacing roles in all drama. Torres Malgre played "the Slaver", who carried the forged certificate showing that Patience had a shadow of black blood and so might be returned to slavery on San Croix. Inspiro Spectralski played "the Panther" (Is he a Man? Is he a Ghost?), who is the embodiment of an evil that is perhaps from beyond the world. Hubert Saint Nicholas played the part of "the Guardian", who is really a false guardian.

This Damnable Chase is really a galloping allegory. It is the allegory of good against evil, of light against darkness, of inventiveness against crude obtuseness, of life against death, of openness against intrigue, of love against hatred, of courage against hellish fear. For excitement and intensity, this drama has hardly an equal. Time and again, it seemed that the Embalmer, striking out of the dark, would stab Patience with his needle full of the dread embalming fluid and so trap her in the rigidity of living death. Time and again, it seemed that the Whip would cut the flesh of Patience Palmer with his long lash with viper poison on its iron tip that would bring instant death. At every eventuality, it seemed as though Simon Legree or the slaver would enslave her body, or the Jesuit or the Panther would enslave her soul. And her mysterious Guardian seems always about to save her, but his every attempt to save her has such reverse and disastrous effects as to cast doubt on the honesty and sincerity of the Guardian.

A high point of the drama is the duel of the locomotives that takes place during a tempestuous night in the West Orange Shipping Yards. Again and again, Patience Palmer is all but trapped on railroad trestles by thundering locomotives driven by her adversaries (the West Orange Switching Yards seem to consist almost entirely of very high railroad trestles). Patience finally gets control of a locomotive of her own on which to escape, but the locomotives of her enemies thunder at her from every direction so that she is able to switch out of their way only at the last brink of every moment.

The Embalmer attempts to stab her with his needleful of embalming fluid every time their locomotives pass each other with double thunder and only inches to spare. The Whip tries to lash her with his cruel lash with its poisoned tip; and the Slaver threatens her with the outreached forged certificate of color, and only by fantastic cringing can she cringe back far enough to keep from being touched by it as their locomotives roar past each other in opposite directions.

It seems impossible that the racing locomotives can come so close and not hit each other, with their dazzling switching from track to track. And then (Oh, God save us all!) the Panther (Is he a Man? Is he a Devil?) has leapt from his own locomotive to that of Patience Palmer: he is behind her on her own locomotive, and she does not see him. He comes closer -- But the climax of *The Perils of Patience* is not there in the West Orange Switching Yards. It is at a secret town and castle in the Barrens of New Jersey, a castle of evil repute. In this place the enemies of Patience were assembling a gang of beaters (slack-faced fellows with their tongues cut out), and they were readying bloodhounds to hunt Patience down to her death. She somehow obtains a large wagon piled high with hay and pulled by six large the high-spirited horses. With this, she boldly drives, on a stormy night, into the secret town of her enemies and down that jagged road (there was a lightning storm going on that made everything seem jagged) at the end of which was the castle itself. The bloodhounds leap high at her as she passes, but they cannot pull her from the wagon.

But the Panther (Is he a Man? Is he a Beast?) has leapt onto her hay wagon behind her, and she does not see him. He comes close behind her--But Patience Palmer is already making her move. Driving unswervingly, carrying out her own intrepid plan, at that very moment she raises a key in her hand very high into the air. This draws the lightning down with a stunning flash, and the hay wagon is set ablaze. Patience leaps clear of the flaming hay wagon at the last possible moment, and the blazing, hurtling inferno crashes into the tall and evil castle to set it and its outbuildings and its whole town ablaze.

This is the flaming climax to one of the greatest chase dramas ever.

This final scene of *The Perils* will be met with often later. Due to the character of the "slow light" or selenium scenes, this vivid scene leaks out of its own framework and is superimposed, sometimes faintly, sometimes powerfully, as a ghost scene on all twelve of the subsequent dramas.

2. *Thirtsy Dagers*, a Murder Mystery. This is the second of the Aurelian Bentley television dramas of 1873. Clarinda Calliope, one of the most talented

actresses of her time, played the part of Maud Trenchant, the Girl Detective. The actors Leslie Whitemansion, Kirbac Fouet, X. Paul McCoffin, Jaime del Diablo, Torres Malgre, Inspiro Spectral ski, and Hubert Saint Nicholas played powerful and menacing roles, but their identities and purposes cannot be set exactly. One must enter into the bloody and thrilling spirit of the drama without knowing the details.

More even than *The Perils of Patience* does *Thirsty Daggers* seem to be freed from the bonds of time and sequence. It is all one unfolding moment, growing always in intensity and intricacy, but not following a straight line of action. And this, accompanied by a deficiency of the libretto, leads to confusion.

The libretto cannot be read. It is darkened and stained. Chemical analysis has revealed that it is stained with human blood. It is our belief that Bentley sent the librettos to his clients decorated with fresh human blood to set a mood. But time has spread the stains, and almost nothing can be read. This is, however, a highly interesting drama, the earliest murder ever done for television.

It is nearly certain that Maud Trenchant, the Girl Detective, overcomes all the menaces and solves all the crimes, but the finer details of this are lost forever.

3. *The Great Bicycle Race*, the third of the Bentley television dramas, has that versatile actress Clarinda Calliope playing the lead role of July Meadowbloom in this joyful and allegorical "journey into summertime". It is in *The Great Bicycle Race* that sound makes its first appearance in the Bentley dramas. It is the sounds of all outdoors that are heard in this drama, faintly at first, and more and more as time goes on. These are country and village sounds; they are county-fair sounds. Though the sounds seem to be an accidental intrusion (another ghostly side-play of the selenium response magic), yet their quality lends belief to the evidence that the full and original title of this drama was *The Great Bicycle Race, a Pastoral*.

But there are other sounds, sometimes angry, sometimes imploring, sometimes arrogant and menacing -- more about them in a bit.

Sheep and cattle sounds are all through the play; goat and horse and swine sounds; the rattle of ducks and geese; all the wonderful noises of the countryside. There are birds and grasshoppers, windmills and wagons, people calling and singing. There are the sounds of carnival barkers and the chants of gamblers and shills. There are the shrieks and giggles of young people.

And then there are those intrusive sounds of another sort, the separate overlay. These seem to be mostly indoor sounds, but sometimes they are outdoor grandstand sounds also, bristling talk in the reserved shadows of crowd noise and roaring.

"No, no, no. I'll not be had. What sort of a girl do you think I am?"

"All these things I will give you, Clarie. No one else would give you so much. No one else would ever care so much. But now is the time for it. Now is the summer of our lives. Now we cut hay."

"Let's just see the price of a good hay barn first, Aurie. Let's just get some things down on paper right now. We are talking about a summertime check that is as big as all summer. And we are talking about a much larger settlement to back up the other seasons and years."

"Don't you trust me, Clarie?"

"Of course I trust you, Ben tie baby. I trust that you will get that trust fund that we are talking about down on paper today. I am a very trusting woman. I believe that we should have a trust fund to cover every condition and circumstance."

Odd talk that, to be mixed in with the sound of *The Great Bicycle Race*.

The race was in conjunction with the Tri-county Fair, which counties were Camden, Gloucester, and Atlantic. The bicycle racers rode their twenty-mile course every afternoon for five afternoons, and careful time was kept. There was betting on each day's race, but there was bigger betting on the final winner with the lowest total time for the five days, and the kitty



grew and grew. From the great fairground grandstand, one could see almost all of the twenty-mile course that the riders rode, or could follow it by the plumes of dust. The grandstand was on high ground and the whole countryside was spread out before it. Cattle and mules were paraded and judged in front of that grandstand, before and during and after that daily race; then the race (for the approximate hour that it took to run it) was the big thing. There were seven drivers in the race, and all of them were world famous: 1. Leslie Whitemansion drive on a Von Sauerbronn "Special" of fine German craftsmanship. This machine, popularly known then as the "whizzer", would get you there and it would bring you back. It was very roadworthy and surprisingly fast.

2. Kirbac Fouet was on an Ernest Michaux Magicien, a splendid machine. It had a socket into which a small sail might be fitted to give greater speed on a favorable wind.

3. X. Paul McCoffin was on a British Royal Velocipede. There are two things that may be remarked about the British Royal: it had solid rubber tires (the first rubber-tired bicycle ever), and it had class. It had that cluttered austerity of line that only the best of British products have.

4. Jaime del Diablo was on a Pierre Lallement "Boneshaker" with its iron-tired wooden wheels, the front one much larger than the rear.

5. Torres Maigre was on an American-built Richard Warren Sears Roadrunner, the first all-iron machine. "The only wood is in the heads of its detractors" was an advertising slogan used for the Roadrunner.

6. Inspiro Spectralski (Is he a Man? Is he a Cannon Ball?) was riding a Mcracken's Comet. This comet had won races at several other county fairs around the state.

7. Hubert Saint Nicholas had a machine such as no one in the state had ever seen before. It was a French bicyclette named the Supreme. The bicyclette had the pedals fixed to drive the back wheel by the ingenious use of a chain and sprocket wheel, and so was not, strictly speaking, a bicycle at all. The true bicycles of the other six racers had the pedals attached directly to the front wheels. There was one syndicate of bettors who said the bicyclette had a mechanical advantage, and that Hubert would win on it. But other persons made jokes about this rig whose back wheel would arrive before its front wheel and whose driver would not arrive before the next day.

It was on these great riders that all the six-shot gamblers around were wagering breath-taking sums. It was for them that sports came from as far away as New York City.

Clarinda Calliope played the role of Gloria Goldenfield, the beauty queen of the Tri-county Fair in this drama. But she also played the role of the "Masked Alternate Rider Number Seven". (All the racing riders had their alternates to ride in their places in case of emergency.) And Clarinda also played a third role, that of Rakesly Rivertown, the splurging gambler. Who would ever guess that the raffish Rakesly was being played by a woman? The author and director of The Great Bicycle Race did not know anything about Clarinda playing these latter two roles.

The grandstand, the bandstand, the pleasures of a country carnival in the summertime! And the "slow smells" of the selenium-directed matrix just becoming ripe and evocative now! Smell of sweet clover and timothy hay, or hot horses pulling buggies or working in the fields, smells of candy and sausage and summer squash at the eating places at the fair, smells of dusty roads and of green money being counted out and thumped down on betting tables for the bicycle race! And then again there was the override of intrusive voices breaking in on the real summer drama just by accident.

"Clarie, I will do handsomely by you in just a day or so. I have placed very, very heavy bets on the bicycle race, and I will win. I am betting against the wildest gambler in this part of the country, Rakesly Rivertown, and we will have the bet up to a cool million with one more raise. He is betting the field against number seven. And number seven will win."

"I have heard that this Rakesly Rivertown is about the sharpest gambler anywhere, and that he has a fine figure and makes and extraordinary

appearance."

"A fine figure! Why, the fraud is shaped like a girl! Yes, he is a sharp gambler, but he doesn't understand mechanics. Number seven, the Supreme, has a rear-wheel drive with gear-ratio advantage. Hubert Saint Nicholas, who is riding number seven, is just toying with the other riders so far to get the bets higher, and he can win whenever he wants to. I will win a million dollars on the race, my love. And I will give it to you, if you act a little bit more like my love."

"Surely your love for me should transcend any results of a bicycle race, Aurie. If you really loved me, and if you contemplated making such a gift to me, you would make it today. That would show that your appreciation and affection are above mere fortune. And, if you can't lose, as you say that you cannot, you will have your money in the same amount won back in two days' time, and you will have made me happy two days longer."

"All right, I guess so then, Clarie. Yes, I'll give it to you today. Right now. I'll write you a check right now."

"Oh, you are a treasure, Aurie. You are a double treasure. You can't guess how double a treasure you are!"

The wonderful Tri-county Fair was near its end, and its Great Bicycle Race with it. It was the last day of the race. Hubert Saint Nicholas on number seven, the Supreme, the French bicyclette with the mechanical advantage, was leading the field by only one minute in total elapsed time going into that last day's racing. There were those who said that Hubert could win any time he wanted to, and that he stayed so close only to keep the bets a-growing.

And the bets did grow. The mysterious gambler with the fine figure and the extraordinary appearance, Rakesly Rivertown, was still betting the field to win against number seven. And a still more mysterious gambler, working through agents, was betting on number seven to place, but not to win. These latter bets were quickly covered. Number seven would win, unless some terrible calamity overtook that entry; and, in the case of such terrible calamity, number seven would not finish second, would not finish at all most likely.

The seven intrepid racers were off on their final, mad, twenty-mile circuit. Interest was high, especially with moneyed gamblers who followed the riders from the grandstand with their binoculars. At no place was the winding, circuit course more than four miles from the grandstand; and there were only three or four places, not more than three hundred yards in all, where the racers were out of sight of the higher tiers of the grandstand. One of those places was where Little Egg Creek went through Little Egg Meadow. Something mysterious happened near Little Egg Creek Crossing that neither the libretto nor the enacted drama itself makes clear.

Hubert Saint Nicholas, riding the French bicyclette, number seven, the Supreme, with the rear-wheel drive and the mechanical advantage, was unsaddled from his mount and knocked unconscious. The race master later and officially entered this incident as "A careless rider knocked off his bicycle by a tree branch," though Hubert swore that there wasn't a tree branch within a hundred yards of that place.

"I was slugged by a lurker in the weeds," Hubert said. "It was a criminal and fraudulent assault and I know who did it." Then he cried, "Oh, the perfidy of women!" This latter seemed to be an unconnected outcry; perhaps Hubert had suffered a concussion.

Fortunately (for whom?) the alternate rider for number seven, the Mysterious (though duly certified) Masked Rider, was in the vicinity of the accident and took control of the bicyclette, the Supreme, and continued the race. But number seven, though having a one-minute lead ere the race began, did not win. Number seven did come in second though in total elapsed time.

The Great Bicycle Race is a quaint little drama, with not much plot, but with a pleasant and bucolic atmosphere that grows more pleasant every time the drama is played back. It is a thoroughly enjoyable "Journey into Summertime".

And there were a few more seconds of those intrusive "ghost" voices breaking into the closing moments of the pastoral drama.

"Clarie, I have been took bad, for a big wad, and I don't know how it happened. There is something funny about it all. There was something funny and familiar about that Masked Alternate Rider for number seven. (I swear that I know him from somewhere!) And there has always been something double funny and familiar about that gambler Rakesly Rivertown. [I swear and be damned if I don't know him from somewhere!]"

"Don't worry about it, Aurie. You are so smart that you will have all that money made back in no time at all."

"Yes, that's true, I will. But how can I write and produce and direct a drama and then get taken in it and not know what happened?"

"Don't worry about it, Aurie."

I myself doubt very much whether Aurelian Bentley knew about the "slow sounds" from nowhere-town that sometimes broke into the playing of his dramas, much less the "slow smells" which now began to give the dramas a character all their own.

4. The Voyages of Captain Cook was the fourth of the Bentley-produced television dramas of the year 1873. In this, Clarinda Calliope played the role of Maria Masina, the Queen of Polynesia. If The Great Bicycle Race was a journey into summertime, The Voyages of Captain Cook was a journey into tropical paradise.

Hubert Saint Nicholas played Captain Cook. Inspiro Spectraiski (Is he a Man? Is he a Fish?) played the Shark God. Leslie Whitemansion played the Missionary. X. Paul McCoffin played the Volcano God. Torres Malgre played the God of the Walking Dead. Jaime del Diablo played Kokomoko, the bronzed surf boy and lover boy who was always holding a huge red hibiscus bloom between his white teeth.

The people of the South Sea Islands of the Captain Cook drama were always eating possum and sweet potatoes and fried chicken (a misconception) and twanging on little banjos (another misconception) and talking southern U.S. Darcy Dialect (but these ghost voices were not intended to be heard on the television presentation).

The complete libretto for The Voyages of Captain Cook has survived, which makes us grateful for those that have not survived for several of the dramas. The story is replete. It is better to disregard the libretto with its simultaneous curses invoked by the Shark God, the Volcano God, and the God of the Walking Dead, and to give oneself over to the charm of the scenery, which is remarkable, considering that it was all "filmed", or "selenium-matrixed", in the salt swamps of New Jersey.

The anomalous intrusive voices are in this drama again, as they will be in all the subsequent dramas.

"A 'South Sea Bubble', yes, that's what I want, Aurie, one that can't burst. Use your imagination [you have so very much of it] and your finances [you have so very much of those] and come up with something that will delight me."

"I swear to you, Clarie, as soon as my finances are in a little better order, I will buy any island or group of islands in the Pacific Ocean for you. Do you hear me, Clarie? I will give you any island or group you wish, Hawaii, Samoa, Fiji. Name it and it is yours."

"So many things you promise! But you don't promise them on paper, only on air. Maybe I will find a way to make the air retain the promises you make."

"Not on paper, not on air, Clarie, but in real life. I will make you the real and living Queen of Polynesia."

The essence of the South Sea appeal is just plain charm. It may be that this Bentley drama, The Voyages of Captain Cook, was the original charm bush whence many things bloomed. No, in things of this sort, it is not necessary that a scion ever be in contact with its source or even know its source. Without the Voyages would there ever have been a Sadie Thompson, would there have been a Nellie Forbush? Would there have been a Nina, daughter of Almayer? Well, they wouldn't have been as they were if Clarinda Calliope hadn't, in a way, played them first. Would there have been a White Shadows of the South

Seas if there hadn't first been The Voyages of Captain Cook? No, of course there wouldn't have been.

5. Crimean Days was the fifth of the Aurelian Bentley television dramas. In this, the multit talented Clarinda Calliope played the role of Florence Nightingale, of EkmeK Kaya, a Turkish lady of doubtful virtue who was the number-four wife and current favorite of the Turkish admiral, of Chiara Maldonado, a young lady camp follower with the army of Savoy, of Katya Petrova, who was a Russian princess as well as a triple spy, and of Claudette Boudin, a French lady journalist. Clarinda also masqueraded as Claudette's twin brother Claude, a colonel with the French forces, and as such she led the French to a surprising victory over the Russians at Eupatoria. The unmasqueraded Claude himself was played by Apollo Mont-de-Marsan, a young actor making his first appearance in the Bentley dramas.

The Crimean War was the last war in which the field officers of all sides (Leslie Whitemansion was a British field officer, Kirbac Fouet was a French, Jaime del Diablo was an officer of the forces of Savoy, Torres Malgre was the Turkish admiral, Inspiro Spectralski was a general of the Czar, X. Paul McCoffin was a special observer of the Pope), after their days of tactical maneuver and sometimes bloody conflict, would dress for dinner and have formal dinner together. And it was at these dinners that Clarinda Calliope, in her various guises, shone.

There was a wonderful and many-leveled table intrigue, and I believe that more and more of it will come through every time the drama is replayed. And it was here in this drama that one of the most strange of the Bentley-effect phenomena first appeared. There is unmistakable evidence that some of the subvocalizations (thoughts) of the people were now to be heard as "slow sound", which was really selenium-triggered "slow thought". Some of these manifestations were the role thoughts of the actors so strangely vocalized (Clarinda Calliope, for instance, could not speak or think in any tongues except English and her own Pennsylvania Dutch in normal circumstances: but in her triple spy roles we find her thinking out loud in Turkish and Greek and Russian); and other of the vocalizations are the real thoughts of the actors (the amazingly frank intentions of Leslie Whitemansion and of the new Apollo Mont-de-Marsan as to their lady loves of the evening after they should have received their two-dollar actors' fee for the day).

It was a wonderful play and too intricate to be described. This one, above all, has to be seen. But again there was the anomalous intrusion of voices that were not a part of the scenes of the play: "Get rid of that Greek Wop kid, Clarie. I told him he was fired, and he said that he would stick around and work for nothing. He said he loved the fringe benefits. What are fringe benefits? I told him I'd run him off, and he said that this was the free state of New Jersey and that no one would run him off. I won't have him around."

"Oh, Aurie, there isn't any Greek Wop kid. That was me playing that role too. Am I not talented to play so many roles? And you will not fire me from this role. I will continue to play it, and I will be paid for it. It isn't the principle of the thing either: it's the two dollars."

"Yes, I understand that much about you. But you say that was you playing the part of that smart-mouth Apollo Dago Greek? That couldn't be. I've seen you both at the same time. I've seen you two together too many times. I've seen you smooching each other."

"Ah, Aurie, that was quite an advanced technique and illusion, not to mention double exposure, that I used there. What other actress could play both roles at once and get away with it?"

"Your techniques and illusions are becoming a little bit too advanced, Clarie. And do not be so sure that you are getting away with it."

All through Crimean Days, there was some tampering with history going on for dramatic effect. The Light Brigade, for instance, was successful in its famous charge and it won a great victory. But the final outcome of the war was left in doubt. Aurelian Bentley had somehow become a strong partisan of the

Russians and he refused to show them being finally defeated by the allies.

6. Ruddy Limbs and Flaming Hair is the sixth of the Bentley television dramas. In this piece, the dramatic Clarinda Calliope plays the part of Muothu, the Maid of Mars, for the Ruddy Limbs and Flaming Hair are on the planet itself. There are some fantastic elements in this piece, as well as amazing scientific accuracy. There is, in fact, a technical precocity that is really stunning. Aurelian Bentley has foreseen circumstances that even the scientific community did not then see, and he has dealt with those circumstances.

He posits, for instance, an atmosphere composed mostly of an enomagnetized, digammated, attenuated form of oxygen. Being eno-magnetized, that atmosphere would naturally cling to its planet even though the gravity would not be strong enough to retain it otherwise. Being digammated, it would produce no line in the Martian spectrum, would have no corona or optical distortion effect, and could in no way be detected from Earth. And yet a human Earthly would be able to breathe it freely.

This was a good-natured utopian drama of total realization and happiness. The Ruddy Limbs and Flaming Hair apply both allegorically to the planet Mars and literally to the highly dramatic Clarinda Calliope as Muothu. Muothu displayed rather more of the ruddy limbs than were ordinarily shown on Earth, but it was explained that customs on Mars were different.

Ruddy Limbs and Flaming Hair was the last of the dramas in which the apparently tormented and disturbed Aurelian Bentley still showed the strong hand of the master as scenarist, dramaturgist, director, and producer generally. After this we come to the four "Trough of the Wave" dramas, and then the three bewildering and hectic displays on the end of the series.

7. The Trenton Train Robbery is the seventh of the Bentley television dramas, and the first of the four "Trough" plays where Aurelian Bentley and his effects are sunken in the slough of despond and have lost their brightness and liveliness and hope. We will pass through them quickly.

In the Train Robbery, the peerless Clarinda Calliope plays Roxana Roundhouse, the daughter of the slain locomotive engineer Timothy (Trainman) Roundhouse. Armed with a repeating rifle, a repeating shotgun, a repeating pistol, and a few pocket-sized bombs, Roxana rides the rods of the crack Trenton Express in the effort to catch or kill the murderers of her father. These murderers have sworn that they will rob that very Trenton Express again.

And Roxana Roundhouse does catch or kill all the murderers of her father. In spite of some good shots of landscapes rushing by, this is not one of Aurelian Bentley's best efforts.

And again the voices of unknown persons creep into the drama:

"You've already flayed me, Clarie, and scraped both sides of my pelt for whatever might cling to it. What more do you want from me? Go away with your lover and leave me alone." And then in a fuzzier voice (apparently the "thought voice" made vocal) the same person said or thought: "Oh, if only she would go away from me, then I might have a chance! For I will never be able to go away from her."

"Grow more skin, Aurie," the other voice said. "I'm not nearly finished fleecing you and flaying you. Oh, don't look so torn up, Aurie. You know I could never love anyone except you. But a little token of our love is required now and then, and especially now, today. Yes, I know you are going to use you old line, 'I gave you a million dollars last week,' but Aurie, that was last week. Yes, I know that you have expenses that the world wots not of. So do I. Believe me, Aurie, I wouldn't ask for these tokens of affection if I didn't want them." And then in a fuzzier voice, a "thought voice", the same person said or thought: "I'll never get another fish like this one and I sure can't afford to lose him. But gentle handling doesn't get it all the time. When the hook in him shows signs of working loose a bit, it has to be set in again with a very hard jerk on the line."

8. Six Guns on the Border is the eighth of the Bentley television dramas. In this drama, Clarinda Calliope (is there no end to her versatility?)

plays the part of Conchita Allegre, the half-breed Apache and Mexican girl, on the Arizona border during the Mexican War. Conchita hates the American soldiers who are invading that area. She has them come to her secretly, with promises of love, and then she has them ambushed and killed. She kills many of them herself with her own six gun, and she makes antimacassars out of their skins. The sort of gentlemen that Conchita really likes use a lot of oil on their hair so Conchita needs a lot of antimacassars at her house.

But there are a few of the American officers so awkward and oafish that Conchita simply can't stand to have much to do with them, not even long enough to seduce them and have them killed. These horrible specimens are: Captain James Polk (played by Leslie Whitemansion).

General Zachary Taylor (played by Kirbac Fouet).

Captain Millard Fillmore (played by X. Paul McCoffin).

Captain Franklin Pierce (played by Jaime del Diablo).

Captain James Buchanan (played by Torres Malgre).

Captain Abraham Lincoln (played by Inspiro Spectralski).

Captain Andrew Johnson (played by Apollo Mont-de-Marsan).

Captain Sam Grant (played by Hubert Saint Nicholas).

There was a lot of historical irony in this play, but maybe it belonged somewhere else.

There was a lot of "Comedy of Manners" stuff in it but it falls a little flat, mostly because the eight oafish officers spared by Conchita were too unmannerly to be in a comedy of manners.

Aurelian Bentley came near the bottom of his form in this piece. But for the energy of Clarinda Calliope (she played five other parts besides that of Conchita) there would have been hardly any drama at all.

And, as always, there were those intrusive voices hovering over the playbacks.

"Clairie, believe me! Believe me! Believe me! I will do all these things for you. I promise it."

"Yes, you promise it to the earless walls and to the earless me. Promise it to the pen and ink and paper here."

"Get rid of that Apollo kid first, Clarie."

"You get rid of him. You have a lot of rough-looking men around."

9. Clarence Greenback, Confidence Man was the ninth of the Aurelian Bentley television dramas. Hubert Saint Nicholas played the role of Clarence Greenback, the casino owner. It was the first time that Clarinda Calliope had not played the lead role in a drama. Is it possible that Clarinda had somehow slipped? Or was this another instance of the left lobe of Aurelian Bentley having lost its cunning, and casting badly. The talented prestidigitator of drama did not have his sure touch nowadays. Oh sure, Clarinda played other roles in the drama, but she did not have the lead role.

Clarinda played the role of Gretchen, the sweep-out girl at the casino. She played the role of Maria, the mounting-block girl in the street outside the casino. She played the role of Elsie, the chimney-sweep girl. She played the part of Hennchen, the scullery maid in the third and vilest kitchen of the casino. She played the part of Josephine, the retriever who had to gather up the shattered bodies of the suicides below Suicide Leap Window of the casino and take them to East Potters' Field and dig their graves and bury them. Elsie made a good thing out of her job, from the gold teeth of the late patrons of the casino, but the dramatist and producer did not know about the good thing she had there.

There were hazards in all these different roles.

"No, of course we can't put out the fires for you to clean the chimneys," said Leslie Whitemansion, who was in charge of fireplaces and chimneys at the casino. "Clean them hot." And it was very hot working inside those tall chimneys with the fires roaring below, and Elsie the chimney-sweep girl suffered.

For keeping a copper coin that she found while sweeping out the casino, the sadist Baron von Steichen (played by X. Paul McCoffin) had Gretchen hung

up by her thumbs and flogged.

And Maria, the mounting-block girl, who had to stand in the muddy street outside the casino and bend her back for the gentlemen to step on her when they mounted or dismounted their horses, she had it worse on the muddy days. Oh, the great muddy boots of those men! Maybe they're trying to tell me something," Clarinda Calliope spoke or thought (by slow talk-thought). "I do like subtle people." But a good actress can play any role, and Clarinda has her revenge today. Hardly anyone remembers the plot for Clarence Greenback, Confidence Man, but everyone remembers the tribulations of those pretty little servant girls.

And then there were those other intrusive voices of the overlay. It was almost as if they belonged in another sort of drama.

"Clarie, this has to stop. Not counting the special gifts, and they're fantastic, I'm giving you ten times as much as the President of the United States is making."

"I'm ten times as good at acting as he is. And how about my special gifts? - and they're fantastic. Why do you have all the private detectives running around the last couple of days? To spy on me?"

"To spy on everything and everyone. To save my life. Frankly, Clarie, I am afraid of being murdered. I have premonitions of being killed, with a knife, always with a knife."

"Like in *Thirsty Daggers*, a Murder Mystery? That one wasn't really very well worked out, and I believe it's one of the things bothering you. Your underminer is looking for a better solution, I believe, for a neater murder. It is seeking to enact a more artistic murder. I believe it will do it. I believe you will come up with quite an artistic murder for yourself. There are good murders and bad murders, you see."

"Clarie, I don't intend to let myself be killed at all, not by either a good or a bad murder."

"Not even for art's sake? It seems it would be worth it, for the perfect murder, Aurie."

"Not when I'm the murdered one, Clarie."

Then, a moment later, the female person said or thought something further, in a "slow thought-voice".

"Sometimes persons have perfection thrust upon them in spite of themselves. An artful murder for Aurie would make up for a lot of the mad art that he's been guilty of lately."

10. The Vampires of Varuma was the tenth of the Aurelian Bentley television dramas. This is the fourth and last of the "Trough of the Wave" dramas, which show Bentley's dramatic powers in almost complete decline and himself mightily disoriented. Yet, in this bottoming-out, there is a curious resurrection of his powers in a slightly different form. His sense of plotting and story movement did not return yet, but his sense of dramatic horror as motive force was resurrected to its highest pitch.

Clarinda Calliope played Magda the peasant maid, Miss Cheryl Somerset, the governess from England, and the Princess Irene of Transylvania. All three of these had been traveling to Castle Khubav on rational errands by the regular coach of the road; and each of the three had seen all the other passengers dismount hastily, and had then experienced the coach horses being whipped ahead frantically by an invisible coachman, or by no coachman at all. And each of these ladies had arrived, on successive days, in the apparently driverless coach, not at Castle Khubav, but at the dread Castle Beden. And inside the Castle Beden were the seven ("no, not seven, eight" was written into the libretto in a weirdly different hand) insane counts in their castle of evil. These were: Count Vlad mel, played by Leslie Whitemansion.

Count Igork, played by Kirbac Fouet.

Count Lascar, played by X. Paul McCoffin.

Count Chort, played by Jaime del Diablo.

Count Sangressuga, played by Torres Malgre.

Count Letuchaya, played by Inspiro Spectralski (Is he a Man? Is he a

Bat?) Count Ulv, played by Hubert Saint Nicholas.

And then there is another one added in the libretto in that weirdly different hand: Count Prividenne, played by Apollo Mont-de-Marsan.

There is a slip-up here somewhere. Apollo is supposed to have been "gotten rid of", to have shuffled off the mortal coil, and the sheriff's report said that he died of indigestion. But if Apollo has not been "gotten rid of" then certainly money was paid in vain.

The seven (or eight) evil counts are sometimes conventional counts in evening clothes and monocles. And sometimes they are huge batwinged creatures flitting ponderously down the lightning-lit corridors of Castle Beden. The castle, in fact, is the main character in the drama. It does not have formal lighting, as it is lit by lightning all twenty-four hours of every night (there is no daylight at Castle Beden). The floors and walls howl and chains rattle constantly. The counts have sometimes conventional six-inch-long eyeteeth, and then suddenly they will have hollow fangs eighteen inches long and deadly. And there is a constant lot of howling and screaming for what is supposed to be a silent television drama.

A flying count will suddenly fold his bat wings and land on the broad bosom of one of the three maidens and have into her throat with his terrible blood-sucking fangs. And every time it happens, there is a horrible flopping and screeching.

The voice of Clarinda Calliope is heard loud and clear and real in a slow angry sound.

"Dammit, Aurelian, that's real blood they're taking out of my throat."

And came the suave voice of the master dramatist Aurelian Bentley (but the voices shouldn't be breaking in like this): "Right, Clarie. It is on such verisimilitude that I have built my reputation as a master."

Clarinda, in her three roles, seemed to lose quite a bit of blood as the drama went on, and she fell down more and more often. And the drama was a howling and bloody success, no matter that the story line was shattered in a thousand pieces -- for each piece of it was like a writhing blood snake that gluts and gloats.

And then, after the drama itself was ended in a spate of final blood, there came those intrusive voices that seemed to be out of some private drama.

"Aurie, if you are worrying about being killed, how about providing for me before it happens?"

"I leave you half of my kingdom, ah, estate, Clarie, right off the top of it. My word is good for this. And stop falling down."

"I'm weak. It took a lot out of me. Yes, your written word is good on this, Aurie, if it is written and attested to in all the right places. Let's take care of that little detail right now."

"Clarie, my spoken promise is enough, and it is all that I will give. I hereby attest that half of my estate, off the top, belongs to you. Let the eared walls of this room be witnesses to what I say, Clarie. If the walls of this room will swear to it, then surely they will be believed. Now don't bother me for a few days. I will be busy with something else. And stop falling down. It's annoying."

The female person then said or thought something in a fuzzy thought-voice: "Yes, I believe I can make the walls of this room attest for me when the time comes. (I might have to put in another amplifying circuit to be sure.) And I believe that the attesting walls will be believed."

The male person then said or thought something in a fuzzy thought-voice: "I have Miss Adeline Ad dams now. Why should I care about this Calliope clown? It's irritating the way she keeps turning chalk-white and falling down. I never saw anyone make such a fuss over nine quarts of blood. But now Lam on a new and more glorious dawn road. Is it not peculiar how a man will fall in love with one woman and out of love with another one at the same time?"

11. The Ghost at the Opera is the eleventh of the Aurelian Bentley television dramas in the year 1873. The Ghost is based on Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, but Bentley's production is quite original for all that. The role



of Leonora is played by Miss Adeline Addams. But the same role is also played by Clarinda Calliope, who was originally selected to play the role by herself. This business of having two different persons playing the same role creates a certain duality, one might almost say a certain duplicity, in the drama.

The "Ghost" is the doubling: it is the inept and stumbling Clarinda trying again and again to sing parts of the Leonora role and falling in it totally and being jerked off stage by the stage manager's crook; and it is the beautiful and brimming genius Adeline Addams coming on and performing the same role brilliantly. This provides the "cruel comedy" that is usually lacking in Verdi; for, without cruelty, only a limited success is ever possible in opera. But Clarinda took some very bad falls from the stageman's crook jerking her off her feet, and besides she was still weak and falling down from all the blood she had lost in her roles in *The Vampires of Varuma*. She was suffering.

"Why do you go through with it, Clarinda?" Hubert Saint Nicholas asked her once in an outside-of-the-play-itself voice. "Why do you allow yourself to be tortured and humiliated like that?"

"Only for the money," Clarinda was heard to say. "Only for the actor's fee of four dollars a day. I am clear broke and I am hungry. But if I can stick it out to the end of the opera, I will have four dollars tonight for my wages."

"Four dollars, Clarinda? The rest of us get only two dollars a day. Are you playing another role that I don't know about?"

"Yes, I am also playing the role of Wilhelmina, the outhouse cleaner."

"But I thought that you had millions from that old tyrant, Clarinda."

"It's gone, Hubie, all gone. I had expenses that the world wotted not of. I gave Apollo most of the money when I was in love with him. And I gave the rest of it today to do a special favor for me."

"You gave the money to him today? But he was buried yesterday."

"Time seems to go faster as we get older, doesn't it?"

Meanwhile, back on the opera stage, a new Verdi was being hammered out. Leslie Whitemansion was playing Manrico. X. Paul McCoffin was playing Ferrando. Hubert Saint Nicholas was playing Count di Luni. Apollo Mont-de-Marsan was playing the ghost. But was there a ghost in the libretto besides the double ghost of the two females playing the same role? Yes, there was; there was a real ghost in the libretto. It was written in there in a queer "other" hand, really a "ghostly" hand, and it wrote that Apollo was playing the role of the ghost.

So the merry comic opera went along almost to its end. It was just when Manrico was being led to the executioner's block and the evil Count di Luni was gloating in triumph, when everything was finally being shaped up in that drama that had some pleasure for everybody, that a horrible thing happened in one of the loges or boxes that overhung the stage.

Aurelian Bentley was knifed there in his box at the opera. Oh God, this was murder! "Your mind is looking for a better solution, I believe, for a neater murder." Oh, that had been the voice of another sort of ghost. But now, to be slain by the ghost of a man dead only a day or two, and in the presence of several thousands of persons here! (For it was, possibly, none other than Apollo Mont-de-Marsan, who had been "gotten rid of", who was getting rid of Aurelian Bentley.) And again:

"There are good murders and bad murders, you see.... It seems it would be worth it, for art's sake, for the perfect murder." Aurelian Bentley was stabbed to death in his box at the opera there, but even he had to admit, with some appreciation, as he went, that it was done with art.

And immediately, as the opera on stage came to its great conclusion, there welled up cries of "Author, Author, Bentley, Bentley!"

Then the dying (or more likely dead) man rose for the last time, bowed formally, and tumbled out of his box and onto his face on the stage, stark dead, and with the thirsty (now slaked) dagger twinkling between the blades of his shoulders.

What other man had ever made such an exit from or on life's stage! That

was Theater! That was Drama!

12. An Evening in Newport was intended to be the twelfth of the Bentley television dramas. But it was never produced; possibly because of the death of its producer. It exists only as a libretto.

There was a high society "drama of manners", as Miss Adeline Addams knew it, as Aurelian Bentley with his quick mind and quick mimicry knew it from his brief brushes with it. But does not a drama or comedy of manners depend largely on the quip and the arch aphorism? How could it be done in silent presentation?

By art, that's how it might be done: by the perfect art of the silent mimes, and Aurelian Bentley was master of that art. By the gestures, by the facial implications, by great silent acting this might be done. Was there any devastating riposte that she could not give with her autocratic hands? It was never tested, but Aurelian believed that she was pretty good.

On the lower level, An Evening in Newport was a one-sided dual between Mistress Adeline Addams of Newport, playing the role of Mistress Adela Adams of Newport, and Clarinda Calliope, playing the role of Rosaleen O'Keene, a low, vicious, ignorant, filthy, bad-mannered, fifth parlor maid newly arrived from Ireland. It was a stacked set in favor of Adeline/Adela.

On the higher level, the drama was the passionate portrayal of the total love of a beautiful and wealthy and intelligent and charming and aristocratic young lady (Adeline-Adela) for a man of surpassing genius and ineffable charm, a man of poise and power and heroic gifts, a man the like of whom will hardly appear once in a century. The drama was supposed to take on a note of hushed wonder whenever this man was mentioned, or so the libretto said. The libretto does not identify this exceptional man, but our own opinion is that the librettist, Aurelian Bentley, intended this hardly-once-in-a-century man, the object of the torrid and devoted love of Miss Adeline Addams, to be himself, Aurelian Bentley.

But An Evening in Newport, intended to be the surpassing climax of that first and still unsurpassed television series, was never produced.

13. Pettifoggers of Philadelphia is the noncanonical, apocryphal, thirteenth apocalypse of The Wonderful World of Aurelian Bentley, that first and greatest television series. There is no libretto to it. There is no formal production, and it does not carry the Bentley "Seal of Production". But it does repose in one of the old television receivers, the one that was Aurelian's own control receiver, the one that was in Aurelian's own luxurious den where he spent so many hectic hours with Clarinda Calliope and later with Adeline Addams. It reposes there, and it may be seen and heard there.

Though Bentley was already dead when these scenes were ordered and live-presented, yet he walks in them and talks in them. The experience of hearing the thoughts and words of a hovering dead man spoken out loud and of seeing him as if in the flesh is a shattering but dramatic one.

The setting and sole scene of Pettifoggers of Philadelphia is that same luxurious den of Aurelian Bentley's, first placed under court seal, but then opened for a meeting which, as one of the parties to it stated, could not validly be held anywhere else. A probate judge was present, and pettifoggers representing several of the parties, and two of the parties themselves. It was a hearing on the disposition of the estate of Aurelian Bentley, of what might be left of that estate, he having died without having made a will. But one of the parties, Clarinda Calliope, insisted that Bentley had made a will, that the will was in this particular room and no other, that the will in fact was this room and the eared and tongued walls of it.

There seemed to be several meetings in this room superimposed on one another, and they cannot be sorted out. To sort them out would have been to destroy their effect, however, for they achieved syntheses of their several aspects and became the true meeting that never really took place but which contained all the other meetings in one theatrical unity.

The pettifogger of a second cousin once removed was there to present the claim of that distant person, as next in kin, to the estate of Aurelian

Bentley.

The pettifogger of Adeline Addams of Newport was there to present the claim of Adeline to the estate, claims based on an irrefutable promise. This irrefutable promise was the marriage license for Aurelian Bentley and Adeline Addams. It was not signed or witnessed, of course. The marriage, the pettifogger said, had been scheduled to take place on a certain night after the presentation of an opera, that was contained in a television drama, that was contained in a riddle. But Aurelian Bentley had been killed during that opera, which voided the prospect of marriage, but he did not void the promise.

There were pettifoggers there for the different creditors. And all the pettifoggers were from Philadelphia.

And there was Clarinda Calliope representing herself (as Portia, she insisted, and not as a pettifogger), and she claimed rights by a promise too big and too intricate to be put on paper.

There was the probate judge of the private hearing who ambled around the luxurious den flipping a silver dollar in the air and humming the McGinty's Saloon Waltz.

"Oh, stop flipping that silly silver dollar and get on with the matter of the probate," Miss Adeline Addams complained to that nitwit judge.

"The silver dollar is the matter of the probate," the judge said. "The dollar is important. It is the soul and body of what this is all about."

The piles of paper began to accumulate on the tables there. There were the documents and attestations of the distant next of kin, of Adeline Addams, and of the creditors in their severality. And not one scrap of paper did Clarinda Calliope put forward.

"Enough, enough," said the judge after the flood of paper had narrowed down to a trickle. "Stop the paper," but he didn't stop flipping that silver dollar or humming that McGinty's Saloon Waltz. "All a-sea that's going a-sea, Miss Calliope, it is time you laid a little evidence on the table if you are to be a party to these hearings."

"My evidence is too large and too living to lay on the table," Clarinda said. "But listen, and perhaps look'. Due to the magic of the selenium 'slow response' principle, and to the walls of this very room being wired parallel to the receiver in this room, we may be able to bring to you a veritable reconstruction of past words and avowals and persons."

And pretty soon the voice of the once-in-a-century man began, ghostly at first, and then gradually taking on flesh.

"Oh, Aurelian!" Adeline Addams squealed. "Where are you?"

"He is here present, in this room where he spent so many wonderful hours with me," Clarinda said. "All right, Aurie baby, talk a little bit clearer and start materializing."

"All these things I will give you, Clairie," came the voice of Aurelian Bentley, and Bentley was there in shadow form of himself. "No one else would give you so much. No one else would ever care so much... trust me, Clarie."

Aurelian Bentley was standing there solidly now. It was a three-dimensional projection or re-creation of him, coming into focus from all the eared and eyed and remembering walls of the room that was wired in parallel to the television receiver. Aurelian stood in the midst of them there in his own luxurious den.

"Clarie, I will do handsomely by you... a million dollars, my love, and I will give it to you." Oh, these were startling and convincing words coming from the living ghost there! "I swear to you, Clarie... I will buy any island or group of islands in the Pacific Ocean for you... Hawaii, Samoa, Fiji. Name it and it's yours."

What man ever made such tall promises and with such obvious sincerity?

"Not on paper, not on air, Clarie, but in real life. I will make you the real and living queen."

If they will not listen to one risen from the dead, whom will they listen to?

"Clarie, believe me, believe me, believe me! I will do all things for

you. I promise it." How are you going to top something like that?

"I leave you... my kingdom, ah, estate, Clarie. My word is good for that."

It was all in the bag, and the drawstring was being tightened on the bag.

"I hereby attest that... my estate... belongs to you. Let the eared walls of this room be witnesses to what I say, Clarie. If the walls of this room will swear to it, then surely they will be believed."

The image of Aurelian Bentley disappeared, and his sound was extinguished with a sharp snipping sound. Adeline Addams was putting a scissors back into her handbag.

"I've meant to find out what wire there was for several times," she said. "That sort of shuts it all off when the wire is cut, doesn't it?"

"Here, here, you are guilty of destroying my evidence," Clarinda Calliope said. "You can go to prison for that! You can burn in fire for that!"

A sudden flaming hay wagon with a wild woman driving it rushed into the room and seemed about to destroy everyone in the room. Everyone cringed from it except Clarinda and the probate judge. The flaming hay wagon did crash into all the people of the room, but it did them no damage. It was only a scene from one of the earlier plays. You didn't think that Clarinda had only one circuit in that room, did you? But several of the persons were shaken by the threat.

"Good show," said the probate judge. "I guess it wins, what there is left to win."

"No, no," Adeline cried. "You can't give her the estate?"

"What's left of it, sure," said the judge, still flipping the silver dollar.

"It isn't the principle either," said Clarinda, "it's the dollar." She plucked the silver dollar out of the air as the probate judge was still flipping it.

"This is the entire residue of the estate, isn't it?" she asked to be sure.

"Right, Calliope, right," the judge said. "That's all that was left of it."

He continued to flip an invisible coin into the air, and he whistled the last, sad bars of the McGinty's Saloon Waltz.

"Anybody know where a good actress can get a job?" Clarinda asked. "Going rates, two dollars a day per role." She swept out of the room with head and spirits high. She was a consummate actress.

The other persons fade out into indistinct sounds and indistinct shadows mt he old kerosene-powered television receiver.

The prospects of retrieval and revival of the first and greatest of all television series, The Wonderful World of Aurelian Bentley, recorded and produced in the year 1873, is in grave danger.

The only true and complete versions of the series reposes in one single television receiver. Aurelian Bentley's own control receiver, the one that he kept in his own luxurious den where he spent so many happy hours with his ladies. The original librettos are stored in this set: they are, in fact, a part of this set and they may not, for inexplicable reasons, be removed to any great distance from it.

All the deep and ever-growing side talk, "slow talk", is in this set (All the other sets are mute.) All the final drama Pettifoggers of Philadelphia is recorded on this set and is in none of the others. There is a whole golden era of television recorded in this set. I bought this old kerosene-burning treasure from its last owner (he did not know what it was: I told him that it was a chestnut roaster) for eighteen dollars. Now, by a vexing coincidence, this last owner has inherited forty acres of land with a fine stand of chestnut trees, and he wants the chestnut roaster back. And he has the law on his side.

I bought it from him, and I paid him for it, of course. But the check I

gave him for it was hotter than a selenium rectifier on a shorted circuit.

I have to make up the eighteen dollars or lose the receiver and its stored wealth.

I have raised thirteen dollars and fifty cents from three friends and one enemy. I still need four dollars and a half. Oh wait, wait, here is ninety-eight cents in pennies brought in by the "Children for the Wonderful World of Aurelian Bentley Preservation Fund". I still need three dollars and fifty-two cents. Anyone wishing to contribute to this fund had best do so quickly before this golden era of television is lost forever. Due to the fussiness of the government, contributions are not tax-deductible.

It is worth preserving as a remnant of that early era when there were giants on the earth. And, if it is preserved, someday someone will gaze into the old kerosene-powered receiver and cry out in astonishment in the words of the Greatest Bard:

"-what poet-race Shot such Cyclopean arches at the stars?"

#### SPLINTERS

The three town-and-country men kept loose hours, so it was just one o'clock in the morning when they began to talk of going fishing at once.

"It would help if we knew what the weather would be for the next few hours," Charles Penstock said. "If it will be fog, we can go and jug for bullhead catfish on Silly Ghost Cove on Keystone Lake. If it will clear to a quick frost, we can drag for walleyes on Tenkiller. Or we can dynamite for pond pickerel on Oolagab."

"If it is heavy dew, we can spear frogs on Euchie," Ed Rivet said. "What did the weatherman give on the evening news?"

"He gave predictions that are now three hours old," Otto Pankration said. "That's too old. We'll just have the weatherman up and see what he says now. He might be intuitive and hit it sharp if we get him out of his sleep."

"What are you going to do, Otto, phone Voiles and wake him up?" Penstock asked.

"More than wake him up, I'll bring him here. Ah yes, nl bring him here," Otto said calmly. But Otto was shaking in a nervous sort of passion. That meant -- well, it meant that he was being excessively Ottoish. Penstock and Rivet looked at each other.

Oh, oh! they thought, almost audibly and almost in concert. Here we go again with a stammer! How can Otto outdo Otto tonight?

Otto Pankration was sometimes an imposinman, and that was his public reputation. But sometimes he was a dubious venture of a fellow. The latter was most often the case when he was with his cronies Penstock and Rivet.

"So bring the weatherman here then, Otto," Penstock said.

"Ah yes, well, you see this high-voltage assembly here --" Otto began.

"The one by which you call spirits from the vasty deeps, as you said the night before last?" Ed Rivet asked. "It is impressive and expensive-looking, yes, and you should be able to use it as a prop for some good illusions. But it looks like an electric furnace to me, and not a high-voltage assembly at all."

"It looks like it, and it isn't," Otto answered. "Well then, to the business at hand." He turned on the mechanism that looked like an electric furnace and wasn't. It didn't spark, it didn't fiash. It growled and hummed a little bit. That was all.

And a man was standing there, bare-shanked and angry, and apparently just tumbled out of his sleep. All right, pretend to be unimpressed! Pretend to be blasé about it all. A man had materialized in the room right there! Otto had outdone Otto again tonight. Whether or not the feat should come undone later, it was absolutely top stroke now.

The bare-shanked and angry and confused man was Hector Voiles, the most noteworthy of the local TV weatherpersons. Well, was Hector really there, or

was he a projection? Or was he present and yet unsubstantial in some other way?

"How have you brought me here, Pankration?" Hector wheezed. "You could at least have let me put on pants."

"Think 'pants,' Hector, and you will be wearing pants," Otto blared. "Pants are the slightest of illusions at best. Now tell us what the weather will be for the coming hours."

"But I haven't the reports here, or the charts, or even the instruments."

"You are yourself the instrument," Otto said. "Be intuitive! Tell us what the weather will be. Then you can go back to bed."

This wasn't in Otto's big home. That was sort of above them and around the corner. It wasn't in Otto's laboratory either. It was a small room, half underground, fitted out for the comfort of Otto and his cronies, and otherwise filled with a jumble of instruments and equipment that seemed to be out of present use. This was Otto's Little Den. Or it was Little Otto's Den.

"It is overcast and misty now," Hector Voiles said. The light didn't pick him out very well in that room, and indeed the room was poorly lighted. Or else they were all low-resolution persons tonight. "But it will clear within an hour, and then it will quick-frost. Quick-frost, yes, but only at ground level will it freeze. At instrument level it will not fall below thirty-seven degrees. And for a fortnight hence the weather will be good for eidolons. Oh I wonder why I said that? I wonder what I meant?"

"Thank you, Voiles," Otto Pankration said. "Quick-frost you said, and whatever else you said doesn't matter. Leave now."

"I don't know how," said Hector, the bare-shanked weatherman.

"Go the same way you came," Otto said with a mean edge to his voice.

"I can't. I don't know how I came here," said the suddenly shivering Hector.

"Be intuitive. Divine a way," Otto said. "Go from us now and go back to bed."

Hector Voiles the weatherman became unsubstantial and unhinged. He unmaterialized, and he was gone. And Otto Pankration, Charles Penstock, and Ed Rivet loaded into Ed's car to go to Oolagah Lake to dynamite for pond pickerel. The dynamiting goes so much more crisply when there comes a quick frost.

How would Otto outdo Otto on that one? Sluff it off if you can, but it had been a pretty good trick. Otto had materialized a known man against that man's will. He may have used TV data to build the prospectus for a projection, but it was not a TV image that was projected. Hector Voiles did not appear bare-shanked and newly awakened and humbling on TV. Hector had been caught in the actual moment. He had been jerked out of his sleep and brought to Otto's Little Den, or to Little Otto's Den.

But it was hard in ordinary circumstances to think of Otto Pankration as a little man, for he was quite large.

What would Otto do for an encore now? How would he top the materialization of Hector Voiles?

Well, he didn't really top it. It was already tops. What he did next was materialize two slightly more interesting people. One of these he materialized publicly, the public being those two cronies Charles Penstock and Ed Rivet. But the other one he materialized privately, for himself alone. He dipped the dipper for TV persons again.

"I am not restricted to them," Otto explained, "but they are handy objects to sight on and to orient my equipment on. And, of course, I am still experimenting. I will grab and project TV persons, but I will not take them in their TV attitudes."

He next took Barry McNary, that local TV pundit and all-points expert who was so filled with urbanity and scope and interest. He took Barry as he was in the early-morning hours (this was the following early morning), but he

didn't take him bare-shanked or bewildered.

Barry was there suddenly, in Little Otto's Den, in a rich crimson dressing gown, and smoking an in-style pipe whose genuine aroma filled the cluttered room. You cannot fake an aroma like that. And Barry McNary brought his own setting with him when he came. He was in his own easy chair, reading a book of his own, with his own side table beside him and his own midnight Tokay at hand. And he glanced at the three town-and-country men with absolute boredom. Then he continued his reading, not for effect, but because it was his pleasure. Little Otto might materialize Barry there, but there was no way that he could compel the interest of this pundit.

"Barry McNary, pundit and punko, you will answer questions for us now," Otto said ponderously. "Aye, and you will do tricks, as I order you to do them. Do you know any reason that I am not able to order you to do tricks?"

"The reason is that I am not here," Barry said, "and I have no knowledge of this romp, nor interest in it. Hound dogs, in some manner you have got hold of the equivalent of an old and discarded undershirt of mine to worry and toss. So worry it then, dogs! But it is long discarded, and I am not in it."

Otto tried again and again to dominate Barry McNary, and he got nowhere. Barry would not answer at all, or he would answer demolishingly. Barry McNary was whipping Little Otto at every turn. A projection should not be able to whip its projector and constructor like that. Barry had a dangerous validity about him even though he said that he wasn't there. It was bad enough to be whipped by a commanded and controlled thing who didn't act as if he were controlled. It was even worse to be whipped by a mere shadow, or by a mere discarded undershirt. Then Barry McNary left him without being dismissed, and he refused to return.

Still and all, Otto had materialized a second known man, one of more moment than the first one, Hector Voiles. Who else in town was doing any authentic materializing at all? And, as Otto said, he was still experimenting with these new techniques.

Then Otto materialized still another TV person, Evangeline Aster, a real sparkler. He materialized Evangeline privately, telling no one about it, not even his two close cronies. Of course, he was proud to be able to materialize and summon and command such a sparkler as Evangeline, but the pleasure he wanted with her was private.

Otto brought Evangeline to him every night for a week. But it started a little slowly.

"The rule is that a person brought here by me must obey my every command," Otto said at an early summons. "I made that rule, just as I made you to come here."

"Oh let's just forget the whole thing," Evangeline said. This was the second night of their encounter and Evangeline was in woolies, though she had been in scanties the first night, not expecting to be transported. "I really don't like it here at all and I want to go back. Let me go."

"You and I are going to have one of the great affairs of the century, Evangeline," Otto said. "Now, to make up for lost time, I will force you to be in rapport with me."

"Forced rapport is no rapport at all," Evangeline said, like one reciting an axiom. "This isn't like you, Mr. Pankration, and it surely isn't like me."

"No. It isn't like us. It is us," Little Otto said. Wait a minute! Dr. Otto Pankration had the name of being a witty and interesting man. How do you square that with the Otto of these encounters?

But farther than that, Dr. Otto Pankration had the reputation of being absolutely courteous, of being just as absolutely uninvolved, of being a man with no crudity in him at all. Moreover, he was completely faithful to the memory of his dead wife. But Otto-in-the-flesh here was the hot-breathing opposite of that.

And Evangeline Aster, that beautiful sparkler of a woman (she herself

had coined the name "The TV Sparkler" for herself), she had always been a consummate comic. She was even that still more rare thing on the current scene, a clean comic, a comic with class (she also had coined that phrase for herself). Evangeline had style, she had probity, she had a husband on an important foreign mission at the moment.

(A comic with class? This baggage here?)

She had known Dr. Otto Pankration for five years. But -,he hadn't at all known this Little Otto who had summoned her to these cluttered quarters here.

"I have a fine old name, one of the most respected of the ancient Dames of Europe -- Pankration," Little Otto said. "But it is really the name of a wrestle named 'Rough and Tumble.' Let us tumble now, Evangeline."

"Oh let's just forget the whole thing," Evangeline said dully. How could this living sparkler seem so dull?

"You and I, Evangeline, we are to have one of the great affairs of the century," Otto said again, "and I believe that we are falling a little bit behind schedule. Let's pick up the pace and make up for lost time and passion."

So they did. They carried it through. And, for a week there, they had one of the great affairs of the century. NVell, maybe it was a bad century. And maybe the great affairs are pretty ordinary when they are stripped down.

After the fifth night, Evangeline stopped watching it.

She stopped watching it? But she was in it, wasn't she?

Evangeline Aster went to see Dr. Sigmund Izzersted. She was about to enter the great marble portals of his famous Coucherie when she heard the doctor call to her in a curious small voice.

"Oh Miss Aster, were you coming to see me?" The voice came from that little side street (it was more a shady lane) that ran along the north boundary of the Izzersted complex. "Just come through this little door in the wall and into my special consulting room and we will have a consultation," the doctor said.

"I never saw that door in the wall before," Evangeline told him. "I don't even believe that I can go through a door that little. Well, I came down sort of to see you, but you're so expensive that I just don't know whether I can afford another session."

"Oh I pay no attention to money," the little doctor said (Little? No one had ever thought of him as little before), "since money impinges nowhere into the psychology of persons and is of no major interest to them. What have I been charging you?"

"A hundred dollars an hour or part of an hour. It's always at least two hundred dollars a session even if it lasts no more than eight minutes -- you know, four minutes in one hour and four minutes in another."

"Oh that's way too much, Miss Aster," Dr. Izzersted said. "I couldn't afford to go to myself at that rate. I don't make enough. How about two dollars for as long as the session takes?"

"Are you kidding, doctor?"

"Miss Aster, no! When a psychologist starts kidding, well, that blows him for a psychologist. He might as well break up and be done with it."

They went through the little door in that wall along the shady lane. The consulting room that they came into was quite small, and Evaneline said that the couch looked like a doll couch.

"It will fit you," the doctor said. "Lie down."

Evangeline lay down on the couch and it fit her.

"Your problem, your problem, ah yes," Dr. Izzersted said. "You have been sleeping in woolies for the past few nights, and you never slept in woolies before in your life. You don't understand it, and neither do I."

"How did you know I had been sleeping in woolies?" Evangeline asked.

"Ah yes," Dr. Izzersted began again. "It is a series of very realistic dreams you have been having, and you are thoroughly ashamed of the role you are playing in them. But you justify yourself by saying that it is not you in



the dreams. It is somebody else. You are merely watching while somebody else in your body cavorts through the episodes. And then you have ceased even to watch them. Is that what you are trying to tell me?"

"I haven't told you anything yet; but yes, that's the case. Why is this consultation room so little, and why does it seem to be in a different place? Yes, I watch myself, or somebody else who is got up to look like me, doing these things, as I might watch them in a drama. But I watch them from the outside. On the other hand, it is myself who does them, for I am bruised and worn from them every morning. Did you know that -reat affairs of the century are very bruisy? But, on still another hand, there is something secondhand about my bruises, as though they were transferred to my body from another one."

"Bubbly, mighty bubbly, Miss Aster," Dr. Izzersted said. "Do you know that some days are very good for blowing soap bubbles (I blow a lot of soap bubbles in my business), and some days are terrible for it? Yes, on a bad day you can add all the clycerin and gloop that you wish to the mixture and you will still not be able to blow decent bubbles. And some fortnights are good for flying eidolons; but most times are very poor for it. This is an excellent fortnight for flying them. I don't know why this should be."

"What is an eidolon?" Evangeline asked.

"It was an eidolon of yours, Miss Aser, and not yourself, that carried on one of the great affairs of the century with the eidolon of a prominent man. What we are realiv havinc, this fortnight is an eidoIonic epidemic. But I wasn't sure that the prirnaries were aware of their own eidolons. You seem to be, to some extent, aware of your own."

"Then I'm not responsible for what my eidolon does?"

"Of course you're responsible for it, Miss Aster. Tt,@ere is something wrong going on in you, and that's the way it comes out."

"But I haven't done anything wrong."

"But you are going to do something wrong, murder or arson or some such. And eidolons sometimes blow before the wind and arrive at a crux before their primaries."

"And these eidolons have separate bodies?"

"Very infrequently do they have substantial bodies, Miss Aster. Shadow bodies mostly. But this fortnight, as I say, is very bubbly, very good for flying eidolons. I believe that there are at least half a dozen solid ones flying in this city of a half million. That is an unusually large component. But it isn't so unusual over a long haul. Every undertaker, after a fortnight such as this, gets bodies that he knows are simply not authentic. Oh they have meat and they have weight, but they are incompletely and sketchily done."

"And there are numerous cases where a body is definitely identified as a person. And then the living person will appear and assert his living identity, and where does that leave the dead and sketchy body? But the first identification will not necessarily have been mistaken. The bodies will (save for the sketchiness of one of them) be bodies of the same person. Even the fingerprints will be identical except that, ah --"

"Except that what?"

"Ah change of subject. The way out of your dilemma, Miss Aster, is to junk your eidolon, which is only a splinter of you anyhow. Ah I see a gleam in your eye. Yes, it would be vivid publicity, I suppose. Throw it screaming off a great and prominent, height (and you have always had such a terror of heights!), and then you can reappear --"

"Oh yes! I think I recognize it now. It's been done before. And it works."

"You first came into prominence, Miss Aster, as junior hog-calling champion of Sebastian County, Arkansas, I believe."

"Can we not forget that, doctor?"

"But you are proud of your powerful and blood-curdling scream, with which you won that championship. You believe that, in a more dramatic situation, it might be --"

"Yes, yes, and do I ever have a more dramatic situation in mind for it! It will work, I know that it will."

Evangeline had her genuine sparkle on her now when she saw a shining opportunity. And Dr. Izzersted, who was smaller today than he usually was, had a queer gleam on him like, well, like glycerin in a soap-bubble solution. Yes, he was just a little bit iridescent. He was incompletely and sketchily done. He was not quite as authentic as he might have been. You couldn't exactly see through him, but he did fracture the light a bit.

"Does the real Dr. Izzersted know about you?" Evangeline asked.

"Yes he does," said Little Sigmund, "though he came to the knowledge of me with extreme difficulty. He uses me a lot in his studies. I become the analogue for the splinters of many people. What the real Dr. Izzersted doesn't know is that I also use him a lot in my studies. And yet I am the real Dr. Izzersted. All the splinters are of the same authentic wood. If I'm not he, then who am I? Will you time your event for the ten-o'clock news?"

"Oh yes, I think so. I believe that it would be the best timing, to do it just a few minutes before the news. Then maybe I will be identified by a bulletin while the program is going on. And then, while they are still staggering from that, I'll appear. I'll electrify everybody, that's what I'll do. Oh thank you, thank you!" "That will be two dollars, Miss Aster."

"What? You'd actually demand money from a woman on her way to a screaming and plummeting death? Oh you cheese, you cheese!"

Those town-and-cotuntry men, Charles Penstock and Ed Rivet, had gone to visit Little Otto Pankration at a loose hour. They knocked at the door of Little Otto's Den, and the door was opened.

They were startled, though, that it was opened by Mr. Pankration himself. But were not Mr. Pankration and Little Otto Pankration the same person? Probably they were. Nevertheless, the two town-addcountry men were startled.

"Oh Mr. Pankration," Ed Rivet said, "we were really looking for Little Otto." And then he felt very foolish.

"Oh go away," Pankration growled. "Vagabonds, out-of-season killers of game, dynamiters of fish, spooks of whatever sort, be gone from here. You are only rags and splinters of men who are dead and gone. In any case, I am locking up the storeroom now."

"Mr. Pankration," Ed asked, "what is that thing that looks like an electric furnace, and isn't?"

"It is an electric furnace," Mr. Pankration said. He pushed the two town-and-country men out of the doorway, came out the door himself, and closed and locked it behind him. Then he walked around the corner to his main establishment. And Charles Penstock and Ed Rivet stood uncertainly in the road.

Then the door of Little Otto's Den unlocked and opened again, and Little Otto looked out and hissed for them to come in. Still feeling a little foolish, they entered.

"It should be foggy in the next hours," Charles Penstock said. "Let's go to Silly Ghost Cove on Keystone Lake and jug for bullhead catfish."

"I can't go, not anymore, not anywhere," Little Otto said. "He won't let me out of the complex at all."

"Who is he?" Ed Rivet asked. "Isn't he really just yourself? How will he keep you from going out? Will he hide your shoes, like the Ozark farmer did to his wife?"

"Not my shoes, my feet," Little Otto said. "He hid my feet."

The other two saw that it was true. Little Otto hadn't any feet. He wouldn't be able to go with them.

"He says that you are spooks," Little Otto said. "He says that your primaries are dead men, and that makes you dirty."

"That's true," Ed Rivet admitted. "You knew that. Ah we're sorry about your feet."

Charles Penstock and Ed Rivet went away from there to Silly Ghost Cove on Keystone Lake to jug for bullhead catfish. It was a favorite spot of theirs.

The pundit Barry McNary gave this account the next morning on his program, "The Morning Sun":

A night of horror rampages on into the glare-eyed dawn. The plummeting, screaming death of the beloved Evangeline Aster was horror enough for any night. But there have been flesh-crawling (yes, and pseudoflesh-crawling) developments since then. And now we are all in stunned and sordid amazement.

Evangeline Aster, that sparkler of the picture tube, that comic with class, had been in unusually high spirits only ten minutes before the tragedy. She had laughed as she told it: "Kids, am I ever going to pull one! I will stand them all on their ears. This stroke is going to put your favorite sparkler into the Big Time. And it will all be good, clean fun. What is more good, clean fun than an absolute horror stroke?"

Then, at nine forty-seven last night, Evangeline climbed the parapet gingerly (she was afraid of heights) and seemed to be talking to someone there, though she was alone. Then she seemed to stumble (it was almost as if she were pushed by invisible hands), and she fell to her screaming death from the veranda of the forty-ninth-floor Penthouse Club.

She was utterly smashed in the street below. But many observers, including myself, will swear that her scream was repeated in the high air again and again for several minutes after her horrifying death.

Naturally, considering the close friendship of Miss Aster with the people of this station and her frequent appearances here, her violent death of only thirteen minutes before was the main topic on our ten-o'clock news last night. But it was at ten twenty-seven, almost at the end of the news program, that something almost more shocking than Evangeline's death took place.

Evangeline walked into our studio and onto camera, alive and sparkling. Or it seemed as if she did. Something walked into the studio, possibly alive in a gaudy way, and sparkling in a funky manner. And, at first, it looked like Evangeline. I myself had no doubt that it was herself -- not for ten seconds or so.

"The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated," she said. "Oh isn't there any way to update that line? Surely a lot of fuss has been made about an imposter. It is not I who have died, as all of you can see. Here I am, more sparkling and radiant than ever!"

But then something went out of the apparition. It became not Evangeline Aster, but a horrible and revolting caricature of her. What was it? What was it? It was alive. It walked and it talked. And then it staggered and whimpered.

"She tried to push me off," the apparition whined. "That's what scared me. I didn't think she'd do that to me."

We closed the station down then and got the horrible situation off of camera.

But the horrible situation has been examined all through the night, from that hour to this, and soon there will be nothing of her left to examine. The horrible situation has been examined by a cosmologist, a meteorologist, a physician, and by a para-psychologist. The walking and talking apparition was, by every basic test, Evangeline Aster. And yet it wasn't Evangeline as solidly as was the dead body that was in police morgue. But the apparition even had the fingerprints of Evangeline except that, ah -- change of subject.

"The weather has been good for idolons for more than a week now," the meteorologist said. "Rarely is the weather good for them; most of the time it is no good for them at all. We weathermen believe that they (idolons, fragments, splinters, ghosts, they are sometimes called) are always present. But most of the time they cannot be seen or heard. And in times of very

special weather they can be."

"No, it isn't alive," the physician said. "It is apparently an echo or a mirage. It is associated with a certain amount of matter, but it's a loose and perhaps accidental association. No, there's nothing here. It's all illusion."

"Oh it's plain enough," the parapsychologist said. "It's a 'clearly manifest psychic splinter,' presently impaired by the destruction of its primary. Psychic splinters are so ordinary that they are almost the rule. They're personality fragments, no more than that. They are 'partially manifest psychic splinters' when they are poltergeists or other ghosts or presences. But a 'clearly manifest psychic splinter' like this one isn't encountered often. I'd like to study her for a long time, but there's only a couple of minutes left for it."

"There has been something going on around town lately that is almost like a burlesque of my own work, and she's part of it," added the great parapsychologist Dr. Otto Pankration.

"A lot of me went with her when she went," the apparition said. "It was like turning out the light in me. She tried to throw me off the parapet. How damned inconsiderate of her anyhow! She told me one thing: 'Keep screaming, keep screaming.' Oh I'd forgot that she told me that. I kept it up for a while and then I stopped. I'll start again."

"It is pseudo-organic," the cosmologist said. "It is mostly made of glycerin and it is evaporating. Ah glycerin, like we used to put in the soap-bubble mixture. No, there's really nothing to her, gentlemen."

"She tried to throw me off the parapet, but I threw her off instead," the apparition said. "I thought that was kind of a joke on her. But she told me to keep screaming on my way down, and I'm on my way down now. I forgot, and I stopped screaming. But I'll start again now."

The apparition has disappeared. It had become an absolutely horrifying caricature of Evangeline at the moment of its disappearance.

But the screaming continues, continues, continues

"How long?" we asked.

"No telling," the parapsychologist said. "It's become immaterial now, and there is no way you can make an immaterial entity shut up, particularly if it is obsessed by a single idea or instruction. The Hollbecker phantom in Germany has been screaming for fifty years now, but nobody pays any attention to it anymore. It is just like any other industrial noise--."

Oh my God, that scream, that scream, that scream! Will any of us get used to it in even fifty years?

#### LORD TORPEDO, LORD GYROSCOPE

Karl Riproar was the unusual son of two torpedo-makers, Epstein Riproar and Nastasia Hectic-Smith. Karl was extremely hyperactive in both mind and body. He was a genetic and chromosomal freak, as are all extraordinarily hyperactive persons. And he was descended from a short line of such freaks. By heredity and induced mutation and massive chemical and magnetic intrusion, he became one of the very active and hectic ones.

Epstein Riproar who was Karl's father had been a hyperactive and violent man, an intelligent but erratic doctor and designer who found himself outside the law because of his manufacture of torpedoes. These torpedoes were not the physically explosive directional underwater bombs. They were people who were hyped up to carry out such violent assignments as were given to them. They were powerful and swift, and perhaps they were intelligent. Anyhow, they were of surpassing speed in mind and body, and of relentless strength and power and impetus. There was some argument as to whether the 'torpedoes' were chemically stuffed and stimulated, or whether they were actually mutants. Well, Epstein Riproar made every kind of torpedo that there was any market for, and he sold them to eager buyers for top prices. These torpedoes could be used for hit men or for assassins of every type. They could get in and out of any jam. Because of their speed of attack there was scarce any protection against them. Such

mentality as they had was of the high speed variety. They could conceive and carry out a murder or mutilation in a tenth of a second.

Karl's mother was Nastasia Hectic-Smith, a hyperactivist and incendiary and maker of torpedoes herself. She herself had gone through genetic tampering that was deliberately design to double her activity and relentlessness. It also, by one of those slip-ups that some-times happen, doubled her intelligence, which was already high. This was not necessarily a disaster. Torpedoes should have high-speed mentality, but not enduring intelligence. Many of the torpedoes were set to destruct after one hit, so real intelligence would be wasted on them. But it might not be wasted on a manufacturer of torpedoes.

As to where Epstein and Nastasia got their furious energy, well there was a solution to that in their family traditions. It had to come from somewhere. Yes, it sure did.

Epstein and Nastasia had met as fellow members of that underground and international organization known as "The Restless Lions". Both of them had been manufacturing torpedoes for various individuals and organizations, and sometimes they had bid against each other and been down-priced. Now they combined their talents and techniques. They became the top manufacturers and purveyors of human torpedoes.

They decided to have a son and turn him into the hottest torpedo of them all, one not intended to self-destruct but to be used again and again with growing expertise. This son was Karl Riproar, one of the most active and turbulent babies ever birthed. The surgical implantations were made in him when he was one day old, to double his inherited activity and restlessness.

~'I hope it doesn't double his intelligence too," Nastasia said. "He'll have enough trouble with it, being so damned smart, without another doubling. It hasn't been easy for me being always so smart that I'm like to pop. But try to get all that stuff you've got in your mind out of your mind, and it isn't easy."

"It won't matter too much, Nastasia," Epstein said. "The way things are going, it may be an actual advantage for a torpedo is not to carry excess baggage, but super-intelligence may no longer be in excess. I hope that his intelligence does double or even quadruple, so long as it doesn't put a damper on his energy. And I want to watch it work."

"Hopping hippos, Epsie, this isn't 'Murder-X' to make him mean that you've salted his glands with!" Nastasia howled. "This is 'MelereX-X' the nice-guy drug. The chemist made a mistake on our order."

"He sure did," Epstein agreed. "Wouldn't it be funny if our child did turn out to be a nice guy? But the switch may not go too hard. With everything else working in him, and with his inheritance from us, he should be mean enough."

Actually, the surgical implantation had increased young Karl's intelligence eight times, but his father didn't get to watch his development very long. Epstein and Nastasia were killed in a shoot-out a week later. And Karl Riproar, when he was eight days old, was placed in one of those progressive institutions.

"This is the smartest kid ever tested," said one of the wranglers at the institution to one of the medical monitors. "You could drive a truck down some of the grooves in his brain. I bet we wouldn't get another kid this smart in a thousand years. Or another kid this active." Actually, they got another one that smart and that active the very next day, but that was an extraordinary happening. And they really weren't likely to get another such for two thousand years.

Karl Riproar grew into a physical and mental wonder, and he was a boy who was always busy. (Maybe you missed the weight of that statement. We was always busy.) He was not just busy twenty-four hours out of the day: it was much more than that. Karl was busy in many depths and directions, and he never let up. He was like a roaring river in his relentless activity and in his constant consuming. He wasn't mean. He was a nice guy. In this, it did matter

that the 'Murderex-X' had not been implanted in him. And the 'MelereX-X' had made him person-able and amiable, odd qualities for a natural-born torpedo. But Karl had the relentlessness that is often found in mean people. And he had a spacious glutton that was almost without equal.

He was a glutton for body food and for mental nourishment, and oh for another sort of food also. By the time he was six years old he had things pretty well arranged in his own way at the old progressive institution. A recollection of him when he was about six years old has him sitting at table and shovelling it in at a startling rate, but he was doing many other things at the same time. He had an ear-plug in each ear, and they were receiving two different instructional programs. There were three TV sets before him, two of the programs being educational and the other one being that whanging presentation of violence and adventure and relentless activity 'The Restless Ones'.

Karl had a dictaphone turned onto himself, and he was talking and singing around his food, putting out an amazing spate of entertainment from his 'consciousness three' level. He was also reading one book and one newspaper by eye, and reading another book by braille.

And this was the general format that he would follow for much of his life during the routine of the six forty-five minute periods every day that he was at his meals stuffing in the food and drink. About his only later refinement was his sitting on the john while he did all these other things, for saving time; but this combination was not allowed in that early part of his life that he spent in the progressive institution.

"The attainment levels of the little inmates of this institution aren't as high as they should be," a wrangler at the school said to a rhetor (being a progressive institution they had wranglers and rhetors and monitors, but not teachers).

"It's only in comparison to that Karl Riproar and that Emily Vortex that the attainments of the others seem low," the rhetor said. "Actually their levels are rising all the time. They are above what we might logically expect them to be."

"Dammit, this is a progressive institution," the wrangler said with some wrath. "The attainment levels of the little inmates aren't as far above what we might logically expect as we might logically expect them to be. Something is hindering them a little, all except Karl and Emily."

Karl Riproar wasn't mean. We wasn't mean at all. Just irresistibly active. The fact was that Karl was an absolutely normal boy through all his boyhood years. He liked everything that all normal and healthy boys like. He just liked those things to be faster and still faster, to be accelerated to their limit; and he liked a lot of them at the same time.

Karl was a physical as well as a mental marvel. He was a superb wrestler and boxer, and he excelled at ever kind of ball, at every event of track and field, at horsemanship and shooting and fishing, at sail-boating and swimming and tight-rope walking, at snake-catching and calf-riding and cartooning, at tumbling and gymnastics and trapeze work, and woodcraft and fieldcraft, at cliff-climbing and building-climbing, at magic tricks and hypnotism, at microscopy and radio-build mg, at taxidermy (well, where did he get that twenty-two foot long alligator skin?), at playing the comet and the harmonica and the musical saw, at ventriloquism and imitations, at building midget cars that would run, at the manufacture of stink-bombs and disappearing ink and itching powder and turnip whisky and dynamite from materials found around the kitchen and store-room of any progressive institution, at sword-swallowing and juggling, at training fleas, at making fire balloons, at duding it up with the girls (it was his outstanding duding it up that won him the companionship of Emily Vortex the fairest and most intelligent and most hyperactive and fastest in the metric mile of all the girls in that particular progressive institution), at making counterfeit money in the printing and engraving

section of the 'useful arts' department, at making real money in the money market.

"There's an astonishing amount of angular momentum being consumed around here," Wrangler Hoxie remarked one day at the institution. "All that angular momentum that is consumed has to come from some where. Well, where is it coming from? You are a smart boy, Riproar. Why don't you solve this problem?"

"As to myself, I have kept the problem solved," Karl Riproar said with that certainty that young boys sometimes have. "That is to say that I have anticipated it and have not let it become a problem."

"At nine years old you have it solved? Then you're the boy who's found the golden fleece, Karl."

"It wasn't lost. It was there all the time, Wrangler Hoxie," Karl said.

"And just when did you begin to solve this problem of energy and angular momentum, Karl?"

"When I had myself sent to this progressive institution. The fleece was here and waiting to be shorn."

"But Karl, you were only eight days old when --"

"Yes. It doesn't pay to let a problem get too big a start on you."

Though Karl excelled at all things and did them with real passion, yet there were many who thought that he did them too rapidly, or that he did too many of them (eight to twelve of them, perhaps more) at the same time.

At field hockey he was the best goal tender in the progressive institution. Nay, he was the best in whole history of that institution. Except when --

-- when he was also on call as kicking specialist and punt return man in the football game in the cornering field, or as center fielder in the baseball game in the bordering field (well, deep center field in the one game was very near to the goal in the other, and Karl was very fast and he never missed a fly ball, nor the blocking of a goal-attempt either; but when he was at bat on or base there were complications), or as volleyball player on the adjacent court. (How Karl could jump to spike the ball down over the net! How he had to be on the fantastic rush even to be there to make those wonderful jumps!)

Ah, the memory of him running so swiftly from field to field, catching a fly that looked impossible to catch and pegging it home to nail the runner at the plate, thwarting a hockey goal with an incredible last minute arrival, making a simultaneous save and kill in the coffin corner on the volleyball court, swooping under a tumbling punt and returning it all the way back through the whole opposing team to score, all the while holding (and speed-reading) an open book in one hand and having that green (educational) and red (drama) ear plug blaring into his head, and under his chin the microphone into which he was broadcasting continuously to some juvenile radio show! Ah, the memory of that!

And on the fly (always on the fly) making the moves on the scattered boards of the four simultaneous chess games he was playing. Karl Riproar was really something to watch! He was a completely natural and unspoiled boy, but he was so very accelerated about it all.

It was suggested that Karl might have done some of these things better if he did not do so many of them at the same time. This is false. Nobody could have done any of these things better than Karl did them (except, just possibly, running the metric mile). Learning always on the fly, he learned much more than any other inmate in the progressive institution did (except possibly Emily Vortex). There just could not be any better athlete or better student or gamesman or entertainer than Karl

"You are the torpedo, that's what you are," one of the other boys at the progressive institution said in admiration.

"We name you Lord Torpedo," said another of those boys. "You comprehend it all."

"Why should you call me Lord Torpedo?" Karl Riproar asked. "A torpedo is

anything that is torpid, and I am not that. Or is it the torpedo fish which is so torpid that is hardly ever flicks a fin or does anything at all to break its smooth lines. Or it is a destructive weapon in the same smooth lines of that lazy fish, and there is nothing I want less than to be a destructive weapon."

"We name you Lord Torpedo," the kid repeated, "because you are so fast and so powerful, and because you never miss. And because you comprehend it all except your new name which is too close to you for that."

Karl could do everything better than any other inmate of the institution, could he? How about the metric mile foot race? There was a little bit of mystery about that. The title-holder in the metric mile was a girl Emily Vortex. Oh, she was fast, she was very fast, but she was also tricky. But Karl Riproar finally challenged her for the title and they staged the gala race.

Emily (they called her Lady Atalanta) broke in front. She was very fast off the starting blocks. And she maintained a killing pace. But Karl gained on her and came almost up to her. Then she tossed the first of the apples, and how could Karl not swerve aside from anything that looked so good to eat? But Karl had foreseen this. He had made himself an apple-grapple, and he picked it up without breaking speed, and he ate it with a musical munching as he read the book he was carrying in his left hand and changed the station coming in on his left ear-plug.

Emily threw the second apple, and Karl grabbed it neatly with his apple-grapple, and now he was three strides ahead of her. She threw the third apple, and he swooped it in as neatly as he had the others, and now he was six strides ahead of her and going away. But as he bit into that third apple he came onto something more than juicy fruit. The thing exploded in his mouth, and it threw out a homing directional device. This was a holo, leaded balls on the ends of raw-hide ropes, and the holo wrapped around Karl's ankles and threw him. And Emily went on to win the race and retain her title.

The holo, in its second stage, hog-tied Karl with his hands behind him and his hands and feet together and him writhing helpless. Then Emily came back with a fourth apple and jammed it in Karl's mouth. Yeah, he was the trussed pig with the apple in his mouth, and Emily's triumph was complete.

But this did not put Karl's spirits down at all. Rather it elevated them, and now he acquired a special affection for this Emily Vortex.

Karl made fortunes in the stock market and on the various money exchanges.

"There are a lot of empty places in the money shuffle and they're just crying out to be filled up," Karl said. Then he explained how he did it all:

"Inerrant prediction is the key," he said. "But faulty prediction is worse than none at all. You must know where you are, have a stable axis, for accurate prediction. The gyroscope is the best of all prediction

instruments since it is the only one with a stable axis. But if a person is himself a gyroscope, then he has all the predictions by their gyrating tails."

This is the explanation of how he made fortunes in the money markets? Well, Karl did have what can only be called a high rate of rotation in all his activities, and in that sense he was a gyroscope. He was even called Lord Gyroscope by some of his fellow inmates in the progressive institution. This was from a take-off done on him in one of the gridiron entertainments at the institution.

"Are we going to have a crisis in energy sources around here?" Emily Vortex asked Karl Riproar one day. "I come from an older family than you do in this hyperactivity business and I know where to draw energy from. But is there enough for both of us? Are you hogging it? If there will only be enough for one of us, then I know which one it will be. Myself."



"I hog it a little bit, Emily," Karl said, "but there will be enough for us both until it is time for us to leave here. And for the time after than, I have plans. See my plans." And he showed her his prospectus of things to come in this area.

"Not bad for starters," Emily Vortex said. "Give them to me. I'll work theii~ over and see if something really good can't be made out of them."

2.

When he came to his fifteenth birthday and was officially of age, Karl Riproar did a number of quick things.

He funded and founded the "Karl Riproar and Emily Vortex Simultaneous Arts Institution and Perpetual Memorial". He ordered construction to begin on it that very day.

He declared himself to be "Ultra-Departmental Director" of the city, using a little-known emergency provision by which he put the previous ultra-departmental director under citizen's arrest and replaced him.

He founded the "Karl Riproar and Emily Vortex Sky's the Limit Speculation and Enjoyrment Enterprises" which survives even to this day.

He married Emily Vortex.

Let us not have an inaccuracy creep into this account. He didn't marry her that day. It was the following day that they got married. Emily was one day younger than Karl and did not come of age till the following day. But their marrying was part of the number of quick things that they effected as soon as they could.

Karl legally changed his name to 'Lord Torpedo Lord Gyroscope'. But on a practical basis he would still go by the name of Karl Riproar.

He founded the "Imperial Compressed Music Company".

He bought the land for the "Pleasant Meadows Home Development Project". He had construction on the homes begin at once, and also on his own manor house and gardens which would occupy the central portion of that area.

He gathered in funds from a number of annuities that he had set up to mature when he was fifteen years old. He shuffled those funds. He increased them amazingly. The money for their increase had to come from somewhere. Really it was a toll levied on all the money markets of the country. But it was one of those tricks that are done only once.

Anything else?

No, those were the main projects of Karl Riproar and Emily Vortex. They were set up then, and all working pieces were working. They could play endless and trick variations with these projects, but the basics were there from this first establishment.

So Karl Riproar waxed in years and size and strength and mentality and activity and angular velocity and momentum.

To describe the simultaneous developments and achievements and pleasures of Karl Riproar and Emily Vortex would require a talent for simultaneity equal to their own. So we will describe the course of Karl mostly. Their courses ran roughly parallel, but we understand Karl's better. Besides, we're scared of Emily. She's weird.

Karl Riproar, the boy and man who was so much in a hurry that he had to do as many as a dozen things at once, he now entered a timeless realm and regime in which there was no pressure at all but in which more things happened in more momentous and more massive fashion than ever before.

"This is like Heaven," Karl said one day.

"Not quite," said the usually more accurate Emily. "I calculate that the number of contacts in Heaven is two and a half times what we're experiencing, that the angular-momentum there is almost three times what we've achieved, and that the quantity of life there is nearly four times what we've reached here. But we're closing the gap, Karll we're closing it."

The quantity of life, that was it. If you hear people talk to much about

the "quality of life" do not pay attention to them. The quality is always predicated on the quantity. The more life there is the better it is. The abundance of it is the whole thing. It cannot be rich and detailed if it isn't abundant.

Rich and detailed and abundant, that was a good description of their "Imperial Compressed Music Company." Music solidifies at very high speed. You didn't know that? Three-hour-long works of limpid melody can be turned to ultra high speed and then compressed and solidified into mere micro-seconds, into depth-moments of total enjoyment and no duration at all. These compressions can be enjoyed, one or ten or ten thousand of them, exquisite morsels for the sensually-educated elite.

This was strictly high fidelity stuff as Karl and Emily processed it. The morsels were complete and unabridged, every note and shading of the originals there, all of it for instantaneous enjoyment. Karl and Emily enjoyed such music, more than one could hear in a hundred lifetimes ordinarily, and they also marketed it at a high profit to the very wealthy.

And the "Pleasant Meadows Home Development Project" was an abundant success. This project provided three thousand homes on beautiful rolling foot-hills, for persons of the intellectual and aesthetic elites. This became a super-intellectual community such as has not been seen since Florence, since Tara, since Athens. There was cross-fertilizing vigor and power there; there was the high stimulus of art and drama and literature and all the winged sciences. And the financial arrangements were so favorable to the people that those selected simply could not afford to pass the project up. "To those who have much, much will be given" was the slogan of the project, and it worked.

Most of the three thousand homes were filled with the very young and the very promising elements of the cream of the cream. Many of them moved on after a year or two or three, and their places were always taken by others even more promising and more select. Some of the people sickened and died, but the genius people have always have a proclivity towards early deaths. No matter, there were always fresh faces and fresh minds and really sparkling people arriving every day. And Karl and Emily lived in the middle of them, in the manor house on the top of Torpedo Mountain to which all the surrounding country was foothills.

Karl and Emily had a good thing going in the "Pleasant Meadows Home Development Project". If you areas canny as they were, and you develop and sell three thousand homes, then you make fortunes out of them, even if you give not-to-be-refused deals. And if, for some reason, there is a high turnover in home ownership there, and you keep surety strings on the properties, then you can make those fortunes over and over again every two or three or four year.

And all the while there is the pleasure of the stimulating company of that large and talented neighboring group. And that brilliant neighborhood group had the pleasure of the acquaintance of what was, perhaps, the most gyroscopic couple in the world.

As to themselves, Karl and Emily were so well attuned that the disagreements between them were few and small. One of those disagreements (a disagreement over no more than ten seconds time) had to do with their own intimate congresses. Karl thought that twenty seconds each time was long enough for such event. "That is, after all, one hundred and thirty billion times as long as it took for the 'big bang' that produced the universe," Karl said reasonably, "and we do it eight times a night, and twelve times on Wednesdays and Saturdays. And we do only a very few other things while we are doing it. Really, can we reasonably give more than twenty seconds to it each time?"

Emily thought that they should take at least thirty seconds to it, but she had to admit that there was almost total pleasure and realization in those twenty-second encounters of theirs. They would wake or half-wake from the

multi-level, rich, and detailed dreams that such gyroscopic people have (each of them could dream from eight to twelve dreams at the same time); they would hold their magic congress (doing only a very few other things while they were enjoying the twenty seconds of it); and then they would plunge back into their high-frequency and variegated sleep again.

Their usual night congresses followed (according the Karl's dream regime; we don't know Emily's) these dream cycles which would take their names form the dominant dream motif of each group:

1. The Alpha-Orlando Dream sequence.
2. The nightly episode of the Green Ocean Dream Serial.
3. The First Genovese Dream Experience.
4. The "Aemilia of the Ten Thousand Eyes" dream encounter.
5. The apprehensive "Don't Push That Button, Dammit, That Button Blows Up the World" nightmare.
6. The Second Genovese Dream Experience.
7. Karl's Signature Dream, the "Falling Through Rotting Space" nightmare.
8. The "Hofstadter Passion" dream sequence.

So you can see that their happy carnal encounters, following this evenly spaced schedule of dream, would be pretty well strewn out through the night.

"I wonder if poor people ever dream?" Emily speculated once.

But, for them, every night and day, every hour and every minute (by quintessential third-powering they could have as many as 216,000 minutes in every hour) was crammed and overflowing with pleasure and fulfillment.

And it went on that way for many happy years.

"Wrangler Hoxie back at the progressive institution, used to wonder about the astonishing consumption of angular momentum in our vicinity," Karl Riproar the Lord Torpedo and Lord Gyroscope said one day. "He said that all that angular momentum had to come from somewhere."

"Whatever made you think of that?" Emily asked with her smiles (she could smile as many as twelve different smiles at one time). "It wasn't the Chairman of the Environmental Quality Board who is puffing up the incline to our front door?"

"Yes" Lord Karl said. "He is wondering about the same old questions. Have we been shearing our sheep too closely, do you suppose?"

"Oh yes, we have. There should have been enough of them to keep both of us. But, Karl, we have increased our consumption of everything so very much as the years go by."

The Chairman of the Environmental Quality Board came in and talked to them for ten minutes. For ten minutes! Why that was almost the equivalent of ten days' experience the way they usually compressed it. And they had to slow down to voice speed to carry on the talk with him.

"The attainment levels of the three thousand genius families in the 'Pleasant Meadows Home Development Project' aren't as high as they should be," the Chairman of the Environmental Board said in a guarded voice.

"They are higher than for any other group of equal numbers in the world," Emily told him. "Best in the world isn't bad." Emily was luxuriating her bare feet on the floor before her. She was receiving through the soles of her feet. There were elite soles-of-the-feet broadcast and reception programs for persons of extraordinarily fine sensibilities. There were two such programs, and Emily was enjoying one with each foot.

"Yes, the attainment levels of the people in the Pleasant Meadows Project are higher than any group anywhere else," the board chairman agreed. "And yes, it is higher than we could logically expect it to be. But --"

"But is it as high above what you might logically expect as you might logically expect it to be?" Emily asked. "Is that your question?"

"Yes. Considering your own unique elevating influence, that is my question," the board chairman said challengingly.

"A thing that big is hard to hide forever," said Karl Riproar the Lord of Torpedo and Gyroscope.

Then the three of them looked at each other for a while.

"Where does all that personal and psychic energy, all that angular momentum come from?" the board chairman asked. "You consume colossal amounts of it."

"Oh, it comes from the sheep," Karl said, "from the pleasant genius sheep of Pleasant Meadows. We shear them but we do not butcher them. Why were you not afraid to come here alone?"

"I'm not alone. I have back-up," the board chairman said. "But I'm not afraid because when you do kill (and I suppose that it is accidental when you do it) you kill very slowly. It takes about three years for it to happen. But I intend to settle you two in about three minutes. I have only to blow this whistle that I wear around my neck. There is no way you can prevent me blowing it. And it is tuned --"

"I know what it is tuned to," Karl Riproar said, "and I know that we can't prevent it blowing, since it will blow of itself." Then the whistle did begin to blow, apparently by itself. It did not blow an alarm though. It blew a pleasant little tune that went out over the aether. Why should the pleasant little tune, or the whistle blowing by itself, have frightened the board chairman? Oh, because he didn't expect anything like that, and he didn't know what was going on.

The board chairman held the whistle in his hands now, and still it blew by itself. The board chairman turned white, and he pulled the whistle from around his neck and flung it across the room.

"My you are nervous!" Emily smiled to the board chairman. The whistle still blew of itself on the floor across the room. And the burden of its message was "All clear. No difficulty. You can go now." That was the message that the whistle sent out over the aether. And back-up vehicles fifty meters away were seen and heard to leave.

"How?" the board chairman croaked.

"Simple ventriloquism," Karl said. "Were you never young and tricky? A childhood hobby of mine. I could make pianos and violins seem to play by themselves, seem to play quite well too. And, as 'Ultra-Departmental Director' of the region for life, I am the one who has set up all codes and signals."

"You are vampires," the board chairman said. "The energy consumed by your dazzling simultaneities comes from the blood of others."

"Not from blood, from ichor," Karl Riproar said.

"And 'vampire' is a crass word used only by crass people," Emily smiled. And they both were doing many other things at the same time and not paying very much attention to that board chairman or his investigation of them.

"You suck blood, or you suck ichor-energy," the board chairman said bitterly. "You are judged and condemned."

"You cannot judge us. We are special cases," Emily said, and she took a dozen compressed music morsels and went dreamy-eyed on them.

"So all the vampires have always said, that they were special cases," the chairman remarked. "And are you both of old vampire families?"

"I don't know. I don't think there's any such thing," Karl said. "Both my parents were torpedo-manufacturers." And Karl was doing a piece of hot-stone sculpture, holding the anode in his left hand, and speed-reading a mathematics text that he held in his right hand.

"How do you think a creature feels to have the juice and the very life of him sucked out?" the board chairman asked belligerently.

"Like you feel," Karl said.

"As you feel now," Emily smiled. "As you begin to feel now."

"I begin to feel giddy," the board chairman said. "But it won't be -- all at one time?"

"There are some that we can't draw just a little bit of juice from and leave," Emily said, "because a little bit is all that they have in them. Oh yes, I code-dial a doctor for you, but he will be too late. A strange case, so we will have to report it; that you were irrational when you came here, and that you just weakened and died."

Karl and Emily did a number of pleasant things (ten or twelve of them at the same time) as they waited for the doctor's lorry to pick up the Chairman of the Environmental Quality Board. Lord Karl put a plug in his left nostril and tuned its direction and amplification to pick up the wonderful aroma a Sweet clover in Pleasant Meadows. He inhaled and enjoyed, and by doing so he consumed all the energy and pleasure potential that was in the board chairman, who thereupon expired.

The Only Tune That He Could Play  
or  
Well, What Was the Missing Element?

Tom Halfshell was taking his major in Trumpet-playing, his minor in Nostalgic Folklore, and his outreaching corollary in Monster-Morph.

"That isn't a perfect balance, Tom my son," his father had said. "The selection is too soft. It's a soft art, a soft science, and a soft speculative synthesis. My son, you had better introduce a harder and more manly element into your studies. "

So Tom took up Hard Geography for his sustaining corollary. This gave him four fields of study beyond the basics, a heavy schedule for even an intelligent young man. And this got Tom where it hurt, because he was not very intelligent. He was intuitive, he was rhythmic, he was effervescent, he was enthusiastic; and he was a young man of tone and taste. But he just wasn't very intelligent.

Still, he got good acceptance by both his elders and his contemporaries. And the hard hand of friendship will help one through almost any course.

Tom and three of his friends, Cob Coliath, Duke Charles, Lion Brightfoot, manly boys all, talked about his deficiencies and advantages, and the varying joys of the world, as they hunted fierce hogs with spears from muleback one spring morning.

"You are an unmatched half, Tom," Cob Coliath shouted as he doubled back on his coursing mule after a very tricky and tangle-footed hog, "and ours is a world full of unmatched wholes. Complete yourself, Tom, complete yourself! "

Anything to do with man's best friend the swine is a worthy occupation, and lance-killing is a particular joy. The swine is meat and leather. He is also ferocity and fun and friendship. Spilling hogs' blood is almost as tall a thing as spilling one's own.

"Complete myself, that's what I'm trying to do!" Tom howled as he killed the boar with an absolutely perfect lance-thrust, from a bad angle, and already past the beast. And the other young men gasped in admiration.

Tom Halfshell wasn't as big or as strong as these other young men. He hadn't their tough intelligence, or their dedicated hardness, or their steadiness of hand. And yet he had more spectacular kills than any of them, with a real virtuosity of lance and mule-handling and boar-butchering. He was the least of the four in every element that should count high in boar-spearing, but he made the most kills, and he made them more dazzlingly than the others.

One of the things he had was trickiness, a quality not much understood.

"Unmatched Halfshell Tom," Duke Charles sang as he led the charge after more of the fierce and bristling porkers. The four young men had killed nine hogs, and they had three more to go this morning. "Halfshell Tom, it always seems that there should be another half to you somewhere. When they spun the naming wheel, it stopped just right for your name. You do so many things well, and still you are not complete. Why not? There's an OTHAFA element in

incomplete things. The rest of us are complete. Watch that porker!"

The porker, a solid, tusked boar, cut back into the feet of Tom's mule and knocked the beast down. It cut back a second time on a shorter radius and charged Tom who had barely found his feet after being thrown. It was in too close for Tom to use the lance blade, and he used the lance butt and spun the charge of the boar twice. And then the boar had him --

-- but Lion Nrightfoot had the boar then, with a slicing, almost backhand thrust of his blade, as Lion's mule, a clattering hack who enjoyed his work, brought him in exactly to 'top kill' position on a long sweep.

Ten porkers killed. Two to go. And the shaken but talented Tom Halfshell was on muleback again and leading a new charge.

There was great friendship among these four boys, and they risked their lives and limbs for each other again and again. Their coursing area was only the hog-run behind a small slaughterhouse, and there were surely easier and safer ways to slaughter the exciting and embattled hogs. But hogs should be slaughtered splendidly. All things concerning hogs, those totem animals, should be done as splendidly as possible.

Now there was a furious and fleet-footed sow among the porkers left, and she was super-dangerous. There were elements of hate and intuition among sows. Swine were man's best friend, but that didn't apply to the disappearing sows of the species. The sows felt somehow (for they could not really know, since the thing was never mentioned in their presence) that even the remnant of them would soon be replaced by clone-boars.

This first sow was all the more deadly for being short-tusked and close-coupled. She was murder, challenging and charging murder.

"Thank all things that there is no analogy to men to these fierce, carry-over animals," Coliath called. "We'd all be better dead than have such savage things within our own species. Watch it, Lion! Watch it, Tom!" The boys would rather find their eleventh and twelfth kills among the uncomplicated porkers, but this shrilling and squealing sow forced the kill upon them. She threw the mules of Cob Coliath and Duke Charles with charges so swift that those canny-footed animals could not cope with them at all.

But then it was the bloodied Tom on his own lamed mule who killed her with such trickery and curious desire. The other three of them did not like to be involved with the remnant sows at all: but Tom Halfshell liked it particularly. He had her in all exciting and bristly kill. His lance had a large gout of flesh on it when he was finished, and Tom for a moment had the notion of having a pet pig from it.

And then the ridiculousness of that idea struck him. It was only from bits of boars' flesh that pigs were ever cloned. Besides, Tom already had one little pet pig. He would wait till it was too big to be a pet before he requisitioned another one.

Then Tom Brightfoot killed the anticlimactic twelfth porker.

Oh, it was all simply hard and hot and bloody work that the boys had to do: but they would not have been boys of the species if they hadn't been able to infuse it with glory. They dragged the dead porkers to the tripods at mule-tail, and they had the first of them hoisted up quickly. They began to skin them to the time of their own hog-skinning songs. Youth, youth, and the danger and death that it loves to bring even the easiest task! This was fullness. This was completeness!

Except for Tom Halfshell. And they always joked that he was in some way incomplete. But there was something unusually important coming up this day.

"We are lucky that we will all take part in the 'Last Man Festival' tonight," Lion Brightfoot shouted as he worked the skinning knives and tongs with strong hands. "There have been 'Last Man Festivals' before, but this is the last of them all. This 'Last Man Who Remembers' is a hundred and forty years old, and that doesn't even count the twelve 'given' years. My father says that we will invent other festivals, that we will never run out of festivals; but nothing like this one can ever be held again. It's the end of an era, he says. We will all play tonight in the bands, but only Tom will be

with the twelve trumpeters. Will you play the brass trumpet, Tom?"

"No, I think I'll play the conch-shell trumpet," Tom said. "Anyone can play the brass trumpet. "

"And no one can play the conch-shell like you", Duke Charles cut in. "You'll drive us clear over the hills with that conch-shell tune of yours, Tom. The way you play the conch-shell, it's demanding an answer."

"It is, yes," Tom said, "and sometimes I think that I can hear that answer from over the hills. Mine is one tune that's supposed to have an answer. I had a Butterfly Moon Shell once and tried to play it, but I could get no real music out of it at all. And the Butterfly Moon Shell is listed by the musicology museum as 'deceptive and non-musical'. But I bet someone could play it. I bet someone could play the answer to my time on it. Maybe, to some people somewhere, the conch-shell trumpet is 'deceptive and nonmusical.' No, I can't tell you in words what I mean. But I could tell you on the conch-shell what I mean, if you would only listen and understand it. I bet the 'Last Man Who Remembers' understands it. I saw him yesterday, and he had a mighty deep look to him.\*

"The Last Man won't understand anything after tonight," Cob Coliath said, as he did fine and strong work with a butcher's saw. "He will die tonight, and he says that he's ready for it. His official title is 'The Last Man Who Remembers,' you know."

"Who remembers what?" asked Tom who was not quite as intelligent as the others.

"Oh, if anyone else remembered what it was, then he wouldn't be the last man to remember it," Lion Brightfoot said reasonably. "And when he is finally dead, then no one at all will know what the old secret was. It was a crumby thing anyhow, they say. And my father maintains that nobody now left would understand it even if it were explained to him."

These four boys had arrived on simultaneous requisitions just about two years before this. They were boys as good as any you will ever find. And the fact was that men and boys, like everything else, were getting better all the time. Men now had a thorough understanding of what they were doing when they put in their requisitions for sons. They were more scientific about it than ever before, They understood the goal, and they got the results.

"The reason for the world is the enjoyment of the world," was a sound current ethical-scientific statement, "and the reason for men and boys is the fulfillment and pleasure of those same men and boys."

The men and boys did fulfill, and they did please themselves. They lorded it over the universe and they brought it into accord and resonance with themselves.

2

These four boys who had come from the potting sheds at the same time were doing quick and hard pork work (the most meaningful and totemistic of all work). And after they had worked, they must go to their instructions. It would be that way all their lives: in the mornings, work; all the afternoons, instructions; in the evenings, enjoyments. Intellectuality and friendship and art and pleasure were the things that life was built upon, and not one of them must be slighted.

These boys usually took their basic courses together; and then they took their majors and minors and corollaries with others who followed the same specialties. But even in the specialty subjects, there were 'cross-currents,' meetings between the basic friends. And the instructions must be carried out as splendidly as the pig-killings and other things.

Boys came to their instruction years with explosive momentum: and the acquisition of knowledge and skill and understanding was supposed to continue at an explosive pace all their lives., The perfect balance, the passion, and the (yes) the serenity, can only come at high speed, as a rapidly spinning top will have balance and surety and serenity. But when it slows down, then it

wobbles, and sometimes it falls.

When the boys had been in the potting sheds (the fleshpots and the mindpots) they had developed great bodily and psychic mental intensity, but they had not been conscious in any of those areas. They had been in the large, unconscious, amitotic environment of intense activity kept well below the surface. It was there that the requisitions for sons were fulfilled; it was there that the selections were made as to what things should rise above the surface, what things might be kept in harmless somnolence below the surface forever, and what things must be destroyed while they were still below the surface to prevent them from making trouble later.

So it was that the boys broke up through the surface of that environment with bright memories in some areas, and with gappy holes in their memories on other sections. Into the holes in their memories, other sorts of things might be flowed during the instructions, things of unrelated substance. But all the boys broke through that old surface with great power, like porpoises leaping, like rockets riding on controlled explosions, like shouting stones hurled by spring-released catapults. And when the boys surfaced they became conscious, and they were all registered as having the 'given' age of twelve years. (They might have been in the amitotic environment anywhere from six weeks to six months: but not twelve years.)

Tom Halfshell went at noon to his instructions in his major of Trumpet Playing and related subjects. Horns were paramount in the musical part of the instructions. All boys arrived with the memory of blowing a sort of Triton's horn in the depths of a sea. Drums and gongs and bells and clanging iron were important in their music also, and the rattling and singing woods, and even strings and keyboards. But it was the horns, and their cousins the pipes, that were the royal instruments.

Tom Halfshell played the brass trumpet as formal instrument, and the conch-shell trumpet as informal instrument. And he was good, much better than any of his fellows, on brass or wood or shell or bone horns, or pig-tooth whistles or penny whistles, or even on that most royal of all instruments, the squealing, pig-stomach, Bag-Pipe. And yet he was not at ease with the pig-pipe, nor it with him.

"You are much better than the other boys, Tom," the instructor told him, "but they are complete, and you are not. There is something amiss with your blowing. There may even be outlawed OTHAFA elements in your tune. Your tune keeps looking for a missing piece and calling out for it. But, by the character of the world that we live in, there is no such missing piece. Do you understand that?"

"I understand it as a statement, but sometimes I feel otherwise as a feeling," Tom Halfshell said.

"You are not allowed to feel too otherwise," the instructor told him. "I am recommending that you change your major from the trumpet to the pig-stomach bag-pipes. Your father is a piper and not a trumpeter, and his requisition for you was for a piper."

"No, I must stay with the trumpet and the conch-shell trumpet," Tom said. "My tunes will not talk right on anything else."

"You seem to have an endless repertoire of tunes," the instructor said. "You seem to have them, but you haven't. All the things that you play are variations of the same time. Leave that time, Tom. You play it well, but incompletely. Play other tunes, even if you play them badly for a while."

"No, I can't," Tom said, "It's the only tune that I can play."

"But it has OTHAFA elements in it."

"I don't know what those elements are, and you can't or won't tell me.\*

"Ah, I always hate to see a boy chopped down before he ever becomes a man," the instructor said sadly. "Your blood be upon yourself!\*



In his minor, Nostalgic Folklore, Tom Halfshell also had his difficulties, to go along with his splendid experiences. Nostalgic Folklore was full of holes:

That's the best that can be said about it. There had been changes made. Once it had not been all Swine-Myth and Solar-Myth. Once, perhaps, there had been Moon-Myth in it, and other things. But you could sure get yourself demerited if you asked why there were no moon-myths now. There were quite a few areas that you had to avoid.

And the name of the course was the trickiest thing about it. Yes, it was very evocative of nostalgia: but there were so many sections of forbidden nostalgia. There were blood memories whose expression had been erased. And there was foolish stuff of poor quality that had been put in to fill the holes where something had been torn out by the roots. In particular was the land or plateau of OTHAFA blocked out, and yet there was evidence that any tricky boy could see that the land had once been central to folklore.

Monster-Morph was a powerful course. It converged on man as its center. Man himself was the golden monster to whom all the roads and designs ran. And the primordial morphs of men were all interesting, trolls and boogermen, bears and apes and swine, lions -- aye -- and eagles, giants and ogres, cyclops, and one-eyed pirates. The last was quite revealing, for men seemed to be returning to the powerful single-eyed vision that had once been his. Modern man was particularly accident prone to the blinding of one (but not both) eyes. One man in three now wore a black patch over the blinded left (or sinister) eye, and it was a patch of honor. And Tom had learned that, as a thing quite recent, men were requisitioning cyclopean or one-eyed sons. And they were getting them too, now, for the first time, in this very season. There is much to be said for the power of the single vision.

The power of monsters was assumed into man, and what man or boy would not glory in such an accretion? But Tom Halfshell was bothered by a devious monstrosity omitted. There had to be complementary shapes to the power-monsters, and there weren't. There had to be complementary colors and after-images to the golden Solar-Swine who was man. But something had happened to the ability to see after-images.

Over the hills was a land named OTHAFA, but it wasn't on the maps of Musicology, Nostalgic Folklore, or Monster-Morph. That is why Tom had selected Hard Geography as his sustaining corollary when his father had advised him to take an additional instruction. Tom wanted to learn some Hard Geography about one particular place.

And there was some semi-hard geography about the particular place, but not really hard. There was even the statement that OTHAFA was a generic term and that there might be a dozen or so of such regions (one of them very big) in the world. There was also the statement that OTHAFA might be regarded as the archipelago of many hard-surmounted islands, showing the same (non-geographic) characteristics in every instance.

"There is something in the OTHAFA Archipelago that has cut us off as sheerly as we have cut it off," was one statement. But was it a statement of Hard Geography? As geographical information, it was very frustrating.

There was only shadow information about the place in Musicology and Nostalgic Folklore and Monster-Morph and Hard Geography. There were only fossil memories. And Tom found that he would not be able to go to the place himself.

"You have already broken it by asking," the instructor of Hard Geography said. "A well-raised boy would not have the trickery to ask. No, permits to go there are not given to anyone now, nor have they been for many years. It is a sign of criminality even to ask.

"Ah, Tom, I always like to see a boy chopped down before he ever becomes a man. Your blood be upon yourself!"

And yet there was a coherent fantasy about the OTHAFA Archipelago. Part

of it was Tom's private fantasy. Part of it was the private fantasies of several other boys. These fantasies had elements in common, and those elements were handed down from somewhere. Besides, remnants of kite-nets were found (they might float on the air for long distances). And animals were sometimes taken that had that old three-point wound marks as though somebody had botched killing them with a trident.

There was an almost documented fantasy if the things were put together.

The folks of the Archipelago were creatures of the moon-snail totem. From a distance, they looked a little bit like men. But on closer view -- well, they weren't men. They sure weren't men.

They were night hunters. They were net people. They used fowling nets (the kite-nets of which pieces were sometimes found), hunting nets, and fishing nets to capture their winged, legged, or finned prey. And they used tridents or daggers to kill their netted game.

They also used a light and swift net in style between the hunting and fishing net that swept their totem moon-snails up from the wet grass. And they used another light and swift net in a style between the fowling and hunting net that could take a bemused doe-deer where it stood with raised head, and extinguish its breath with its strangling, running draw-loop before the ritual trident was even brought into play.

The folk of the Archipelago were moonlight hunters, and they signalled with Moon-Snail trumpets.

Sometimes Tom Halfshell, thinking of these things, rose late at night and went to the high Festival Meadow to blow powerfully on his conch-shell trumpet. He would blow, and then he would listen for an answer. He would blow, and then listen again. But the answering music-call (Tom had a fantasy that it would come from an unplayable shell-trumpet of the Butterfly Moon Snail) never came from the inland islands beyond the hills.

Then, on the last night of them all for him, the answer did come briefly, in a briefness of only seven notes. But it came just a little bit too late for Tom to hear it.

4

That was on the night of the 'Last Man Who Remembers' Festival. Tom Halfshell had been selected as one of the twelve high Horn-Boys for that festival. Really, he wasn't that good. He was better than any of his fellows in the immediate instruction classes, but the dozen high Horn-Boys for this festival were selected out of hundreds of instruction classes. There may have been a hidden reason for Tom being selected to so high an honor. There were a lot of cryptic remarks bouncing off of him that final evening.

Even Tom's father, as several of the instructors had said in the same stilted words, "Your blood be upon yourself!"

"Let it be in myself and on myself then," Tom said cheerfully. "My blood sings in me tonight."

"The Only Song That Yen Can Play, is that what it sings to you?" the father asked.

"Yes, it does sing that, and maybe some additional trumpeting also. Father, that is a requisition for a son that you are filling out there. And that is a cloning vial of your flesh and blood that you are packaging with it. That is not a legal thing for you to do. You already have a son, myself."

"It will be legal," Tom's father told him. "I am dating it tomorrow, and I won't mail it until after midnight."

The 'Last Man Who Remembered' was a crowing, cackling little monster of a fellow. He was a hundred and forty years old, and that didn't even count the twelve 'given' years.

"Heh, heh, they weren't 'given' to me," he cackled to an audience of a million men and boys. "I came before that. I'm the only one left who came

before. "

There were about a million men and boys there. The people liked to invent festivals every week or so and flock to them. There was an eighty acre festival ground between the city below and the hills beyond. The people watched one half of a football game. Then they had band music and speaking and short snatches from the Last Man Who Remembered.

"Heh, heh," the Last Man Who Remembered crowed to the people. "They ragged and they nagged. And what can you do with naggers and ragers? Get rid of them, that's all."

And an officer of some high station addressed the crowd briefly: "Ours is a world to be lived in. It is a complete world. It is the way we like it."

They had the semifinals of the regional pig-sticking tournament then, and some of the best riders and lancers in the nation took part. They had three hundred marching hands, but they often had more than that at their weekly

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festivals. They had thirty speakers, loaded with wit and program, and limited to thirty seconds each. They had the second half of the football game then.

All of these things were carefully balanced and interspersed. And again and again they cut back to the 'Last Man' for his remarks:

"Heh, heh," the Last Man Who Remembered cackled. "They thought that we couldn't get along with them. We showed them. There used to be the saying 'You can't live with them and you can't live without them.' And then there came along a taller saying 'The hell we can't live without them!'"

"This 'Last Man Who Remembers' will soon be on his way out of the world," an official announced. "He will be accompanied by a boy, and by the pet pig of the boy."

The select dozen Horn-Boys blew with such trumpeting power that there were, here and there in the assembly, burst ears and blood running down jowls. The boys blew superbly: but one of them, so it was bruited about by those who understand high trumpeting, blew incompletely. This incomplete trumpeter would have to be killed, the rumor said. But one always hates to see a boy chopped even before he even becomes a man.

There was a heavyweight prize fight, very good, and it ended in a knockout in four rounds.

"Heh, heh, they were always more trouble than they were worth," the Last Man Who Remembered was cackling to the assembly. "Well, we did give up something when we gave them up, heh, heh, but I'm the only one who remembers what it was, so it won't matter to the rest of you. "

"There are still some few persons who are incomplete and unsatisfied," another high official announced. "There's about one of them in a million. They believe that they're missing something. Some of them even believe that the missing element lingers on the other side of the hills. But all of us who have our sanity and balance know that there is nothing worthwhile over the hills, that we're not missing anything. What could there possibly be that we don't already have?"

The twelve loud trumpets spoke again, and then one of them predominated. It didn't win place for loudness or for excellence either. It won a temporary first place by the trickiness of its time. There was shocking joy in that tune, but there was more joy in the knowledge that there would be extra bonus blood spilled that night.

"Hey, hey, 'tis said that some of them are still left in the OTHAFA valleys," the Last Man Who Remembered crowed. "I never believed it."

And now the action picked up pace and moved to the climax. Twelve trumpets shouted together. And then eleven of them fell silent, and a single one kept on with its strange time that seemed to be requiring an answer or at least a counterpoint. "It's the only tune that he can play," people with special trumpet knowledge told their neighbors. Then the lorn trumpeter with his conch-shell trumpet still roaring and soaring came to the very center of the arena. His pet pig was at his heels; and the finest riders and lancers

came to that same center which was really the coursing area.

The Last Man Who Remembered, wired for sound so that none of his observations might be lost, was brought to that same central area.

"Heh, heh, we got rid of them," he cackled. "Good riddance. They kept the whole world in a turmoil. How is it that the trumpet-boy knows about them though? Well, no matter. He'll be going with me."

Tom Halfshell, the trumpet-boy, still played. The expert pig-lancers were in the mule-saddles to make their kills and send the three creatures on their ways.

"Heh, heh, they're well forgotten," the Last Man crowed. "They were one kind of fun, but there were so many other kinds of fun that you couldn't have when they were in the world. Why, you couldn't even have a pig-sticking pageant with them around."

A lancer got the old Last Man then. He was down, dead on the turf then, with a self-satisfied grin on his face. And an era was over.

Tom the trumpeter blew powerfully and disturbingly again. A lancer killed the pet pig, a very tricky small target. The little pig was stretched out on the turf at the head of the dead Last Man.

Tom blew his powerful half-tune again. Then it was cut off sharply by a lance. He was down dead, and he was placed on the turf at the feet of the dead Last Man.

That was the end of the pig and the boy and the man, and of any secret that they might know.

But an answer to the time of Tom Halfshell arrived then, distantly, but clear and carrying, from 'over the Hills and far away,' played on the unplayable trumpet-shell of the Butterfly Moon Slail.

This really was an answer to Tom's tune, a convincing answer, and it thunderstruck a million men and boys -- while seven notes of it sounded -- -- and then -- it was cut off sharply -- by a murdering lance.

There is no faking a lancing.

And there is no avoiding a countervailing action. A countervailing action is presupposed by an action on this side of the hills, just as matter presupposed antimatter. The anti-creatures in the 'over the hills and far away' (OTHAFAs) regions (what was the name of them when they still lived in this plane of the world? -- Yes -- 'Women') they could not let one of their own persons go intuitive and evocative, not any more than could the men on this side of the hill. Silent and sharp murder (how fitting an instrument is the lance!) may be the only possible response in some cases, in the case of a trumpet-call that threatens to play havoc in just seven notes.

If you suppress a secret you must suppress the anti-secret also.

YOU CAN'T GO BACK

A note, a musty smell, a tune,  
Some bones and pebbles from the moon!  
Today they set a-flow a spring,  
Remembering, remembering.  
The Helen Horn-Book

One evening in the Latter Days, Helen brought over some bones and rocks that belonged to her late husband John Palmer. She brought the

Helen had married again, and to a man who hadn't known John. Moon Whistle too. And she left all those things with us.

And she thought that she'd better get some of those funny old things out of her house.

"The Moon Whistle will be no good without you to blow it, Helen," Hector O'Day said. She blew it then, very loudly, with her too-big mouth; and there was laughing lightning in her eyes, still undiminished. Then she was away and

down the stairs and out of the building with that rush of hers hat was a sort of break-neck tumble.

And she left behind her a tumble of memories of the times when we decades before this, had gone to White Cow Town four times. It had never been crowded in White Cow Town when we were there. It wasn't a place you stumbled over, not unless you were a pretty high stepper.

In Osage County there were some pretty small towns: Bigheart, Hulah, Okeas, Wild Horse, Shidler, White Eagle, Horseshoe, Kaw City, Hog Shooter, Rock Salt, Bluestem, each of these towns being smaller than its fellows. But smaller than any of them was White Cow Town.

There just weren't many people there, and those that were there were pretty narrow. There was a saying "There are no fat people in White Cow Town."

(An informant has just told me that Hog Shooter isn't in Osage County, that it's over the line in Washington County. Not in memory it isn't! The informant must be wrong.)

In these latter days it was Barry Shibbeen, Grover Whelk, Caesar Ducato, Hector O'Day and myself who were together in our card-playing and discussion den when Helen had brought those mementos over.

But back in the old days John Palmer had been with us, and Helen had been there too for the events at White Cow Town, and some of the Bluestems.

That first time, we had ridden up to Bluestem Ranch Number One with Tom Bluestem and his mother in her Buick sedan. The Number One was the oldest of the Bluestem Ranches and was run by Tom's grandparents. They were wonderful people and they said that the place was ours.

The Moon Whistle was hanging on the wall in the ranch-house, and Helen who was a horn-blower and whistle-blower asked if she could blow it.

"Oh, we'll give it to you," Tom's grandmother said, and she handed it to Helen. And Helen blew it loudly.

"Don't blow that damned thing in here!" Grandfather Bluestem shouted. "Take it down to Lost Moon Canyon if you want to blow it. We'll have White Cow Rock breaking in our roof here if it hears it. Oh, that damned whistle!"

This was a surprising outburst, for Grandfather Bluestem was always a friendly and soft-spoken man.

Well, that Moon Whistle did have an eerie and shrill and demanding tone, even a little bit insulting. It was a 'call', and somebody had better answer it.

"I don't know where Lost Moon Canyon is," Helen said.

"Oh, I'll take you all over there," Grandmother Bluestem told us. Barry, Crover, Caesar, Hector, John, Helen, myself, and Tom Bluestem, we all got in the ranch truck and Grandmother Bluestem drove us to Lost Moon Canyon. We were all nine years old except John Palmer who had recent! V had his tenth birthday, and Grandmother Bluestem who said that she was either fifty or a hundred years, she forgot which, she was weak at numbers.

Lost Moon Canyon, through which ran Hominy Creek, was the roughest place on the Bluestem Ranches. There were large and dangerous-looking overhanging rocks, unnaturally large for a canyon no bigger than that, absolutely threatening in their extreme overhang. There was the feeling that one of them was about to fall right down. Then the biggest of those rocks moved, and we howled in near fear.

"Oh, that's only White Cow Rock," Grandmother Bluestem. "It's different from the other rocks. It's a moon. And it won't fall. It moves slowly. Blow the Moon Whistle, Helen, and it'll come on down."

Helen blew the Moon Whistle (Oh, that damned shrill whistle!), and White Cow Rock descended a hundred feet, with a slow and wobbling motion, and hung right over the ranch truck. There was an upside-down goat standing on the bottom of the big rock, but it didn't seem as if it were going to fall off. There were also some ducks walking upside-down on the bottom of White Cow Rock.

"Let's go up," Tom Bluestem said. "There's a shaft or channel right here in the middle of it, and you can climb through it all the way to the top. You can if you're not afraid. It's scary, but that's all."

"I'm not afraid of anything," Caesar said, "but some things make me kind of nervous. I don't know when anything's made me as nervous as that big, bobbling rock does."

From the top of the cab of the truck we could get to the bottom of the shaft in the rock. Tom Bluestem climbed up that shaft followed by John Palmer, Barry Shibbeen, Grover Whelk, Caesar Ducato, Hector O'Day, myself, and Helen.

"Aren't you coming up too, Grandmother Bluestem?" Helen asked.

"No, I can't," that lady said. "Since I've gotten older I can't do it. There are no fat people on White Cow Rock or in White Cow Town."

As we climbed up the shaft we could see why there were no fat people on top of that rock. That shaft got pretty narrow in some places. It was tricky climbing up it, but not as dangerous as it might seem. There was no place so wide that we couldn't put one hand on each side of the shaft, and there were no smooth or slippery places in it. But it was a very high and long climb and it was pretty dark in there. We had climbed about fifty yards when we came to a short tunnel leading into a little cave.

"We can crawl in here and rest for a little while," Caesar said.

"No, we can't either," Tom Bluestem contradicted. "There's some real mean and peculiar people who live in that nook, and the gnawed bones on the floor of their cave are real weird. Some of them are bones of kids about our age. Let's keep climbing."

"What lives in that cave are gnomes and trolls," Helen said.

"How'd you know?" Barry asked her. "You've never been up here before."

"Every moon everywhere has a family of gnomes or trolls or whatever their local name is living in the exact center of it," Helen said. "And all the caves have real weird bones in them, dire wolf bones, wooly rhinoceros bones, human bones, things like that."

There was sharp, strong smell there. It was the most characteristic smell on the whole of White Cow Moon. We climbed the rest of the way to the top. And then we were in the middle of White Cow Town and in the brightest and friendliest sunshine ever anywhere.

White Cow Rock was a rough, rock-and-clay sphere about a hundred yards in diameter. White Cow Town on the top of the rock had thirteen houses and one store in it. Nine of the houses had out-houses behind them; but the out-houses that had been behind the other four houses had fallen off that rock or moon in times gone by. Of necessity, for there wasn't much level space on White Cow Rock, those out-houses had been built quite a ways down the slope, and sometimes the whole rock wobbled. It had never been very safe to use any of those out-houses of the rears of those lots in White Cow Town.

"I tell you though," said an elderly citizen of the town, "there comes times, at least once a day, when it's not very safe not to use them either."

Listen, it was plain magic up on top of that rock or moon. There were never such bright colors or such nourishing air anywhere. The rock was free-floating. It had now drifted about five hundred feet higher in the air and about half a mile to the North. It gave us a good view of both Lost Moon Canyon and the Bluestem Ranch House far below, and you could even see the towers of Pawhuska off in the misty distance north-east. This was much more magical than being up in a balloon even.

All of us had been up in a balloon once, at the Barton's Show Grounds in T-Town. But that balloon was held up by three cables worked by winches, and it rose only about seventy-five feet up in the air. This moon had it beat by a sky mile.

All those houses up on the moon were old-looking and unpainted, but they had a sharpness of outline and a liveliness of detail that isn't to be found in the houses down on Earth. This was like being in really bright daylight for the first time in our lives.

The only animals that the people up on White Cow had were chickens and ducks and goats. The saying about the place should have been amended to say "There are no fat people nor no big animals on White Cow either." The goats were native to that moon, a man said, and so were the chickens. The ducks had come there about five hundred years before this, and the people had come about a thousand years ago. But big animals wouldn't have been able to go up that shaft.

The delight and magic of White Cow was just the 'living in the sky' that was the condition there. There was an immediacy, a wininess, a happiness, an exhilaration, a music, a delight about 'living in the sky'.

Four of the men on White Cow worked for the Bluestem Ranches down below, mowing and baling hay, mending fences, moving cattle from one pasture to another, doing whatever workers do on a ranch. One of the women taught at the consolidated school that was between Bluestem and Gray Horse. And nine of the children of White Cow went to that same country school down on Earth. One of the men up there had a still and made moonshine.

"You show me a law that says you can't make moonshine on a moon," he used to challenge people. His still gave a sour-mash smell to the whole moon, but it wasn't the strongest or sharpest smell that they had.

"How can the goats and the ducks walk straight out or even upside down on this rock?" Hector O'Day puzzled to us. "They walk on every part of this sphere."

"It's all a question of gravity," John Palmer said. "A weak gravity will hold little things but not big things. It'll hold goats or ducks on a moon maybe, but it might not hold the people on. One of you lighter kids try walking around this moon to the bottom and up again if you want to. If you don't fall off, then the heavier of us will try it."

"The mathematics of the gravity here is really rum," Barry Shibbeen cut in, but he had that crooked grin on his funny-looking face that meant that he couldn't be trusted. "Recall Foxley's Formula Five, and you'll understand the gravity a little bit better. Think about Edwardson's Elliptical Equation. Remember Mumford's Monotreme!"

"That sounds like a good battle-cry slogan, 'Remember Mumford's Monotreme!'" Grover Whelk giggled. "I wonder what it means."

"I know what Foxley's Formula Five means," Helen contributed, "and it doesn't have anything to do with gravitation. It's for women's sickness and it comes in blue bottles. Mama takes it sometimes."

There was one 'wanted' man who lived in White Cow Town, and the sheriff wouldn't go up there to get him.

"The sheriff is afraid of me," the man said.

"I'm not afraid of any man on Earth," the sheriff answered when that was reported to him, "and I'll go anywhere on Earth to get a man. But White Cow Town isn't on Earth. I'm not afraid of that man. I'm just spooked of those off-Earth places."

In the general store they had a little radio, home-made, and superior to anything that might be bought. It would get station KVOO fifty miles away in Bristow. It would get it clear and loud whenever White Cow Moon went up more than five hundred feet in the air.

They had Nehi pop in that store, but it cost six cents a bottle instead of a nickel.

"That's because of the transportation," the lady said. "We have to get a penny more for it up here than they get of it down on Earth."

The kids in White Cow Town had a rope and they were playing tug-of-war, but they were playing it like a bunch of sissies. They didn't show us much pull at all.

"Look," Barry Shibbeen told them, "there are eight of us and nine of you, and I bet we can out-pull you all over the place."

"No, there are just seven of you, Barry," Tom Bluestem said. "Count me out of it." That was odd. Tom had always been very competitive in all games

and sports. Well, there were seven of us then, and there were nine of the White Cow kids, and some of them were quite a bit bigger than we were. And we still pulled them all over the place. We pulled them all over the place until --

Well, we pulled them until, if they had let go of that rope, we would have fallen clear off of White Cow Moon. We were that far down on the slope of the sphere.

"Help, Tom, what'll we do?" we called to our friend, our friend who had been acting a little bit funny and not joining in the game.

"When you play tug-of-war up here, the name of the game isn't checkers," Tom said. "The name of the game is 'give-away'."

"Don't let them give us away," we wailed.

The kids finally dug in and held the rope fast, with the aid of a loop around 'Last Chance Tree'. We climbed up the rope to safety then. But those moon kids sure laughed and hooted at us a lot after that. We had been beaten about as bad as anybody can be beaten at any game; and we were the smart kids and they were just a bunch of sky bumpkins.

Helen said she was going to stay on that moon forever since they had plenty of the two things she loved the most, duck eggs and goat milk.

"You'll want to go back home and get your cornet," John Palmer told her. "And you can always come back here."

"That's right. I can always come back here," Helen said.

We were adopted by several nations of birds. They gathered on White Cow Moon like clouds, black clouds of crows and blackbirds, gray clouds of doves, brown-and-yellow clouds of larks. There were congregations of cat-birds up there, and of night hawks, even of king birds and mocking birds, and of hawks and eagles. Most of these birds had a contempt for the people of Earth, but they were friendly and genial to the people on the moon.

And there were other things up there that were not quite birds. We didn't know to call them, but they were things of a different wing. And the bones in their nests were as strange and varied as those in the trolls' cave.

Seeding clouds nested on White Cow Moon, and some of them glittered like jewels from all the sparkling water in them. When they wanted to start a shower down below one of them would 'now', another one would say 'now', and a third one would say 'now'. Then they would zoom down and start a shower and spill all over place.

From a hundred feet down in the shaft you could see the stars in the daytime sky.

And this moon was the place where the 'mysterious night lights' nested in the daytime. Almost every rural neighborhood in Osage County has had its own special ghost light for at least a century. These things draw notice, and they scare people. Sometimes they are written up in the news papers, and there is no explanation of them. But, as to where they come from, they come from White Cow Moon. 'Mysterious Night Lights' look funny in the daytime though. You'd hardly recognize them as lights when you see them nesting and confabbing together in the sunlight.

And there were the millions of wonderful jumping fleas on White Cow Moon. Fleas can always jump a little bit further on a moon than they can on Earth. It's a question of gravity.

We played up there till almost dark, and it was one of the finest days of our entire lives. Then we heard Grandmother Bluestem honking the horn of the ranch truck far below and to the south of us. From the top of White Cow Moon when it's high in the sky you can hear a long ways.

Helen blew 'Go down, go down' on the Moon Whistle. She could really blow that thing! And White Cow Moon settled down over Lost Moon Canyon again. We climbed down through the shaft once more (it was a pretty dark and spooky go of it there), and we finally dropped out of it and onto the top of the cab of the truck. Then we all went back to the Bluestem ranch house.

"But what is it really?" Hector O'Day asked them when we were back in



the ranch house and eating a ranch house supper. "Really, I mean."

That Heck! What did he mean by 'really'? We had been up into reality, up into blue-sky reality almost all day long. Why the grubby question?

"Oh, it's just one of the Earth's moons," Grandfather Bluestem said.

"How, how?" Hector asked like a gooney. "What one of the Earth's moons?"

"I don't have the comparative measures of masses," Grandfather Bluestem smiled, "but I'd say that it was the smaller of the Earth's two moons.

"But where did it come from?" Hector still asked.

"Oh, it used to hang out up in Missouri, about a hundred miles southwest of St. Louis," Grandfather Bluestem said. "Then, when some of the Osage Indians came down here from Missouri in 1802, that moon just followed along after them and came down here too. It had always got along with the Osage people, but it didn't like most people at all."

Grandfather Bluestem was a full-blooded Osage, of course.

That hardly touched it. Life on a moon has so many things that just aren't to be found on Earth at all. It has a special magic. Oh, there are plenty of magics on Earth, but moon-magic is in a different category completely. Every group of kids should have a moon of their own.

But there were other activities and delights. There was an endless tumble of delights for us in those years. In such cases, it is good to keep one particular treasure-house-full of delights in reserve. So we went back to White Cow Moon a few more times in that wonderful old decade.

We went once the summer we were ten years old; once the summer we were eleven; and once when we were twelve years old (we stayed up there three days that time).

It was on that last and longest visit that John Palmer and Barry Shibbeen were able to fill up a gunny sack with stones and bones from the cave of the gnomes or trolls who lived right at the center of that moon.

Barry made a chloroform bomb and he tossed it into that cave and knocked all those strange things out. And John Palmer had made gas masks for himself and Barry. So they put them on and crawled in and loaded up the sack. A study of those stones and bones was to raise questions that aren't all answered yet.

But, though it was the most magical place on the world, or just off the world, we didn't get back there in those early years, after that long special visit when we were all twelve years old. There were just too many other things to do. We nearly forgot it, the pervading magic of the place, and the strong sharp odor. But it was a buried treasure that the pack of us owned henceforth, a treasure buried a little ways up in the sky.

2

In skies unhigh it still is set.  
It's as it's always been... And yet  
There's thinnish magic that does cling,  
Diminishing, diminishing.  
Barry's Shibbeens

Into these latter days again where have all been adults for many aeons.

"Who faked them, who faked them? And how did they do it? Hector O'Day asked on that latter day evening when Helen had brought the bones and stones and the Moon Whistle over to us. Many years had gone by since we had last gone up onto White Cow Moon

"It had to be you and John Palmer, Barry," Hector said. "Both of you were smart as well as book-learned, but how did you fake the bones and stones from that rock, from that rock that you conned us into thinking was a moon?"

"I didn't fake them, and I don't believe that John did," Barry said.

"Well yes, they were an odd lot of things. The gnawed bones that we took from that cave were those human children, of bear cubs, of crested eagles, and of certain extinct dog-sized rhinos. They were just the sort of bones, Heck, that

you are likely to find in any trolls' cave on any moon. And the fossil stones, they are somewhat stranger. They record a life on that little moon that was quite different and somewhat older than anything on Earth."

"Exquisite fakeries, that's what some of the savants have called the things, Barry'. But they haven't been able to explain how the fakeries were done. Why have they not, exquisite faker, Barry?"

"Because they're not fakes. At least I don't think that they are."

"Just what is the 'core of facts' in the whole business?" Caesar Ducato asked the bunch of us. "Just what was the thing that we psyched our young selves into believing was a moon? Well, I guess that there was a large and nearly spherical rock in the Lost Moon Canyon area of the Bluestem Ranches. And it did have a fissure in it by which we climbed up onto the top of the rock. And it did have a dangerous wobble to it, or at least some kind of motion. And so we were hypnotized into believing that it was a little moon hanging in low sky. We believed that easily when we were nine years old. What puzzles me is that we still believed it when we were twelve years old and were capable of conceptual thinking. What hypnotism!"

"Who could have hypnotized us and turned our wits moony?" Barry asked. "Several of us were types almost impossible to hypnotize. Who could have conned us into believing that it was a moon, if it wasn't? But it was."

"Helen could have hypnotized us into it, Barry. John Palmer could have done it. You could have done it a little bit yourself. The three of you together could certainly have done it --"

"What, what, what? Did you just say 'But it was', Barry? But it wasn't, man. It couldn't have been."

"It could have been, yes," Barry Shibbeen maintained. "The best argument that it was is that it still is. I fly over it sometimes in my helicopter. And I still fly under it sometimes, which is more to the proof. How about all of you flying there with me in the copter in the morning and landing on the little moon? Will that be proof that it's still there, Hector?"

"Man, it can't be! It's physically and psychologically impossible. None of us has even thought that he saw it since we were twelve years old."

"Wrong, Hector. Tom Bluestem and Julia Flaxfield spent their honeymoon on White Cow Moon ten years after that."

"But they're both Indian. And they hadn't really grown up then, however old they were. They were high on each other then, and it would have seemed to them that they were on a moon wherever they were. Dammit, Barry, there is just no way that a thinking person can accept that there's a little moon there."

"Oh, Caesar, and you too, Hector 0' Day, I say that if you can accept the Earth's regular or big moon, it's a million times as easy to accept that little moon in the low sky in Osage County. Do you fellows accept the regular or big moon of the Earth? That so-called moon is an anomaly and the father of anomalies. It's irrational and it's impossible. The only reason we have for believing in its existence is that we've seen it, and that several persons have attested to have been on it. And there is plenty of instrumental evidence for it. But we have better reason to believe in the existence of the little moon. We have seen it at much closer range. Several persons that we know much better (ourselves) have been on it. We have even traversed its dark inner tract. And if electronic waves have been bounced off the larger moon, we have bounced baseballs off the smaller moon. And baseballs are more tangible. Yes, that little moon is real."

"In its psychological involvement with our childhoods it was real, I suppose," Grover Whelk said, "but it wasn't real in any other sense. I'm not sure whether its psychological effect on us was good or bad."

"Somebody should be smart enough to settle this matter," Hector said, "especially to settle your pig-headedness in still believing in it, Barry."

"Oh, I'm smart enough to settle it," Barry proposed. "I've already offered the way to do it, and I offer it again. Let's all get into my copter in the morning and go find that little moon. We'll fly under it and we'll fly over it and we'll land upon it. If we can do these things, then it's real. If

we can't do them, then it isn't real. Let's all be ready to take off at a reasonable time of eight-thirty in the morning. Agreed, Cease, Grove, Heck, Al?"

"Agreed," we all said. And that is where we made our mistake.

We called Helen the next morning, but she said that she didn't want to go. "It'd spoil it for me," she said. But her daughter Catherine Palmer ("the child of my old age," Helen always called Catherine) told her mother that she wanted to go, and Helen conveyed the message over the phone. "It will be all right with Catherine," Helen said. "She was born an adult, so it won't do her any harm to know that the moon is a crummy place. But I'm eternally a child and it would shatter me. 'You can't go back', you know."

So Catherine Palmer, a seventeen year old mature adult and a major in psychological anthropology came with us. She was a cheerful kid.

"Oh yeah, I've been up on the little moon before," she said. "I went up there with some of the Bluestem kids the summer before last, but it didn't do much for me. I hadn't yet become psychologically oriented the summer before last. Now I'll have to discover why that little moon did something for you old fogies, and why some of you think about it and mumble 'magic!'"

If Catherine hadn't been so pretty and so seventeenish, she couldn't have gotten away with that psychological patter.

We took off from the Jenks airport which is closer to T-Town than the T-Town airport is. It also has better facilities for stabling private planes and copters, not being obsessed with all those scheduled commercial flights. It was no more than thirty miles to our destination. Oh, it is pleasant to rattle in a copter over the Green Country on a fine morning in late spring!

"Catherine, I want you to realize that White Cow Moon is a magic place," Barry almost sang. "I don't believe that young people have nearly enough magic in their lives now-a-years. Drink deep of it when we get there, Cat."

"All right."

"Catherine, yes, it was enchanting," Hector O'Day said. "I only wish that it was real, that it had been real, that it could be real again. I wish that you could experience the enchantment of it, but I don't even know how we were able to experience it once. We'd like to offer it to you, but I'm afraid that we don't have it to offer."

"Thanks anyhow," young Catherine said.

"Ah, it was wonder, it was sortilege, it was delight," Caesar Ducato murmured. "It was a special place. It was the elegance and the charm. And at the same time it was tall magic with all the hair on it. It was the 'world of our own', the 'moon of our own'. It was the place that only the secret masters knew about. So we belonged to the secret masters. It's a pity that the little moon didn't exist except in our imaginations."

"Mr. Ducato, your wattles wobble when you get intense about something," Catherine said.

"It was the thirst and the slaking at the same time," Grover Whelk declaimed. "It was the 'promise fulfilled'. It's too bad that it never was. But even thinking that we remember it is wonderful."

"Why not let it stand on its own two abscissae?" Catherine said. She sounded like her mother Helen when she made cracks like that.

"See, it isn't there!" Hector O'Day cried out, half sad, half gloating, when we had come to the region.

"See, it is there!" Barry Shibbeen countered. "It's there, with its little bit different color green, snuggled down almost to Earth over Lost Moon Canyon, nearly invisible among other rocks almost as big and almost the same color. Blow the Moon Whistle, Catherine. Blow the 'Rise up, rise up!' sequence and let's get it up into the sky a ways."

Catherine Palmer blew the Moon Whistle. She had almost as big a mouth as her mother Helen had, and she had an equal talent for blowing all horns and whistles. She blew the sequence, and White Cow Moon wobbled a few hundred feet

up into the sky.

"It isn't as big as it used to be," Grover Whelk said sadly.

"Yes it is, Grove," Caesar said with sudden animation. "And it does have that peculiar green color in its topping boscage. It has it yet. I don't quite know the name of that color of green."

"Bilious green, sour bilious green," young Catherine said. She was right of course. White Cow Moon had risen about five hundred feet into the air. Barry Shibbeen flew the copter under several times, and then he hovered it at stand-still under it so we could look up through the old fissure that ran through it from top to bottom. Yes, it sure did look as though White Cow Moon was real and present.

"Well, are you fellows convinced that it's real?" Barry jibed.

"Not entirely convinced," Hector O'Day mumbled thoughtfully. "You have to admit, Barry, that it doesn't look very convincing."

"No, it doesn't," Barry admitted. "I wonder why it doesn't. But it is as big as it used to be. It's still about a hundred yards in diameter,"

"Yes, but the yards aren't as long as they used to be," Whelk complained.

We climbed around and above White Cow Moon. Then we landed in the middle of the top of it. Yes, that strong and sharp odor was still as permeating a presence on White Cow Moon as it had been when we were children. We hadn't realized that it was an unpleasant odor, but we realized it now.

"It smells like a badly-kept zoo," Catherine said. "I think it's the smell of the Greater Yeti or Stinking Yeti. I'll interview him in the interests of science."

There were only four houses left on White Cow Moon, and only one out-house.

"When the last out-house falls off White Cow Moon, I just don't know what will happen to us," an old citizen said. "Extinction, I guess. People without out-houses just would not be people any longer."

"I discern the true and unmemorable quality of White Cow Moon now," Barry Shibbeen said, "but I just can't set my tongue to the name of it."

"'Dingy' is the word for it," Catherine said. She was right, of course. I felt a sort of constriction in my throat and chest, and I believe that the rest of them felt it too.

"This moon is full of swamp gas or worse," Caesar said. "Is Magic itself made of nothing better than swamp gas?"

Catherine took the drinking gourd that was hanging on the town pump and milked it full from one of the she-goats there. The goats all had the mange. The chickens had the mange. Even the ducks on White Cow Moon had the mange now.

"Mother and I both drink a lot of goat milk for our health," Catherine said. "Oh, it's sour!"

"Maybe it's the gourd that's sour and gives a sour taste to the milk," Barry said hopefully.

"Nab, it's the goat herself who's sour and gives a sour taste to the milk," Catherine said. "I suppose that the Greater Yeti or Stinking Yeti lives down in that hole that runs through this moon. I'd better go see"

And Catherine Palmer disappeared down the shaft that ran clear through White Cow Moon.

"Well, how does it go on this moon?" Barry asked one of the citizens.

"Badly," that person said. "The main thing wrong is our shrinking population. There's only seven people left. A century ago there were a hundred of us here."

"What's the next main thing wrong here?" Grover Whelk asked.

"The corruption," the citizen said. "The trolls or yeti in the middle of our moon have corrupted our children, both of them. They've taught them immorality and disobedience and smart talk. It's those befud dung mushrooms that they grow down there and give our kids to eat that do the damage. Yeah, there goes the future of White Cow Moon blown, completely blown. And the third

main thing wrong on this moon is the fleas."

Fleas! Yes, there were lots of fleas on that moon, and they got all over you and set you to scratching. Well, there had always been lots of fleas there, but they hadn't seemed so demeaning in the old days.

"If you have trolls or yetis, you're going to have fleas," a citizen said. "There's no way you can miss it."

Catherine came up out of the shaft then, and a Yeti followed her out. He was eight feet tall, shaggy, quite stringy and spare (there were no fat Yetis on White Cow Moon), and smelly. He was roughly thirty-three and one-third percent of the strong, sharp odor of that moon.

"He's a genuine Homo Yeti Putens or Stinking Yeti," Catherine said, "and there's two more of them, another gentleman one, and a lady one. Even in the interest of science there's nothing to be got from the Yetis. Nothing, nothing. This one is the least interesting creature I ever saw. I guess he's harmless though."

"I'm not so sure of that," Hector O'Day growled. "How about all those gnawed bones down in your hole, tall fellow? Some of them were bones of human children."

"If more people gnawed more bones they'd have better teeth," the Yeti said.

"Ugh, platitudes yet!" Catherine shuddered. And we all felt a bit glum.

"How our great memories have shrunk!" Caesar Ducato lamented.

"It is and it isn't," Hector said cryptically. "The moon, I mean. And the way it is, it wouldn't matter much if it was."

"Not only has the magic gone out of it, but nothing else has taken its place," Barry Shibbeen mourned. "What's the word for this place? Oh yes, 'dingy'. I could cry."

"If you cry a tear down into the fissure, it will fall all the way through, and if a sky person should look down and see it through the hole it'd look like a star in the daytime," Catherine said with sudden poetic insight.

Young Catherine Palmer blew 'Retreat' on the Moon Whistle. We all got into the copter and rattled away from there.

'You can't go back' the proverb says.

And it's a good thing you can't.

#### SQUARE AND ABOVE BOARD

The people were young and the season was springtime.

It was said of young Midas Muldoon that he was a complex man, but this was a lie. He was as straightforward as a crooked man could be. He wanted power, he wanted prestige, and he wanted whopping wealth. He wanted to be envied. He wanted to be hated and admired at the same time. He wanted to make people crawl. He wanted to make people quake in fear. Certainly those were all straightforward aims, and in Midas there was never any element of concealment.

Midas had been given his curious name by his father Croesus Muldoon, a confidence man who always swore that he would live and die in a great stone castle. And he did die in a great stone castle of sorts, one of the outskirts of McAlester Oklahoma. Midas, like his father, liked to bet. And he liked to fight. He was athletic, magnetic, and champion at the game of checkers or draughts.

In contrast to Midas, his best friend Christopher Kearny was an intricate and convoluted fellow. He often stopped to think things over, and you can get eaten alive doing that. This being-eaten-alive was never fatal to Cris however. For him, it was one way of getting to the very inside of a situation, or a corporation. He was an inventor, a promoter, an investor. He had only a nominal lust for wealth, and yet he began to acquire rapid wealth while still quite young; and he did this by being an insider in very many ways.

Cris was not athletic; he was not magnetic (he said that only the base metals were magnetic); and he was not a checkers champion. His game was chess. He did not like to fight, or bet. He won a lot of bets, it's true, some of

them large ones, some of them from Midas Muldoon. In these cases however Cris was not betting. Midas was always betting, but Cris was always riding an inside sure thing. Midas Muldoon and Christopher Kearney were rivals in many things.

One of the things that they were rivals for was Bridie Caislean, a very pretty and devious and intelligent girl. And Midas Muldoon always seemed to be very far ahead on this particular rivalry.

When Cris Kearny was twenty-two years old, his auditor Linus Caislean told him that he had just become a millionaire.

"It couldn't have happened to a nicer fellow," Linus said, "nor could the other good news that Bridie has just told me of you have happened to a nicer fellow. I heartily welcome you in-to the family."

Something about this came very near to puzzling Cris, but he hadn't become a millionaire at twenty-two by allowing himself to be puzzled very much or very long. So when Bridie Caislean came into Cris' little office exactly one minute after her father Linus Caislean had walked out of it. Cris looked at her and asked her only one word: "When?"

"There's two things I like about you, Cris honey," Bridie said. "One of them is that you catch onto things quick. The other one is that you're a millionaire now. I've been doing the work on your account for papa, you know. Oh, one month from today, the first day of June we'll get married. Midas Muldoon will whip you when he hears about it, of course. He may even kill you. That's the day when he was supposed to marry me, and he doesn't know any different yet."

"Midas will neither whip me nor kill me, but neither will he give you up as easily as that. He'll stay in the race all the way down to the wire, and he's especially tricky in the hack-stretch. But there's no way that he can acquire a million dollars within a month; and I can't think of anything that could hook you better than a million dollars."

"Neither can I," Bridie Caislean said.

Bridie herself was quite magnetic. She had sufficient of base metal, iron and steel, in her for that. She also had an amalgamated heart: one part pure gold, one part quick mercury, and eight parts brass.

Bridie had been beauty queen at North-Central State A & M Tech (she'd have been beauty queen even at Harvard if she'd gone there) and she was an extravagantly attractive girl. She was as straightforward in her aims as was Midas Muldoon, and she had a talent for being on the inside of things that was at least equal to that of Cris Kearny. She was full of fun and interests, and she was the only thing that Cris had ever envied Midas. Now he was quite pleased to be marrying her.

"What are you thinking about, dear?" Bridie asked Cris one sunny day during their engagement.

"Oh, of all the ancient terrors," Cris said, "of the Sea Monster that is the most primordial of the terrors, of the loathsome and murderous disease that will be diverted from its victim only by another victim, of ghosts that return with the sea-wrack of their deaths still on them. And most of all I was thinking of the terror of falling, though in the sunny little day-dream reverie I've just been having the fall is only a piddling thousand feet. But the terror of falling is the most over-riding terror of them all. Did you know that even bright Lucifer, a winged creature, was so terrified of the depths before him that he forgot to use his wings and so fell like lightning?"

"Cris, Cris, maybe you are just terrified of marrying me."

"Fear of marriage is one of the ancient terrors, yes, but it's a minor one of them. But strangely enough, in my afternoon daydream, I do not marry you."

"Then throw that daydream away. It's flawed. Forget it. Is your cousin Cohn Kearny coming to our wedding, have you heard? I've phoned him. He says that he may come. I just believe that I will phone him again and make sure that he comes. Hey, we sure did get acquainted fast on that transatlantic telephone!"

"How did you know that I had a cousin named Cohn Kearny?"

"How did I know that you have a cousin who has five times as much money as you have? Honey, would I miss something like that when I was running a check on you? I'm thorough. Two million Irish pounds, and a Castle in Ireland besides. Oh, I'll get him to come somehow!"

"Bridle, in your slippery little mind you're not thinking of switching to a man you've never even seen? You're capable of it."

"Of course I'm capable of it, but I'll stick to Plan A for the moment at least, and you're Plan A. You are Colin's first cousin. He has a terminal disease that will allow him to live less than two years more. How sad that it should happen to one so young! You are his only kindred in the world, and he has not made a will yet. That must be remedied. He must come to our wedding and he must make his will to us."

"How do you know that he hasn't made his will?"

"Oh, I learned that from a chatterbox young lady who works for Cohn's lawyer in Cork. There's lots of information to be garnered by transatlantic phone. I learned too that the name of his Castle, Cearnog Ficheall, means the Chess Squares. The chatterbox who laughs with a brogue told me that it's because the Castle is above Chess Square Valley where there are alternate fields of light flax and dark hops that look like a checkerboard. And every seven years they change them and grow the hops where the flax had been and the flax where the hops had been. The chatterbox and myself have become great friends. I asked her how much she weighed and she said fifteen stone. Fifteen stone translates into pounds as 'fat'. The ideal world is one in which all the girls except myself are fat. Why didn't you tell me that you had a cousin with two million Irish pounds, a castle, and a terminal disease!"

"All three are recent acquisitions. Until a year ago he was only a poor relation in the castle of a rich uncle. And the name of the Castle, Cearnog Ficheall or Chess Squares, is really an euphemism for Cearnog Fuil or Bloody Squares. Cearnog is our family name 'Kearny'; and it does mean a square, or squares."

"How apt, beloved square! How opportune! Oh, things will go swimmingly!"

And things did go swimmingly, right up to the eve of the wedding, even though Bridie hadn't been able to get Cousin Cohn to make a will during the week he had been in town.

"Oh, I couldn't will such a monstrous castle and the monstrous entailments that accompany it to two such nice people as you and Cris," Cousin Colin always said. "No, no, you two have become much too dear to me for that."

"The more monstrous the castle the better," Bridle insisted. "It isn't any prosaic castle that I intend to inherit. Does it have a ghost?"

"Indeed it does, half a dozen ghosts, and the bones of some of them are still far below the castle on the rocky and forbidding shore. It's quite a fall that they take when they go through the floor in the Great Checker-board Dining Hall of the castle. It breaks almost every bone they have. And then the Sea Monster (he's carried on the Castle Rolls as the 'Old Retainer of the Castle') comes and strips all the flesh off of the new bones. The whole situation has given the castle something of a bad name.

"You're being droll, Cousin Colin," Bridie said. "My own name, Bridie Caislean, means both Brigid of the Castle or Bride of the Castle, and I insist that my name shall be fulfilled. See! I already have done all the work. I have the will drawn up here. All you have to do is sign it."

"Some days I just don't believe in siting documents after noon."

"But yesterday you said that some days you don't believe in signing documents before noon, and then I never could find you after noon."

"Some days it's one way, Bridle, and some days it's the other way, Cousin Colin said.

But it was Midas Muldoon who struck up an exceptionally close friendship with Colin Kearny during the week that Colin was in town before the wedding of Cris and Bridle. They played checkers together a lot. Midas said that he was champion of America. Cohn said that he was champion of Ireland and of all

Europe as well as the Straits Settlements and Madagascar and Patagonia. Colin had sought his fortune in the latter three places while he was in his late teens. They played very close, and a canny observer would have noticed that both of them were holding back a little bit.

Then, at Cris' bachelor party the night before the wedding, Midas and Colin tied one on together. It was quite sloppy, but here also an astute observer might have noticed that each was holding something back. They slashed their arms and mingled their blood and became blood brothers forever. It was that kind of bash. Then they began to play checkers for extravagant stakes, though each of them seemed to have trouble even seeing the board. They played for such high stakes as almost to preclude their being serious.

Finally, when the fiasco had run its course, Midas Muldoon had won the Castle in Ireland as well as the two million Irish pounds from Colin. And Colin just happened to have deeds and assignment papers in his pockets, and he spread them out to sign everything over to Midas. Then Cris pulled Cohn aside.

"Cousin Colin, I cannot allow this nonsense to go any further," Cris said. "Do not sign anything. Not anything."

"Don't spoil it, Cris," Cousin Colin said in a low voice, and he was totally sober. "Don't spoil it now. Oh, I've conned this fellow into becoming blood brother of me, and he thinks he's conned me into it. I've conned him into taking deed to the castle and taking conveyance to the two million Irish pounds that are one of the entailments of the castle. And he never even suspects, Cris. Oh, I love myself when I pull a smart one like this. It gives me top pleasure to outsmart people."

"However have you outsmarted Midas Muldoon, Cousin Colin! There's been a horrible mistake."

"I love you, Cousin Cris, when you pretend not to understand a trick like this," Cousin Colin chortled. "Oh wonderful, wonderful! Don't spoil it."

So the mysterious business was consummated.

Bridle Caislean came by Cris' place and waked him quite early the next morning. Cris was pleasantly befuddled from the Imperial Irish Brandy (a gift of Cousin Colin) that they had indulged in the night before, and he had a feeling that something had gone amiss. And he did not, for the barest moment there, quite catch the import of Bridle's chatter.

"There is no reason for Midas and I to be out expense when everything for a luxury wedding is already standing ready and is already paid for by you, Cris," Bridle was saying. "I've always loved your habit of paying all extraordinary expenses immediately and on the spot. And Midas and I can use the same airplane tickets and hotel reservations (how nice that you paid them in advance) for our honeymoon just as Nell as you and I could have used them.

"You and Midas Muldoon?" Cris asked.

"Well sure," Bridle bubbled. "Midas won the Castle and the two million Irish pounds from Cousin Colin (that's about five million American dollars, with a Castle thrown in), so of course I'm marrying Midas instead of you this morning. There's a sort of poetic justice here too. This is the day I was supposed to marry Midas in the first place, before I was supposed to marry you, and now I'm supposed to marry him again. Isn't it nice that things always work out so nice for me!"

So this other not-too-mysterious business was consummated also. Midas Muldoon and Bridle Caislean were married that morning. And Christopher Kearny was left with an empty sort of feeling.

It was just one year later that Bridle Muldoon phoned Cris Kearny from Castle Cearnog Ficheall in Ireland.

"Come and visit us, Cris, and the sooner the better," she said. "We are so happy here that we want to share our happiness with somebody, and as the best friend of both of us you are the logical choice. If you start sometime today you can be here sometime tomorrow."

"That'd be a good slogan for a travel agency to use. What's your angle, girl of a thousand angles?"

"No angle, Cris. This is the new Bridle. I'm kind, I'm benevolent,



unselfish, altruistic, and one other word that I forget. Where's your gambling instinct? Come and take a chance on a visit to us."

"I never gamble, Bridle. I go only for sure things."

"It's a sure thing that we want to see you, Cris. Do come."

Chris left sometime that day and his plane was over Ireland sometime the next day. From the air he saw the checkerboard of light and almost white fields of flax and of dark and almost black fields of hops. He saw the Castle (for they were already in their descent), and something twanged in his heart-strings like a harp tuned a little bit flat. It may have been the piles of whiteness on the stoney shore below the Castle that gave him the queer flat feeling. And no more than twenty miles from the Castle he was down at Cork International Airport.

He went first to the office of a lawyer in Cork. This was the lawyer of Cousin Colin, and he was also the lawyer of Cris Kearny now, for Irish affairs at least. The lawyer was not in, but the lawyer's assistant was full of news and good cheer and advice.

"Remember that you are in Ireland now," said this assistant who was a merry and ample person who laughed with a brogue. "This place is full of draiocht."

"Yes, draiocht, magic, especially the voices of the people," Cris agreed.

"Moreover you are in County Cork. And here, especially in the castles and the crags, it is likely to be the draiocht dorchach."

"Oh yes, dark magic or baleful magic. And what do you recommend to ward off this dark or baleful magic, lawyer assistant?"

"Chicken blood. I'll draw some for you from the cock in the yard before you leave. And be advised also that the terminal disease, called here only the 'loathsome disease', can be entailed along with the castle, like any other entailment, onto the new owner of the castle. If the entailment rite is not broken, then the new owner will have the fatal disease, and the old owner will have it no longer. And the new and entailed owner of the castle will die of the disease within two years. Medical science now confirms that this really happens."

"I'm a great admirer of medical science myself. Is there a specific against the entailment of the loathsome disease? And how is Cousin Colin these days?"

"Chicken blood is the specific against the loathsome entailment, as it is against so many other things. I'll draw some for you from the cock in the yard before you leave. And your Cousin Colin is presently vacationing in foreign parts. Rio, I believe, is the name of the place. He had several recent fortunes that were not entailed, you know. He has willed them to you, but you may have to wait a hundred or more years to inherit them considering the exuberant and brawny health he has enjoyed for this last year. Remember too, Christopher Kearny, that old precept: 'Beware of the Overseas Irish hearing Castles'."

"I thought it was: 'Beware of Greeks bearing Gifts'."

"Same thing. Look at an Overseas Irishman sideways and he could just as well be a Greek. You will be offered a castle, yes, and its double entailment, aye, and a thousand years free supply of bones on the shore below it into the bargain. When you accept the deed to the castle you will sign a very curious codicil to that deed."

"How do you know that it is a curious codicil, lawyer's assistant?"

"Oh, I drew it up for them at the castle. This entailed gift will come about through the bloody swearing of the blood-brotherhood and through the checker-playing in big Checkerboard Hall. When you play those dire games of checkers you will lose if you lose, and you will only seem to win if you win. If you win you will lose by dying of the loathsome terminal disease within two years."

"And again, lawyer's assistant, is there not a specific against this terrible misfortune of the checker games turning against me and gobbling me

up?" What a pleasant and roomy person this lawyer's assistant was!

"Once again the specific against this luckless gaming is chicken blood. I'll draw some for you from the cock in the yard before you leave. And there is one square in Checkerboard Hall on which the Master of the Castle has himself placed when he is in his last agony from the loathsome disease. At the moment of his death, the square opens and dumps him on the rocks a thousand feet below: and a friendly Sea Monster comes and strips the flesh from the bones. It's a good arrangement. Persons dying of the loathsome disease may not be buried in Irish Ground lest they contaminate it. And they become so smelly when left unburied. Some of the bones are from old guests who were robbed and had their throats cut by old Castle Masters; and then, being placed on the dire square, they were likewise dumped at their death moment and had their bones stripped."

"All Irish castles have mottos. What is the motto of this Casfie Cearnog Ficheall, lawyer's assistant?"

"The motto of Castle Cearnog Ficheall is Cearnog Agus Cionn Mhord or 'Square and Above Board'. And yet with a different intonation and a different viewpoint, that out of the eyes of a dead person on the stoney shore below the Castle for instance, the motto could as well be Englished 'Och, That Square in the Board Above!' and this would be in the tone of a warning. And now you must be going if you're to be in time for supper at the Castle. But first we'll gather the blood."

Out in the yard, the lawyer's assistant drew a small sackful of blood from the cock. It stood still for the drawing, and then it crowed in a loud voice.

The lawyer's assistant drew a second sackful of blood from the cock. It stood still for the drawing, and then it crowed in a weak voice.

The lawyer's assistant drew a third sackful of blood from the cock. It stood still for the drawing, and then it crowed in a sad and broken voice and fell over dead.

"He'll be good for after-midnight supper tonight," the lawyer's assistant said. "I love blooded rooster roasted on a spit. My mother will pluck it and draw it and roast it and have it ready. I'll drive you to the castle now. It's but twenty miles or thirty dlomeadgir. Och, it's no trouble. I often drive that far in a single week."

The lawyer's assistant got Cris to the Castle at suppetime.

"How old are you, lawyer's assistant," Cris Kearny asked.

"I'm twenty-two this springtime, and everyone else in the world is twenty-three," she said. "How ideal! I'll be back for you about midnight. Your business at the Castle should be consummated by then."

Then she laughed, with a brogue.

Cristopher Kearny blew the burnished trumpet that was set into the front door of Castle Cearnog Ficheall or Chess Squares Castle, and at the same time he splatted one sack of the cock's blood on the same door as a specific against misfortune coming to him within.

Then Midas Muldoon flung the door open, and Bridle and Midas greeted him with great affection. Oh, they made big over him, and they showed him all around the wonderful Castle. He saw everything that could be seen by torchlight. Bridle even introduced him to three of the Castle Ghosts. These were quite urbane and pleleaant entities and somewhat more at their ease than were Midas and Bridie Muldoon. The Muldoons seemed to have just a touch of the jitters.

And then it was no time at all till they were all sat down to a wonderful supper in the Great Checkerboard Dining Hall. There is something excessively black-and-whitish about the term 'checkerboard', but in the Dining Hall it was not so. The great squares (each the dimension of the First Master of the Castle and he had been a tall man) were royally colored. The white was really a sort of golden ivory, and the black was really midnight ocean-blue with touches of French Lilac and Royal Purple. And by the torchlight of the Dining Hall (Irish Castles have electricity only in the bathrooms; it would be

a vulgar intrusion anywhere else) the effect was enchanting.

The courses of that supper were like a litany of the great dishes of 'Supper in Heaven': Gamecock, Rampant Ram, Truculent Trout (each trout glared at one with angry and living eyes from the plate, but that could only have been the effect of the torchlight), Gored Ox, Young Foal of Horse: what great dishes they were on that supper table! There were seven sorts of brandy to go with the seven courses, and seven little piles of snuff were on the serviette at each place.

Seven brandies made each of them a little drunk and more than a little effusive. There came the moment when Midas Muldoon insisted that he and Cristopher should slash their forearms and mingle their blood and so become blood brothers.

Cris was thankful that it was night as he worked his bloody deception with the second sackful of blood. The outcome, of course, was that Midas Muldoon became blood-brother of a cock that was two-and-a-half hours dead. Had it been otherwise, the loath-some disease would have passed out of the blood of Midas and into that of Cris as part of the deecing-and-entailment rite.

And then the supper was cleared away, and a checkerboard and more brandy brought. And Midas suggested that they play checkers for moderately high stakes and for the championship of America and Ireland and all Europe as well as the Straits Settlements and Madagascar and Patagonia, which latter string of titles Midas had won from Colin Kearny just one year before. Cris agreed, but first (thankful again that they had naught but torchlight) he went to one of the squares of the great checkerboard floor (the lawyer's assistant had told him which one it would be) and dribbled a little blood from the third sack on it.

"Be careful of that one square, Cris honey," Bridle warned. "It's -- ah -- a little precarious."

Then Cris sprinkled the remainder of the third sack of blood on the checkerboard on which they were to play.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Midas," he said. "It is only some of our brothership blood that was still on my arm."

"Wonderful, wonderful," Midas Muldoon gloated. "'Twill make the rite all the more binding."

They played, and Cris won. They played, and Cris continued to win. They played, and Cris won bigger and bigger bets. They played, and Cris won Castle Cearnog Ficheall itself from Midas Muldoon as well as two million Irish pounds in entailment with the Castle and also 'a more intimate entailment sealed in the blood of undying brotherhood'. The Castle and attending kale consolidated all Midas' losses for the evening.

Bridle Muldon had all the papers ready. Cris received the deed to the Castle and the assignment of the two million pounds. And in turn he signed a codicil to each paper, to the deed, and to the assignment. The codicil to the deed said that Cris would not take possession of the castle until two years and one day had gone by; and in case of his untimely death before that time, ownership of the Castle would revert to the Muldoons. The codicil to the assignment of the two million pounds said that the money would be held in escrow by a legal firm in Cork for two years, and one day, after which it would be paid to Cris Kearny; but in case of the untimely death of Mr. Kearny before that time, the money would be returned to the Muldoons.

"It's all pro forma stuff, honey," Bridle said. "You don't even need to read it if you don't want to. Just sign it."

"Fine, fine," Cris laughed as he signed the codicils. "All Square and Above Board."

"How odd that you should use that phrase," Midas commented. "You could not have known it, but that is the motto of this Castle Cearnog Ficheall which you now own tentatively."

"Haven't you grown skinnier since your marriage, Bridle?" Cris asked.

"Not at all. I've gained two stone since I've been married. That's twenty-eight pounds. Subconsciously I did it for you. I remember you used to

say that I was perfect but that I would be even more perfect if I were a bit more ample. And now I am that."

"Somehow you seem skinnier, Bridle," Cris said.

Daydreams of amplitude. Rather, waking torchlight night dreams of amplitude. The beauties of spaciousness. Why was Cris musing on such things?

At midnight the trumpet that was inset in the front door blew the angriest tune that ever was heard, like a signature tune of somebody.

"That is a friend who is taking me back to Cork tonight," Cris said.

"I'll look in on you at the Castle again tomorrow perhaps."

"Wonderful!" Midas shouted. "It's been wonderful to see you again, Cris."

And after Cris had left, Midas shouted still more loudly: "Wonderful, wonderful! Now I have transmitted the fatal loathsome disease to Cris through the botherhood rite and the entertainment rite. And I am free of the sickness, and he will die of it before two years have gone by. And the Castle and the funds will revert to us. Nothing can go wrong, nothing."

"Nothing can go wrong for me at least," Bridle shouted inwardly to herself. "Even if this trick doesn't work, it will work for me. Even if the disease somehow was not transmitted, even if Midas dies of it instead of Cris, I can always marry Cris. He loves me eternally, and nobody else can ever take my place with him. Maybe it will be even better for me if this doesn't work. Then I will have all the fortunes of both Midas and Cris. Isn't it nice that things always turn out so nice for me!"

But Bridle was wrong about nobody ever being able to take her place. And she'd be furious when she found out who it was. Bridle had the beauty, yes, but beauty wasn't everything.

There were such things as amplitude, as Cris realized when he got into the car with the lawyer's assistant at midnight and had an ample kiss from her. There were such things as spaciousness, and merriment. There were even such things as that business of laughing with a brogue.

Oh, Bridie was beautiful, but Sharon (Sharon McSorley was the name of the lawyer's assistant) would make two of her with a bit left over. And you can't have too much of a good thing.

They plighted their troth over an after-midnight supper of rooster hot from the spit, and Spanish sherry.

"When we move into the Castle, in two years and a day, I'm going to make only one change," said full-bodied Sharon. "I'm going to fix that tricky square in Checkerboard Dining Hall so that nobody will ever exit that way again. I've already told the Sea Monster. He says that he can get by on bodies as seldom as one every seven years, but I've told him that there'll be no more at all. He thinks that he may get another appointment at a Castle that overhangs Dingle Bay in Kerry County. Sea-rumor says that there's a good fall of bodies from that Castle. I've told the Castle Ghosts that they may remain after we move in. They are pleased entirely with the arrangement. They say that it's always been the case that when the Castle has an ample mistress there will be merry times in the old place."

#### IFRIT

I am Henry Inkling, newspaper reporter and feature story writer. I am the best around here, but I never seemed to have anything to show for it until quite recently, within the last several days. It was always the expenses of keeping up my life style that swallowed up everything I could make.

But now I've whipped that. Now I have a beautiful home on a beautiful lake. I have stunning mountains rising right out of my own back yard. I have food and drink beyond anything I ever imagined before. And my friends and visitors are absolutely astonished by my setup. I have elan, I have style, I have class. I have become the hottest host in the newsy fraternity in town, and I never knew that adulation could be heaped so high. My evenings-at-home

are probably the most cultural in town and likely the most boozy, and they are certainly the most In-Groupy. And the whole business doesn't cost me anything at all. Everything I earn goes straight into the bank now. I don't need it, but it seems like a good idea to put it somewhere. Not only do I have no new expenses at my new and luxurious setup, but I have no expenses at all. Allis free. I have it made. This change of life and change of circumstance began about two weeks ago when editor Sandow X Moshla gave me a story to do.

"Wrestling," he said. "I'm sorry, Henry, but the wrestling shows advertise pretty big in the papers, and we try to do a wrestling special once a year. Do this, and I'll give you a really good assignment the day after tomorrow. Ugh, wrestling, ugh!"

"Ugh," I said. "Well, at least there can't be anything new in wrestling. We've had the Wild Man of Borneo who was wheeled up to the ring in a cage. We've had Number 131-3 arriving with his handcuffs and his ball-and-chain and his prison-striped trunks. We've had Le Canonier with his brass cannon that he was always wheeling around and pointing at his opponent while he almost got it torched off with a burning fuse. We've had Hayfield Hooligan with the giant bale of hay in his corner which he always cut open and scattered around the ring. He was the only one who could keep his footing when the ring was knee-deep in hay. We've had the Hangman with that little gallows on wheels, and the rope with its noose that he was always trying to put around his opponent's neck to hang him right there in the ring. Is there anything new this year?"

"There's the Weeping Genii, Henry. He arrives as the Genii in the bottle. His manager carries him into the ring in a half-gallon bottle. Then he takes the cork out of it, and the Genii pours out. He's about as big as a squirrel at first, but then he expands till he's six-foot-nine and three hundred and eighty pounds. He can't wrestle much, but he's good show. I'm sorry, Henry, but he's about the only new thing in wrestling this year."

"How could he do that?" I asked. It hit me a little odd. "How could his manager carry him into the ring in a half-gallon bottle and then have him expand to such a size as that?"

"Oh, it's all a fake, Henry. You know that everything in professional wrestling is a fake."

So that night I went out to the Junior Pavilion at the Fairgrounds to see the wrestling matches. Sure they were all fakes, but they were good show and they drew the crowd along with them.

Lord Stamford Heather-Rose had his valet spray the ring out of a commercial-sized crop sprayer that had the words "Attar of Roses" lettered on it. Then his opponent Josh Pole-Cat had his valet spray the ring with an even larger sprayer that had the words "Essence of Skunk" stenciled on it. Josh Pole-Cat was the good guy for that evening, however, and Lord Stamford Heather-Rose was the villain. And Josh won it all in about that degenerated into something very near to straight wrestling.

Horseshoe Jones was matched with Rexford "The Lawyer" Pettifogger in the next bout. Horseshoe always seemed to have a horseshoe in his hand, and he brandished it as a weapon. As many horseshoes as the referee took away from him, Horseshoe always seemed to come up with one more. Rexford "The Lawyer" Pettifogger had an equally never-failing supply of large writs with the words "Legal Writ. Cease and desist!" written on them so big that everyone in the Pavilion could read them easily. The Lawyer would hand one of these big writs to his opponent, Horseshoe Jones. Horseshoe was a slow reader. He read letter by letter rather than word by word, and about the time that his finger finally came to the last letter, "The Lawyer" would knock him down with a whanging blow right on the button. But Horseshoe would always come up off the mat with another horseshoe in his hand, and they would go at it again.

The Weeping Genii was in the semi-final match against Battering Ram Bently, and I felt a curious excitement as they got ready for that bout. Battering Ram came into the ring with his manager. And then the other manager seemed to come into the ring alone. He carried several towels and a

half-gallon bottle. Then, when the referee motioned the wrestlers to come to the center of the ring, the Genii's manager pulled the cork out of that bottle, and the Genii poured out of it. Sure enough, he was only about as big as a squirrel at first, and then he expanded to six-foot-nine-inches and three hundred and eighty pounds. The two wrestlers joined battle. And nobody seemed at all amazed by the unbottling trick. Well, it amazed me.

"How did they do that?" I asked a lady next to me.

"Oh, it's all a fake," the lady said. "You know that everything in professional wrestling is a fake. Yi, yi, yi, kill him, kill him, kill him, Genii!"

"How in the world did that huge creature come out of that little bottle?" I asked the lady on the other side of me.

"Oh, they borrowed that from the Arabian Nights that we read when we were little," the lady said. "It's all a trick, of course. You know that everything in professional wrestling is a trick. Wow, wow, wow, gouge his eyes out, Weeper! Break him in two, Battering Ram!"

The Weeping Genii wept when the Battering Ram battered him around, and it was good show to see that great hulk crying like that. And yet the Genii had the better of it, and he won the bout. He was popular. The Battering Ram was the good guy and the Genii was the villain. But he was a villain that everybody liked. And after his hand had been raised in victory, he diminished and entered into the half-gallon battle again. And his manager corked the bottle and carried it away with him. And still nobody seemed to regard it as an extraordinary trick.

I didn't stay to see the main event. I followed the manager with his bottled Genii. I had to get an interview with them. I caught up with them in the dining room of the Fairmont Mayo downtown. The manager had a fine meal already spread out before him. And the Genii in the bottle also seemed to have a fine meal spread out before him, on a banquet table not even an inch long. The Genii had a lot of room to move about in that bottle.

"I want an interview with either or both of you!" I said. "Nobody else seemed to pay much attention to it, but yours is the slickest trick that I ever saw in my life."

"It's a little too sophisticated for the common people," the manager said, "but it's a good trick and I have my livelihood from it." He took the cork out of the bottle. "I'll answer any question you want to ask, as will my associate, Ifrit the Genii. But he's a little hard to hear in his smaller state. You'd just about have to get down on his mensural level to hold conversation with him. You may as well ask me what you have on your mind first."

"How does the Genii grow small, or how do you make him grow small?" "It only works for persons of honest heart," the manager said. "Persons of good heart, whether of the Genie or the human sort, have only to say four words in Arabian, 'El-hadd el-itnein el-talat el-arba, and they will grow small quickly, but not so quickly as to bewilder them."

"You said the words and you did not grow small," I charged.

"No, I'm a black-hearted and dishonest-hearted person. I don't know what you are. But, so that you will not find yourself marooned, let me tell you that to grow large again you must say three other Arabian words: 'El kharnis el-goma el-sabt.'"

"That's the damndest spoof I ever heard of," I said.

"Try it," the manager told me. "If you are of brave heart as well as honest heart, try it. You have nothing to lose except your own orientation and perhaps your life. And you stand to gain a whole new way of looking at things."

"El-hadd el-itnein el-talat el-arba." I spoke the words bravely. No. I didn't begin to grow smaller. Everything else in the world began to grow larger. I climbed onto the enlarging table. I hooked my fingers over the rim of the mouth of the bottle. And when I was in the bottle and had become stabilized in my smaller size, I conducted an interview with Ifrit the Genii.

In this I use the form Genii for the singular and Genie for the plural. I know that's incorrect, but that's Ifrit's usage and that of the other Genie.

MYSELF: Just what is a Genii?

IFRIT: We are a species a little lower than the Angels. To put it bluntly, we're a species a little bit lower than almost everything. There are three races of the Genii, the Gul who are always male, the Ifrit who may be either male or female, and the Sila who are always female. I am a male Ifrit. Ifrit is not my personal name. We do not have personal names. But that is what my manager calls me for want of something better, and that is what you may call me for convenience.

MYSELF: How in the world do the Gul who are all male or the Sila who are all female have offspring?

IFRIT: Mostly by the natural method. Some of them have their births by section, though. And some of them give birth under hypnosis or anesthesia, much as do humans. But in the beginning it was always the natural method.

MYSELF: This is quite luxurious here, Ifrit. This seems to be a larger place by the moment. It's a real manor house you have here. This veranda is as big as a castle by itself. How does it all come about?

IFRIT: I carve some of the things out of little pieces of wood when I'm in my larger form. Rough carving is all that's needed. And my manager buys some of the little things in toy stores and drops them into the bottle. Then, when I come into the bottle, the things are no longer little, and they're no longer rough. They become perfectly arranged and perfectly formed. And they become incredibly detailed. New details add themselves from only shadowy hints or from none at all.

MYSELF: But that's beyond all reason and nature. That's magic.

IFRIT: Oh sure. Magic on a small scale is always freely given, and we make use of it by going on a small scale ourselves. That grand piano there, it's of concert quality. And yet the original of it was only a penny piece of plastic out of a crackerjack box. But, as we say, there's really nothing magic about magic. It is the natural ambient of us Genie.

MYSELF: Are you the slave of your manager? Is he your master?

IFRIT: Oh, I suppose so. The arrangement is a pretty good one. A Genii can only have one manager at a time, and if he has a good master, he's safe from falling under the dominion of a bad one. Mine is a pretty good master, and I have a good life. In two-thirds of the towns on the circuit I'm visited by others of my kind. We have our own methods of getting together. And I have my books and my records here, more than ten thousand of each. I have my flute and my violin and my piano. I have all the best to eat and drink. I have my correspondence. We have our own bottle-to-bottle instant mail service. The phrase 'A message found in a bottle' has more meaning than you'd believe. And I have several hundred human friends who have mastered their fear and who visit me on my estate here. Even my gladiatorial combats are rather fun. It is to play the 'Giant of the First Kind' in a miming form of comic drama when I do the wrestling. There are also times when I become a 'Giant of the Second kind', a giant who is more than a mile tall. Oh, we're a prodigious people.' And when I look up from my estate here, it is the humans who are the giants. Sometimes a bunch of them look like a skyful of giants to me. We Genie may always have masters because we belong to an inferior race.

MYSELF: But what about the Genie who are slaves to bad masters?

IFRIT: Oh, they have a bad time of it. There's a breaking point, but it's so fin31 a breaking point that it's never been used yet. If you ever get a Genii completely in your power, Henry, don't push him to the limit. Every Genii knows a word he can say that will bring the world to its end. It's a dangerous and fearful situation.

MYSELF: What is the word, Ifrit?

IFRIT: It's El-jhokholimfhorad -- Oh, no, no, no. I almost said the direful word. If I'd gone on and said the last eleven syllables of it, the world would have come to its end. Never again ask me what that word is. I might forget myself and say it. I'm surprised that the world hasn't already

been destroyed by some Genii saying the word. Lots of Genie are even goolier than I am.

MYSELF; Why are you billed as the 'Weeping Genii'?" Why do you weep?

IFRIT; I've always been a very emotional person, and tears come easy to me. And It's a miming role that I enjoy. I used to be billed as the 'Weeping Axe-Man' when I was a gladiator at Rome.

MYSELF; How old are you, Ifrit?

IFRIT; I'm a little over eleven thousand years old. My master, that giant in the sky above us, above this bottle, has fallen asleep over his wine. You had bet ter lam new or he may decide to hold you for ransom. All he has to do is put the cork in the bottle and you're trapped. He does tricks like that. Up the ladder quickly now! That's fine. Now the three words!

MYSELF: El-khamis el-goma el-sabt.

Then I was out of the bottle and was my own size again. I found myself rather awkwardly standing on a table in the dining room of the Fairmont Mayo, but I jumped down quietly and left the room as nonchalantly' as I could. Ifrit and his manager left town quite early the next morning. Ifrit had a wrestling date that night in Muskogee, and then he had them on successive nights in Fort Smith, Little Rock, Texarkana, Shreveport, Baton Rouge, Port Arthur, and Beaumont. I followed along after them and had further interviews with Ifrit in each of those eight towns. In five of them, he was also visited by friends, either human or Genie, in his estate-in-the-bottle. Ifrit and I became the best friends in the world. He was a person of deep-rooted culture; and he also had a strong and endearing streak of goofiness in him. He may even have been a tall-storyteller. He told me that he had a wife, that she was currently living in a three-liter gin bottle in the Netherlands, that she was carrying a child of his, but that the birth would be not at all soon. The gestation period of Genie, Ifrit said, was a hundred and eight-seven years, and only half of that time had passed with his wife. But another Genii, also of the Ifrit race, told me that my friend Ifrit had been spoofing me, that the gestation period of Genie is only ninety-four years, and that the wife of Ifrit would come to her time within thirty years. Which one to believe?

All things that are worn or carried by a person when he enters a bottle are miniaturized along with him. But it is not really the case of the person or his things being miniaturized at all, but of his being put into a different juxtaposition with all things else in the world so that there is greater variance of apparent size. And for this reason also, the space inside a bottle may sometimes seem much more vast than at other times. And it is generally the case that as a person develops his estate-in-a-bottle he is given more space in which to develop it.

All in all, my friendship with Ifrit was among the most rewarding of my life. When I left the wrestling circuit after eight days with it on the road, I felt a terrible loss.

"But after all, I will be wrestling through this part of the country again in three months' time," Ifrit reassured me.

He had heard through their own networks that about a thousand humans in the United States alone had now set up plush estates-in-bottles. This had become the most exclusive of all the in movements. You had to be pretty well in even to have heard of it. But some of those thousand humans, Ifrit gave the opinion, didn't really have the temperament to handle bottled estates.

This was on the night that Ifrit had defeated the Alligator Man in a bout in Beaumont, and had then fulfilled his vaunt to cut enough out of the Alligator man's hide to have made for himself a pair of alligator shoes. And Ifrit did cut the pieces out of the hide of his defeated opponent right there in the ring with a big knife. It was all a hoax, though. That was not the real hide of the Alligator Man. He actually had an ordinary skin like that of yourself or myself, and the alligator hide was only part of his costume.

And the Shoemaker from the "Great Colossal Imperial Alligator Shoe Factory of Tampa Florida" was faking it all when he went for the world's record (nineteen seconds) for making a pair of alligator shoes right there in



the ring. Nevertheless, the Shoemaker seemed to be making the shoes, while drum rolls marked off the seconds, and while the Alligator Man still lay on his belly and writhed, and screamed at the holes that were cut in his hide. And the shoes, size eighteen very wide, did fit Ifrit's big bare feet perfectly, though really they had been bought previously and only seemed to be made by the Shoemaker in the ring. The loudspeakers announced though that the new world's record for making a pair of alligator shoes had been set, and that it was eighteen-point-nine-nine-two seconds.

This was all fun. It was part of the folk fakery of professional wrestling. Yet I realized at my heart-wrenching leave-taking that night that there was one thing in professional wrestling that was not a fake. Ifrit the Genii was not a fake. He was the most genuine person I had ever met.

The last words he said to me that night at our parting were, "Why don't you get a bottle of your own, Henry?" And he added, "Beware of the Pride of Lions in the Sky. That is the only threat to you that I see."

I smiled. We have very few lions in the skies in my part of the country.

No, there is not any twist to this account, no flashy ending. I will not hoke it up in any way. There is nothing here except the plain observed facts about a patient creature who was born into slavery, a valiant member of a vanishing species that is something of an anomaly in the modern world, a good person, an admirable person, a friendly person. No great deeds attach to him, no exciting actions, and none will be invented for him.

I write only, "He is a good person," and if that is not exciting, then we will do without excitement this day.

I did, as Ifrit had suggested, get a bottle of my own, an empty gallon bottle that had once held Red Rosa wine. I put it in a fence corner off an alley behind St. Louis Street, about four feet above the concrete, where two of the fence braces joined. No one would notice it there or bother it there. I put just enough water in it to make a large lake, and enough dirt and pebbles to supply spacious and rolling meadows and sudden mountains. I seeded other things in there with microscopic tokens of themselves. I came and went into my bottle, into my own estate or universe there. I felt like Superman entering that little bottle that contained a great estate and world. And my estate thrived quickly, as I explained at the beginning of this account. In my estate-in-a-bottle I had beautiful friends, a beautiful manor house, a beautiful lake, and beautiful mountains. Listen, did you ever course and race fine horses for mile after mile on the inside of a gallon bottle that had once contained Red Rosa wine? Were your evenings-at-home ever the most cultural in town, the most boozy, the most In-Groupy? Did you ever feel that your bottle was so full that it was running over?

Then disaster struck!. Oh, it struck only five minutes ago. It was so sudden that I am not yet able to appreciate the magnitude of it. My seven best friends, including my fiancée, went up the ladder to the mouth of the bottle just at dawn after the happiest night we had ever experienced together. Then I looked up to watch them going, and I saw the Lions in the Sky, and I froze with fear and horror. And my friends, as they emerged from the throat of the bottle and began to say the three enlarging words, were slapped to their deaths. It was a mother cat there, and she slapped each of my friends (including my fiancée) to one of her seven kittens to catlike bugs.

This, since the striking of that disaster, has been the longest five minutes of my life.

Oh, I see too late that I am one of those humans who lacks the temperament to run an estate-in-a-bottle. And I failed to heed the warning of Ifrit about the dreaded Lions in the Sky. And now I fear that there is no way that I can escape gory death.

Still and all, I was the hottest host in town for a while, and to the Innest Group. And it may have been worth it.

The biggest of the Lions in the Sky, the mother cat, has her paw over the mouth of the bottle, and she is wobbling the bottle. By the flick of her

giant tail in the sky I can tell that she is calculating everything minutely.

She will tip the bottle It Will fall four feet to the concrete and it will shatter.

How fast can I say three enlarging words aftenstand free from the shattered bottle? How fast can the mother cat and those seven kittens pounce on what they believe is a tasty bug?

I'll race you for it, Lions in the Sky!

#### GOLDEN GATE

When you have shot and killed a man you have in some measure clarified your attitude toward him. You have given a definite answer to a definite problem. For better or worse you have acted decisively.

In a way, the next move is up to him.

And it can be a satisfying experience; the more so here, as many would like to have killed him. And now it is done under the ghastly light, just as that old devil's tune comes to a climax and the voices have swelled to an animal roar.

And afterwards an overflowing satisfaction compounded of defiance and daring; and a wonderful clarity born of the roaring excitement. Not peace, but achievement. The shadows prowl in the corners like wolves, and one glows like a lantern.

But Barnaby did not shoot him till Thursday evening. And this was only Monday, and that state of clarity had not yet been attained.

It was clear to Barnaby that Blackie was really a villain. Not everybody knew this. A melodrama villain is only black behind the lights. Off stage he should have a heart of gold. Whether of wrestling match, or afternoon serial, or evening drama or film, or on the little stage here at the Golden Gate Bar, the villain should be -- when his role is finished -- kind and courteous, thoughtful and big-hearted, a prince of a fellow.

That is no myth. Here it was not entirely true.

"I have always suspected," said Barnaby, "that there is some bad in every villain. I would prove this if only I had proof. Why am I drinking cider?"

"We always give you cider when you have had enough beer."

"It is a dirty trick, and you are a dirty Irish trickster. Tell Jeannie to play 'Fire in the Cockleburs.'"

"There isn't any such song, dear."

"I know there isn't, Margaret, but once I asked her to play a song that wasn't, and she played it."

Barnaby was a confused young man. He was something of a rum-dum as are many of the noble men of the world. And even with a broken nose he was better looking than most. He came to the Golden Gate because he was in love with three wonderful women there.

The Golden Gate Bar is not on the Pacific Ocean. It is on another ocean, at this point several thousand miles distant. But if the name of fine ocean were known, people would go there, and range up and down that coast until they found this wonderful place. And they would come in every night, and take up room, and stay till closing time.

It is crowded here as it is, The most one can ever get is one wrist on the bar. All the tables are filled early, and no couple ever has one alone for long. The relentless and scantily-dressed waitresses double them up. Then they double them up again as the crowd grows. Soon the girls and ladies have all the seats, and the men stand behind them at the tables. And later, as the drinking and singing continue, some of the men sit on the ladies' laps. They do things like that at the Golden Gate.

Clancy O'Clune, the singing bartender, began this custom. He sang ballads and love songs to the girls. He wandered as he sang, and picked out

the plainest and shyest and most spinsterish creature he could find. He would sit on her lap and sing to her; and as soon as her embarrassment had faded a little, she would join in the fun and sing with the crowd.

Group singing was what brought the crowds to the Golden Gate. For people love to sing if they don't have to sing alone. Jeannie was marvelous at the piano, and with her, people would sing all the old ballads: "Tavern in a Town," "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now," "When You Were Sixteen," "Hot Time in the Old Town."

The Gate was a family place down on the old pier, and the only drinking spot along the beach where children were admitted. For them was cider in great steins. The motif was Gay Nineties. There were moustaches and derby hats. The waitresses were scanty and seductive, and plumed and pretty in some old dance hall costume fashion. Even the customers liked to dress the part, and came in vintage gowns and old checkered vests from ancient trunks.

"I know the evil of him is largely compounded of soot and grease," said Barnaby who was still thinking of Blackie, the villain. "How do we know that the evil of the devil himself is not so compounded?"

On the floor was sawdust, and the lights were gas lights. The cuspidors were old brass, and stood up in their glory.

"Has Blackie a name, Margaret, like regular people?"

"Of course he has, dear. He is W.K. Willingsforth."

Now that was interesting. The true name of the Devil was sought by Faust, as to know it gives a power over him. And to learn it so casually was unheard-of luck. And if he had a name, than possibly he had also a habitation as though he were human.

The lamp lighter turned out the lights in the bar-room and fired the eerie gas torches in each and of the stage. For every evening was the melodrama. This was lend and wide, with pistols and boots and whips, and the bull-roarer voice of Blackie. Clancy O'Clune was the hero. Jenny, bustling and bosomed, was the thrilling heroine. And Blackie was the villain, that filthy old snake of a man.

The crowd would howl out "No! No! No!" to his monstrous demands, and hiss and cat-call. And Jeannie at the piano ran a marvelous accompaniment as her sister Jenny fluted her outraged innocence and terror.

This was a Monday night that Barnaby first saw the villain. And an odd passion came on him; for beyond the comic and burlesque he felt a struggle and a terror. The sandy hair raised on his neck, and he knew the villain for what he was.

Barnaby sat with a middle-aged couple and drank beer from a pitcher large beyond all believing.

"We love to come here," said Anne Keppel, "We have so much fun just watching the other people have fun. This is the only place this old bear will ever take me. I love to sing, but I wouldn't dare sing anywhere else. He makes jokes about the ghost of a dead cat coming back, and why does it have to suffer like that."

"The only place I ever sing," said Aurelius Keppel, "is here and in the bath tub. In the tub, I have to keep up a great splashing, or this shrew will beat on the door and announce that the doctor will be here in a minute, and to be brave. It isn't that I haven't a wonderful voice. It isn't that I haven't a wonderful wife. But my wonderful wife doesn't appreciate my wonderful voice."

If one is to hate the villain properly, he should love the heroine. Barnaby loved passionately, but knew only slightly, the heroine, Jenny. A little better he knew, a little more he loved her sister, Jeannie, the pretty piano player. But he knew Margaret, the mother of the two girls, quite well.

Margaret was more beautiful than her daughters. She was the tallest and best liked of those wonderful waitresses. And she was the owner of the Golden Gate.

And the girls were onto him. "It isn't us, it's mama you like. How does she do it?"

"I'll tell you. She's younger than her daughters. You're a couple of old

maids. Young and pretty, but still old maids. You're not in your mother's class."

"Oh, we know it."

But they were no such thing. They were as exciting and heady a pair as were ever met. Jenny, the frail heroine, might toss a man over her shoulder like a sack and spin away with him. And there was never any telling what Jeannie would do.

The melodrama was over, and the little stage was dark. And it was then that Barnaby knew that he must kill the villain.

Clancy O'Clune, still in his hero's habiliments, picked a slightly gray and quietly amused pretty lady. He sat on her lap and sang to her softly a goodnight lullaby. Afterwards, Jeannie brought the piano to a great volume, and everybody sang "We Won't Go Home Till Morning."

But they all went home at midnight when the Golden Gate closed.

And when Barnaby was home, he took out a little six-shot and fondled it as though it were a jewel.

2

Now it was Tuesday, the second day of the involvement. Barnaby was sitting in the company of four sophomores from City College. It is known by all, though not admitted by all, that sophomores are at the same time the most ingenuous, ingenious, and disingenuous people in the world. They are a wonder and a confrontation. Their hearts are ripe and their minds are on fire, and the door of the whole cosmos is open to them. Now, at the end of their second spring, they are imbued with clarity and charm.

"A survey reveals that eighty percent of the people believe in Heaven but only twenty percent in Hell," said Veronica. "That is like believing in up but not down, in a disc of only one side, a pole with a top but no bottom, Making Love to Alice Bly, in light but not in darkness."

That one line in the middle was not part of the argument. It was a line in the ballad that the crowd was singing, and Veronica sang it with them. And yet it too was part of the argument, for Miss Bly, who looked like an angel, had roots that went down to Hell.

It was odd that they would be talking of things like that. And only Barnaby knew the reason: that Blackie was so much a Devil that they were reminded of his homeland.

"If it weren't for the evil in it the world would be a fine place," said Simon. "But it is only the Evil who do not believe in evil, and only the Hellish who do not believe in Hell. There's Seven Men Going to the Graveyard."

"And Only Six are Coming Back," sang Hazel. Then she said, "It is there like a cold wind, and curls in the corner like a dog. A whole room full of people can turn evil in a minute. The world grinds and shudders. It can come like a bolt and stand in the middle of you."

It did come like a bolt and stand in the middle of them, but perhaps only Barnaby knew what it was and shivered for it. And yet the rest shivered as with sudden cold. For the Villain had appeared costumed in his villainy, and the melodrama began.

Once more the short red hair rose on the nape of Barnaby, and the odd passion came over him. He breathed heavily, as did others in the room. There was a terror in the comic, and excitement danced like lightning over the burlesque stage.

And when the crowd howled "No! No! No!" in simulated fury, it was not entirely simulated. And there were some who crowed "Yes! Yes!" wickedly against the crowd; and one of these was Hazel, bright-eyed and panting, as she felt the evil, like a dog in the corner, rise within her.

So it thrashed to a climax. Did not Jeannie know that the accompaniment

she played on the piano was diabolic? For the temptations of the dark villain were manifold. But for a word of his, the crippled brother of the heroine would go to prison; and he withheld the word. But for his testimony, the mine of the heroine's father would pass into the domain of the Fast Buck Mining Company, and he would not give the testimony. There was even evidence, clear to the more perspicacious, that he was himself the Fast Buck Mining Company. But for him, the dastardly he about the heroine's mother would spread and spread; and perhaps he would be the one to spread it. There would be no bread in the cupboard, nor coal in the scuttle, nor milk for the small children. And against all this only the frail virtue of the thrilling heroine.

"She ought to go with him," said the girl at the next table. "He only wants her for the weekend. I'd go with him. Yes! Yes!" cried the girl at the next table.

And then Barnaby knew for sure that the old dark villain had to die.

Now the melodrama was over and the lamp lighter lit the lights again. The sods rose in a hundred-headed fountain; everybody had a dozen more beers and sang the ballads of Jeannie. Clancy O'Clune put on his sheriffs badge that was eighteen inches across, and there was law and order, though a great deal of noise, in the Golden Gate Bar.

And when the midnight tide pounded under the pier, Clancy came and sat on the silken knees of a little houri named Maybelline, and sang to her "Good Night Little Sweetheart."

And after everybody sang "We Won't Go Home Till Morning," they all went home. Except those who went to the Buccaneer, and the Alamo, and the Town House, and places like that.

### 3

Wednesday morning Barnaby had a breakfast date with Jenny. It may not have been made clear that Jenny was really beautiful. Just how beautiful, it is impossible to say. Not, perhaps, as beautiful as her sister Jeannie. Not, certainly, as beautiful as her mother, Margaret. But nevertheless breath-taking, fantastic, clear out of the world.

But she asked the oddest questions.

"Why don't you work? You're not working today. You didn't work yesterday. I don't think you even worked Monday."

"Listen," said Barnaby. "You can believe it or not, but before that I worked for four weeks straight. Naturally I'm entitled to a vacation. How could I work this week when I've met you wonderful people and have you to think about? If it wouldn't make you conceited, I'd tell you how wonderful you really are."

"No. It won't make me conceited. Please tell me. I know, of course, but I like to have people tell me."

"You are just a dream. You are that little heroine all the time. All of you are wonderful except that villain. I would like to strangle him with my hands."

"Why, he's the most wonderful of us all, He's a real flesh-crawler. I know what's the matter. You're jealous because it's really mama you're in love with. I guess all villains are really marvelous."

"I know a devil when I see one. I'll bring a gun some night and kill him."

"He says sometimes people do. Not kill him, but shoot at him. Then he knows he's getting across. But it'd be terrible if something happened to him."

"It would be grand."

"Don't talk like that, I have to go. I'm glad you asked me, but I'm mad that you asked Jeannie first. If I'm a dream, why did you ask her first? Now I have to leave because I'm always so busy. Wait till the waitress goes by, and then kiss me. Be in tonight and see how pretty I look."

Now it was Wednesday night, the third of the epic. Barnaby was at a table with three seamen. These were not unknown. Long John in particular was known all over town. He was not merely lantern-jawed, he was jawed like an eighteenth-century ship's lantern, copper bound and brass bottomed, and the nose on him as livid and red as an old beacon at night. His clothing was beyond description, and the hat on his head older than any man now living in the world. And most know Benny Bigby and Limey Lynd, the other two. To know them, however, was not to like them. Benny had a muzzle like a fox and was always looking over his shoulder. Limey was a cockney dude. They were loud and obscene. If they hadn't been friends of Barnaby, he wouldn't have liked them either.

Already, through the early crowd there was running a tide of resentment toward the seamen; and this only for their insistence that all the songs that night should be sea songs. Now there is nothing wrong with "As I was A-walking Down Paradise Street -- With a Ho Ho Blow The Man Down," but it has seventeen choruses, and when it is sung seventeen times, that makes either two hundred and eighty-nine or two hundred and ninety-nine. That is too much.

And when another ballad slipped in sideways:

"I only ask you, lack, to do your duty, that is all;  
You know you promised that we should be wed,"

they sit in towering silence and would not sing.

"It isn't as though they were high-sea seamen," Blackie, the villain, said to Clancy O'Clune. "One of them works on a garbage scow, and one on a pile-driving barge, and one on a ferry boat."

But Barnaby was loyal to his friends, and he considered only the evil source of the remark. So he also howled for sea songs.

Now the crowd came like snow and filled the room.

"I have been in every Hell Hole of the world," said Long John. "Zanzibar, Devil's Island, Port Royal (that was before the earthquake), Oklahoma City, Cote der Pirates, Newport News, Mobile, Alabama; but I have never seen a more evil looking man. Who is he?"

Barnaby was pleased. He had found a friend. Someone else who hated Blackie. "That is Blackie, the Villain."

"Ah, Le Noire, I should have known. I heard of him once in Marseille."

And yet that was hardly possible, for neither of them had ever been there.

The thing about Blackie, is that he was very easy to be afraid of. He had arms like a python. And if one cannot conceive of a python with arms, no more can he of Blackie. Barnaby was a handy young man. Though he fought less than he once did, yet he always won more fights than he lost. He measured Blackie with his gray eyes, and he knew that he was afraid of him.

"I wonder how it will be when he is dead," said Barnaby. "When the soul leaves the body, they speak of the Wings of the Dove. With him it will be the pinions of the vulture."

The little houri named Maybelline came over and made herself acquainted with Barnaby, and he was entranced with her. And however it happened, she was soon sitting on his knee, and they were drinking beer from the same mug.

It wasn't as though he weren't still in love with Jeannie, who now smiled and frowned at him together from her piano.

It wasn't as though he wasn't still in love with Margaret who now wagged a finger at him from across the room. But an houri is different from other girls, and when you are entranced, what can you do?

Everybody sang:

"In a cottage down in Sussex  
Live her parents old and lame,  
And they drink the wine she sends them,  
But they never speak her name."

And they sang:

"Shoot me like an Irish soldier,  
Do not hang me like a dog."

Everybody sang together the music of Jeannie, and the only lights in the place were those old gas lights. Something went out of the world with them. These new lights, they have no smell to them, they have no flicker or real glow. You can't reach up and light a cigar or dramatically burn a letter. It's almost as though they weren't alive.

And after a while, Jeannie began to play devil's music, and Evil uncoiled like a snake and slid into the room. The lights in the world went out, and the torches were lit in Hell; and the melodrama began on the little stage. The world shuddered on its axis, and the villain was prince of the world. Once more the odd passion came on Barnaby. An animal surge went through the crowd as the noble hero and the trilling heroine and the dark villain acted out the oldest epic in the world.

"No! No! No!" But tonight virtue would not triumph. The more he was hissed, the more powerful the villain became. For he also had his supporters, and now they rose like a ground swell. Virtue was howled down in a crescendo of devil's music played by Jeannie at the piano.

"O.K." said Jenny, the heroine, "let's go and get it over." So Jenny went with the evil villain, and everybody laughed as the lights were lit again with a taper.

Now they all had a dozen more beers and sang:

"Just break the news to Mother,  
She knows how dear I love her,  
And tell her not to wait for me,  
For I'm not coming home."

And the words had a double meaning for Barnaby.  
They sang:

"The cook she was a kind old soul.  
She had a ragged dress.  
We hoisted her upon a pole  
As a signal of distress."

And this seemed inexpressibly sad to Barnaby, and not even the houri on his knees could cheer him up.

For over in the corner was Jenny, and she was sitting with Blackie, the villain, in a condition of extreme friendliness; and for all he knew they were drinking their beer from the same pitcher.

Then, as the night ran on, Clancy O'Clune picked out an eleven year old girl who was drinking cider with her father, who was a barber, and he came and sat on her lap and sang to her "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms" for a goodnight song.

Afterwards everybody sang "We Won't Go Home Till Morning." And they all went home at midnight.

4

Thursday morning Barnaby had a breakfast date with Jeannie, the outrageously beautiful piano player.

"Did Jenny turn you down? Why did you ask me first today?"

"I always ask you first."

"Jebny says you're mad at her because she's friendly with Blackie.

But he's so nice. Don't you know that? He's one of the nicest men we

ever met."

"He is a devil. He makes my flesh crawl."

"He is supposed to. But only on the stage, He's a consummate actor. I think that's the word that mama says he is. And mama says for us to keep an eye on you because you're acting so peculiar. We tell her you only act peculiar over her. Don't you think we'd make nice daughters-in-law?"

"You would be nice anything, Jennie."

"And don't you wish you were a sultan and could have us all at once?"

"Yes I do. I never thought of it, but that's just what I wish."

"And the houri too?"

"How did you know she was an houri? I thought I was the only one who knew."

"I'm never sure you're serious. I do have to go, dear. Isn't it too bad that everyone always has to go all the time? You eat the rest of my jelly and egg. Kiss me. Good bye."

And it was morning and evening, the fourth day.

And in the evening Barnaby sat with a table full of refinery workers. He had brought with him tonight his little six shot loaded. And five were blanks and one was not.

The refinery workers were named Croesus Kahlmeyer, Midas Morressey, and Money-Bags Muldoon. These are the names that the waitresses gave to them, for refinery workers are the biggest tippers in the world. They tip livishly. The reason they call do this is that all refinery workers get a hundred hours a week overtime, and the money they make is fantastic.

Gaiety Garrett was waiting their table. The boys all called her Gaiety Unrestrained. And in a larger sense gaiety unrestrained reigned through the whole of the Golden Gate.

Now the surf pounded loudly under the pier. It always seemed noisiest when the melodrama was about to start. For after the hours had passed, the lamp lighter turned out the lights in the barroom and flared the torches on the stage. The smell of them came over the room like a weird fog.

Then Barnaby took the little six-shot from his pocket and fondled it. For the reign of the prince of evil was about to be ended in the world.

And when the melodrama was at its loudest, and the pistols barked, and the crowd roared like an animal, Barnaby raised his six-shot trembling.

And fired it six times.

It is such a little thing to kill a man and brings so much satisfaction, you wonder everybody does not do it. It is like walking through green meadows after an oppressing darkness.

Barnaby relaxed and the short hairs subsided on his nape; for the passion had left him. Peace came down on him like white snow.

"I have killed the villain," he slid. And he had. The pinions of the vulture had sounded and the soul of the villain had gone.

But the act was for himself alone. Only he and the victim knew that it had happened.

For Blackie did not act as though he were killed. He strutted through the drama to its close while the crowd howled and everyone was happy.

Yet there was no doubt that the villain was dead, for a great clarity had descended on Barnaby. And Blackie was now more like an odd old friend who needed a shave, and no more a python or a devil.

Margaret came to the table and she was white faced.

"Don't you ever do a thing like that again. Give me that. How could you do that to him? We all love you and thought you loved us."

And she looked at him queerly. He liked the way she looked at him: a sort of wild worry beneath the kindness.

Everybody drank an ocean of beer and sang thousands upon thousands of songs. And when it was late, Clancy O'Clune went over to Gladys, who wore



glasses, and sat on her lap and sang "Just a Song at Twilight" for a goodnight song.

And as always they sang "We Won't Go Home Till Morning". And as always they went home at midnight.

5

Friday morning Barnaby went to work; but there was only a half day's work for him. It often happens that a boy will find only a half day's work after he has laid off for a week and needs it.

And in the afternoon he went to the Golden Gate, which was closed in the daytime. He went in the back where deliveries were made.

The sour ghost of last night's beer permeated the place. And there was another ghost there, loud and wailing.

It was a terrible noise, a discordant clanging and chording that was the saddest thing he had ever heard: the woeful wailing of a soul that has been in purgatory a long century, and has just been told that it is not purgatory it is in. It was a hopeless crash filled with a deep abiding sorrow that had once been hope.

Blackie was playing the piano, and there was torture in his eyes. Yet he talked happily.

"Hello, Barnaby. I love the instrument. I play it every chance I get. Yet I am told that I do not play well. Do I play well, Barnaby?"

"No, no, you play quite badly."

Blackie, this old python who needed a shave, seemed discouraged.

"I was afraid you would think so. Yet to myself it is beautiful. Do you think it sounds beautiful to anyone?"

"No. I don't think it would sound beautiful to anyone in the world, Blackie."

"I wish it weren't so."

"I shot at you last night, Blackie."

"I know it. Six shots. I knew you would."

"One of them was not a blank."

"The third. I know it would be the third. I dug it out of the plaster this morning."

"Does anyone else know?"

"No. How would anyone else know? I am going away, Barnaby."

"Where?"

"Kate's Klondike Bar. They need a villain there. Here they are changing the format. They will call this the Speakeasy. It will be a gin mill with flapper waitresses like John Held Jr. pictures. They will have a lost generation motif and sing lost twenties songs. Clancy is practicing 'Star Dust' all the time. I could stay on as a gangster, but I am better as an old time villiin. The gay days are about over. The Twenties will be the new era of nostalgia."

"I will not like that."

He went to find Margaret where she was counting her money in a little room.

"Blackie says you are going to change this to a Sad Twenties place."

"Yes, dear, the Twenties will be all the rage now."

"I don't remember them like I do the older times. I wasn't even born yet, in the twenties. Do you remember them, Margaret?"

"Of course I do. It'll be sweet to have them back. We have some wonderful ideas. The girls play old scratchy records all day long to learn them."

"Will you still have the melodrama?"

"Well, no. But we'll leave skits. Well, not skits really; we'll have ukelele players and things like that. You'll like it."

"There's only one thing bothers me."

"What, dear?"

"In the Twenties, how did they know who was the villain?"

"I don't know, dear. Here are the men with the scenery. I have to show them where to put it."

But that Friday night it wasn't the same. The girls were all dressed in potato sacks with the belts only three inches from the bottom. Their stockings were rolled and their knees were rouged; and on their heads were sheath-like helmets that made them look like interplanetary creatures with the ears sheared off them. Jenny and Jeannie looked like two peeled onions with not enough hair on their heads to cover them. Oh, that those breath-taking creatures should come to this!

They sang "Yes Sir, she's my baby." They sang "Oh you have no idea." They sang:

"You play the Uke,  
You're from Dubuque,  
I go for that."

The Speakeasy spoke, but Barnaby could not hear its message. To him it was dismal and deep. And then the long evening was over and the gin glasses were empty.

Clancy O'Clune was singing a good night song to a boney flapper.

"Picture me  
Upon your knee,  
And tea for two,  
And two for tea."

But he didn't sit on her lap. All at once none of the ladies were built like that anymore.

Barnaby went to Blackie's room, Blackie was packing.

"What town is Kate's Klondike Bar in?"

Blackie told him the town. But it shall be told to no one else. If it were known, people would go there, and come in every night, and take up room; and it's going to be crowded enough there as it is.

"That isn't very far," said Barnaby. "That's only a couple of hundred miles. I'll go there and get a job. Then at night I can come in and listen to them sing, and watch the melodrama."

#### THIS BODING ITCH

The Palmer Itch, the Palmer Itch  
Assuaged with oil and honey,

It means that we will all be rich  
In everything but money.

C.S. Wynward Lewis

On all channels, the comedians on the early evening (6:05-6:10) comedy spot had jokes about itching palms. Yes, and they were all jokes about the left palm being itchier than the right palm.

"I didn't know that anybody except me had itching palms today," one hundred million wives in just one country said when they heard the comic.

"I didn't know that anybody except me had itching palms today," one hundred million husbands gave the echo. "And I sure didn't know that anybody except me had their left palm itcllier than their right one."

And six minutes later, it was on all the early (6:16-6:21) news spots.

"If only they don't call it the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome,'" a young lady named Vera Vanguard said. "I can stand any thing except that."

"I suppose that we may as well call it the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome,'" the spot news commentator said. "The phenomenon is with us and it may well be with us for the foreseeable future, possibly until the 7:01 news spot. Our foreign contacts assure us that it is now world-wide. Oh, there is professor Arpad Arutinov. Professor, can you give us an opinion on the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome'?"

"See page 982, paragraph 2," Arutinov said. He was an imposing man except for his shocking weasel-like face.

"Page 982, paragraph 2 of what, sir?" the spot news commentator asked.

"Of the book," Arpad Arutinov said. "And don't ask what book. There is only one." The Professor disappeared from the screen. He always seemed to be just passing through, and yet he was always seen briefly in very many places, dozens every night, wherever the TV lights were shining.

"I wonder what book he means," the commentator said. He looked at his next note. "So far, the wave of suicides attributed to the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome' has been quite light. The Syndrome is driving people bugs, but it is not driving very many of them over the buggy edge yet. The death rate is sure to pick up as the evening unrolls, if the itchiness holds."

The commentator didn't know what book the Professor meant, but at least two of his listeners did know.

"Hand me the book, Fritz," Vera Vanguard said, "and then look to your Happy Ox Hodgepodge. I think it's burning."

"There is no way my Happy Ox Hodgepodge can burn," Fritz said. "The hotter the fire, the more juice will bubble up in it." And Fritz Der Grosse handed the book to Vera and she turned to page 982 paragraph 2 and read:

"The Mutational-Advances in the human species have been orderly and well-spaced. And each has been quite clearly announced, though only at the very moment of its happening. The coining of color vision, the coming of speech, the coming of consciousness (the latter two were probably simultaneous comings) have all been announced by rampant pruritus. The ancient trepanning of skulls which so puzzled archeologists and anthropologists was directed at getting into the brain to scratch the announcing pruritus, the Boding Itch.

"Humans as they are now constituted are only about two steps away from perfection. Since the mutational-advances have been orderly and well-spaced, let us consider which advances are next in order. And let us consider when the spacing will be fulfilled. My own figures indicate that the spacing is fulfilled almost exactly now and that it is time for a new appearance (which I believe will be a double appearance).

"All that humans now need for their completion are a handy road map to show them where they're going, and a correlating eye to show them where they are right now. They will get these two benefits quite soon, and there will be a spill-over of them to other intelligent species.

"The spill-over to other intelligent species is a sort of insurance. If mankind stumbles and falls back at this step, or at any other step, things will not have to begin quite at the beginning again. The other intelligent species will have a good start on things, a better-than-nothing start.

"When the rampant and universal itching appears, know you that the illuminating summer of the intellect is nigh."

"Well, that's surely plain enough," Fritz said. He took the book from Vera and put it back on the shelf. The name of the book was The Back Door of History and it was written by that weasel-faced Doctor Arpad Arutinov.

Vera and Fritz went into the kitchen to eat the Happy Ox Hodgepodge, one of the Great Dishes of the Western World.

"Yes, that's surely plain enough," Vera agreed as she tied the bib under her chin (Happy Ox is sloppy), "but there's many a slip on those muddsy syllogistic roads. When will WHEW get into the act? And how can WHEW be balked from spoiling the whole show?"

WHEW was 'Worldwide Health Enforcement Wardens.' This multinational agency under its motto 'Good health and good attitude compulsory for everyone!' could act on a world-wide scale within short minutes to obliterate

any new ailment or unease. Sometimes it acted too rapidly, but it was never guilty of not acting. There was no way that it could neglect something like the new itch.

"What worries me most is WHEW's secondary motto 'Out by the roots! Leave not a trace,'" Fritz said. "I believe that it will be a very delicate and detailed tracery, and I don't want my own version of it to be obliterated without a trace. I believe that the tracery will consist of a 'world line' as well as a 'personal line,' and that those of us who are the natural leaders must combine the two of them in our leadership. Perhaps some of us could hide?"

"Hide from WHEW? Oh, that's funny. Nobody can hide from WHEW, Fritz."

"Monkeys and apes world-wide ire also exhibiting the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome,'" a commentators voice on the 6:41 news spot was saying. "And dolphins are showing a strange and unlocalized unease which is somewhat similar to the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome.' Let me emphasize though that the dolphins are not actually suffering from an itching of the palms of their hands. They haven't any hands or palms thereof.

"But WHEW is on the job. Already they have treated and cured ten million persons and they will be treating about ten million persons a minute until everybody on Earth is cured. WHEW is using the new (well, it's about six minutes old now) Deep-Bite Acid Treatment. There have been early complaints of the treatment leaving holes clear through the palms of the hands, but this has now been adjusted for. The Deep-Bite Treatment was biting a little bit too deep for a short while there. But the mysterious itch will soon be no more than a memory."

"Maybe we could get good depth photographs of the -- ah -- road maps of the future before they are obliterated," Fritz Der Grosse hazarded to Vera.

"I'm afraid not," she snuffed that one out. "The maps are not clarified yet, on me or on you, and I don't believe that they will be clarified until the itch has run its course."

"If extremes come to the extreme, we could --" Fritz hesitated.

"What, funny man, what?" Vera asked him.

"Lop them off," Fritz Der Grosse said in a pale voice.

Vera Vanguard read scraps from another book, while they assessed a very direful situation.

"There are seven major mounts on the palm of the hand: the Mounts of Jupiter, Saturn, Apollo, Mercury, Mars, Venus, and the Moon.

"There are seven major nodes on the palm of the palm: the Nodes of Solomon or Judgement, of Everlastingness or Transcendence, of Virtue, of Eloquence, of Power, of Agape or Enabling Love, and of Futurity.

"There are six minor lines on the palm of the hand: the Life Line, the Saturn Line, the Head Line, the Heart Line, the Mars Line, and the Girdle of Venus.

"Thus it is seen that there are seven mounts and seven nodes, but only six major lines. This does not mean that we have lost one of the lines of the palm of our hand. It means that we haven't arrived at it yet. Indeed there is folk memory of the time when there were only four major lines in our palms.

"The seventh line, when it appears, will be the line of the Future, and it will be the chart of things to come. It will erupt out of the Node of Futurity which is located in the Mount of the Moon, and it will move across the palm to the Ring of Saturn which is at the base of the index finger.

"It is the custom to end books on Palmistry with the question, 'What does the future hold?' The answer is that the future for us holds the Vision of the Future Limned out plainly in the palms of our hands, and it holds a new Illumination to see that Future by."

The book that Vera Vanguard had read this from was Palmistry for Plain People, by Moses Mantes.

About thirty of the people who considered themselves as natural leaders in that town had gathered in the rooms of Fritz Der Grosse.

"If we are able to effect telekinesis it all, and I believe that we are, then we should surely be able to control and influence our detached parts," George Frontrunner said. "We are already on the verge of a breakthrough in this field. We'll let this impasse push us right into this breakthrough."

Then the commentator on the 7:01 news spot was talking:

"For more than eight minutes now WHEW has been developing new breed of dog that will go direct to severed members, and utterly destroy them. Here is a direct quote from the Plenipotentiary of WHEW: 'Don't hack them off, folks. They aren't that itchy. And if you have any left-handed (hey, that's a pun) ideas about this, well, forget them!' People out there, WHEW means what it says."

"Let's cut our losses in half," Fritz said to that circle of his friends. "Oh, we'll each just lop the left one off and try to conceal it in a good place, though the dogs do complicate that. The left palm is supposed to be much the more informative one, you know."

2

The eyes we have, the eyes we have,  
And soon we'll have another!  
Or else a leopard epitaph.  
Oh how they slink and slutlier!

C.S. Leeward Lewis

Vera Vanguard was giggling. Her handless left hand was packed in dry ice to stop its bleeding, and she looked dismal and disheveled. None the less, she was giggling.

"I thought it would stop half the itching, at least," she snickered, "and it did for a moment. But now I have a now itch, right on the top of my head. And I've only one hand to scratch that with, and no other hand at all for scratching my itching hand."

"Yes, I have an itching right on the top of my head too," several of them said. "It's the second stage of the rocket, as it were."

"The 'Book' said that the new appearance would probably be a double appearance," Fritz reminded them. "Well, what is going to develop on the tops of our heads?"

The severed left hands of the thirty persons were romping around on the talbes and floor, and climbing up the draperies. They wre under pretty good telekinetic control by their owners, though several of the hands seemd to have minds and lives of their own. Each of these hands bore an dmerging map of the future, and they must be kept safe from the effecting cures of the WHEW.

Four of the hands, working together, raised one of the windows two inches and crawled out under it to the stone ledge outside. Other left hands opened the other two windows of the room, and then all the hands were outside on the ledges. The people closed and locked the windows then and pulled the drapes over them. Would the dogs developed by WHEW be able to find and destroy the hands when the hands were outside on stone ledges that were thirty stories high?

"The dolphins, worldwide, are spending a lot of time contemplating their navels," the commenator on the 7:31 news spot was speaking. "They are contemplating their navels and grinning those wide dolphin grins. And the dolphis are, especially within the last four minutes, becoming arrogant and uncooperative in certain experiments that people have been conducting on them. What does it all mean?"

"It means that now the dolphins can read the future and the humans can't," said a one-handed young lade named Clair O'Hare. It's been suspected

that dolphins had the equivalent of our palmistry all along, but we never knew how it was recorded. So that's where they have it, in the navel. Never mind, in three or four minutes we'll be able to read the future too."

"WHEW has nearly completed its world-wide work," the commentator was saying. "The Deep-Bite Acid Treatment has already been applied to more than ninety-nine percent of the people in the world and the damnable itching has been eaten out to its roots. After being healed, all persons will have slick and unlined palms. The WHEW crews are now mopping up the remaining one-third of one percent of the people in the world, those who are marked for special handling, those identified by the sensors as being somehow uncooperative.

"There's an interesting side-light to this. Most people, as soon as the itching in their palms is cured, complain of an itching in the top of their heads. 'I think my head has been itching for quite a while,' some of them say, 'but I didn't notice it so much because the itching in my hands was worse.' We may, have a follow-up on the 'Itchy Pate Syndrome' on the 7:46 news spot."

A bunch of WHEW crewmen burst in on the group in the rooms of Fritz Der Gross. "You people are ticketed for special handling," the leader said, "but I don't know why. Oh, maybe that's it! Eustace, bring the specially trained dogs. Thirty of you folks here, and each of you has his left hand freshly lopped off. How are we going to treat hands that aren't here? How did this happen?"

"Thirty separate grotesque accidents," Fritz said. "I know it's an outrageous coincidence, but it's no more than that."

The Whew crewmen gave the right hands of each of the group the Deep-Bite Acid Treatment and burned out their Lines of the Future just when they were in the final stages of being born. Never mind, the lines of the left palm are always clearer than those of the right.

Then the crewman, Eustace, came in with nine fierce, newly-trained dogs. The dogs threw themselves against the windows of the room, broke them out, and tumbled through.

"After that!" the chief of the WHEW crew cried; and all of those crewmen followed the dogs through the windows and into a thirty-story fall to shattering death. The crewmen on 'special handling; jobs are indeed specialist, but their specializations have crowded out their common sense.

The phone rang. Fritz answered it. And a tapping noise came from it.

"That's mini-Morse Code," said a one-handed man named Horace Rand. "I'm pretty sure that I can understand it. I'm pretty sure that I'm sending it, in a way, through my own detached and observing left hand. I've sent a lot of mini-Morse by that hand. Yes, here is the message: 'All clear here. We're on the window ledges three floors above you. We sure did snooker those dogs and fellows, didn't we? Did you ever see dogs trying to follow a trail straight up into the air when they're falling straight down? They can't get any traction. Is it all clear down there? Can we come back down?'"

"Wandering hands, come back to us," Horace tapped in mini-Morse. And within three minutes all the severed hands had returned to their owners and were frolicking over them like so many pet squirrels.

"Our hands really could be handier for us now than they were before," Claire said. "This is neat. And the Line of the Future in my separated hand here has become quite clear and wonderfully detailed. I can't quite interpret it yet, but I feel that the ability and illumination for that is on the way to me."

They all knew what was happening, of course, and how that ability and illumination was coming to them. They knew that at the fontanel of the head there was a 'third-eye' that saw by a sense other than regular sight, the third eye that had been asleep in all of us for the last few short thousands of years, the third eye that should open to new unifying and illuminating vision any time now.

"Zoo monkeys and apes have become very arch and knowing in the last few

moments," the commentator on the 8:01 news spot was saying. "They look at the palms of their left hands and they laugh. They scratch their heads (they seem to have the new pate itch the same as humans do), but they scratch their heads with a sort of delight. They seem to know something that we don't."

The thirty persons in Fritz Der Grosse's rooms (natural leaders, every one of them) looked at the palms of their left hands ("Oh, roll over, now flatten out a bit, perfect, perfect!") and laughed with new joy. They scratched the tops of their heads (with their right hands only), and they scratched with a sort of delight. They were beginning to know things that nobody had ever known before.

And they ate more Happy Ox Hodgepodge. It's great brain-food, it's great disposition-and-attitude food, and it's the best 'third-eye' food in the world.

"The dolphins still contemplate their navels," the commentator was saying, "and now they seem to ripple the skin of their heads and whistle and giggle a lot."

"The dolphins already have the blow-holes at the proper place," a one-handed man named Cyril H. Digby said. "They are natural 'third-eye' creatures. The third eye as shown in old alchemical drawings has always looked at least as much like a dolphin's eye as a human's eye to me."

"But WHEW is on the job," the spot commentator was continuing. "The Deep-Bite Acid Treatment developed earlier in the evening for the obliteration of the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome' has been adapted and deepened for the obliteration of the 'Itchy Pate Syndrome.' The secondary motto of WHEW the Worldwide Health Enforcement Wardens is still 'Out by the Roots. Leave not a Trace.' WHEW is now making twenty million cures per minute Worldwide of the 'Itchy Pate Syndrome.'"

"Nipped in the bud," Vera Vanguard said, "or rather 'nipped in the bloom,' for we have already begun to bloom with our glorious new mutational-advance. We have the handy road maps to show us where we're going, to show us the future; and we begin to have the correlating inner-outer eye to show us where we really are now. It sees by a sense other than regular sight, but it sees totally. But WHEW is on the strike again. What will we do?"

"When a process has worked well once --" Fritz Der Grosse began.

"Then take a long cool look at it before you try it again," Horace Rand offered.

"We may not have time enough to take a long cool look," very said apprehensively.

"I say 'Lop them off!'," Fritz cried.

"Is it our heads you are talking about, man?" Cyril H. Digby asked.

"Yes, our heads," Fritz maintained it, "our wonderful heads with so much new illumination churning around in them. Oh, I feel myself getting smarter by the minute."

"I'm not sure that your latest proposal reflects that, man," Cyril said.

And now the 8:11 spot news commentator wis talking: "Within the last eight minutes WHEW has developed a new breed of hunting leopards that will savagely and instinctively zero in on severed human heads and find them and devour them. Don't look for easy outs, folks. WHEW will cure your pate itch in WHEW's own way."

"That just about does us in," Claire O'Hare railed. "The ledges outside the windows are too narrow for our heads. They'd roll off. And even if they didn't roll off, they wouldn't be able to climb up the walls to the higher stories. The leopared would have them right where they were."

"It's going to be a race, folks, and I always loved a race," Vera crowed with avid pleasure. "I feel myself getting smarter by the second, and I'm sure the rest of you are lighting up too. If only a WHEW crew doesn't got here for

three or four minutes we'll be so smart that we can outwit them a dozen different ways."

But a WHEW crew burst into the rooms in that very instant.

"Delay them just half a minute, group," Vera Vanguard begged her associates in a husky voice. "Oh, I'm getting so smart so fast that I know I'll think of something in half a minute."

But the WHEW crewmen were already inflicting the Deep-Bite Acid Treatment cures on the heads of group people, eating those third eyes clown to their roots before they were fully awake.

"No, no, our heads don't itch at all," Horace Rand protested.

"The Pruritus-meters are running and they say that your heads do itch," the chief of the WHEW crew said. "Great leaping leopards, that's what the joyful leaping marks on my Line of the Future are," Fritz cried. "Oh great leaping leopards!"

And the leaping leopards were in the room.

"Won't you WHEW gentlemen all have some Happy Ox Hodgepodge?" Vera asked.

"I will," the chief said, and he began to fill a big platter with it. "And my men will have some of it just as soon as they finish treating you people, just as soon as they are certain that they have you cured and no mistake about it."

"A report from India says that the elephants are looking into the ends of their trunks and cooing with delight," the commentator on the 8:16 news spot was saying. "And they are scratching the tops of their heads on the holes of trees with obvious pleasure."

"I suppose that the spill-over to the other intelligent species is a good thing," Fritz Der Grosse said, "but it is not enough. We need us too."

A one-handed man named Buford Cracksworthy, in a moment of panic, had lopped off his own head.

"Here, here, here," the chief of the WHEW crew cried. "That isn't allowed at all."

"Oh boy oh boy oh boy!" the severed head moaned in severe unease. The slumped-over body of Cracksworthy wasn't in control of its head, and the head wasn't in very good control of itself. That wasn't a successful way of saving the third eye.

One of the leaping leopards came, smashed the head, and then chewed it iipind swallowed it. It sounded as if the beast was chewing a head of cabbage.

"What a race, right down to the wire," Vera Vanguard chortled. "I'm getting so smart I'm about to bust. Oh, is it my turn now? Have you already blinded the third eyes, that is cured all the others? Hand, just let me see that line once more by my new illumination. Oh, I understand it. There is a delay, and there is a great burgeoning in the group futurity line then, an absolute incandescence. But my personal future line, why is it blurred?"

"I'll think of something, I'll think of something fast. Ouch! Say, that deep-bite acid does have a bite to it! Oh, its darker in here than it was. And I forget what I was trying to do."

#### TONGUES OF THE MATAGORDA

"I will tell you one of my early adventures," said Esteban of Azamor, "the adventure that, more than any other, made me what I am today. It is an account that should be cut in crystal for the magnificence of it, but I can do no i-nore than tell it in crystalline words."

"Make it that they are Quevenes words then," said a surly Quevenes Indian called Glaukos. "You know what will happen if you continue to use Spanish words."



"Oh certainly, you will cut another piece out of my tongue. But I've saved you the trouble. Here is a piece of my tongue that I cut off already. So if in my account I do use a Spanish word now and then, it is already paid for."

"This is no piece of your tongue," Gliukos said. "It is a piece of moon-crab meat. But I am starving so I will eat it." The Quevenes did not like their slaves to talk in words they did not understand; and to compel them to speak Quevenes they had indeed cut notches and slivers from the tongues of Esteban and also his companions in slavery, Captain Dorantes and Captain Castillo.

"It was in the year of Restored Salvation 1481 and I was the son of the Emperor Maximilian of the Holy Roman Empire when I decided that I would reach out my hand and obtain as big a share of the world and its glory as I was able to do," Esteban began his tale. "Oh, even more than I was able to do, for I intended to go into the area of the impossible. My father the Emperor had given me five realms in Europe and two in Asia, but that was hardly enough to satisfy a shining young man like myself."

"I have never heard of the Emperor Maximilian having a black son," Captain Castillo objected in that sunny voice of his.

"Did I say that I was a black person then?" Esteban asked. "No. I was fair of hair and skin. I was tawny as a lion, and as fierce. It was in the course of this heroic adventure that I became black person. Pay attention and do not interrupt. There is a rite and ceremony which is enacted on the day when the son of an Emperor decides to reach out his hand. Certain Jinns (Christians pretend not to know about the Jinns, but the Moslems understand that God created three intelligent species, Angels, Jinns and Humans) come to the son of even a Christian Emperor and pledge themselves to do favors for him and to stand by him in both success and adversity. They do this because every Jinn is himself the son of an Emperor somewhere. One of them promised me money unflinching; one of them promised me love unflinching; one of them promised me adequate might at arms against opponents of ordinary flesh. And so the promises were made by seven of them. But the eighth of them made me an odd and crabbed promise: 'If you are ever in an encounter where you are overmatched,' he said, 'you will have the choice of changing places with your opponent in all ways.' 'It's a favor of which I will have no use,' I said. 'By whom would I be overmatched?'"

"With nine hundred and ninety-nine followers, all of them like young lions in their hearts, I conquered three more realms in Europe, three more in Asia, and three in Africa where I had been unrealm'd before. Then I came to the central realm of Africa, the Kingdom of Sonrai. We had come over five hundred land leagues of desert to the wonderful City of Timbuktoo the capital of Sonrai which is like a paradise in the middle of the desert. There we met a force ten times our numbering that was captained by the tall and muscular son of King Askia of Sonrai. This son, who was named Esteban, was a great captain of combat. To each of my lion-spirited men he assigned ten of his strong and swift warriors. Each of my men killed the ten men sent against him, but each of my men lost his own life in slaying them. And finally there was nobody left except myself and Esteban the son of King Askia. 'Well, find nine more men somewhere and I will battle you,' I said. 'It is time that I put a finish to this.' 'It is myself and myself,' the big Esteban told me. 'I do not need nine other men. Perhaps you need them, but they will not be provided to you.' We began to fight with swords, and suddenly I was afraid. This Esteban was stronger and quicker than myself.

"His sword was longer and heavier and his shield was taller and more massive. He began to kill me with sure and careful blows, and I caught the frightening scent of my own dead body as it would be by sundown of that day. So, in my mind, I called on the Jinns for help. The first seven of them said 'We have already given you all that we promised to you, money and love and adequate might at arms against opponents of ordinary flesh. It is no fault of ours that this Esteban is of extraordinary and spectacular flesh.'

"'Oh, eighth Jinn, I am overmatched,' I cried then. 'For what it's worth, let me change places with this strong opponent in all ways.' At once I felt myself to be taller and stronger and faster of hand and arm and body. At once I was handling more easily a longer and heavier sword and taller and more massive shield. And my opponent was no longer a black African man, but a tawny lion man the color of desert sand, and his face was the face that had always been mine. And I saw that I myself now had black hands and arms and legs. So I killed the sand-colored man who had been myself, and cut off his head, and cut his body into four quarters. And by this I myself became Esteban of the spectacular flesh. 'Oh my son!' King Askia of Sonrai cried, and he came and put his arms around me. 'There has never been such a warrior as you since myself in my youth.' So I became Esteban the son of King Askia of Sonrai, and I have been that person ever since. I still have memories of the years when I was the son of Maximilian of the Holy Roman Empire, but that old body of mine has long since turned to dust. I don't know what the original Esteban has memories of or where his essence is now. I guess I am living in that essence. That is my heroic adventure."

"It is a good enough tongue," a Quevenes Indian called Melas said, "but it would be better if we had drummers to drum it and flutes to flute it. It lacks a little without them."

"But when I came upon you, Esteban, you were a boy of no more than thirteen years old," Captain Dorantes said, "and that was thirty-two years after the year 1481 of Restored Salvation."

"Oh, that is a part of a different story," Esteban said, "in which I had found and drunk of the fountain of youth and had become a young boy from it. And in my boyish guise I had wandered away from the Kingdom of Sonrai, and I have lost it this while."

"I'll tell you a tongue of an adventure that I had," said the Quevenes Indian called Glaukos, "which concerned the devil and his ugly sister. This was the devil named Jube, not your own devil named Diablo, who is not a real person."

There were five of them sitting on the mud-sand of Matagorda Bay of the Gulf of Mexico, and the year was probably 1530 or 1531. They were the big black man Esteban of Azamor, and the two Spanish men Captain Dorantes and Captain Castillo. These three were the first great explorers to cross the North American Continent, but there was no one to call them great here. They were temporarily (for more than a year now) slaves of the Quevenes Indian people. And there were two Quevenes Indian men, Glaukos and Melas. All five of these were 'head-taller men', men who stood a head taller than ordinary humans. All five of them, as it happened, were starving to death. In all other things they were distinctive and did not resemble each other very much.

This area was parched and its grass turned brown and black from lack of rain. Salt water had risen in all their water holes. Black buzzards were hanging in the hot air discussing whether this would be 'carrion evening' or not. They were weighing the five tall men with their hard eyes.

"I was rolling stones with the devil," Glaukos the Quevenes said. "I had a fine stone with six sides, all of them square, and the numbers on it were from one to six. But the devil (you can believe this or not, as you wish) had a stone with one-more-than-six sides to it, and on the extra side was the one-more-than-six number. As you know, we Quevenes have only the six regular numbers, and we have the saying that anything that cannot be counted with six numbers belongs to the devil. Well, that was all right for a saying, but now the devil was claiming that he had beat me at the stone rolling by rolling a number that I could not match, and that I owed him everything I owned, my fish-trap, my bow, my club, my shells and my colored stones, my life, and my death. 'If I owe them then I will pay them,' I said, 'except the last two. I want to keep my life and my death away from you.' We have more communication with Jube the devil than other tribes of people have because we are more evil than other people, more Jube's kind of people. 'I will offer you a barter,' the devil said. 'Marry my sister who is the ugliest woman in the world, and I

have not been able to find a husband for her anywhere. In barter for your marrying my sister I will wipe out all the debts you owe me and I will also give to you and your group the most favored land in all the world to live in.' 'I accept that barter,' I said. So I married the sister of Jube the devil, and I and my group received this wonderful land, this bay, these islands, these long necks of land, the smaller bays and smaller islands. It's true that this is the most favored land in the world. We have it good here, and we starve only five moons of the year. What other tribe of people in all the world does not starve it least six or seven moons of the year? And for two moons every year, when the stinker fish are swarming, we become the fattest people all the world. And my wife being the ugliest woman anywhere doesn't bother me at all, since I am the ugliest man. I tell you that there is nobody who call get ahead of me on a barter, not even Jube, the devil. This is my own tall tongue. It is the life or myself and of all my group."

"It is a good tall adventure," Captain Castillo acknowledged. This, as it happened, was in the middle of the five-moon period in which the Quevenes people always starved, and their one black and two white slaves would starve with them. Besides it being the regular starvation season, was i drought in the area this year. The Matagorda Bay (the name meant 'Fat Bush Bay' or, 'Fat Thicket Bay') was 'Skinny Bush Bay' this season.

Oh, there were sand fleas to catch and eat, but it takes 20,000 of them to make a good meal, and it takes five days to catch that many of them. The sand-mud shore of the Matagorda was very low, and it seemed as if they looked up at the hazy green water and its puny waves as they swished over the mud-sand. It was dry in that land and all of their sweet water holes had gone salt.

"I will tell you all an heroic adventure of my own," Captain Dorantes said. "it happened in the year 1520. Esteban will tell you that it could not have happened, that he was with me every moment of that year. But Esteban is mistaken. He has a forgetfulness of ninety-nine days during which I left him with a pawn broker in the town or Florence, in Italy. 'Let us step into this pawn shop and see if we can buy a good used falcon cheap,' I said to Esteban on that day. I am sorry that I just used a Spanish word, but I don't believe that the Quevenes have such a word or thing as pawn broker."

"We know what he is," said the Quevenes called Melis. "He is one who barterers all used property and used persons."

"Yes," Captain Dorantes said. "I came to the pawn shop in Florence because, whatever people say, one thing is not always as good as another. What I wanted must be of the City-of-Florence sort, and no other variety of it would serve. When I walked into the Florentine pawn shop with Esteban, I gave a secret sign to the pawn broker. He nodded to me. Then he took a needle with a leather bulb attached to it and jabbed it into the arm of Esteban. Esteban immediately became glazed-eyed and out of his wits. The pawn broker took the lid off a clay jar that was taller than a tall man. Then he jabbed Esteban in the buttock with a different sort of needle; and Esteban, still out of his wits, jumped three varas up in the air and came down inside the clay jar. 'One hundred ducats for him for a hundred days,' the pawn broker said as he put the lid back on the big jar with Esteban inside it. 'I agree,' I told him, and the pawn broker counted out one hundred gold ducats to in one of the hundred, however, was a Spanish gold ducat, and I had him replace it to me so all of them would be Florentine ducats.

"I'll work him at night, of course,' the pawn broker said. 'I have a fulling mill for fulling cloth. It consists of a strong man with a hammer. He will be the strong man. I have a treadmill that squeezes honey out of the reed-canes from overseas that we begin to grow here. I have another treadmill thit drives the grinders to mill wheat and barley and rye and millet. These slaves work very hard for me when they are in this mind-captured state, and they do not really suffer. They believe they are only dreaming that they are trudging on worse tread-mills than those in hell and are suffering more hellishly.'

"That is all right,' I said. 'He is very strong.' I took my hundred gold Florentine ducats then and I went to Spain. There was a civil war going on in Spain at that time and certain cities had risen against the realm. I served as captain for our brave Emperor of Spain to put down this rebellion. But I also intended to locate and possess the greatest treasure in the world which was buried somewhere under the Alcazar Fortress.

"As captain of infantry forces, I broke the back of the rebellion of the against Spain. 'Brave Captain Dorantes,' the Emperor Charles told me, 'For your services I will pay you almost any sum as reward. I'll give you twenty gold ducats for having saved Spain.' 'One hundred and twenty,' I countered him. 'Twenty-five,' he came back at me. 'One hundred and eighteen,' I lowered my figure a little. But we finally fastened onto one hundred gold ducats of Spain as the reward for serving the country. I put them in my pocket along with the hundred gold of Florence, and I went to the Alcazar Fortress and down into the cellar of it. Then I went down into the cellar under the first one, and then to a still lower cellar. I knew that the greatest treasure in the world was in the lowest cellar of the Alcazar. I also knew that the monster who guarded it could be bribed, though this was against the common belief that the monster was incorruptible. But he could only be bribed with the gold ducats of Florence. The father of the monster, a Florentine dragon who had been in the service of the Great Lorenzo, had taught that the only trusted specie in the world was the Florentine. So the monster would have nothing to do with the gold ducats of Spain or Naples or Venice or Constantinople.

"I gave the monster (he was of the genus Draco) the one hundred gold ducats of Florence that I had received from renting out Esteban, and the monster declared me to be the new owner and master of the fortune. I looked at it through the little peep hole into the iron room which contained it, As I had no other place to put it, and no way to carry it away with me, we decided to leave it where it was. The monster transferred the key to the treasure room from one to another of his pockets in token of the changed ownership. So now I am the richest man in the world and the owner of the world's greatest treasure."

"What are 'pockets'?" Glaukos asked. "How many of them did the monster have? Maybe that monster had a good thing going."

"I went back to Florence," Captain Dorantes said. "And I paid the pawn broker back with the one hundred Spanish ducats. He grumbled that he would rather have Florentine ducats, but he accepted the Spanish. The pawn broker wakened Esteban by jabbing him again with a needle in his buttock, and Esteban leaped three varas up in the air and came down outside the clay jar in which he had been living. I set the good used falcon into Esteban's hands as he woke up. 'It is a perfect hunting bird, just what I wanted,' he said. He did not know that ninety-nine days had passed since we had first entered the pawn shop. He thought it had only been an instant.

"The pawn broker gave me one of the motivating sort of needles just to show what a pleasure it was to do business with me. I have it yet. I can, but I will not, jab Esteban in the buttock with it and he will leap three varas into the air and land in a clay jar, though I don't know where the jar will have come from. This is the heroic account of how I became the owner of the greatest treasure in the world."

"If you make me leap three varas into the air, you will be the clay jar that I will come down in the middle of," Esteban told Captain Dorantes, "and I will come down hard."

Matagorda Bay is not the hottest place in the world. It is no more than the third or fourth hottest ordinarily, though now it was a little bit hotter than that because of the long dry weather. It is not the most stinking place in the world. It is about the fifth most stinking. The mosquitos there are not the largest in the world. They are only the eighth largest. But if the Matagorda was not the worst place in the world, neither was it the best. The

official name of the place was Holy Ghost Bay, but the Holy Ghost had traded it off to Jube the devil.

"I'll tell you the tongue how I became the greatest hunter in the world," the Quevenes Indian named Melas said. "I had always been a great runner. I could run so far and so fast because I imitated the running animals: the wolf for the long hard run, and the mountain lion for the shorter bursts of steep speed. A man can sometimes run down a deer by himself, but he does it by running like the running animals. I ran so much like them that I became them. I ran down on four legs. I leaped. I pounced. I was the tireless wolf for most of the chase, and then I was the leaping mountain lion for the catch and the kill. Persons who saw me running in those ways thought that I was a wolf and a mountain lion. I felt myself to be them too. And so I was them. I would rise in front of the deer in my wolf form and send the deer running wildly across the prairie. And then I would circle around it and get ahead of it again. I was able to do this because when I tired myself out running as a wolf I would change, and then I would have the rested strength of the mountain lion still waiting for me to use. And then, when the myself-as-lion ram, the myself-as-wolf rested; but the itself-as-deer never got to rest. So I am able to drive most of the deer where I want them, and I kill most of them in my own area here. When I kill one, I bury it in the sand-mud for three days to rot a little and to become loose in the joints and easy to devour. And I did that with a deer just three days ago. I had forgotten about it, but now the smell of that deer comes to my nostrils. So we will dig it up and eat it when the sun has dropped one bow-length lower.

"But first I must tell you that all deer are not as they seem. Some of them are human people. Young women and girls like to run in the form of doe deers, and they cannot change back into their human form while they are being hunted and kept on the move. It is a sort of summer moon-madness that compels them, some of them quite young girls, to run across the grassy plains and on the edges of the salt marshes as doe deers. And some of the young men like to run in the form of buck deers. I believe it is persons blowing on little cottonwood flutes who set them onto this notion of turning into deers and running. Seven years ago, a young woman of this region gave birth to a little fawn deer. And I think it must have been that both herself and her young man were running and playing in the deer form when they mated.

"When you kill a human in the deer form, then it dies as a deer and you bury it as a deer. But when you dig it up to eat it three days later, you may find that it is the dead body of a human person. I myself have got several bleak surprises this way, once digging up the body of one of my daughters that I had buried as a killed deer, once digging up the body of one of my sons in the same kind of event. I have dug up five different human persons that I have buried as deers. They all have a whiff on them a little bit different from that. Of those who are both buried and dug up as I think I catch that little-bit-different whiff now, from a mud mound only six paces from here. When the sun has dropped another half bow-length, we will dig it up and see which it is; but I will put another log on the fire now to be ready. And when we have dug it up and roasted it a little bit, we will eat it with either a sad or a happy stomach, whatever the case may be."

Well, they were hungry. They needed big meat of some kind.

"I also have an heroic story-adventure to tell," Captain Castillo said. "It is not that I myself am a hero either inside or outside of the story. It is that I have been in places that were themselves heroic, that I have washed in heroic sunshine and heroic water, and I have walked on heroic hills, aye, and in heroic skies. But what I am going to do now is live out a small heroic adventure rather than tell it.

"John writes in his Apocalypse 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no sea. I believe that this passage as we have it is somehow incomplete. A seaman once spoke to me of this very passage 'If there is no sea there, then I won't

go.' But I believe there will be a new ocean, one of sheer crystal, and that John somehow forgot to mention it. I am a man who is in love with water, even such rotten water as surrounds us here.

"I have been called a dreamy man; and all my life I have dreamed (both sleeping and waking) of blessed and crystalline water of every form. When I became a doctor of medicine, this dream of sweet waters went through my healing. When I became a captain of soldiers, the occanness of writhing waters ran through all my authority. I have walked on arcliing bridges of water; not of ice, but of water. I have climbed cliffs of water and lived in water castles. And I've gone down into watery caverns deeper than the dolphins can go.

"I believe that water is the same as grace when it falls as rain on the earth. I believe that an insufficiency of sweet water is meant to be a pang and a punishment, and that the present salt swamps of the Matagorda are the salt swamps of Purgatory itself. But I also maintain that every person and group can say when his sentence and punishment has gone on long enough. I am about to say it now.

"I myself have been given powers. I am able to lock up a sky so that neither rain nor grace may fall upon a region, though I have never done that. Now I believe that I have the power to open a clogged sky so that rain and grace may fall again."

"Not quite yet," said the Quevenos man named Glaukos. "Let us set the rocks above the fire first to make a roof over it." They had two very large flat rocks, and it took all five of the powerful men to work together to lift each of them. They lifted them and set them on a frame of sticks and stones about the height of a man above the hearth stone. It would shed rain pretty well. It would protect the fire.

By the time the hearth was roofed, the armadillos had arrived. They stood and rattled their armor, and whimpered. There were five of these armadillos in a small tribe that had come for the last four days and rattled insistently. The men always knew what the little armored beasts wanted, that they should dig with their spade deeper into the sand-mud than the animals could dig. For four days, in response to their whimpering, Esteban had dug with the spade more than eight feet deep. Each day the animals had gone down to the water that seeped into the hole, and had found it salt, and had gone away sorrowful. If there was any sweet water at all it would ride on top of the heavier salt water. Today the armadillos came even less hopefully than before. If they did not find sweet water today they would die. So Esteban began to dig another deep hole. And Captain Dorantes and the Quevenos called Melas set out all their clay pots and bowls to catch the rain.

"There is a small cloud," Captain Castillo was saying. "I command that it become a big cloud and that it come over us. I command it as a natural element, and I pray to the Holy Ghost that it may happen."

"This man does not know how to command!" the Quevenos called Glaukos jeered. "It is I who command it! Tremble, cloud, and come."

"Let us all command, exhort, pray, and cajole the cloud at the same time," Esteban boomed reasonably enough from the hole he was digging. And the five of them, the Captains Dorantes and Castillo, the African Black Esteban, the two Quevenos Indians Glaukos and Melas, all commanded and reasoned and prayed and cajoled.

Then something began to happen with a jolt, as if the machinery of the sky had made a mechanical shift.

"I can feel that the tide has turned in our favor," Captain Castillo said.

"The tide is too slow and too sour," Glatikos admonished. "Has the cloud turned in our favor?" He was watching it with his ugly face intently upraised.

Yes it had. The little white cloud that had intended to pass them to the north was now veering back towards them. It turned black and enlarged itself. It filled the sky over their heads and began to rain on them, softly and

steadily.

"Men, do not just stand there!" the Quevenes called Melas cried. "When there is one good luck try for another one immediately before the first one grows cold. We may yet have meat that we will not have to shudder at when we eat. Help me dig out the buried deer. With our new running luck, it will still be deer when we dig it out and eat it."

Esteban came out of his dug water hole with his spade. The armadillos tumbled down into it and howled with delight to find sweet water. Of course it was sweet. The rain water was pouring down into that hole in little torrents. Then Esteban with the spade, and others with rocks and sticks to dig with, uncovered the body of the buried deer. At first it seemed that they had uncovered the face of a human girl, but that was only the tricky afternoon light coming fractured through the rain into the burial hole. It was a doe deer of incomparably gentle expression. It was mildly rotten. It had become loose in the joints and would be easy to dismember and roast and devour. So they dug it out of the hole.

The deer skinned easily, the mild rot helping. It unjointed easily. Bigger pieces went directly into the flat fire in the hearth stone, and smaller pieces were spitted in the flint-fire for quicker charring and eating. The man divided the tongue of the deer, into five parts, one for each of them, for they were all tongue men this day.

"Your tongue, your story was the strongest, water-master," the Quevenes Glaukos told Captain Castillo. "It brought rain for our dying piece of land and good water for our sandy throats."

"No, my tongue, my story was the strongest," the Quevenes Melas contradicted. "It brought deer meat and saved us from starvation. My mind was confused with my hunger and I did not even remember that I had killed and buried a deer three days ago. Then my 'tongue' which I told recalled the happening to my mind, so we do not have to starve to death after all. And now our luck has changed to the good. The black buzzards are gone out of the sky, and the white gulls have come to bounce and loiter in the rainy air. Gulls are good luck birds."

Five heroic stories! Five heroic tongues! (The Quevenes Indians call a 'story' a 'tongue'.) The five tongues hadn't resembled each other very much. They had only one thing in common: all of them had been true.

"I feel it," Esteban said. "Something is flowing for us now. Howl, tongue, howl! Burned yourself, didn't you? You knew you'd get burned if you tried that piece of deer meat while it was still hot. But it's better than starving."

"I also feel the power flowing in our favor," Captain Dorantes said. "Oh, from this moment on, greatness has found us!"

"A wonderful tide and a wonderful favor," Captain Castillo said. "We will not die in this miserable place. We will travel five hundred hard land leagues to get to other places, but then we will have our crystal day in the sun, in the new sun."

The five armadillos waddled off, fat-stomached from the new water they had drunk. They were making satisfied and thankful grunts. They raised their tails in going-away salutes as they passed. Even their skinny tails had rows after rows of skinny armored scale plates.

#### MAKE SURE THE EYES ARE BIG ENOUGH

It rings like happy thunderclap,  
The nine-tenths world of clown.  
It's 'Things Returned' with sop and hap.  
It's circus Game to town.

A discovery was made in the field of phenomenal psychology early this week. It consisted of opening the eyes and seeing the nine-tenths of the world that had previously been invisible. The discovery was simply there for persons

of a certain type, and it had not been there before.

It had been there for certain kids for at least a day. Then it had been there for a tyrannical old lady named Mary Imperial McSlim, and she found it so amazing that she decided to keep it for herself. But the next noontime it was there for her grandson Rusty McSlim, the great phenomenal psychologist, and he was excited enough about it to want to share it with the entire world, and that evening it was experienced by a dozen of McSlim's great colleagues whom he had called together to tell about it. That was when the thing was effectively there.

But three others of the colleagues who were present didn't experience it at all. They even said that it was another sample of McSlim's droll humor.

The new experience or discovery was a wider range of seeing and sensing. It was the quick cognition of animations and people and off-people and pantograms and joyous beasts and monsters that had heretofore been invisible. It was seeing the other nine-tenths of the world in its racing brightness, and the realizing that the one-tenth of the world that had always been visible was comparatively a little bit sub-par. It was -- well, it was the sensual pleroma, the fulfillment, the actualization, all this laced with the excited "Hey, where have you guys been!" motif.

Mary Crisis McSlim, a kid and the daughter of Rusty McSlim, had seen the enlarged scene earliest; but the first accountable or adult person to see it had been her great-grandmother Mary Imperial McSlim, the grandmother of Rusty McSlim the great phenomenal psychologist. And old Mary Imperial had seen that enlarged world by a peculiar arrangement.

Great-grandmother Mary Imperial was an old tyrant, and now fate had punished her for her tyrannies. She was confined to her bed for the rest of her life. She had always wanted to see everything, and now she couldn't. So the great Rusty McSlim fixed it so that his afflicted grandmother could see with the happy and hungry eyes of his lively daughter, Mary Crisis, who ran everywhere and saw everything.

All that Rusty had to do was drill a small hole through the lachrymal crest of his daughter, between the bridge of her nose and her left eye socket (Mary Crisis was left-eyed), and set a mini-probe into the lacob's membrane at the back of her eye. And the probe was attached by tight magnetic couple to a little recording retro-camera made to hook over the left ear of Mary Crisis. Mary Crisis didn't like it hanging on her ear though, so she wore it stuck with chewing gum in the corner of her eyebrow. This, of course, gave much greater fidelity to the running pictures.

The camera was a small cube about two millimeters on a side. If it had used a lens of its own instead of the lens in the left eye of Mary Crisis, it would need to be at least four millimeters on a side, and Mary Crisis might have let it get covered up or she would have forgotten to turn it on. But she turned on her own eyes automatically.

Every afternoon when Mary Crisis came in from her lively day, she would click that day's picture-capsule (a cube about one millimeter on a side) out of the little camera and give it to her great-grandmother Mary Imperial. And old Mary Imperial would put it in her projector and watch it for several happy hours, seeing everything that the hungry eyes of Mary Crisis had seen that day, and seeing it all with the immediacy and buoyancy that Mary Crisis contributed to it. And the great-grandmother would go, in surrogate fashion, everywhere that Mary Crisis and her three best friends, Eustace Riggles, Bravura Jones, Henry Gusset, had gone that day.

Well, Mary Imperial couldn't see with the eyes of the three friends of Mary Crisis, but Mary C was clearly the wide-eyed and hungry-eyed one of the group. Eustace was all ears, Henry was all mouth, and Bravura was all motion; and she was almost always in the field of vision of Mary C anyhow. And what the eyes of Mary C did bring was a varied panorama of the pulsing world containing everything from giggling cows to new-born birds and city traffic.

Giggling cows? Yes, for the last couple of days there had been giggling cows.



This surrogate seeing had become a big and sustaining thing in the life of old Mary Imperial, and she prayed that nothing would ever go wrong with the arrangement. But it was a ten-fold bonus for her when everything suddenly went exuberantly right with the surrogate living and viewing.

On the evening of the record, she saw the already lively world as greatly magnified and wonderfully exploded and fantastically added to. She saw 'our companions and friends', the aura of other creatures with which we are usually invisibly surrounded. And a great quantum stop in perception had been made.

How thin and tinny and how few in number had been the objects in our old field of view! How mediocre in color and how undistinguished in style it had all been! How un-flamboyant the world had been before this! She viewed for quite a few hours.

Then she buzzed for her great-granddaughter Mary Crisis just at midnight, and Mary C came almost instantly from her bed. People always came almost instantly when Mary Imperial buzzed for them.

"You saw so many additional things today, Mary C, such enhanced things, such a mass of wonderful things and people. How?" she asked.

"I don't know. All my gang saw the new people and things and whirlings today. We say it's the circus come to town, the Big Circus this time. We keep seeing and knowing more and more guys and their dogs, some of those dogs twenty-five feet long; and they're all so friendly and monstrous looking. We keep getting hit, 'bop!', by more and more colors and better ones. Have a stick of Sappy-Happy Chewing Gum, G-G Mother. Open up and live a little."

"You know that civilized people don't chow gum, sappy-happy great-granddaughter of mine. There has been a premonition of this for several days. Do those giggling cows in Monaghan's meadow have anything to do with these new things?"

"Yes, I think so," Mary Crisis said. "They started before this other business started, maybe two days before. They had already been giggling for quite a while before we began to see the Big Circus. I think that they were already seeing what we saw today."

There was an incredible advance and expansion in the seeing adventure, that's what it was. There had never been anything like it for a long, long time. When medium-early man had suddenly acquired color-vision and so moved out of the old black-and-gray dinginess, that must have been something of the same explosive and emerging experience.

But the old tyrant Mary Imperial didn't get all of it. She got only the visual part, and she got that second hand. She should have opened up and lived a little, as Mary Crisis told her. But she missed it by declining the symbol that was more than a symbol.

Rusty McSlim caught the full phenomenon about noon the next day, and he didn't know what triggered it. It wasn't something he had eaten; he hadn't eaten anything that day yet. It came onto him like a big door banging open and letting in endless masses of sunshine and color, all of them inhabited by stimulating creatures that Rusty felt he knew from somewhere.

Rusty was an acute observer of the phenomenon from the time it first came to him, and he had more than just a 'seeing' of the new throngs of creatures, human, quasi-human, way-off-human, and comically and rampantly animal.

Besides the seeing of these folk he also had the bountiful smells of them. Hey, the odd creatures do smell good when you catch them at full whiff! And he heard them, with other ears, with old pointed ears that he had forgotten about having. He did not hear by conventional sound that is often irritating, but by the most wonderful invention ever, sound without noise! And he understood the 'talk' of these nations of creatures, though perhaps it should be called 'communication' rather than literal 'talk'.

And he also had a great new comprehension by that blending of all the senses (the 'common sense' in the old meaning) whose organ of perception is

located just below the fontanel of the head.

Rusty McSlim observed and reveled, and nided his time. This was almost too much to take in at once. These newly-visible folks ran from typhoeans (extreme types, they) to very close cousins of humans. And the new-appeared animals had a much wider range, though there were no strict rules for determining which were mere animals and which were intellectual quasi-humans. Rusty spoke civilly when he was spoken to, but he did not yet take any initiatives.

But, that evening, Rusty convoked a group of his close associates; and twelve of his fifteen gathered colleagues experienced the whole fulfilment. All of them were phenomenal psychologists, and so they knew the importance of recording their impressions. Most of them spoke their observations into their recorders (which phenomenal psychologists even take to bed with them); and at the same time they set four panoramic cameras to gobbling everything up.

But the most startling observation that they made was that the observing was a two-way street. The 'now-appearance persons' were regarding the human psychologists as themselves being new and they were quite interested in them. Some of these appearances, a 'first-time-ever-seen' quasi-humans were recording their own observations of the McSlim group.

There was one large near-human person who was really a jolly green giant, but done with quite a bit more style than the giant of the old advertisements.

"Out of mythology!" the green giant gasped and grinned. "I never expected anything this exciting. You are creatures right out of mythology!" And he had his own recorder switches on to catch his own jolly green comments. "Amazing," he said, "You really are amazing!"

That was a recorder the big green person was using?

"Let me see that, let me see that!" cried Doctor Darrel Dogstar whose real field was electronic psychology. "We don't have anything as smooth and sophisticated as that, not at any price."

"Oh, it's just a little knock-about model. It is good to see you folks, really good to see you! Every new acquaintance we make enlarges all of us," the jolly green person was speaking to Darrel Dogstar who was examining the smooth and sophisticated recorder. "We always suspected that you were there. You had to be there to to explain certain eccentricities in the animate continuum, but we could never see you or sense you before. We considered filling you with luciferic fluid to make you visible in outline, but that is a little bit like putting salt on the tail of a pterosaur: you have to catch it first. And now you are apparently lit up by some chemical accident, and we can see and sense you almost as easily as we can see ourselves and persons of the other participating groups. Well, we have caught a group of you here now, and we have filled you with luciferic fluid, unbeknownst to yourselves; so we will still be able to see you even if the effect of your chemical accident wears off. And it won't matter whether you continue to see us or not. We know what we look like and we don't need you to confirm it. And yet we welcome you as a participating species, if you are such."

"To us, this is a total surprise," Rusty McSlim spoke in honest humility. "We hadn't even an inkling of your existence."

"Not so, not so!" half of McSlim's colleagues leaped to lie about the situation. "Of course we knew that you existed, most of you. Your existence was mandatory for the operation of some of our psychological equations."

The sense of touch was the only one not in full scope here. The entities of some of the different orders couldn't touch each other, though to a limited extent (the limit was the strength of the electrical or coronal discharge experienced in touching alien tools) they could handle each others' artifacts.

"It may be a peculiar question," hazarded Doctor Jorkus Halliburton whose forte was astral psychology, "but what year is this where you are? Is it with you as it is with us?" He asked this of one of the beautiful fish-faced people.

"Oh, we don't use years," said that beautiful person, "and 'here' is where we are. Years are so temporal. You will notice that only the wavering and changeable species use them, only about half of the species who are members of the 'great visibility'. You should know that yourselves still haven't become visible to all the species here present. Try harder."

"We don't know what to call all of you. If we call you 'people' there may be some confusion," said Doctor Lollie Lindwurm who was about as phenomenal a psychologist as you'll find. "We just aren't the same. We are impressed by you, but you make up a very odd cousinship for ourselves. The green giant says that we are creatures out of mythology, but I believe that some of you entities are angelic messengers ascending and descending on Jacob's Ladder."

"Not many of us are angelic messengers," said a lizard-faced person of one of the cousinly species. "Hardly one in a thousand. It's probably at least as frequent among you as among most of us. Generally we are in horizontal or 'big circle' relationship with each other, and there isn't much ascending or descending to it. Up with the lateral movement! That's what I always say. Oh, are you old enough to have known Jacob, female cousin?"

"There seem to be fewer outright animals and more quasi-people among you now than there were when I was out and about today," Rusty McSlim said.

"We're indoors now," answered a lordly type, probably a thunder-man, "and the larger beasts are left outdoors."

"You site] that we are apparently lit up by a chemical accident," Daniel Dogstar essayed. "But why do you think that our breakthrough is an especially chemical one?"

"Oh, you're a chemical species," a fine-looking, rubbery, frog-faced person said, "just as I myself belong to all Urstuff species, lion-molecular and non-all-that-detail. You are not so much creatures right out of mythology as you are creatures right out of a chemistry book. You remind me of some of the cartoon characters in Elementary Basic Chemistry Number One. You yourself, entity Dogstar, are an almost perfect depiction of the protean spirit of Protein as drawn in our elementary texts. You are hinged and articulated just as a protein molecule is. We ourselves, I'm afraid, do not offer such graphic insights into any of the disciplines. I can see that it's going to be a real bash, exploring you people who have always been invisible to us. I love alien encounter."

"But you must understand that your being made manifest isn't really an unusual thing. It is only that some of us have not personally encountered an instance of it before. A new species is added to the community of the 'great visibility' every aeon or so, and now it is your turn to be added. And you will be added, though there may be a little bit of that 'watch those bumps!' experience for two or three days as you cross the threshold."

2

What happy incremental eyes!  
What newly opened door!  
The 'rest of world' in weirdly-wise  
Reunions us, and more.

More about thit evening meeting cannot be given right here and now. Doctor Darrel Dogstar got his book First-Ever Meeting with the Simultaneous Aliens into print and on sale within eleven hours, and he has writs out to prevent anyone else descibing the full conversations and congresses that went on that night. The writs will run out, of course, after the book has enjoyed its three full days on sale: but this is 'now' and not three days from now.

But almost all who had been present had good feelings about that meeting, especially the part about the human beings being taken for creatures right out of mythology. And the 'happiness motif' was very strong in the encounter, strong beyond the ability of words to describe. The reunion with

our kindred was just about the juiciest well of euphoria ever tapped.

But, next day, some of the colleagues gradually lost their power of seeing the invisible; and by noon that power was gone from them. Only two of them, besides McSlim, retained the rapport and the seeing. And yet that was the day when several million persons in the United States, substantial numbers in the Netherlands, and scatterings of folks in England, France, Germany, Turkey, Japan, and Australia began to see and to sense in the full way, to make contact with what they were already calling 'the other nine-tenths of the world', with the quasi-people and quasi-animals and quasi-spooks.

So the experience was valid in that it had been partaken of by several million people: and it looked as though it would soon be shared by hundreds and thousands of millions, by almost everybody. And yet the encounter itself could not be considered as fully verified until it was known how it happened, until it was known why it happened to some people only and not to all, and until it could be brought about at will.

So the hunt for an effector was on. If one computer with one car-load of data couldn't find it, then perhaps a hundred computers with ten thousand carloads of data could find it.

Why had the new power come to only a few millions of people and not to the hundreds of millions and the billions? Were the people who received the power all of one type? And what were the characteristics of that type? What particular thing did the people of the 'new seeing' eat or smell or drink or stick in their ears? What thing, that the people lacking the power did not use?

The people who had managed the 'Big See', well, they had been rather kiddish people, and four-fifths of them were kids indeed. They were breezy and easy. They were un-intricate, even when they were rather intelligent. They were casual. They were at the same time rapid and relaxed.

Or (and this may be important) they were folks who had been in the company of such casual people when they first experienced the new powers: and they just may have shared some triggering, lifestyle item of the casual people.

No, one computer couldn't solve it, and one hundred couldn't. But two hundred and twelve computers were able to do it in a little less than two hours. They got it down to about two million possible items, and then everybody knew that the hunt was almost over with. And quickly the computers had it down to a single item, verified and certain.

The item, of course, was Sappig-Happig Chewing Gum, called Sappy-Happy by the children in the United States. And everybody said "Why didn't I guess that?" when the computers had worked out the answer. What else could it have been? It's name in Dutch meant 'Juicy Keen' or 'Juicy Slurp', and the gum was a product of the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Company, their newest flavor of chewing gum which brought their total flavors to the number of sixty-six. Chewing gum was now one of the thousands of things made out of petroleum in the attempt to reduce the glut of all oil products. And the largest gum factories, including those of Royal Dutch Shell, were in the United States where the chewing gum habit was the largest.

So it was announced to the world that the enabling factor for the 'big see' was this new and exotic flavor of chewing gum. Then everybody began to chew Sappig-Happig gum; and another hundred million persons in the world enjoyed the larger vision and the acquaintance of their near cousins who had been till now invisible. A billion persons in the world would have enjoyed the larger vision that day except that the world supply of Sappig-Happig ran out without even reaching most of the world.

Never mind that; it would be produced and allocated quickly, tomorrow enough for a billion people, the next day enough for nine billion, so that each person could have at least one package to tide him over until full production could be achieved. And there was even the belief that the chewing gum with its enabling ingredient, whatever it was, was only the nose of a great many-faceted chemical advent for the fulfillment of mankind.

The 'Reunion of the Peoples' was a stupenduous thing. The 'Big See' was an 'event for ten thousand years'. "It's a world so much bigger than we thought it was" was a frequent comment by people who had had the new sight. It couldn't all have been comprehended in a day or a week, and something less than a week has so far been allotted to it.

In the context of the 'Big See' the laws of numbers and space became more lenient. For, considering how many of the new creatures there were probably ten times as many as the old creatures, there wasn't much crowding. And there wasn't any strong feeling of inferiority in the humans over the new relationships, for the humans were at least halfway up the hierarchy of creatures.

The new animals, seen for the first time, were really more striking and more varied than the new 'people' ("It's like wildest Africa raised many powers," somebody said about those new animals), but only a few of the 'old animals', some of the cattle, a few of the horses, as yet seemed to be aware of them. The 'giggling cattle' found here and there apparently found the 'new visibilities' friendly and risible, and they took delight in them.

And the now Flora-now-become-visible were solid achievements. There were trees so much taller and stronger and better-done than the trees that had been visible before. There were bushes that were Bushes, there was grass that was Grass. And even the unliving landscapes were superior. The simultaneous rivers were much more rampant and distinguished than any known before, more 'riverly'. The hills, the plains, the mountains, oh they were giantized, and yet they didn't deform or destroy the old landscape. It was just that about nine more aspects of the world were now known.

And when the other nine-tenths of the 'old people' should be able to see the other nine-tenths of the living world that had heretofore been invisible (and that shouldn't be later than the end of this week) then a new phase of humanity and of the world would be realized.

But the new batch of Sappig-Happig chewing gum was a bummer. Not only was it a little bit weak on chewability, but it was completely lacking in the 'Big See' qualities.

So the people of the world suffered severe withdrawal symptoms, even that great majority who had not yet experienced that expansive opening. People went very sour then and they downplayed yesterday's exciting phenomena. They were told that the great thing would come again sorely in a day or two, but they were skeptical about the whole business.

Critics claimed that the fact that the made-visible 'cousins' spoke in the observers' own language, whether English or Dutch or Japanese, proved that the whole syndrome of events was subjective and fictitious. And yet all the more discerning witnesses had said that the new folks had not exactly 'spoken' to them but only that they had 'communicated' with them as clearly and naturally as if they were speaking in words.

And others said that the whole complex was no more than a psychological quirk, a substitution. It was the case of inadequate persons having alienated themselves from human friends by their difficult personalities, and then imagining crowds of new friends who should be a bit different than the objectionable humans, after much superior to them. These same critics pointed out that the chewing of gum is itself a psychological quirk and a substitution, an activity without content indulged in by persons who were themselves without content, a noisy gnawing on virtual nothingness. And many said that the whole affair was only a soap-bubble, a day-fly, rather colorful and striking for a short moment; and now that moment was gone.

The entire complexity and recognition was denigrated as being messianic, millennial, chiliastic, soteriological, pleratic, and silly. Strong words, those! It was even called Orwellian and big-brotherish.

But thoughtful persons who had themselves experienced the 'Big See' knew that it had been a foot-in-the-door beyond which door the other nine-tenths of

the world was really to be found.

But dashed hope was huge and world-wide.

But new hopes were springing up like springtime flowers. There was a total investigation of the chewing gum affair. And the enabling or triggering element that had been in the introductory batch would be identified and reconstituted.

Within one hour, the world-wide investigation converged on one man, one "Flavor-Master" at the largest gum factory. His name was John Mastic, and he had been a Flavor-Master for twenty-seven years.

"I am an artist," John Mastic told the articted investigators. "When I mix the First batch of a new Flavor, I am painting a dawn, I am composing a symphony, I am creating a folk drama, I am bringing up cool deep meanings from the cellar of the soul, I am setting the juice of life to flowing. Each first batch of a new flavor is blended in this one big vat here in the amount of about eighty thousand kilograms.

"Yes, I am careful to jot down everything that I put in. And then if the flavor catches on, it can be duplicated in any of the [f@ictories](#). Oh, there was the basic chickle first, there were a hundred kilos of essence of walnuts, there was lemon and citron, there were the four sorts of sugar, there was the coconut fibre. There was the powdered graphite to give it slipability. There was the mint and the wormwood. And there were our own patented Sialogogue Number Nine which no other chewing gum manufacturer is able to dilplicate. And there were twenty thousand kilos of synthetic corn cobs, made from crude oil, to give it chewability. That's it."

"We have the list", the articted investigators said, "and, yes, it agrees with what you remember. But some element is missing, missing."

"Can't think of what it could be," John Mastic answered cheerfully. And the articted investigators left him with end-of-the-roadish expressions on their faces.

"I forgot to tell those fellows that I used four thousand kilos of Youngman's Royal Range Pellets in place of the same weight of synthetic corn cobs," John Mastic told himself three minutes later. "The market is so mixed up lately that range pellets are actually cheaper than synthetic corn cobs (both of them largely made out of petroleum), and the chewability element is at least equal in the pellets. I can't see where it would make any difference though."

"Why don't we have the Lord Protector of the United States in Washington get together with the Lord Protectors of all the other countries and declare a world crisis," Mary Crisis McSlim asked her father Rusty McSlim. "That's the only thing to get something done, to make a world crisis out of it."

"Now, I don't think we'll need a world crisis at all, Mary C," Rusty said.

"Need it! New-creature hokey, we want it! There is nothing like a world crisis to get people stirred up. Why do you think we won't need it, papa?"

"Ah, I just heard cockroaches giggling in the pantry. When even cockroaches see the 'Big See', can people be far behind?"

"For a bunch of giggling cockroaches you'd throw away the opportunity for a world crisis? Oh, you shatter me," Mary Crisis said.

In two days, they still haven't been able to reconstitute any Sappig-Happig chewing gum containing the 'Big See' qualities. Nevertheless, four or five hundred million persons in the world are already onto the expanded vision without it. It will succeed, with chemicals or without, with substitutes and surrogates, or by sudden combinations. The odds are too high (the acquisition of the missing nine-tenths of the world) to give up easily.

The cows are still giggling their delight in Monaghan's meadow, and they are still munching those good Youngman's Royal Range Pellets. Those happy cattle are surely enjoying the 'Big See' yet.

And so are other things.

Gar-fish are giggling in the lakes. Honker geese are giggling in their skies and in their swamps. Earthworms are giggling in the ground, and squirrels are chortling in the hickory trees. And many of these species have neither eaten Youngman's Royal Range Pellets nor chewed Sappy-Happy gum. The Fish-and-Game Department guys are reporting happier species by the hour.

It is a many-fronted chemical advent, a world-wide movement. It has come to the gophers in their tunnels. It will come even to the lords of creation very soon, maybe even to the rest of them today. And when it comes, it will be a nine hundred percent gain in everything. May our eyes be big enough to take it all in! Don't let any of us be left out.

What's that funny noise in the front yard?

It's giggling moles tearing up the ground. But they are seeing the 'Big See' too.

#### MARSILIA V

"The Island of New Guinea is a nearly submerged mountain-range in the shape of a bird. And the Vogelkop Peninsula is the head of the bird. The Flora is the most fantastic in the world. The Fauna, to me, is less so."

That was the entry in the notebook of Lieutenant Littlejohn. The lieutenant was unfortunate in his family name. A burly man might carry a name like Littlejohn without notice. The lieutenant could not, for he was small. He was unable, by taking thought, to add anything at all to his apparent age. He was an unfinished spooky colt. And his sterile upper lip quivered when he was excited.

In bare lip, he was unique in the battery. Every other man had grown a whacker of a moustache in the nine months they had been on Guinea. Two hundred and thirty-three men in the battery had grown moustaches. One, Lieutenant Littlejohn, had not.

Actually, he was unable to grow one, but it was believed that he could have done it if he had tried hard enough. Charley Redwolf had grown one, and Charley was an Indian. Indians grow them with difficulty, and Charley had done it on sheer determination. He had sunned his upper lip for an hour a day with a handkerchief over the top part of his face. He had followed the advice of a Melanesian boy and every night he had applied wisps of kunai grass soaked in the urine of the Cuscus or Coconut Possum. Redwolf hadn't done much else in those nine months, but he had grown a moustache.

There was a strong feeling in the battery that Lieutenant Littlejohn could have done it also if he'd had the heart for it. Littlejohn was not greatly respected by the men.

He was left much in peace now, but it hadn't always been so. He had abandoned some of his more interesting hobbies, and others he now carried out furtively. He had given up his butterfly collecting entirely for the length of his service. There is a stigma attached to a butterfly collector. There are several men even today who will do imitations of Littlejohn and his net, and these imitations are hilarious.

And yet, what's so bloody funny about it? Butterflies are interesting, and the net is the proper instrument for taking them. And some truly fantastic varieties had been seen at the stop-off stations of the battery.

But on Guinea, things were better. Here everybody became odd, so individual oddities were less noticed. Littlejohn wandered by himself through the jun-les. He went up and over the cliffs, and down deep ravines. He learned which of the boggy meadows could be crossed and which could not.

And when he came to very secluded pools, he stripped and swam. But these had to be secluded. Even so, he often heard mocking whistles as of jungle birds. Few birds were unknown to the lieutenant, and he knew the names of two of these whistlers. They were Sergeant Rand and Corporal Mueller.

And Littlejohn made entries and drawings in the notebooks that he always carried with him. He drew in a boyish and unsure hand, plants, trees, rivers, rocks, insects. He named and classified and described them, as --

"Marsilia Vogelkopiensis. Pteridophyta. Hydropteridales. Of the Water Fern Family. Four-lobed leaf. Of a green-purple color that I have never before encountered in nature. The unusual aspect of this Marsilia is that the Sporophyte is not truly aquatic. It drifts on a morasmal underlay. Reproduction is heterosporous."

Littlejohn always carried a rock hammer and a thimble-sized bottle of reagents. And he read the rocks as if they were newspapers.

PFC Hebert, the tough Cajun, and his shadow, PFC Brooks, came on him one day.

"Ah, Lieutenant Renoncule, are you looking for gold?" asked Hebert.

"Not in particular, Soldat Croupe d'un Raton."

"You shouldn't have called me that, Lieutenant."

"You shouldn't have called me Buttercup. I realize that I am known so, but not commonly to my face."

"I didn't know you understood. Are you looking for gold?"

"No. Though I come on traces of it several times a day."

"Where you got your stash? There should be someone like us who knows."

"There is no stash. I do not collect it. It would not be remunerative."

"Yeah? How remunerative wouldn't it be?"

"A diligent man, working in the most promising streams, might realize eight or ten cents worth a day."

"Maybe you realize more than that. Maybe you are really diligent. We will be watching."

They were large, rough men. Good hearted though; just mean everywhere else.

Littlejohn made a further entry in his notebook --

"I have discovered an entirely new variety of crow or rook today. So far I have heard only its distant 'caw' and found one feather, and that quite old. Yet I know that they go together. I will soon have proof. This will shake ornithology to its roots."

2

Captain Robinson was sad. He had become infested with small guests and had had to shave all the hair off his body. The prickling, now in its second day, had become intolerable. And he had one other worry.

"Who'm I going to send?" he barked at T<sup>3</sup> Carp who was acting First Sergeant on loan to headquarters. "Lively made the last three. I can't send him all the time. Who'm I going to send?"

"There's only one left. You'll have to send Buttercup."

"Buttercup! He couldn't lead a detail of girl scouts from here to the moss tent."

"I doubt if he could, but this will only be a routine patrol. It shouldn't take more than twenty men to do it, and finish it in twenty-four or thirty hours. You could send Rand and Mueller along as sergeant and corporal, and they can take care of anything. We have a pretty rough bunch in our battery, so there's not much to worry about."

"The rough bunch is what I'm worrying about. It's like sending a little boy into a wolf den. But I can't be holding an umbrella over him forever. You tell him, and then you brief him. They'd better leave about midnight, and they can lay up close before dawn and operate by daylight."

"All right. I wouldn't worry. Lieutenant Lively said that on the last patrol the Hard Heads weren't even there. There was just a bunch of middle-aged ribbon-clerks from Tokyo or somewhere."

"That also is what I'm worrying about. The Hard Heads are supposed to be there. We have to know where they are, or some midnight they will be in the middle of us here."

The battery was available for general guard duty, dock detail, and perimeter duty. The perimeter ran up and along the crests, about ten miles back from the beach. And what Japanese were behind it were mostly content to



stay behind it. But not entirely. They did make sorties, and they had to be kept track of. There was little daily contact between the two forces along the perimeter itself. If the only trouble was that the two forces were not in agreement as to where the perimeter was supposed to be. There was constant infiltration, the nuisance of telephone lines being tapped or cut, and the chilly feeling that comes when all phones ring dead and the radio is out. The radio is always out.

So there were probing patrols, exploratory patrols, anticipatory patrols, just plain nuisance patrols in the middle of the night. The battery had to supply a patrol every third day, to last approximately half this interval.

They did well to travel at night. The terrible heat went down with the sun, and movement was bearable. They moved through the dark, covering the miles as well as they could through the tangles that were always at three levels.

"There is a reason for this," said Lieutenant Littlejohn to Sergeant Rand. "There is a symbiosis of three factors all conspiring to bar our way: the ground grasses which are tendriled rather than tifted, the parasitic vines, and the free-standing boscage. Each offers its obstacle, and combined they make slow going..."

"That part's all right," said Rand, "but now we're coming into new country for us. Here we aren't sure of our topography."

"Oh, but I have been here often. I know the topography, and especially I know the botany."

"This far through the draw? But this was considered as beyond the perimeter till the last forty-eight hours. Well, if you can make it, then all of us can make it."

There are men who do not know where it begins. But they would not be too successful here. There is always a definite point of starting. A man should be able to hear the whistle that begins the game, or the bell that starts the round. He should know when he is walking on the sand of an arena and no longer on a street. They were on an arena now, and most of them knew when they had entered it. It was about two-thirty in the morning. It would be hard to define the change, but it was definite, this point where the area of conflict began.

"There's a glow up front," said Corporal Mueller. "Shall I scout it?"

"No need," said the lieutenant. "It's only fox fire, phosphorent glow from rotting wood."

"It may, and it may not be. I've been in the jungle a lot at night. I say it could be anything."

"Too green. Not an artificial light at all. Simply fox fire."

"Lieutenant, it could be a smoked-up carbide lantern. They show green. It could be an electric spot with a lurcher's shield on it to make it a dark lantern. It could be a spot hung with netting, or even with one of their green fatigue jackets."

Corporal Mueller scouted it. Mueller walked like a bear, plantigrade, and he rolled like a boat. But he could move more quickly than any other man of them, large or small; and he could get to places that none of the rest could reach. A bear can go where even a puma cannot. He will grumble and talk to himself and make a fuss over it, as a puma would disdain to do. But he will go there and back.

But it was only fox fire, half an acre of it, a cup-shaped swamp of early submerged rotting wood glowing in the jungles.

They lay up about two hours before daylight. There were eighteen of them: Lieutenant Littlejohn, Sergeant Rand, Corporals Mueller and Meadows. PFCs Hebert, Brooks, Pop Parker, Redwolf, Martin, and Gagnon; and privates Bellar, Girones, Mufios, Villareal, Cross, Jennings, Crawford, and Crandall. They slept for two hours before daylight, with Meadows, Redwolf, and Bellar as guards.

Then they roused, had J rations, and moved along their route. There is little twilight in the tropics. It is dark, and then within fifteen minutes it

is broad daylight. And the sun is the enemy.

They went in three groups of six men each. Lieutenant Littlejohn took one with Corporal Meadows as his assistant. Corporal Mueller took one. And Sergeant Rand took one. Every two or three hours they would rendezvous and rest for half an hour,

"There is something moving up that ravine," said Sergeant Rand at one of their rendezvous points, "less than a mile from here. The birds are rising above someone."

"It's likely wild pigs," said Mueller.

"Birds do not rise for pigs," said Rand. "They rise for some of the large predatory animals, of which there are none on Guinea. They rise from birds of other factions. And they rise from a man or men. These are rising from men below them. Who can spot one?"

"Heavens," said Lieutenant Littlejohn. "Give me the field glasses. I believe I see him."

"Heavens," said Meadows very softly to himself. But he gave the field glasses to Lieutenant Littlejohn.

"Do you see them?" asked Rand.

"One, yes. I see him clearly. And he is a beauty."

Meadows and Mueller looked at each other in disgust.

"Well, can you tell what he is?" asked Sergeant Rand. "Let me look. It's important."

"Of course it's important," said the lieutenant. "It will shake ornithology to its roots."

"It will what?" asked Rand. The day had become blindingly hot. There is an insanity about very hot days. "Tell us at once whether he is Japanese, Melanesian, or Malay. Or let one of us look. We can tell in an instant."

"Japanese or Melanesian? What an odd term of reference! It almost seems that we are not talking about the same thing. But he is a new species entirely. I had heard the 'caw' before, and had found one feather. And now I have seen him himself."

Sergeant Rand took the field glasses roughly away from the Lieutenant.

"It's too late," said Corporal Meadows. "The man has already gone over the crest. And we still don't know what he was. But he has seen us."

"Lieutenant," said Rand, "will you please tell us just what you were looking at?"

"The crow. A completely new species. Do you realize what this means?"

"Yes, Lieutenant," said Rand wearily. "It will shake ornithology to its roots. And when you have shaken it, what will you have? The man! The man, Lieutenant, was he Japanese, Malay, or Melanesian?"

"Man? Was there a man there? Probably a patrolman of our counterparts, or a straggler of some description. But the crow! A completely new species!"

"Judas Priest!" said Meadows.

Rand, Meadows, and Mueller talked a little apart from the lieutenant and from the men. It was very hot now, and all the heat was not from the sun.

"What we do with the little joker if we get in a jam?" asked Meadows.

"I will be responsible," said Rand. "If it reaches a point of necessity, I will do whatever has to be done. You are with me if that happens?"

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Then the men will be with me also. I have the scent of something. I believe that the Hard Heads are back. It's been too quiet today. There is nowhere so quiet as the mouth of a trap. I feel that there is more than one pair of eyeballs watching us. See if you can spot them."

"Lieutenant," said Sergeant Rand a little later, "we will not split up this time. We will go all eighteen together."

"You are giving the orders now?" asked the Lieutenant with what was supposed to be ice in his voice. But the ice had a certain rattle and tinkle

to it.

"I seem to be," said Rand. "Someone has to give orders. We are under surveillance. We will travel together for greater security if we are caught in the bag."

"Suppose that I countermand your order?"

"Would you give an opposite order, knowing it to be foolish, just to assert your authority?"

"No. No. The order is correct. It is just that I should have given it. But I will not give the order to scatter again."

The lieutenant didn't know what was wrong, but he knew that he had lost the argument. He should have been giving the orders and giving the right orders. And instead, he had been daydreaming and giving no orders at all.

But his resolve, and he made one, didn't last long. At the next check he turned up missing, and Corporal Meadows had to go back for him. Meadows found Littlejohn sitting on a rock and sketching plants like a small boy. He caught him by a handful of jacket and jerked him to his feet.

"That's enough," said Lieutenant Littlejohn. "I am a commissioned officer. Lower your hand or you will be sorry for it."

Corporal Meadows was breathing hard. It was a hot day and this perversity wore him thin. With the heat he couldn't strive, and this thing here was almost as intangible.

"If you were only a man, I could hit you. But I don't know what you are. I can't hit you."

"Whether I am or not we may find out today," said the lieutenant. "I half wish you had tried it. It may be that I would have surprised you."

"Nothing you could do would surprise me now. But you couldn't surprise me in that way. I have fifty pounds on you, and I have the name of being rough."

"Several of you have the name for it," said the Lieutenant.

"And several of us are," are Meadows. They caught up with the others.

"Lieutenant," said Sergeant Rand in a low but savage voice. "You will start to grow up right now. You are a drag on us. I cannot have you acting like a four year old."

"You are right," said Littlejohn, "and it's an ugly habit of yours. But it may be that some others here could stand a little growing up."

"You could even help a little," said Corporal Mueller. "We believe that we are in the middle of a trap and that any move may release the trigger. But we have to spot them, the outline of them, before we cut loose. We haven't really come on a thing, only the smell of a trap."

"Oh," said the lieutenant. He remembered something but he didn't remember it clearly enough. "I did see a foreign movement several times, but I saw it with only a part of my mind. I was otherwise preoccupied."

"Then for God's sake, see it again! Spot them!"

"Did you ever know anyone to act like that?" Meadows asked Rand a little later.

"Yes, many. You on your first patrol, for one, Meadows. You were pretty scatterbrained. I may have been so on mine."

3

They sank down in a clump on the edge of a clearing and remained very quiet for a while. But there was a nightmare aspect about the site as though the brush and thickets were alive and watching them.

Ahead was a flat green-purple meadow.

"I'd like to forget it all," said Rand. "I'd lie clown there in the meadow and just sleep. But it's probably full of thorns."

"No. No," said the Lieutenant. "How could there be thorns? Whoever heard of Marsilia with thorns? That is the largest area of Marsilia Vogelkopiensis that I have ever seen. The inconvenience of lying down there would not be

thorns."

"Lieutenant," said Corporal Meadows, "I warned you to forget this science and nature jazz till we're off patrol. Don't make us do anything that we'll regret."

"But don't you realize what it is? A fair sized field of quite rare Marsilia. And the feature of this Marsilia is that its Sporophyte is not truly aquatic."

"Do tell," said Meadows.

"Instead, the spore apparently moves by slow drift through a morasmal aggregate."

"Heavens," said Meadows.

There comes a time in those afternoons when no one is at his best. The breeze dies entirely, and the temperature here in these dead draws will go past a hundred and twenty. There are blind pockets in the air, and a bird will fly in and will not fly out. The atmosphere piles up in shimmering layers that confuse the vision and falsify distance, and the hills seem to roll and rise like green waves. The eyes burn and blur, and there is an angry threat in every tree.

"I have the sudden feeling," said the Lieutenant, "of a groundbird who has not been paying attention, who looks up and sees the bullsnake poised for the swallow."

"Am I the snake?" asked Meadows.

"You? No. How could you be the snake? This snake is a hundred yards long and we're right in the middle of his coils. It is a centicephalon, a hundred-headed snake. It prickles my hair a little."

The brush and the thickets were in fact alive and watching them. An ambush has a hundred eyes, and to be found in the middle of one calls up a world of anger and frustration and sudden fear. Watch out for the man who says he doesn't scare. He will scare when he sees the eyes of an ambush.

"This chills me too," said Corporal Mueller. "Were we all blind at once? There is one of them. Redwolf, see that form behind the largest kapok tree in that group. He is yours when we start blazing. And there is another. They're all along the far edge of the clearing and are filling in. And they're edging around. But whatever we do, don't let's panic. How about it, Rand? Shall we slip out before it's sprung?"

"Yes. Slip out. Crawl out. Just plain break out. Get out somehow. But the worst advice that a man in danger can ever follow is not to panic, It is even thought of as somehow noble not to panic. But an old captain used to tell me that there was a proper time for everything, including panic. A rabbit knows that. A deer knows it, and he's not even very smart. Why does a man try to forget it? This is the time for a little judicious panic. Go as quietly as we can, at first, fellows, right back the way we came, and then down the first draw to the right. Crawl like snakes, men, and then run like horses. We will rendezvous at Blind Creek Point four miles down. Most of us should make it. And we have found out what we came to find out, The Hard Heads are back, and in number. Now move, men."

"Just a minute," said an unfamiliar voice. "I will give the orders here." Or was it a familiar voice with an unfamiliar ring to it?

"Who said that?"

"I said that. And I will be obeyed. Are you not accustomed to taking orders from an officer?" asked Lieutenant Littlejohn.

"The Lieutenant will be obeyed," said Sergeant Rand. "And what are the Lieutenant's orders on this?"

"First we will trigger off the action with an apparently casual shot. And then we will retreat, but not back the way we came. We will run very low down this gully here on the edge of the Marsilia complex. And we will gather in a pocket on the other end. There appears to be very good cover there. And three men, Mueller, Redwolf, and Cross, will hold this end till we are all down. It's narrow and crested here, and three men can hold it for a while. And, once we are in the pocket, they will have to come to us, and singly, or a

few at a time. The gully is narrow. And it is bound to have a back door."

"But, Lieutenant, that's two hundred yards. And it's only crawl cover. They'll shoot us like turkeys as we go down. And what's the use of holding one end of the gully when the entire length of it would be open to them?"

"But how would it be open to them? How would they get at it?"

"Are you crazy, Lieutenant? They'd cross that clearing in fifteen seconds and have us head on."

"The clearing? But that's the Marsilia. They surely wouldn't venture to cross that."

"Lieutenant, you're in a child's world. I'm sure the Hard Heads will not respect the Marsilia, as you call it."

"Then this is better than I hoped," said the Lieutenant. "If you don't understand, then maybe they won't either. I read a warning once about over-estimating an enemy. It makes for timidity. Now, if you are ready, men, I will give the order."

"How about it, Rand?" asked Meadows. "We are looking to you."

"Do you know what you're doing, Lieutenant Littlejohn?" Rand asked.

"Yes, I know what I'm doing."

"The Lieutenant will be obeyed," said Sergeant Rand.

"I have just looked into my coffin," said Pop Parker. "I hadn't particularly wanted a dirt one, but it looks as though I will get it."

"The beauty of the dirt ones is that they will fit anyone," said Pvt. Crawford. "And there are always enough to go around. But we will soon fill up eighteen."

"I only knew one man who seriously claimed to be afraid of nothing," said Sergeant Rand. "But the peculiar thing is that he was afraid to die when the time came. He's the only one I ever remember who was afraid to die when it came down to it. A man usually isn't afraid of death when it comes really near. But he's embarrassed over it. It's an awkward and unaccountable thing. And it cannot meet your eye when it comes. It's a shuffling skulker. But it's no great thing to die. Anyone can do it. The defeating thing is to have to do it needlessly."

"And tell her not to wait for me " For I'm not coming home," sang PFC Jennings softly.

"The order will be the rifle shot of PFC Redwolf," said the Lieutenant. "Corporal Mueller has already given him his target. Have you still your eye on your man? Then aim quickly and fire. Now move, men, move. And don't worry about a thing."

Redwolf killed the Hard Head behind the kapok tree with a good shot, and then things began to pop. The old devil was unchained and all sorts of things began to come out of the pit.

Mueller, Redwolf, and Cross hunched down behind the crest, and the remaining patrolmen crawled and stumbled and ran low, down the gully. Mueller and his two men could probably have held the end of the gully for several minutes, except that they would be out-flanked in a matter of seconds.

For the trigger had set the whole jungle into motion. The hills rose like green waves, and the earth burst open. The jungle-line ejected more than a hundred of the enemy, green-brown men, moving like sure animals. No ribbon clerks these. They were the old Hard Heads, the killer soldiers who struck like a giant rat pack, all musk-animals, meaner than men, sharp pack-running killers.

And, as the fifteen patrolmen stumbled down the gully, those Hard Heads charged at them with a loose crackle of fire, came across that green-purple meadow rapidly, more than a hundred of them with less than seventy-five yards to go. Not over ten seconds for it. They came in a black rush like the teeth of one great cutter blade. They came light and fast. And then, somehow, heavy and fast.

They charged to take the fifteen men strung out single, crawling on their bellies down the narrow ditch. Fifteen men with not over fifteen inches

of cover, and no firing room at all. Sitting ducks. Lying down ducks. Plain dead ducks.

"Somehow I never intended to die on my belly like a snake," said Meadows. He was nicked, and he watched a spate of red and black blood mix with the green hot mud in a pattern that was also a premonition. He wasn't nicked badly, but then he hadn't raised up very high. He had always hated to crawl on his belly.

The last seconds of one's life tick off loudly and with finality. Two. Four. But slowly now as though the hands of the clock were mired. The attackers were half-way across, a black-green row of them that filled exactly half the world.

Five. Six. These may have been the longest seconds ever. They were unnaturally long. They were grisly, hot, weird, seconds.

Time itself had slowed down.

Then it stopped completely.

The Hard Heads stumbled heavy-footed. They were a study in slow motion. These death-bringers worked it out with horrible delay. It was eerie that the last scene in life should be run in slow motion. There was something obscene about it.

The Hard Heads wallowed, floundered, and panicked.

And they began to go down.

It is incredible the way a little mud can swallow a man, or a clutch of men. The heat was now unbearable, and again not all of it came from the sun. The piled-up air shimmered and shattered the vision. It is possible that this was all a mistake of blurred sight and that the impossible thing was not happening at all. The earth does not commonly devour a group of men like that.

And yet, in the blinding heat and the wavering air, it seemed to do so. If those Hard Heads weren't sinking out of sight in the mud, it was a very nightmarish sort of mirage.

"I saw a cow go down once," said Pop Parker. The way he said it, it was the most profound statement in the world.

But they didn't make too much fuss about dying, those hundred Hard Heads. A little protest, a little argument. Yet mud is very unsatisfactory to argue with. A little screaming and chatter, that was all.

It was the eighteen men who watched it who felt a sense of sickness and shock. It was like the shock of the small boy who, for the first time, sees the bull-snake begin to swallow that ground bird.

"I always said I'd never do it," said that tough Cajun Hebert. "I've never been sick before in my life, but now I've just brought it up green."

"Santa Maria, Madre di Dios --," said Private Girones.

-- ruego per nosotros pecadores --," said Private Munas.

-- ahora y en la ore de nuestra muerte," said Private Villareal.

After the Hard Heads were chest-deep and really frightened, it seemed that the pressure made it impossible for them to scream loudly. But they knew that they were being buried alive and that the hot sky was inexorable. And the eighteen patrollers watched the enemy disappear with plain horror.

"If it would rain," said Crandall, "it wouldn't be so hot. And it wouldn't seem so bad." Why had he said such a silly thing as that?

His mind was in a state of shock and his stomach was tied in green knots. But they all of them spoke inanities when they spoke.

In three minutes, there was no sign of the Hard Heads. More than a hundred of them had gone down there, and the Marsilia had already begun to sew up its wounds, oozing its clover-leafed foliage again over the greenish sand.

"I will never love it again," said the Lieutenant. "It is really a sacophag, a flesh-eating plant. But it's quite bland to look at. It is hard to believe that its enticement is intentional." "Lieutenant," said Sergeant Rand after a decent period of silence, "did you know that that was

quicksand?"

"Sergeant, get the men started back. Some of them may be a little queasy after what they have seen, and I believe that they should have some movement to settle them down. We can be at Blind Creek Point in an hour and a half. They can take the last of their rations then and rest till sundown. Then we will move them again, and should be in our own bivouac area by midnight. Now move them, Sergeant, and waste no time about it."

"Yes, sir."

But, when they were resting at Blind Creek Point, the Sergeant asked again.

"Lieutenant, did you know that that was quicksand?"

"Certainly. Didn't you? I explained that the Marsilia Vogelkopiensis invariably has a morasmal underlay."

"Yes, sir. So you did. I wasn't paying attention."

Lieutenant Littlejohn was sketching again as they waited for the sun to go down. He was sketching a crow in the sky. But now, strangely, it was not a boyish hand that showed in the sketch. The strokes had boldness and force to them that they had lacked before. It was the hand of a sure and canny man that drew that stark crow in the sky.

#### ONE-EYED MOCKING-BIRD

Tobias Lamb, though not well liked, was held in high esteem by the scientific community. There were many of us who hardly liked him because -- well, it was because his tricks and illusions sometimes shattered us completely. "And besides," Alwin Garvie said of him, "he's in unlikely man."

Ah well, admit it, we were afraid of him. He was a harsh mocker; and yet he had a pleasant strain (or it was meant to be pleasant) in him. He was a hard driver. If he didn't actually hold a whip in his hand when he was working on a project, there was always a whip in his voice. He was avid, even feverish, to drive a project to success; and yet he didn't seem at all hungry for personal glory. When Paul Kradzesh stole the credit for the Crisley Communicator from him, we really feared for Kradzesh's safety and life when Big Toby should react to being robbed of that glory. But Tobias Lamb didn't react to it at all. Whether credit should redound to him or to another was less than nothing to Toby.

And now he was talking about the new project that had hold of him and of us all.

"The thing is to get a few nations accultured and thriving, and then to give the inventive tilt to them. And then we will let them invent. As we are looking for rapid invention, we will put a time limit on their inventiveness; the time it takes a rifle bullet to go four kilometers. In fact, I'll put one of the nations inside a rifle bullet here and shoot it off."

"What in the world for?" Francie Jack asked. She had always made an effort to understand Big Toby, but she hadn't understood him any better than had the rest of us.

"Toby, you have a bad case of anthropomorphism, of putting things into human terms and analogies," Lucius Cockburn chided the big lout Toby. "Nations that can only barely be guessed at with an electronic microscope are not true nations."

"If they are made up of thousands of individuals of a kindred, and if they are able to live, elect, and proclaim a destiny, then they are nations," Toby insisted. "What for, Francie? For a test and an experiment and an opportunity. I will really be shooting at that mocking-bird singing so imperfectly on that bough. But whether I miss or hit the bird, the rifle bullet will still crash into that rock cliff four kilometers across the valley, and it will destroy itself and the small nation that I will have put inside it. It will do this unless the individuals of that nation shall wake to

consciousness, form local governments, expand to a limited -universal government, develop science and technology, form groups of empowered geniuses to apply that science and technology, learn to navigate the bullet, avoid destruction against the cliff; and return it here in quest of their origin, all within two and a half seconds of time. I have not set it an impossible task. It is a short-aeon nation made up of miniaturized intelligences, and the concept of delay would not be possible to it."

"The 'Reacting Jelly' does react amazingly fast sometimes," Paul Kradzesh admitted, "and most times it does not react at all. We have the package to perform miracles. We have the activator to go into the package. But it performs irregularly and randomly. We must induce uniformity. And, Toby, it is silly to refer to a supersmall glob as a nation."

"No, it is a sanity which in present company seems to be limited to myself," Big Tobias Lamb said stubbornly. This harsh and clumsy man was held in puzzled esteem by the scientific community. He was admitted, yes, and there were even some persons who tried to like him. But did he conform to Elton Cabot's dictum of the ideal scientist? --

'Serene, handsome with inner and outer perfection, into every field of the mind, something of a poet, totally cultured, completely free of hokum, very much of the philosopher, everything of the humanist.'

It seemed that most of those were things that Toby Lamb was not.

But Big Toby, physically powerful and exceptionally ugly, loutish and impossible, completely ambiguous in his own group; he was a cult hero of several other groups, though it puzzled us how those culties ever even heard of him.

Toby made noises, it was too much to call it music. He made these sounds on supposed reproductions of very ancient instruments, according to probably faulty interpretations of ancient musical notations. He made these noises on clanging iron 'harps' and on howling flutes. And persons of the 'rattling rock' sort had intruded audio pickups into Toby's big studios and they had turned his sounds into cult things. A clanging, always a clanging, that was the 'Toby Sound'.

It was so typical of him that, in his loud talking, when he banged his palms together for emphasis, he did not make the 'clap' sound that other persons make. He had a 'clang'.

And Big Toby painted strong and grotesque pictures. Perhaps 'painted' is the wrong word since it is not known how he achieved them; but he 'effected' powerful and vulgar and disturbing pictures. He called them his 'Cainite Space Ship' series. They were wrenching and a little bit distasteful, but they were also funny.

"You are a mocker," Lucius Cockburn told Toby often.

"Oh certainly. There are all too few of us. What we want are mockers who at the same time have total faith. I want that in the director of every project and every public board and government. And I want it in the short-aeon inventive realms and in the miniaturized intelligences that make them up. But deliver us from the mocker who sings too sweetly."

Tobias Lamb had other activities which, in any other man, would seem to contribute to Elton Cabot's dictum of the ideal scientist. Well yes, he was 'into every field of the mind'; in that much he conformed to it. But how clumsily he was into many of those fields! He wrote several books. But his New Physics for the Middle-School Children was not well accepted. It was forced off the market. He seemed to be teaching physics by means of a hairy sort of mythology. Even his mathematics was more myth than math. And his Not For Everybody Book, well, it was not for everybody.

But now Big Toby was teasing an invisible glob of activated molecular syndrome into a microscopic hole drilled into the lead- shot part of a rifle bullet. He used a complicated microscope with a variety of eye-pieces impinging on his eyes; and he fingered a keyboard that created and controlled finger-shaped electrical fields to nudge the small glob into the hole and settle it there.





and a navigation to return to earth, and to soft-land on earth. That latter was very difficult for us, as it will be for what Alwin calls the 'wee realm' that I am putting into this rifle bullet here. Had the thing been done by any other than my own family I would call the whole thing impossible."

"Who was running your space ship, Toby?" Alwin Garvie asked. "Who were the tyrants who made it work?"

"Two brothers, Jabelcain and Jubelcain. And their half-brother Tubalcain. Our very take-off from Earth was an hysterical and amazing feat of invention, but it was necessary for our survival. Oh, our intelligence gathering system was good. We knew where the Earth-faults in our neighborhood were. We knew which one would blow with the most power, when the fountains of the deep should burst open, and we beheved that if we set our bronze sphere as a cork in the throat of that erupting fountain, we could be blown clear off Earth. The wee folks in this bullet have an easier task here. They don't have an intelligence system sufficent to know when next a rifle will be shooting off in this part of town, nor the means to get there and set themselves in the chamber of that rifle by themselves. I do this for them.

"But we, in the old days, had to go. If we'd stayed, we'd have drowned. And in that case we would not have had such future progeny as myself, a heavy loss."

"Oh what stuff, Toby, what stuff!" Viola Rafter admired. "That is the sort of stuff you tell to the small chemical smudges to motivate them, is it? That is something like the stuff I tell to my own house plants to motivate them; but I don't do it nearly as well as you do. Is some larger person telling you this to motivate you for something?"

"Yes, somebody larger tells me such narrations now and then. Yes, to motivate me, I suppose, as I motivate the small molecular smudges. And I do find myself curiously motivated now and then, and especially now."

Tobias Lamb had now scaled the sub-microscopic 'realm' into the rifle bullet and had put the bullet into the chamber of the rifle.

"I never heard that legend before, Toby," Lucius said. "I have met the myth that either Gog or Magog rode astraddle of the roof-ridge of the ark for the whole trying time of the flood and so prevented the old race of giants from being entirely wiped out. So we have half-giants in the world even now. But that the descendents of Cain escaped Earth in a space-ark, that is new to me. I believe that it's cheating."

"No, not cheating, not cheating at all. To have taken the gamble with the odds a billion to one against, that is not cheating. To suppose that we of the left-handed fraternity, of the goatish rather than the sheepish brotherhood, had no purpose, that is unreal. We of the line of Cain, we who lost our innocence for the second time, we who ate of the horrible tree of knowledge for the second time, there must have been a reason for us. We were the only early inventors, you know. Genesis 4, 20-22 gives only the barest hints of our inventions, but they were the only human inventions in their time."

"When did the Cainite Space-Ark return to the Earth, Toby?" Lucitis asked with a failed smirk.

"I don't know. Within the last several hundred years. When invention returned to the Earth, that was the space-ark homing back."

"What stuff you must have in your unconscious, Toby!" Francie said. "You're sheer mythic. And it's said that, in the circuit of re-entrant thought and style and mentation, the mythic meets again with the subatomic and the atomic and the molecular on the field of small aeonics. They'd make no sense else, its said. They make no sense as it is, I say. But our other smudges of reaching molecular jolly are not reacting at all today in the perfect conditions we have set up. We do not know what your own 'realm' is doing in the con- ditions you have set up, but ours do not move."

"They do not move because you do not move them, because you do not motivate them," Tobias said. "You can't motivate them, except accidentally,

because you don't believe them to be alive and subject to motivation. But there is not any such thing as inanimate matter. The smallest sub-atomic particle is alive and at least partly conscious, and at least partly thinking. If you do not believe this, pretend that you believe it at least. You'll get better results that way."

Then Tobias Lamb raised the rifle to shoulder and eye, slid off the safety, sighted with the gun, and crooked his finger around the trigger.

"What are you really going to do, Toby?" Francie Jack asked with apprehension in her voice. "You're acting very strange, even for you. You're up to something, Toby. You're up to something tricky!"

"The minor thing I'm going to do, on either the first or second fly-by, is plug that mockingbird that is too saccharine to mock. And the main thing I'm going to do is set a living realm in the position where it must invent or perish. I'm betting it will invent."

Tobias Lamb shot the rifle then. And, after an interval that seemed about two and a half or three seconds, the rifle shot Tobias Lamb. It shot him in the right eye and clear through his head. It killed him too.

Tobias Lamb was dead standing up. He was so stocky and solid that he did not fall. He did not even lower the rifle. He was in a cataleptic rigidity. He had no breath and heartbeat. The shot had entered his right eye and had exited massively from the back of his head.

He still had his big grin, more grotesque than ever, almost more life-like than ever.

"This is not real, this is not real. This is something happening out of time," Francie Jack spoke as if in a daze.

"What is that misfit bird-song?" Alwin Garvie asked in inconsequential amazement. "The mockery of it, the arrogance of it! That at least, is real."

"The coroner will decide what is real," Paul Kradzesh stated heavily. "And here he is now. I never saw a call answered so fast. It's almost impossible."

The coroner was busying himself about the standing dead man, going through what seemed like a burlesque routine.

"Oh, he is rigid in death," the coroner said then. "He's dead standing up, and he rigidified so swiftly and he is so well balanced that he did not fall. Ah, he still has his finger on the gun trigger. Don't stand in front of it. It's a rare happening, and yet I've seen it twice before in my practice."

"You lie," said dead man Tobias Lamb in a pleasanter voice than usual. "Such a thing never happened before. It didn't happen this time either. Oh, don't look so angry and repelled, good friends. Did you want me dead? You really don't understand the possibilities and paradoxes that are present in the context of 'unelapsing time'? It's a property of very small realms and societies. It's a bonus that almost dwarfs the rest of it. Oh, how howlingly valuable it will be to us!"

"We do not like you, Tobias!" Paul Kradzesh swore savagely. "We do not like you because of tricks like this. But it did happen! And the coroner was here."

"And he is not here now," Toby Lamb laughed. "You cannot say properly 'He was here' because there are no tenses in unelapsing time. Nor will I assure you that my death is an illusion. It is a valid event in unelapsing time, that first remarkable fall-out of the miniature space flight and return."

"No, of course I'm not all right, Francie. I have a shiner. The soft landing of the returning bullet-space-ship was not all that soft. It blacked my eye."

"I hate you, Toby," Paul said tightly. "Why did you do such a thing as that?"

"For the joy of discovery, for dramatic effect, for open fun, and to perform a valid experiment. All, that bird-song! it's near perfect now! The inimitable mockery and arrogance of it! And the burning belief! A little discipline in its life was all that bird needed. Aye, get at glob of irony in

its song! Mock, bird, mock! And believe at the same time. A one-eyed bird had better be a true believer around here!"

The mockingbird, still singing on its branch outside, had lost an eye to the fly-by either coming or going. But it had a new song that you had to respect whether you liked it or not.

"The reactive jelly, as you so ignorantly call it, will react astonishingly now," Big Toby said. "It has become a nation of constimate atomic-speed invention. Set it any problem and it will solve it. The ramifications of all this, they are endless."

"We do hate you, Toby," Lucius Cockburn growled.

"Oh sure, oh sure. Whether the little nation did those space marvels or not, it is absolutely essential that it believes it did them. Its motivation hes in its high history."

"We can't accept knowing that even the dust is inventive," Francie Jack said sadly, "but we'll profit from it. We have the perfect activator now. But it will take a new sort of people to accept it fully. Some day you may have them."

"Some day, today, almost immediately," Tobias Lamb gloated. "Oh, the most promising students for it can be selected with no time elapsed at all. I've already put a realm to work on that, and the selection is already waiting for me."

Those students who are now developing best ways to motivate and mythologize sub-microscopic smears to get maximum performance and invention from them are an odd lot. They have to be, for they are working with small, left-handed orders that are more goatish than sheepish, that are very near to the grotesque heart of matter. And some of those students had a hop on the subject, those who had read Tobias Lamb's New Physics for Middle-School Children and had been enchanted by it.

They have accumulated and analyzed a frightening amount of dream material from molecular-level and smaller entities, and the dream material in those little worlds is absolutely grotesque. And the mythic configurations can not even be conceived of in the geometry of human myth. They are quite otherwise.

Those brilliant, odd-lot students have their own cultus and fraternity now, and their token and mascot is the One-Eyed Mocking-Bird.

Oh Whatta You Do When the Well Runs Dry?

The deep well of unconscious cerebration.

- Henry James

For you never miss the water till the well runs dry.

- Rowland Howard

The well ran dry on November 7, 1999 (a Sunday). And when that well ran dry, then everything that mattered came to a halt. It took a few hours for the multitude to realize that it had all stopped. A few of the smart ones knew it almost at once, and a smaller few knew that nobody could be very smart again under the new conditions.

Miss Phosphor McCabe woke up very early on the morning of November 8.

"I never felt so empty-headed in my life," she told herself. "Usually I have all kinds of things going on up there. Most times my head is as busy as three airports. Something's gone wrong. Fortunately I have friends who'll know what to do."

You remember Miss Phosphor McCabe. She lives in that big pink pagoda on that hill on the north edge of town, and she has lots of unusual friends.

"Now I know what's happened." Miss Phosphor said. "The well's gone dry. I better get some of my friends to see what can be done about it."

She got hold of a couple of her friends and told them about the well.

"Yeah, we know," the special friends said. "We'll give them a little while yet."

Clear dry, was the well? There was none of the sparkle water left anywhere? Oh, there were little bits of it in isolated pockets here and there, but there was an impediment to its use. In the isolated pockets the water was no longer moving; and so it lost its sparkle. When it did not move or sparkle it could not be received or enjoyed as extraordinary water. It was ordinary now and it couldn't satisfy the thirst for the extraordinary.

(This is metaphor, yes.) What had dried up was not a well or pool or ocean of physical water. What had dried up was wit, and artistry, and congruence, and enjoyment, and the sparkle of the spirit. What had dried up was creativity in every form; and could the calling of all the committees in the world bring it back? Several self-constituted committees had assembled very early to see what could be done. The problem was to rekindle the wit of the world and get it to flowing again (This is mixed metaphor, yes.)

The problem might be quite urgent. Will a witless world die immediately? Or will it (worse case, perhaps) continue on a witless way for aeons?

The world had waked up witless on the afternoon of November 8 (afternoon by artificial universal world time). Oh, some people had gone to bed witless and distraught. Some people had felt the assault of witlessness in their sleep. And there were some people who still rose in the mornings instead of in the afternoons. But it was afternoon when most of the world woke witless and with the sense of having lost something.

"It is no good saying that we knew it would happen," the great cosmologist Norbert Hsu mumbled. "We didn't. Oh several of us predicted it, but we all had the strong inner feeling that it could never happen. After all. this is the well that had never run dry since the beginning of life on Earth. Ah, Irene, you look dowdy today, and that's another thing that we all could never happen."

Irene Komohana hissed with the intake of her breath. She had been regarded as the most stylish woman in the world, but she didn't resent Norbert's in-passing statement that she was dowdy now. She knew that it was true.

Seven persons had come together (this was in an un-pink building on the south edge of town), by natural reaction, from several parts of the world, within two hours of the drying of the well. These seven persons had a natural affinity for each other. They were (or perhaps now it was "they had been") the awarest of the aware. They had always been the first ones to know things, and they were surely among the first persons on Earth to realize that the well had run dry. These seven had been as smart as any people you will find anywhere, and already they realized that neither they nor any others were going to be very smart in the new case. Norbert Hsu, Carlos Llosa, Agnes Belka, Edwin Senate, Irene Komohana, Sedgewick Dollo and Johua Santa Cruz were the once talented seven: but were they talented now? Had all talent necessarily dried up?

"What has dried up is the 'Idea Well,'" Carlos Llosa, the great public servant, said: and they all groaned at the phrase. The "Idea Well," what a rosy-posy name! Be assured that none of them would have named it anything as banal as the "Idea Well" if they hadn't suddenly found themselves in the post-idea state.

"What we must do is treat it like any other well that runs dry," Carlos plowed ahead without a trace of any idea in his skull. "Maybe we will give it a little acid treatment as is given to oil wells when they fall off their flow. Or we will set guns down in its depth and perforate its formations. We might put it under saltwater pressure and hope for some response. Or we locate and cement its leakages as well-men sometimes do with water wells. We set in barriers, or we break out barriers, to let ground water or rogue streams flow into it. We calculate its accretion and its depletion, and we compel the second to be less than the first. And the well may recover... a little bit...

sometime."

"But this well offers a difficulty in that we don't know where it is," Agnes Belka pointed out. "We don't know the physical location of this well: we do not even know whether it has physical existence."

"It's true that we have no idea how to locate it," Joshua Santa Cruz agreed, "since all ideas dried up when the well dried up. We can't do anything about it since what is lost is our ability to do anything about anything."

"Maybe things will go on as they were and nobody will notice the difference," Edwin Senate said.

"Yes, things will go on as they were," Sedgewick Dollo agreed. "For a few hours, or even a couple of days they might go on. Things might continue on for about as long as fingernails continue to grow on a corpse."

But there were little things cropping up all over the place to indicate that things wouldn't go on quite as they had before. Fewer people were dying (that was noticed almost immediately), and nobody was dying spectacularly. Is dying, especially spectacular dying, a creative act? It seemed so. But about as many people were being born as before, though there didn't seem to be quite as much meaning attached to the act. People were being born without accompanying prodigies, and without any premonition of coming greatness. The extraordinary had gone out of people, those already present and those arriving. For there was this other thing: if people weren't dying as much, neither were they living as much.

"It just isn't the same thing anymore," folks were heard to say. It just really isn't living anymore."

Musicians couldn't improvise. They had nothing left to improvise with. The art of creative lying came to an end. Profanity became tired: it became louder and more in use, but it was repetitious and unoriginal. Pornography similarly lost gusto and increased in stridency. Jokes died out, and intuitions died. Problem-solving was a lost talent. And the roily oil that had made the slide through life so much easier had now lost its slickness and turned into an abrasive.

The incredible creativity by which (and only by which) persons had managed to get along with each other at all was gone. There had used to be (just two days ago there had used to be) a super-creative person in every group, in every viable couple, at every human meeting, at each crossroads or confrontation of any kind. At least one third of the persons in the world had been super-creative in personal relations. If it hadn't been so, then personal relations would have been impossible. Now the super-creativity was gone and personal relations had become a gruesome remnant.

Suicides and showboat deaths were down, but dumb accidents were up. It looked as if the death rate might soon adjust itself. The accidents, the accidents! It really takes quite a bit of creativity for even the most obscure person to live for a long span. The amorphous and ever present gray creature named "accident" is escaped only by the employment of creative wit. And when that weapon is no longer turned against it, the "accident" moves in, slowly but relentlessly, chomping.

Great multitudes of people were getting lost. They got lost on their way to work: they got lost on their way home. They could no longer recognize their proper houses. Some of them could no longer recognize their proper mates. After all, people do look pretty much alike. It takes a lot of native wit and a number of mnemonic tricks to be able to recognize one's own wife or husband out of the mass of humanity. And native wit and mnemonics shriveled and died when no longer nourished by the strong and sparkling water. The whole systematic world was going to break down right away.

("We will give them a couple of days yet," small groups of Forteanes said to each other. Some of these Forteanes were friends of Miss Phosphor McCabe, and others of them were unknown to her.)

"We will strictly ration the water from this special ocean-well," Carlos Llosa said positively. "We will enforce a regulation that each person must deposit three liters in the pool for each two liters that he withdraws. I have information also that there is a small but constant, and natural and unhuman, flow into the well, and that it will soon give us a working pool again if we can halt the panic withdrawals. We will emphasize a 'Don't think! Thinking consumes substance from the collective unconscious' campaign for a week or so. And, if we then have something to ration, we will ration it most strictly and without favoritism."

This was the second day that the seven special persons of natural affinity had been holding their meeting. There wasn't much left of their natural affinity now. And there wasn't much left of their specialism.

"How can we ration it?" the great cosmologist Norbert Hsu demanded. "How can we force a person to disgorge into this well of the group unconscious? How can we limit what he will withdraw? We don't even understand the mechanics of the dipping out of this well. Will we give a person a chit entitling him to withdraw so many bright ideas a week?"

"Yes, that is exactly what we will do!" Carlos declared. "Don't laugh. It can be done. Any such thing is mere regulatory or administrative procedure." (In his private life, Carlos Llosa was President of the United States, and he had been competent in the administrative procedure field.) "Any process or decision can be implemented, once it is set into its proper medium and context, and once enough creative imagination is brought to bear on its problem."

"You are wrong, man, wrong, Joshua Santa Cruz contradicted him. "Perhaps it could be done, if the problem in question were anything else. Any process or decision can be implemented, except one. Surgeons are seldom successful in performing serious operations upon themselves. The hammer can shape and hammer out anything except itself. Enough imagination cannot be brought to bear upon this problem when the problem is that we have completely run out of imagination."

"The well shouldn't have failed so soon," Edwin Senate argued. "We have been wasteful and prodigal of its substance for not much more than a hundred centuries. Oh, certainly we reaped what we did not sow, and we gathered where we did not scatter. But we have been contributing to that pool for hundreds of centuries, and our unhuman brothers had been doing so for thousands of centuries. It shouldn't have gone dry yet."

"Well, we had been consuming the capital at an extraordinary rate," Joshua Santa Cruz remarked, "and at the same time we had reduced the numbers of unhuman contributors to less than a tenth. And if it isn't empty then what is wrong with it?"

"I've never really believed in the Collective Unconscious as an ocean-well from which we dip all our ideas and inspirations," that high stylist Irene Komohana protested. "I just don't like the idea of drinking out of a well that every sort of creature pours into. It isn't stylish. It's revolting. It's positively Fortean!"

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("We will give them a little while yet," the small groups of Forteans said to each other.)

The old theory about the "Collective Unconscious" seemed almost to be proved by its failing. This was the thesis that there was one under-mind that was shared by all humans. Extremists said that it was also shared by all animals, mammals, birds, fishes, frogs, snakes, lizards, earthworms, bees, ants, crickets and midges. Further extremists said that it was also shared by all plants from the trees of the forest to the grass of the fields to the seaweeds of the oceans. And others thought that it was shared by inanimate

things, too, things that had been alive especially: wood, and vegetable loam, and limestone that had been built up by small deposited bodies. And the further-outs maintained that all the fire-rocks also contributed to it. And it was known that ghosts, familiar spirits and unarrived souls had once contributed greatly to the ocean-well.

This Collective Unconscious was a huge underground and trashy ocean or pool or cistern or well (all the terms apply to it). In it were all unborn and unthought things, and all quasi-existences and abominations. In it were the spent arrows that had once been shot upward but had not risen high enough to reach the light and so become thought. They had fallen back and shattered, but even in their dissolved forms they were still piercing shafts of ideas.

In the Collective Unconscious were the paradoxes of existence as propounded by toads, the rhapsodies of rotifers, and the streams-of-consciousness of sunfishes. There were the grotesque limbs of millions of creatures the rest of whom had not been created. There were the everted contents of dragons' stomachs and the everted and maldigested contents of countless minds.

The fruits of child labor, of the children of a thousand species, were thick in that stew. This was the grinding and horrible labor, ill paid and inefficient, going on always for endless hours, in pain and apprehension and fear. Here were the mephitic deliriums of the poor souls in Purgatory and the roaring insanities of the lost souls in Hell. Here was all the broken logic of the ghost nations, and the specious daydreams of the rotting dead.

It was a strange and astringent stew in the pool of the common unconscious, but it was one of the waters of life. It was the manure and the fertility from which all thoughts and ideas were formed. It was the raw material (oh, was it ever raw material!) from which all the sudden intuitions were put together, those winged notions that are called originality and creativity.

That huge and ungainly splashy darkness was a Ouija or planchette board that produced automatic thought as well as automatic writing. It was spook infested. It bubbled up, from the one blind well, into the billions of minds; and it was somehow instrumental in generating all lively and consequential thoughts. And the detritus of those billions; of sharing minds fell back down into the well to add to its slurpy mass.

But, about a hundred centuries ago, one of the member species of this Collective Unconscious had begun to consume its substance at an uncommon rate. Those of this species became the lords who reaped where they had riot sowed and gathered where they had not planted. But there were many contributors to the substance of the harvest. How would one species run it dry?

Well, there had been many contributors, but now there were not near as many. When more and more trees and land plants and plankton plants of the sea (those whose business it is to supply oxygen for the world), when more and more of them are destroyed, then there is less and less usable oxygen for the world. And, following this analogy, when more and more of the contributing species to the subterranean pool are destroyed (wiped-out animals, extirpated ghost nations and airy nations and fire nations of beings, souls with their communication and rapport broken), when great numbers of such contributors reduced or destroyed, then there is less and less of the mysterious underground sparkling stuff, the substratum of cognition, to supply the active minds of the world. More is dipped out of the shaggy well than is put into it, so there would come a time when the well would go dry.

On November 7. 1990 (and on the several days that followed), the well made noises and produced symptoms that indicated that it had gone dry. The offending species was that of the prodigal human people, feverishly thinking and creating and originating, and it was they who had pumped the well dry.

Simple orientation was one of the things that had failed. Simple



orientation had always been a complex and continuing syndrome of creative thoughts and acts. And creative thoughts and acts cannot continue unless they are nourished by the strong broth out of that paradoxical well. People who lose their simple orientation will not be able to perform even simple jobs, and they sure will not be able to perform complex tasks.

The breakdown was at hand: deprivation, suffering, starvation! The world was falling apart.

"Have you ever heard of a large city getting its water supply through huge pipes and conduits and not knowing whence those pipes lead, not knowing the location of the lake or reservoir or source that they are tapping?" This was Joshua Santa Cruz giving the doleful appraisal to the others of the special-seven group. "Well, the world is a large city, and it has been getting its supply of peculiar water through pipes and conduits: and it has no idea of the location of the source that feeds those pipes and conduits.

"People, we must find this well of the world, this dire but necessary ocean of the Collective Unconscious. Various evidence shows that this pool does have physical existence and location, and yet we cannot find it anywhere on the Earth or under the Earth. We have to find it if we are going to revive it. Oh, it is an impediment not to be able to think clearly these last several days! How I miss my ideas! How I miss my old logical thought-train! How I miss my mind!"

"Mr. Dollo," said a secretary-lady who came in (the building in which the special-seven group was meeting was the establishment of Sedgewick Dollo in his exile), "that Miss Phosphor McCabe has called again and says that she has friends who know where the well is and what to do about it."

"Sedgewick," Irene Komohana chided, "Miss Phosphor can't be real! She has to be a tall story that you made up. Isn't she the lady who lives in the pink pagoda? You made her up as a latter-day legend for your town here."

"Wan-witted as I am, I'm not sure whether I made her up or not," Sedgewick Dollo confessed. "Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to think straight again!"

"Miss Phosphor says that they have you where it's short," the secretary continued. "And she says that you will have to come up to their spring to drink."

"The saying is 'have to come down to my spring to drink,'" Edwin Senate said dubiously.

"Miss Phosphor inflected the 'up.'" the secretary said.

"Tell Miss McCabe that we will see her and her friends," Sedgewick Dollo pronounced sadly.

The friends of Miss Phosphor McCabe were plainly of a Fortean race, but they were not of the Stutzamutza subrace as Dollo had expected. There are, of course, many varieties of the Fortean people.

"We Forteans are not organized." one of them said. "We would not be true Forteans if we were. And so we have no leaders nor spokesmen. But I have a love of talking, and mostly they find it better to let me talk than to shut me up. I am Hiram Cloudhopper and I am moved to compassion to see that such arrogant and ignorant folks as yourselves are in trouble. You people are no more organized than we are, but you believe that you are. You accept so many things that stand in defiance of all reason that it seems you'd believe anything without question. So we will talk to you, since Miss McCabe says that several of you are good folks. And yet your credentials aren't much."

Norbert Hsu in private life was president of the World Federation of Scientists. Carlos Liosa was President of the United States. Agnes Belka was First Secretary of Greater Russia. Edwin Senate was Premier of United Africa. Joshua Santa Cruz was Pope of Rome. Irene Kornohana was High Stylist Emeritus of the Best Dressed Women of the World, as well as Prime Minister of Asia and Polynesia. Sedgewick Dollo was Emperor of Latin America in Esteemed Exile.

Their credentials weren't much? What do you call credentials where you

come from?

"Ah, ladies and gentlemen (though neither term seems appropriate to you) of the sprawling and possibly imaginary realm of Fortestan," the great cosmologist Norbert Hsu was saying, "there is one question that we must put to you: can you put water back in the well?"

"There is always plenty of water in the well," Hiram Cloudhopper told them, "but it's a bit compartmentalized there and one compartment of it runs a little low just now. Your difficulty is that you've been too proud to dip out of the well with the dipper of the crooked handle. You do not even recognize the great dipper which, with its queer handle, will dip from the other side of any barrier. You have relegated the dipper to legend as The Great Horn Spoon, but you do not really know it. Your problem is over with now, though. There is plenty of water. Set aside your pride and drink."

"But the well's run dry!" Agnes wailed.

"Not really," Cloudhopper said. "Only one small compartment of it has run dry. And it has run dry only because, on some level or other, you showed yourselves too particular about what came into it to fill it up."

"But all those animals voiding into it -" Irene began to protest. "And it would have been still worse if we hadn't -"

"What animals?" Cloudhopper asked. "You don't know just how raunchy some of the animals can be. You should see some of the animals in our part of the well."

"This well of the unconscious, it does have a real location in physical space?" Hsu asked. "We haven't been able to find it anywhere on Earth."

"Oh, it isn't exactly on Earth," Cloudhopper told them. "It's up in the air about twenty-seven miles above the Earth. In the Fortean Universes, almost everything is twenty-seven miles above the Earth: the moon and the sun and the planets, and the stars and the farther stars."

"How can a well or ocean be subterranean when it's twenty-seven miles up in the air?" Carlos Llosa demanded.

"What's wrong with that?" Cloudhopper the Fortean asked. "There are plenty of subterranean caverns and caves and oceans twenty-seven miles up in the air. You just don't know what the interior of the sky is like. And whoever told you that your own topography was the only one or the correct one?"

"Just what do you people want for reviving the well?" Llosa asked cautiously.

"Oh, nothing at all," Cloudhopper said. "We were going to fill your compartment up for you anyhow. We were just having a little fun by delaying it a couple of days. But you people began to suffer too much, so we will call off the fun."

"When can we use the well again?" Llosa asked.

"Oh, within five minutes. We'll just whistle up to the boys there to knock out a barrier or two and let your compartment fill up. You'll have to get used to it though. It is stronger and tastier than any water that you've had before. It might be too strong for a few of you."

So, within about five minutes' time, this particular portion of the well of the Collective Unconscious filled up again. People could draw on it once more. The people quickly became creative again, enough so that they could maintain their roles in the world. The deprivation, the suffering, the starvation were mostly halted. The world did not quite fall apart, but it had been close.

People could think again and enjoy again. They had their ideas back, they had their old logical thought-trains back, they had their minds back. They could die creatively and spectacularly again, and they could jive stupendously, some of them, and originally.

So then it was all as it had been before the well ran dry?

No, it was not. It would never again be the same as it had been before. This was strange water coming out of the well now, and the thoughts and

actions that it nourished were more extravagant than any heretofore known. There came a weirdness over the whole of regular humanity, and it would be permanent.

You know what rough and shouting people the Forteans had always been? You remember what rude strutters the Boschites were? You know the loud and glittering insanity of the Dalikites, and the perversity and perfidy of the Albionians? These shabby, crude, delirious dregs of humanity had always lived on rocks in the lower skies and in shanties on the outskirts of our own towns.

But now we all drank their water we thought their thoughts (thoughts? some of their ghoully notions were enough to rot the flesh off your bones), and now we became indistinguishable from them.

The stuff that now came out of that enlarged well of the Collective Unconscious was too strong for many persons. It proved too stark for the stylish Irene Komohana, for instance, and for a few million persons like her.

"Glug, gloug, glaaach!" she retched (she even retched with style, Irene did, and yet she had already begun to lose that style). "I can't drink this stuff, I can't dream this stuff, I can't think this stuff or act it out. It's wild, it's vile, it has no style at all. I'd rather die!"

And Irene did die soon after this, of a blundering and noncreative accident. And the enlarged ambient got to her at the last and denied her the circumstance of even dying in style.

"Better die than ratify!" some of the militant and refusing people declared (sloganing had come onto evil days with the great thirst and the extinction of wit). "We will not partake!" And they didn't. These several million persons, for a protest, died gallantly but clumsily.

That was the end of elitism and of real class on Earth. All the people drank out of the common pot thereafter, and all became common, and unhinged and undirected, and a little bit trashy. You think it was common before? Now it was really common! "Oh, if only I could have a mind of my own!" people sometimes lamented.

Footnote (aw, naw, not a footnote; it's a twenty-seven-mile-up-in-the-air note): This trenchant and illuminating discovery and reconstruction in the archaeology of the mind was presented - as a convention - as a future account, as something that was to happen in the year 1999 of the present era. Actually it happened in the year 1999 in an era that prevailed a long time ago, an earlier cyclical correspondence to our own era. It is the true account of how things became so raunchy down in the well of the world and how ourselves became so raunchy. We haven't any particular wells or fountains of our own. We draw it all from the same unsanitary and common pool.

And Some in Velvet Gowns

1.

To catch on Earth an al-i-en,  
Sift every sand and strain each ooze,  
And find him out in town or fen,  
Unless he isn't wearing shoes.

"Alien Identification Handbook Boogie" (third verse)

Have you noticed how brightly colored everything is lately? That big hearing room downtown hadn't had that much color in it since the cast of Brightskin was arrested and brought in for a denunciatory hearing. And one vivid patch in that glittering velvet color medley was the red-flushed face of the angry Judge Daniel Doomdaily.

He had six shackled and manacled prisoners in the dock (they were even chained together by iron collars), and they looked like a rowdy and defiant bunch. These six were Delphina Oakley, Bridget Upjones, Evangeline Guillford,

Elmer Fairfoot, Rollo Marquette and Caleb Outback. They had been in town for less than ten days, but it seemed as if they had been there forever. They were an advance pilot group for that town, they said plainly.

And the judge had six attesting citizens there. These seemed both puzzled and entertained by the goings-on, and only a little bit contrite for failing in their plain civil vigilance. These six were Sam and Sara Joplin, Fulgence and Hazel Sorrel, Buck Bigchester and Thelma Brightbrass.

And the judge had two aides who were supposed to sustain his prosecutions. These were Madras O'Connell, a comely young woman, and Anthony Krebs, who was a plain-looking young man.

"What is the matter with you people that you couldn't tell what they were?" Judge Doorndaily boomed at the six attesting citizens. "But for the accidental discovery of their program, small thanks to you, they would have completed the pilot phase of their takeover arid transference. How could you have been deceived by them? The more you look at them the phonier they get. Anthony Krebs and Madras O'Connell, please begin to phrase up the case against the perfidious aliens."

(The six manacled and shackled prisoners in the dock were the aliens.)

"Madras O'Connell, come to the vesting room at once!" the loudspeaker blared in the voice of Over-Judge Kenneth Rictiram, or anyhow one of the overjudges.

"Oh, damn, Kenneth, I'm in session!" Judge Doomdaily argued with the loudspeaker. "And Madras is a special-knowledge person for this session. Someone else will have to do what you want. I need her here." And the judge patted Madras with judicial friendliness.

"Madras O'Connell, come to the vesting room at once," the loudspeaker overruled by its great volume. "Be quiet, Doomdaily. I outrank you and I wouldn't want it any other way. Get that girl in here."

But Madras O'Connell had already disappeared out of the hearing room.

"Sam Joplin!" Judge Doomdaily snorted. "You should be the most important and most knowledgeable man in your neighborhood, and you allowed yourself to be taken in by these six shoddy fakes who aren't even human. Look at the damnable aliens! They don't even have skin. I don't know what it is that they do have."

"We paint ourselves so you can't see," said Bridget Upjones, who was an alieness in the dock. "Maybe someday you get all the skin burned off of you and have to use cosmetics."

"They haven't skin, they haven't hair, they haven't human shape," the judge went on. "They haven't human smell or sound. All they have is gaudy clothes to cover their abomination. Why were you fooled into accepting these dangerous deceivers for human?"

"I don't know," Sam Joplin said. "They look like humans until you really look at them. And they're such nice folks!"

"Nice folks!" Doomdaily trumpeted. "Do the corruptions and destructions of the human elements of twelve cities in our part of the state look as if they were nice folks? It is only by accident that we learned they had taken over in these places. Madras, where is that report? Madras! Oh, she was called to the vesting room. To the vesting room? I don't even know what a vesting room is, but all at once I'm sure that we don't have one here. Simple citizens, cast your eyes on these six aliens! They are an eroding and occupying disease."

"Only five of us aliens now," said Elmer Fairfoot, who was one of the damnable aliens in the dock.

"Five of you?" Judge Doomdaily slrrieked. "One, two, three, four, five, six. I can count. There are six of you."

But the unnumbered aliens laughed.

"No, judge-man," said Rollo Marquette, who was another of the perfidious aliens. "There are only five of us here now. We have ourselves painted so it

looks like there are six of us."

Madras O'Connell came down from the mysterious vesting room.

"You look different, Madras," Judge Doomdaily said, and he patted her with judicial restraint.

"I'm supposed to look just about the same, if you don't look too close," Madras said.

"Look at them! Look at them!" Doomdaily bellowed as he turned his attention back to the aliens.

All right, look at them. But the eye was caught by very many things before it really got to the aliens themselves. It was caught by their extravagant clothing. Well, there was a lot of bright clothing in those days, but not of such scorchy and flamboyant colors as the aliens wore. These were new and compensating and fulfilling colors. If one tried to see the clothing apart from the aliens who were in it, the colors were almost out of control. It was the aliens who tamed them by wearing them.

But all the aliens were dressed in this multicolored bright velvet, the men in doublets of old renaissance style, the ladies in gowns from the gownier days. These stranger folks were almost hypnotic in their getups, and the combinations of their bright garb and their dull selves did total out to approximate human shape and color.

But a closer look ("Oh, why do we never take that closer look till after the barn door is stolen!" Judge Doomdaily lamented) showed that the garments by themselves were impossibly unhuman, and that the persons of the aliens were even more unhuman in an opposite direction. Then why did these people, in combination with their contrived clothing and clinging ambients, look completely human? Well, they looked completely human until they were dissected by the analytical eye.

"Well, we have you in the dock now, and in chains," Doomdaily gloated. "In chains? I never ordered any chains. We didn't have any chains. Where did they come from? We don't use chains anymore.

"And you, you reprehensible aliens, you would have corrupted and occupied the citizens of Center City as you have occupied those of Pondereek and Blackwell and Newkirk and Fairfax and Pawnee and Perry and Billings and Lucien and Redrock and Gray Horse and Pawhuska and Ponca City itself? Did you believe that our law enforcement was equally slack here? Oh, what has happened to my fine questioning mind? I still see things that cannot be, and I almost accept them. Where did these chains, manacles, shackles, iron collars, come from? How did they get into my hearing room?"

"Oh, take it easy, Red-face," said the alieness Delphina Oakley. "We're not wearing any of those things. Where is your humor? Do you think we're crazy enough to put on such heavy things? We've just got ourselves painted so it looks like we're wearing chains and shackles and manacles. This is just for fun. We thought your hearing room needed a little bit of it."

Delphina's voice, to an absolutely analytical ear, would have sounded horribly unhuman and made up of frightful and unarranged discords. But who can maintain an analytical ear all the time? To a sleepy and inattentive ear, Deiphina sounded delightfully young-woman human, with a lilt and a gaiety and a mocking.

"We owe so much to you, Thelma Brightbrass," Doomdaily said in a proud voice to that citizeness then. "Tell us how you discovered that your husband, Caleb Brightbrass, was taken over and replaced by the alien Caleb Outback. Madras, what have you done to yourself? I still say that you look different."

"You think the Madras-trick is easy to do?" that aide asked. "You try to do her sometime."

"My husband, Caleb Brightbrass, began to act a bit odd about the time that the new people moved into the neighborhood," Thelma was saying. "I didn't object to it. In every way except one he was a lot better than he had been. He

was wittier for one thing. I should have been suspicious right there: my Caleb was always a rock-head. We mixed a lot with those new people and they seemed to be very nice folks, so that was all right. I knew that Caleb had become more like them than like the old folks, and that was all right too. I never had so much fun in my life, for about a week. In every way except one, life was a lot better than it ever had been. But after about a week I said 'Hey, wait a minute.' to myself, and I got damned suspicious.

"And in a week they had their people-trap almost ready to trap the town," Doomdaily orated. "Oh, how many towns have already become completely alien, and who can tell the difference? And then, Mrs. Brightbrass?"

"Then I said to Caleb, 'Are you a man, or what are you anyhow?' 'Ah, I'm a nonfunctioning male,'" Caleb said. 'I believe that's the way you'd have to define me in your terms. Be patient with me for a little while. We often suffer these transition disabilities.' That's when I knew it wasn't my Caleb. That's when I knew that it was some other Caleb who had taken his place. Not that my Caleb didn't have nonfunctioning spells now and then, but he never was smart enough to use words like nonfunctioning and transition."

"Do you know how the alien came to use the name Caleb Outback instead of Caleb Brightbrass?" Doomdaily asked.

"Oh, Outback was my Caleb's maiden name," Thelma said. "He used it sometimes for fun. But I believe that it's the aliens' code that they can't take over a person or a person's name exactly. Well, that was when the scales fell from my eyes and I took a good look at Caleb and the rest of them. And when I saw what I saw, then I blew the whistle on them."

"Elmer Fairfoot! Take your feet off that table!" Judge Doomdaily roared at the alien Elmer in the dock. "Even an alien can have manners. Do you think it's civilized to have your shoes on the table?"

"I'm not wearing shoes," the alien Elmer Fairfoot explained reasonably. "I just have my feet painted to look like it."

"Anthony Krebs, come to the vesting room at once!" the loudspeaker blared in an over-judgely voice.

"Oh, lay off, Kenneth, I'm in session," Doomdaily argued with the speaking apparatus. "You took Madras, and she seems to be changed since she got back. And Anthony is the only other aide I have. Besides, there isn't any such thing as a vesting room."

"Anthony Krebs, come to the vesting room at once!" the loudspeaker overuled Doomdaily. "Be quiet, Doomdaily. Send that young man in here right now'."

But Anthony Krebs had already disappeared out of the hearing room.

2.

In Australia, the trees and other wild plants simply aren't related to the trees and plants of the northern hemisphere. None of the life there, either animal or vegetable, is related to life in other parts of the world. Close examination will reveal that the sets of things are utterly and outrageously different.

But a less close examination will not reveal this. A blended landscape of Australia cannot be distinguished from a blended landscape of the northern hemisphere in corresponding climate-zone and season. And this in spite of the fact that the southern grass is not grass, the bushes are not bushes, the sedges and reeds are not sedges and reeds, and the trees are not trees. Every smell and sound of an Australian landscape will be different from anything found anywhere else, but the totality and the effect of the smell and sound and sight will be the same as in a corresponding part of the world. A maddening identity of the big picture is arrived at without using any similar pieces. There's a weird compensation and balance and camouflage at work here.

- The Back Door of History,  
Arpad Arutinov

Yowl, yowl, the dogs do howl,  
The aliens come to town...

- "Alien Identification Handbook Boogie"  
(fifth verse)

"You six aliens can fool the careless eye and ear," Doordaily was saying, "but here in Center City we are people the closer examination. There is nothing about you that can escape us."

"We four aliens," said the alien Rollo Marquette. "There are only four of us here in the dock now, but we have painted ourselves to look like six of us. And do not look at us closely, Judge Careful-eyes, or you will find that you're looking in a mirror."

"Buck Bigchester," Doomdaily said to another of his good attesting citizens. "Recount for the record how you yourself became suspicious of this nefarious troupe of aliens. What did you first notice to be wrong about them?"

"I first noticed a bunch of things that were just all right about them," Buck said, "and most of them were about that girl Bridget Upjones there. I went for her the first time that I saw her. She had everything."

"Couldn't you tell that her texture was more vegetable than animal, Buck? And that it was unsubstantial vegetable at that? Couldn't you tell that she had two sets of eyes, one above the other? Couldn't you tell that parts of the velvet gown she wore were still alive? Or that she smelled like impure ammonia?"

"Yeah, but she said that they had to use live paint for part of those color effects. And she said they had to use color because they just weren't there without all that color to complement them. And she put a little bit of that hot sauce stuff behind her ears, and it combined with the ammonia and came out smelling like 'Wonder Woman Number Nine.' Oh, I guess that I knew her teeth weren't like real teeth. And then she had those little fiddlefoot crabs that ran in and out of her ears. They made up for what was lacking in her ears, she said, and the total effect was human. None of that strange stuff could subtract from a girl as pretty as Bridget was.

"But I got a little bit suspicious the night I took her out to the Four-State Fair and we stopped in front of the weight-guesser with his scales. He would guess anybody's weight within three pounds or he would give them a three-pound box of candy. Now this weight-guesser was a real professional, and besides they have a lot of people around carnivals and fairs who aren't strictly human. He turned green when he saw Bridget, though, and he began to shake. 'Two pounds,' he said 'You weigh two pounds.' Bridget sat in that swinging seat that is part of the scales. And she didn't weigh anything, not anything it all.

"'So I hit it within three pounds,' the weight-guesser said. 'I win. Now you get out of here. You don't belong around here. You don't belong on this world at all.' 'Oh, no. I win,' Bridget told him. 'Two pounds is not within three pounds of nothing. Anything at all is an immeasurable distance from nothing at all. They're of different orders. Now you give me my box of candy!' She got it too. She scared him into giving to her. Those people like Bridget don't like to lose, not a bet, not a game, not anything."

Anthony Krebs came back into the hearing room.

"You look different, Anthony," Poomdaily said. "I don't know what it is, but you look just a little bit different. Well, is it my time? Is it time for me to go yet?"

"Don't rush it," said Elmer Fairfoot the alien. "In a moment, in a moment."

"Judge Daniel Doomdaily, come to the vesting room at once!" the loudspeaker sounded in the voice of some overjudge.

"I don't even know where the vesting room is," Doomdaily started to

protest. "Oh, it's all right. I feel that I'm being guided there." And the judge left the hearing room.

"Six little aliens," the citizen Fulgence Sorrel razzed in a tired but amused voice. "Delphina Oakley, Bridget Upjones, Evangeline Guillford, Elmer Fairfoot, Rollo Marquette, Caleb Outback. Six of you in the dock. But are there only three of you now? And you are painted to make it look as if there were six of you?"

"Three of us here now," said alien Elmer Fairfoot, "but try and count us."

"And you're not really shackled and chained," Fulgence said. "They are only things you painted on for fun. And we can't avoid being taken over by you?"

"Why should you want to avoid it?" Elmer asked. "Why do you object? These migrations are common. You've taken over yourself. That little deformity inside each of you, that person whom you sometimes call your subconscious, is what is left of a person who was supplanted by you. He is the one who, looking at it one way, had title to your body before you did."

"I'm getting mighty hot about this." the citizeness Thelma Brightbrass interrupted. "There's a fishiness here that smells to heaven for vengeance."

"But, Elmer, I have not personally supplanted anyone," Fulgence said reasonably.

"No, but now all of those in your line of generation are born stratified. The supplanted ones. those who would have been born independently if it weren't for the usurpation by you people, are now born with you and within you. In some places seven different strata have been counted. In this place, one more stratum will be counted very soon. Don't fight it, Fulgence. It gives depth to us all, and we do need a place to stay."

"Who will take me over?" Fulgence asked.

"There's something the matter here and it gets matterer all the time!" citizeness Thelma exploded.

"I will take you over, Fulgence," the alien Elmer Fairfoot said. "You are the closest thing to an intelligent one in your group, and I in mine. We will be in accord. And I'll listen to you, down under there where you'll be, quite often. Maybe as much as a half minute a day."

"Thanks, Elmer," Fulgence said. "Will I get a velvet gown?"

"No, only a torso paint-job for the present, but it'll look like a velvet gown for a while. Later, but not much later, there will develop a synthesis of apparel to serve our common person."

"Doesn't your paint weigh anything?" Hazel Sorrel asked.

"Oh, yes, but we use just enough of it to bring us up to zero," the alieness Delphina Oakley answered her.

"Well, what do you want here, Delphina?" Hazel asked her.

"Bodies."

"Aren't those bodies that you have there?"

"Not good ones. They haven't any substance. We had to leave substance behind the way we traveled," Delphina told them.

"I'm getting damned mad about this whole thing!" citizeness Thelma announced.

"How many of you are there, anyhow?" Hazel asked.

"Oh, there are just as many of us as we can scrounge up for," Delphina explained. "If we can locate more bodies there will be more of us here to use them."

Judge Daniel Doomdaily came back into the hearing room.

"Now we will quickly dispose of this case," he said, and caressed Madras O'Connell with judicial authority.

"There's something the matter with Madras," Thelma railed, and there's something the matter with Anthony Krebs, and now there's something the matter with Judge Doomdaily. Look it Madras! Her clothes are different!"

"I'm not wearing clothes," Madras said. "I just got myself to look like



I am."

"Maybe she's a nonfunctioning female now," Thelma challenged.

"Not now," cried Madras, or whoever she was. "Oh, not now!"

"That nonfunctioning interval was a bit tiresome for many of us," Judge Doomdaily said. People, he did look somehow different. He looked a lot different -

"But now we can function again," said the judge, or whoever he was. "And now we will quickly dispose of this case, and of much else."

#### The Doggone Highly Scientific Door

A group of children swarmed down toward the new door. The door swung open. The music was booming and jangling in the park inside. and the children crowded through the door in a happy gang. Elroy Hunt went to follow them through, and the door clanged shut in his face. He felt it, he pushed it, and it wouldn't open. There were no knobs or handles anywhere on that door and it was closed solidly. This was one of the new doors at Whizzer's Amusement Park. Hunt stepped back from the door a ways. He was slightly puzzled. How do you go about working a door that is supposed to work by itself? He sat on a bench that was there just about three steps from that door in the wall of the park.

Elroy Hunt liked to tell people that he had never grown up. He was a circus flack and a carnival buff, a comic-book collector and a puppet-show puncher, a citizen of the summertime and a lover of amusement parks. He liked kid amusements.

He liked to eat kid food: Coney Islands, Ding Dongs, Chocolate Cones, Karmelkorn, frozen custards. corn dogs, Goffel-Waffles, Onion Kings, Fickle Pickles, Cracker Jack, Funny Honey, cotton candy, Hooper-Goobers, Cup-Pups, Eskimo-Toes, popcorn. And he had a kid's stomach to match his taste. Save for a few sudden, violent and short-lived stomachaches, he thrived on the junk.

There was another cloud of kids bearing down on the big door of the amusement park, about twenty of them in this bunch. ("I'd better tell them that there's something wrong with the door," Elroy said to himself. "No, I won't either, let them find it out for themselves.")

But the door swung open for the kids ("Hey. it does work," Elroy said. "It must have fixed itself. It must work on some kind of electric eye or scanner."), and the kids exploded through to the inside of the park. And Elroy Hunt followed closely behind them, so closely that he got a bloody nose when the door slammed shut in his face. Elroy went and sat down on the bench again. "There is a double Dutchman in that woodpile," he said.

With his love for such things, there had been no holding Elroy back when Whizzer's Amusement Park opened for the summer on May 24 of that year. It was a Friday, and the grade schools had just let out for the year. Elroy had built up eight hours of overtime that week so he took Friday off. Oh well, lots of young men get spring fever toward the end of May every year, and they create excuses to take time off. Some of them go to ball games. Some of them go fishing, or they go tearing around in their cars out in the country. Some of them go to Grogley's Bar. Some of them might even go to Whizzer's Amusement Park. There is no accounting for a young man's fancy in late May.

But Elroy Hunt wasn't exactly a young man. He was forty-nine years old. Yes, and he had been forty-nine years old that year before, and the year before that too.

Another bunch of kids (Elroy knew this bunch) were coming to the big door, just five of them in this bunch, and a little bull terrier. Elroy Hunt fell in immediately behind them. The door swung open, and the kids went through. But the door banged shut again in the faces of Elroy and the little dog. The dog howled out loud, and Elroy did so interiorly.

"You go on home, King!" one of the kids called to the dog from inside the park. "They won't let dogs inside the park this year. Or stay with Mr. Hunt if you want to."

So the bull terrier named King decided to stay with Elroy Hunt and hook his fortunes to Elroy's. They had been acquaintances but not close friends. Now they looked at each other. They plotted a small plot together in a lightning meeting of minds. Both rushed at the door with absolute shouting-and-barking confidence that it would swing open for them if only they had faith. And both cracked themselves jarringly on the closed adamant door (it was really made out of wood and chrome and glass).

One little kid (hardly more than a toddler) approached the door, and it swung wide open. The little kid padded in, and Elroy and King (rushing for the momentary gap) hit the closing door so hard that they both bounced.

Frustrated, they both went over and sat on the bench that was only three long steps from the door. King licked his bruised foreshoulder. Elroy licked the heel of his hand that was bloodied and scraped.

A boy on a bicycle was coming at full speed (if the door didn't open for him it would be all-systems-smash), and the door opened and the boy was in. And the dog King (with the fastest four-footed takeoff in town) was right after that cycling kid. But the door (with the quickest swing-to of any door in town) whanged shut; and King was out (side and cold).

A man leading four ponies came to the door, and it opened with perfect courtesy, and the man and the ponies were in. And Elroy Hunt was still outside when the door closed on him with abrupt rudeness.

Elroy sat on the bench again; and King (coming back to dog-consciousness after a while) lay on the grass. They watched a delivery truck go in, they watched a dude and his doll go in, they watched some schoolgirls wearing schoolgirl uniform skirts go in, they watched some mean kids from Berryhill go in; they watched a school bus from district seven, full of children, go in. They watched two mothers with three and a half children each go in, they watched a heavy truck with a load of watermelons and a Texas license plate go in, they watched the clown named Gumbo go in riding on the trick mule named Dumbo. Dumbo snickered at Elroy and King as he went in. He knew something that they didn't.

They tried it again. It still didn't work. They door would open for men and women and children and beasts, and trucks and buses and bicycles and watermelons. But it would not open for Elroy Hunt, and it would not open for the dog named King.

A cheerful man sauntered up.

"It's amazing, it's amazing," he said. "The doors, I mean. Have you noticed the door?"

"Oh, man, have I ever noticed the door!" Elroy Hunt said.

"They are highly scientific, the doors that they have this year," the man said. "They are highly selective. They will swing wide for all human people. That is their positive operation. They will open with a little insistence for almost anything else. That is their neutral operation. But there's another class of things (I never liked them, I'm glad that they barred them this year) that the doors reject completely. That is their negative operation. They are the newest and most scientific thing in doors. Get away from me, mutt!" The cheerful man said the latter words to King and not to Elroy Hunt.

"Do you have any idea how the doors work?" Elroy asked the man.

"Oh, yes," the man said. "I understand it. They are highly scientific. They work by scientific electricity and by up-to-date automation."

The cheerful man strode forcefully at the door, which opened just in the thin whisker of time for him. And Elroy and King -

"Naw, let it go. It's no use," said Elroy. He didn't try to follow.

"Grumpf," said King. He didn't try to follow either. They didn't even try it. They were tired of rebuffs. And the door closed very slowly after the entrance of the cheerful man, as though daring them to make a rush for it.

King cocked his head at Elroy, and a bright idea passed between the two of them. There should be other door-gates into Whizzer's Amusement Park. There

always had been. They went along Whizzer's Great Walls of China (they were made of pre-stressed adobe) that surrounded the park, and they came to the Marion Street entrance.

There were two dogs there, but no people to see their failure. Elroy and King tried it. The door wouldn't swing open for them: it wouldn't budge. They hammered on it with fists and they bit it with angry teeth. And it still wouldn't open.

There was happy shouting and chatter inside the park, and the loud squealing of the big wheels and rides. There were open-air hamburgers a-frying, and a wide-traveling garlic-and-mustard odor was shilling for them. There was the chanting and gabbing of barks and narks and marks. But they who had loved the parks couldn't get in.

Two little girls came running and the door opened for them. And closed again before Elroy Hunt and his doggy friends could get in. So they all went around to the New Haven Street entrance.

It was the same thing there. There were several bunches of farm kids going in there in pickup trucks. The door opened gladly for the farm kids and their trucks. It opened for all sorts of persons, young and old, and for about every kind of rolling and rambling thing there was. But it wouldn't open for Elroy Hunt. And it wouldn't open for the pariah dogs with him. Sometimes it seemed that there was no way that the door could let everybody else in and keep Elroy and his associates out without cutting someone in half. But it did it. People, that door was fast!

"I brought my students here just to study the highly scientific doors, said a snooty schoolteacher lady in pince-nez. "They let all people in whoever they are. They let most other things in. And they keep still another class of things out. And they never make a mistake."

"Ah, sometimes they may make a mistake," Elroy said. Elroy saw now that the lady wasn't wearing real pince-nez, but carnival gimcrack things instad, and a false nose with them. She took them off to scratch her real nose, and it was seen that she wasn't really snooty in either sense. She seemed rather nice.

"No, the doors never make a mistake," she said. "Highly scientific things never make mistakes. I really believe that the doors are smarter than most people." Ah, she didn't really seem too nice after all.

"Yeah, they're smarter than one people I know," Elroy admitted bitterly. With his doggy friends, Elroy then went to the Oswego Street entrance, to the Pittsburgh Street entrance, to the Quebec Street entrance. At each place the doors refused to open for them: or, if already opened, they sure did close in quick and firm fashion.

The whipped man Elroy and the whipped dogs (there were six dogs in the party now) went back to the door of first encounter. They were a low-spirited bunch. Then their spirits got a quick lift from a bunch of high-spirited kids bursting out of the door. Elroy knew these kids, and one of them was named Curtis and was the owner of the dog King.

"Hey, King, I won you a dog bowl," the boy Curtis shrilled "I won it throwing lopsided baseballs at wooden milk bottles. I sure am good at hitting those bottles." He gave the fine bowl to King. The bowl had KING written on it in red letters, and King's day was made, in spite of the humiliation of being excluded from the amusement park. And the boy Curtis had two other bowls that he had won. (This boy Curtis was the best grade-school pitcher in the city, and somebody at the ball throw booth was negligent in letting him take so many throws)

"I sure can hit with those lopsided baseballs," Curtis said "You throw a sidearm spitball with the lop-side (that's the heavy side) forward, and the weight wobbles but it stays forward. And it sure whams those wooden milk bottles. Hey there, aren't you the Whitneys' dog, Whitey? I got a 'Whitey' bowl here." Curtis gave the bowl to the dog Whitey, and everyone was pleased by the aptness of the act.

"Hey, there's Stubblefield's dog, Spot!" one of other the boys cried his recognition. "Hey, Curt, that white-headed kid won the 'Spot' bowl. Hey, there he is now. See if you can trade him."

"Hey, white-headed kid." Curtis yelled. and he went and traded a "Fritz" bowl for a "Spot" bowl. He gave the bowl to the dog Spot.

"What other dogs?" he asked then, and he surveyed the bunch. "There's Pepper and Fat Pat and Donnicker. I'll go try to win bowls for them. I sure am good with those lopsided baseballs."

The kids were back into the park through that free-swinging door; and Elroy Hunt, rushing giddily at the opening, was slapped silly by the nick-of-time closing of that door. That really finished Elroy.

In a hopeless mood, he rejoined the dogs. Three of them were happy with their bowls, and three of them were hopeful. But Elroy Hunt himself was frustrated and bitter. The old complaint "It shouldn't happen to a dog" seemed to take special and sinister significance in his mind.

"Ah, there's another old regular," a man coming out of the park said to Elroy. "I believe that you and I both make opening date at the amusement park every year. Have you been in yet?"

"No, I - I probably will go in after a while," Elroy said. "I was just sitting here on the bench watching the people, and the dogs."

"It's too bad the dogs aren't allowed in the park this year," the man said. "But there's a new state law that bars dogs from amusement parks. Say, have you noticed the jazzy doors they have this year? Very scientific."

"Ah, yes, I have noticed the doors," Elroy said. That other elder lover of amusement parks went away then, and Elroy Hunt sat and wondered what was behind it all.

After a while the boy Curtis came out again with his friends and with two more dog bowls, a "Pepper" bowl and a "Pat" bowl.

"I knocked the bottles down for the 'Pepper' bowl," Curtis said, "and I whipped a little kid and took the 'Pat' bowl away from him. They didn't have a 'Fat Pat' bowl. A plain 'Pat' howl will have to do, Fat Pat."

Curtis gave the two bowls to the two dogs, Pepper and Fat Pat.

"Hey, there's Hearn's dog, Donnicker," Curtis said then. "And they do have a 'Donnicker' bowl. I didn't think they'd have one with a dumb name like that, but they do. It wasn't out on prize row yet, but they'll put it out with the next bunch. Then I'll win it and bring it to you, Donnicker."

And Curtis and his friends went back inside. Five of the dogs admired their pretty white and empty bowls.

Well doggone, guys, I'll treat," Elroy said suddenly. He went across the street to the Whistle Stop grocery store. He bought a mastiff-size box of Wigby's Dog Chunks for a dollar and nineteen cents, tax included. He brought it back across the street and filled five dog bowls with it, and it wasn't even a quarter empty. There was a park department faucet there, and he added water to the chunks, and the dogs went about the happy business of eating them.

"Don't worry, Donnicker," Elroy said. "There's plenty left. And Curtis will win you a 'Donnicker' bowl and bring it out pretty soon. Then you can have your feast."

Bascomb Whizzer himself, the owner of the park, came out and sat with Elroy Hunt on the bench.

"Ah, it looks like a good season," Whizzer said. "Everything is greatly improved, and our theme for this year is 'Science of Today.' How do you like the park this year?"

"I haven't been in yet," Elroy confessed. "I may just possibly go in later."

"I thought you always came early and stayed late," Whizzer said. "And the doors, the highly scientific doors, how do you like them?"

"I think they're a fraud," Elroy Hunt said.

"No. That's impossible," Whizzer said. "They are absolutely scientific in their selection. They let in all people of every sort. They let in most

other things. And they keep out all dogs. That's because of the new state law that we can't have dogs in an amusement park. And the doors can't be fooled, and they can't make a mistake."

"Everything can make mistakes," Elroy maintained. "And if one door should make a mistake, suffer a malfunction of its mechanism, then all the doors would suffer the same malfunction, since, I presume, you have them all wired together in some manner."

"Absolutely not," Whizzer said. "The doors work independently of each other. A fault in one door, if it should happen once in a billion times maybe, would not have any effect on the working of the other doors at all. What one door says is right is right. And what all seven doors say is right has got to be right. There is just no way to argue with science when it is right. There isn't a human in the world who can't go through those doors. There isn't a dog in the world who can." And Whizzer himself went back inside his park with that cocksure

walk of his. The door closed very slowly after him, and Elroy -

"I swear that damned door giggled at me!" he said furiously. And he was thoroughly miserable.

Curtis and the other boys came out again after a while, and Curtis had two dog bowls with him.

"Here's yours, Donnicker," he called, and Donnicker accepted it with glad yelps. And Elroy Hunt filled it with Wigby's Dog Chunks and water. And Donnicker began to eat with the special joy that only Wigby's can bestow.

"The other bowl has 'Elroy' on it," Curtis said. "It's the only other one they would let me throw for. They said that I had to quit after that, that I had to be a ringer. Does anyone know a dog named Elroy?"

"No," said Mr. Hunt. "But my own name happens to be Elroy."

They whooped and laughed on that one.

"You, Mr. Hunt?" Curtis guffawed. "Well, do you want it?"

"Sure, why not?"

Curtis gave him the bowl. Then Curtis and his friends went on home, followed by most of the dogs with their bowls.

"That Mr. Hunt sure is a nice fellow," Curtis said as they went away. "He treated all the dogs to Wigby's Chunks, and he took the 'Elroy' bowl for a joke."

The dog Donnicker was still eating his chunks, and one other dog (a good judge of character and circumstance) waited slyly with his empty bowl. Elroy gave him some more chunks. Then he filled Donnicker's bowl again.

"They look good," Elroy Hunt said. "They sure do." He filled his own "Elroy" bowl with Wigby's Chunks and water. He didn't have any spoon or fork to eat them with, and his face wasn't built as well as the dogs' for eating directly out of the bowl. Nevertheless, he began to eat the chunks. And they were good.

Elroy calculated in his head: A mastiff-size box for a dollar and nineteen Cents. And look how many servings could be got out of it! It would do me for more than a week, probably a ~week and a half, I could eat for less than a dollar a week. That's something to think about. And they're good.

His face wasn't shaped right for eating out of a bowl, but it would become easier in time. And he could always use a spoon or a fork when he ate the chunks at home. But he probably wouldn't.

"This is all right, this is all right," he said. "I guess I'll just eat them out of the bowl forever." And he continued to eat the tasty dog chunks.

MAGAZINE SECTION

I

STRANGE INCIDENT AT HATBOX FIELD

Years ago (oh, from 1958 to 1962) Junior Giant Jet-Hoppers were used on short commercial flights out of small airports in the NE Oklahoma, NW Arkansas, SE Kansas, and SW Missouri areas. These smallest of jets would carry only thirty-two passengers. Well, on the routes they ran there were seldom more than twenty passengers: if there'd been smaller jets made they'd have been used.

The Junior Giants had size limitations in several places. They had the narrowest throats of any jets, entirely too narrow; and because of this the Junior Giants were often choked down by the birds they sucked in, especially ducks and geese.

At dusk of November 2, 1940, a Junior Giant took off a north-oriented runway from Hatbox Field of Muskogee, Oklahoma bound for Fayetteville, Arkansas, a flight of ninety-four miles. This was a little early in the year for geese to be flying south, and yet they had been heard the night before this.

It was for this reason that Flight Attendant Angela Rebhuhn brought her shotgun along with her on that flight. Just after takeoff, seeing a flying V of geese coming right at them, she opened the noseescape window (quite against regulations) and shot a blast at the V of geese to make it veer off. Then she readied herself for the second blast but she did not shoot it. She said later that she had the clear impression that the leading goose of the V was not a goose.

The Junior Giant sucked up the first five flyers of the V, then choked and died, banked over the Cookson Hills, and came back to Hat-Box Field at an easy glide and made an easy landing.

The night service crew (it consisted of a man and a boy) removed four geese (and one thing that was not a goose) from the gullet of the Junior Giant Jet-Hopper. The damage was declared to be minor, and the Jet-Hopper took off again after a total delay of only seven minutes.

The four geese that had been sucked into the narrow gullet of the jet and choked it down were now no more than four hot little blocks of charcoal (damn, they stayed hot for a long time!), and the man and boy spread them out on the floor of the machine shed.

But the leader of the V, the thing that was not a goose, did not seem to be badly burned. It was a curious creature. Its wings were like bat wings, very long fingers with a leather-like webbing between them. The creature was slightly made, but it had a finger-wing span of at least five feet. Its head and face were not at all goose-like. They were a little like those of a coon, or a monkey, or a comically ugly little man. Then the funny face stretched itself, flexed its web-jointed fingers, opened its eyes, and it said "Hot and fast, there's just no thrill like it." and it winked at the man and the boy, and the man and the boy fell all over themselves getting out of that maintenance shed.

Then they heard the popping of stretched leathery-fingered wings as the thing that was not a goose took to the air and vanished.

Nobody except Angela Rebhuhn ever believed the man and the boy. The man got testy and would not answer questions about it unless you found him boozed up down on Callahan Street in Muskogee. The boy started out hitch-hiking the morning after the incident. He said that he was going back home (to Olathe, Kansas) to finish high school. He said that he had seen something that only a liar could believe.

But their unbelieved story survived.

Every two or three years after that, people (even newcomers to the neighborhood who could not have heard the story) would report seeing a V of geese going south in the evening sky with a lead flyer that wasn't a goose.

I found the boy in an art class in Olathe, Kansas. He drew for me a clear picture of what he had seen. I found Angela Rebhuhn and showed her the picture.

"That's him, that's him exactly," she said. "I've seen him twice since then. But he doesn't lead geese into the hot throat when I'm on a flight. He

and I have come to an understanding, an understanding over about three hundred air yards. When I shoot my warning shotgun blast, he veers off with the V. He understands that my second shot will be more than a warning."

By John T. Woollybear in the Sunday Magazine Section of the Muskogee Messenger of quite a few years ago.

John T. Woollybear was a casual man with pale blue eyes. He was flecked with large tan freckles, and each freckle had a slight blue ring around it as though it had been drawn by a cartoonist. He had three wives, one in Illinois, one in Nebraska, one in Texas. He was on tolerably good terms with all three of them. Well, he sent each of them a card on her birthday every year. But he never entered the three states where they lived because (tolerably good terms or not) they had legal writs out against him.

John Woollybear was a newspaper hobo. He could run a linotype machine and all those other machines around a newspaper. He was a fair reporter. He wrote unusual feature articles for the Sunday Magazine Sections of newspapers. He had sold at least one of them a week for about forty years and that was about two thousand of them. He had his own rules for writing these Magazine Section stories: "THEY MUST BE STRANGE, THEY MUST BE OUTRAGEOUS, THEY MUST BE GARISH, and they must be true." And he insisted on that lower-case truth in every one of them.

He seldom stayed with one newspaper for more than a month.

When he left a town he usually left about an hour before dawn, dragging a suitcase big enough for three men, picking a highway nexus on the edge of town to hitch a ride from.

2.

#### STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT BLACKBERRY PATCH, KANSAS

Parallel to the Cross-Timbers there is a ridge known, but not known at all widely) as Big Wind Ridge which runs from the Texas gulf-shore through Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and into Canada. It is the unofficial place where the Great Plains and the hilly woodlands begin, and one goes down from the plains to the hills. There is always a strong wind out of the west all along the ridge, and as a result of this there is much kite-flying by men and boys also all along the ridge. Big Wind Ridge is the best kite-flying place in the world, and the best kite-flying place along the whole Ridge is Blackberry Patch, Kansas, an unincorporated place in Doniphan County.

Blackberry Patch, Kansas is the only place in the world where boy-carrying kites and man-carrying kites are really common. The west wind at Blackberry Patch will sustain really large kites, some of which are equipped with seats or even dangling gondolas such as passenger balloons have. It is not uncommon for three to five persons to be airborne by a single kite; it isn't uncommon if they are Blackberry Patch people. But there is something unusual and even secret about the people of Blackberry Patch.

The Blackberry Patch from which the settlement got its name was originally a hundred miles across, back in the Indian days, and the very vines were thick. But now (for the last hundred years or so) the patch has been nibbled away by settlers and farmers. But the heart of the patch still remains thick and secret; and it is there that the Blackberry Patch people (They are now an ethnic mixture of Kaw Indians and settler-Germans) live and make blackberry jelly at the Jelly Factory to sell all over the United States, and make kites and Fat Air suits. Since there is no graveyard or burying place around Blackberry Patch itself, one has to believe that the people go to what they humorously call the Elephant Graveyard in the Sky, in kites and their Fat Air suits, when their days are finished.

Sure the Kaw Indians flew kites back in the Indian Days, beaver-skin kites strung of frames of tough and springy Osage Orange wood. For kite-ropes they used twisted huckleberry vines. They flew the kites more than a mile high, and sometimes the kite-riders put on their Fat Air suits and jumped out

of the high kites. They might drift as far as fifty miles, across the wide Missouri River and into the treacherous Missouri Territory. And their descendants, the Kaw-Germans, still do it.

Affected by the technology of the Settler-German element, the Fat Air suits are much better than they were in the Indian days. And so are the kites. Tough rubber-like polyethylene has taken the place of beaver skins for both the suits and the kites. The suits used to be blown up by mouth, and the air was stoppered inside the suits by big wooden corks. Now the suits have regular air-valves in them; and every suit-traveler carries a bicycle pump along with him when he goes drifting. A person encased in a Fat Air suit can walk along pretty well on the ground, or bounce along; and if he falls down, he can roll along and bounce up again. And in the air he can get along famously. Fat Suitors from Blackberry Patch, Kansas have floated across the Missouri River and clear across the state of Missouri and come down in Illinois. They carry dried blackberries with them to nibble on. And they wear advertisements on their Fat Air suits, and they always attract attention when they land. Often they are given rides back to Kansas by drivers for the Missouri Kansas Motor Freight Lines, as MK Freight Lines is one of the advertisements they most often wear on the backs of their suits.

There is another aspect of the Blackberry Patch kites and the Fat Air suitors that some people find hard to believe. It is the main secret thing about them. There being no burial grounds around Blackberry Patch itself, the Blackberry Patchers, when they find that their days have about run out on them, go by kite and suit to the secret place with the secret name: but the joking name for it is the Elephant Graveyard in the Sky. A person gets into his Fat Air suit and goes up about a mile high in a kite. He jumps out then, and he begins to glide. But he does not begin his gentle glide downward as usual. He glides upward across the Missouri River. He comes to the secret place that looks like a big cloud on the outside. But it is a special sort of cloud with its spherical silver lining on the inside. It is bigger on the inside than on the outside, and has running water and green pastures. And there he will be gathered to the bosom of his fathers (mothers too, maybe), and will find all the wonderful Blackberry Patch people who have ever passed over to their glory.

This last part may be inexact as nobody has ever entered the miscalled Elephant Graveyard in the Sky and returned to give an accurate report of it.

And just where is this big secret cloud with the joking name?

It is exactly over downtown Kansas City, Missouri, and exactly two miles up.

By John T. Woollybear in the Sunday Magazine Section of the Kansas City Star.

That was the last thing that Woollybear ever had published in the Sunday Magazine Section of the Kansas City Star. The Monday morning after it appeared, Peter J. Oldpeter was fired as editor of the Magazine Section and was replaced by a younger and less genial person.

And the Magazine Sections themselves in many Sunday newspapers were now being replaced by other things such as a second or even third section on TV personalities or Rock-Sockers.

3.

#### THE STRANGE CASE OF THE GOOD GIANT IN STONE COUNTY, MISSOURI

The only things known for sure about Saint Christopher are that he was a very good person and that he was a giant. Other things about him, such as whether he ever really lived at all, or whether he ever really died at all, are not known for sure.

Dating from the third century A.D., all around the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, there are at least a hundred giant statues in various states of decay. In many cases the local belief is that they are statues of Saint



Christopher. Some of the statues are fallen and broken badly. Some of them have lost heads and arms. But there is one thing missing from even the best-preserved of them, and that is the face. There are no faces on any of them, even those where the rest of the head is preserved. On the best-preserved of these statues, there is clear evidence that the faces were broken off with hammers or axes. So at least as many of the statues are called locally 'The Giant Without a Face' as are called 'The Good Giant Saint Christopher'.

But what could have been so very wrong, or so very right, with the faces of the stone giants that people believed they had to break them off?

In Stone County, Missouri, in the United States of America, near the place called Talking Rocks, there lived until two years ago a man named Horace Goodjohn Christopher, a retiring sort of man who seemed to be liked and admired by everybody and everything except the coons and badgers and wolverines. These animals hated him, but dogs loved him, and people liked him.

Horace G. Christopher, a giant of a man, was generous. And he always seemed to have money to be generous with. Nobody knew where he got his money for he never worked for pay, and he said that he didn't know where it came from either. "I just reach into one of my pants, and the giant pockets in them were so deep that they never ran pockets and I find whatever I need," he said. The good giant had giant empty.

The good giant had never worked for pay, but he worked almost all the hours of almost all the days without pay, doing all sorts of things for people, especially for widows and orphans. He was a talented workman in every art and craft you could think of.

Besides his great height, there were two things a little bit unusual about this Giant John. He was seventeen-hundred-and-fifty years old. And he was dog-faced. That's right, dog-faced. In hair and hide and snout and eyes and ears and smell he was dog-faced. And it seemed a little bit weird to hear a man's voice (a clear, strong, friendly voice) coming out of his dog-face.

The Friendly Giant had a mill and he ground grain for everybody who brought it. Like all millers, he took one tenth of the grain in fee for the grinding. And yet the nine-tenths of the grain that he returned ground and sacked to the customer was always of greater quantity and greater weight than had been the ten-tenths that the customer had originally brought to him. And he gave to the poor one-tenth amount of every grinding that he had kept from the customer.

The Giant had a hotel or roadside inn at the place called Talking Rocks in Stone County, Missouri. He was the patron of travelers, so he welcomed travelers of every sort at his hotel and offered the best bed-and-board anywhere. When travelers left him, they paid whatever they could afford. And they always found twice the amount of their payment back in their pockets after they were a mile or so down the road.

Everybody liked him except those animals, the coons, badgers, and wolverines, those animals that traditionally hate and fear dogs. Then there appeared a wolverine of genius in the neighborhood. In every species, whether wolverine or human or other, about one individual in five million will be an individual of genius. The gifted wolverine got about a hundred other wolverines to assemble. He had to be a genius because the slashing solitary wolverines are lone hunters who hate other wolverines only slightly less than they hate creatures of other species. But he assembled them.

The mob of savage wolverines ambushed the good giant Horace Goodjohn Christopher one night. They killed him, and they tore his hot flesh right off his bones and ate it completely.

Well, was the giant Horace Goodjohn Christopher the same person as the giant Saint Christopher of Chanaan? His age of seventeen-hundred-and-fifty years would fit just about right. And the mystery of the old faceless statues of Saint Christopher might have been that they were dog-faced statues, and persons might have felt that it was not fitting that a saint should be represented as dog-faced even if it was accurate.

And two days after the death of Horace Goodjohn Christopher, there came further corroborations that he was indeed the same person as ancient Saint Christopher of Chanaan. A man came in a truck to the Talking Rocks site in Stone County.

"I travel for the Zolliger Church Goods Company," he said. "If nobody objects, I will take the holy bones of Saint Christopher with me. It isn't seemly that they should lie here in the dank ground and be gnawed on by every animal that comes along. How many thousand of holy relics will they make'. A thousand sizable places could be made from just one of those giant tibia bones."

"How do you know that they are really the bones of Saint Christopher?" someone asked him.

"Gentlemen, relics authenticate themselves," the church goods man said. "And two nights ago, when I was in a hotel in Jefferson City, I dreamed that the holy bones of the good giant Saint Christopher could be found in this exact spot. I came here and found it to be so."

I myself visited this church goods man, saw the bones and the relics that he was making from them, and was convinced of their authenticity. He even offered me a job selling them. "You are a charming man," he said, "and I believe that you could sell anything." There would be an incredible manner of relics made from those bones, and one man could not sell them all. But so far I have not taken the job.

By John T. Woollybear in the Sunday Magazine Section of the Saint Louis Globe, not too many years ago.

"This is the last thing I can every buy from you, John," the Magazine Section editor of the Globe told John Woollybear. "Were I not retiring at the end of this month I would not dare to buy and publish this. It's outrageous, of course, it's silly, it's garish."

"But a Magazine Section piece cannot be too garish!" John Woollybear protested. "Everybody knows that."

"Maybe everybody knew it fifty years ago, John," the editor said, "but it hasn't been true for a long time. This is the most inept and outrageous thing that I have ever encountered. But it served my purpose. What better way to thumb my nose at the powers at this newspaper where I have spent so many happy years! What a flood of protests they'll get when this silly thing appears!"

John T. Woollybear took his money and left the newspaper office with a touch of sorrow in his heart. Was it possible that the world was in the process of passing him by? Was flamboyance and garishness no longer wanted in the world? Could it be that even a true account like this one of the good giant at Talking Rocks was too garish and incredible to appear in a Sunday Magazine Section of a Newspaper?

Woollybear felt bewildered. And in his bewilderment he experienced a sudden loneliness for his three wives, the one in Illinois, the one in Nebraska, and the one in Texas.

4.

#### STRANGE ACCOUNT OF THE PIKE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA CLONINGS

In the hamlet of Greely Gulch in Pike County, Pennsylvania, there are authentic cases of cloning. In fact, cloning is the way of life there. In my forty years of checking out strange-but-true stories all over the country I have investigated more than one hundred accounts of cloning in various regions and found them all to be false. But now I am prepared to state that the clonings that emanate from Greely Gulch are authentic.

In another Pike County town of Lacka waxed there was the case of three different sets of triplets going to work in the mill. These nine persons (of the three different sets) were all good workmen and they received good paychecks. But one of the auditors at the mill smelled fraud.

The auditor followed the nine workmen when they had finished work one

evening. The nine of them walked behind some ornamental bushes at the front of the mill. Then only three men came out from behind the bushes. And the other six were not behind the bushes. They were nowhere. The auditor followed the remaining three to their boarding house. The three went in, ate their supper, opened their six packs of beer and watched TV, then went to bed. Well, the auditor was an adept at looking into windows; that's how he knew just how they spent their evening.

And in the morning the auditor was watching again. He saw the three rise, dress, eat their breakfasts, and then come out of their boarding house. He followed the three of them to the mill. Near the entrance to the mill, the three ducked for a moment behind some ornamental bushes. Then the full nine of them came out from behind the bushes, went into the mill and went to work. It was sheer fraud. Three men were holding nine jobs and drawing nine paychecks.

The auditor followed the nine/three men every evening. And they ate their three suppers and went to their three beds. But on Friday evening, the three basic men went to the bus station instead of the boarding house. They got on a bus and went away on it. The auditor went to the ticket window.

"Where did those last three fellows buy tickets for?" he asked the ticket seller.

"To Greely Gulch," the ticket seller said.

I found that in a dozen other towns in a sort of circle around Greely Gulch the same thing was happening. The community of Greely Gulch was guilty of fraud by means of cloning at the expense of all its neighboring towns.

Then I went to Greely Gulch myself, and I found- '~I have read enough," the Editor of the Sunday Magazine Section

of the Scranton Scanner told John T. Woollybear. "It's drivel, John. No more, John. You're not the man you used to be, John."

"But read on, Mr. Farmington. Read how I myself went to Greely Gulch and how I became sure that all the people of Greely Gulch could clone. Read how I myself --"

"No, John, no," the Editor of the Magazine Section of the Scranton Scanner said. "No more ever."

"What will I do now?" John T. Woollybear asked himself. "I have always been the best Sunday Magazine Section Feature Story Writer in the World, and I got to be the best by following the stage that a Sunday Magazine Section piece cannot be too garish. I'll not admit that I am wrong about this, but I must admit that the world has gone wrong about it. I've failed to place the last twelve Sunday Magazine Section pieces I've written. And all of them were amazing and all of them were true.

"My STRANGE CASE OF THE UFO NESTS AT WILDCAT WYOMING was shuffled off as fiction. Fiction? I was there; I learned everything; I even soloed in one of the Wildcat Wyoming's UFG's.

"I know that the clonings of Greely Gulch were real because I myself- "But what's the use of arguing? My life is a bust. I am separated from all three of my wives and I miss them all uncommonly. I miss the one in Illinois. I miss the one in Nebraska. I miss the one in Texas. I must find a way to make things up to all three of them, but it's against the law to make things up with all three of them.

"It's time I hit the road again."

John T. Woollybear went to his own boardinghouse and pulled his big heavy suitcase out from under the bed. Now it seemed to be bigger and heavier than ever before. He knew he would not be able to go hitchhiking with it again. It was as if had become older and weaker in the four days since he had come to town and gone to work for the Scranton Scanner.

"What makes the thing so heavy, anyhow?" he asked himself, and he opened up the suitcase. "Oh yes," he said. He took a bulky Fat Air suit out of it. He took a bulky folded-up man-carrying kite out of it. And a bicycle pump. It was still a pretty heavy suitcase. What to do?

"I am, after all, a charming man," he said. "At least three persons in this world have found me so. But how will my charm work now? I could go back

to Blackberry Patch in Doniphan County, Kansas. I learned their tricks when I was there. I could get into my Fat Air suit, go up in my kite, and jump out. As I am getting to my last years, I would probably glide up instead of down. I could drift into that cloud that is jokingly called The Elephant Graveyard in the Sky. It is exactly over Downtown Kansas City, Missouri, two miles over it. And there I would be with all the Blackberry Patch people who have passed over to their glory. I would be with them, aye, but I'd be as dead as they all are. I'm not quite ready for that yet.

"Or I could go back to Missouri and go to work with that friend of mine with the Zolliger Church Goods Company. I have heard that he is badly in need of an assistant to sell Saint Christopher relics. That big skeleton broke up into so many thousand genuine relics that there will be good business in them for as long as one can see into the future. But I know that I'd have a dog-faced feeling if I went into that line of work.

"Or I could go back to Greely Gulch and check in at the Outworker Agency. Then I would go to one of the nearby towns and get three jobs and draw three pay checks. But great howling thunder! I don't want three jobs. I don't want hardly one.

"But what will I do? There must be something for me. I am, after all, a charming man."

He went out of his boarding house and to the variety store.

"Let me see that small suitcase," he said. "Fine, fine, it's just what I want. Let me have three of them. No, no, what am I thinking about. Let me have just one of them."

John Woolvbear took the small suitcase back to his boarding house and set it on the floor in his bedroom. Then the little suitcase seemed to become three little suitcases on the floor.

"I am a charming man," John Woolvbear reassured himself again. "Three persons in this world have found me especially so. It maybe that I won't have to work at all, not if I spread myself properly. And all three of those special persons are well-fixed now, so I have heard."

John T. Woolvbear who had once been the King of the Sunday Magazine Section Fabricators began to fill the three little suitcases out of the one big suitcase. And, by leaving out the Fat Air suit and the folding man-carrying kite and the bicycle pump and a few other items, he made the transfer perfectly.

Just before dawn the next morning, three men took their places at a good hitch-hiking highway nexus just outside of Scranton, Pennsylvania... The three men looked somewhat alike. Each of them had pale blue eyes. Each of them was flecked with large tan freckles, and each of the freckles had a slight blue ring about it as if it had been drawn by a cartoonist.

The three suitcases of the three men were just alike, almost just alike. Each of the suitcases had a lettered sign on it.

The lettered sign on one of the suitcases read TO ILLINOIS.

The second one here the sign TO NEBRASKA.

And the third one had the sign TO TEXAS.

#### GRAY GHOST: A REMINISCENCE

There are a lot of people who don't even remember the old Electric Park that was south of Tulsa, between the Peoria Road and the Arkansas River. It was the dog-racing track complete with electric rabbit.

The palmy days of Electric Park were 1920 to 1928. The grandstands seated eight thousand people until the northern half of the east-side grandstand collapsed in 1925. After that, the grandstands seated only six thousand people.

It was on Halloween night of 1924 that Anselm Sheen took four of us boys, his son Barnaby Sheen, and Hector O'Day, Grover Whelk and myself, all of us ten years old -- and he took us out to Electric Park in his Overland touring car. Halloween night was always the last (and highest-stake) night of

the dog-racing season.

"It's up to you boys," Anselm Sheen said when we got there. "I'll buy each of you boys a ticket to the dog races, even though the tickets are forty cents each. Or, it being Halloween when the ghosts walk, you can go looking for thrills in the old Holy Ghost Burial Ground just a quarter mile south of here. I'm going to watch the races myself, but if I were twenty-five years younger I'd go to the burial grounds for my fun. Ah, I see that you're already starting south for them! Meet me here in an hour and a half. The races will be over by then, and your grisly fun should be over by then too. Be careful if you try the Devil's Handshake. About nine years ago the devil got a good hold on a little boy and pulled him all the way down to Hell."

"We won't be taken in by that, Mr. Sheen," Hector O'Day said. "We're too smart for that."

"So was the little boy who got pulled all the way down to Hell nine years ago, Anselm Sheen said. "He was a really smart boy. He reminds me of you, Hector."

It was all weed-covered hard sand there as we walked south just a little bit after sundown. And the area had a sad scattering of runt apple trees on whose branches no apple had ever grown. As though drawn by some big magnet, all four of us headed for Devil's Handshake Dune. We felt more than heard the giggling of several medium-sized boys coming from a ditch. We even recognized one of them by his giggle. And we heard from the very middle of Devil's Handshake Dune (which was a sinkhole and not a dune at all) the horrified screaming of a little boy in death agony.

Now, the mechanism by which the Devil grabs a little boy by the hand and pulls him all the way down to Hell is this: Devil's Handshake Dune is only twenty feet from where the river-bank drops suddenly down to the verge of the river. The point of the drop is the face of a cliff about twelve feet high. Into the face of this cliff, boys have been digging tunnels and caves for years. And one of those tunnels, a meander of more than twenty feet through the sandy dark, reaches right to the middle of Devil's Handshake Dune. The Devil's Hole goes down to the tunnel at that point, just big enough hole for a little boy to put his arm down into Devil's Hole on a dark Halloween Night -- it goes like this:

"If you're afraid to do it, then let's forget it. If you really believe the Devil will grab your hand and pull you all the way down to Hell, then run away from this place as fast as you can." "I'm not afraid," the smaller boy says, "I'm not afraid of anything. I know the Devil isn't waiting in that little hole to pull me down to Hell." "Then reach your arm into that hole as far as you can reach it. And whatever you feel there, shake it's hand. That's the initiation to join our club. There isn't any other way to get into it."

So the little boy who wasn't afraid of anything lay down on the sand and put his hand down that hole as far as he could reach it. And the Devil grabbed his hand and had pulled him part way to Hell already. The little boy's whole shoulder was in the hole now, and his face was in the sand and his mouth was full of sand, and he was screaming in mortal fear.

Hector O'Day went to the edge of the area, and then went down the cliff that dropped to river level.

"Dirty Dugan!" he hollered into the tunnel entrance. "Dirty Dugan, let go of the kid! Hey, Dirty, we came past two of the tunnels that had already caved in quite near here. And the sand here is squeaking and shifting as though your tunnel was going to have in too. Then you'd be trapped in there and you'd die in there."

The Devil, or whatever was in the tunnel, gave a loud grunt. The little boy somehow got his hand loose from the Devil, or whatever it was. Then he got on his feet and ran as hard as he could, sobbing all the way, towards the lights and noise at Electric Park a quarter of a mile away. Electric Park would be a friendly haven to him.

Hector O'Day climbed up the river-bank cliff, and Dirty Dugan followed him up and stood there looking at us. "Where you guys going to now?" he asked

us. Dirty Dugan, dripping sand, was a bigger boy, at least twelve years old. He had his nickname because he was dirty. He never wore shoes, and he was rough. But this was the third year he had taken the part of the "Devil in the Tunnel" and he was good in the role.

"We're going to Amos Centenary Black's cabin," Barnaby Sheen said. "It's hairy fun just to listen to his talk on Halloween night."

"Amos won't let me in his cabin because I'm too dirty," Dirty Dugan said, "but maybe he'll let me stand in the doorway and listen."

But none of went into Amos Centenary Black's cabin that night, because Amos had just come out of the cabin door and locked it behind him as we got there. He carried a burning railroad lantern and a basket that seemed to have a jumble of things in it; and he started toward the "Monuments".

"Come along, boys, if you want to," he said. "I was lust going to wake up Captain John Diehard as I do every Halloween night. He sure does get lonesome down in that grave. If I could only bear a human voice again,' he moans, 'or even a half-human voice.' Hey, I bet he'd even be glad to hear Dirty Dugan there."

"That's all stuff about you waking up Captain John Diehard on Halloween nights," Dirty Dugan said. "Why don't you do it with some witnesses present sometime?"

"Ah, but I will have five highly intelligent witnesses present this night," Old Amos said. "I'll have Hector, Barnaby, Grover, Laff, and you Dirty Dugan. If people will not believe you five, as Scripture says, neither will they believe one risen from the dead."

The crowd noise at Electric Park had increased to a happy roar.

"That will be the dog Tom 'Talley winning the first race," Old Amos said. Amos Centenary Black was part black-man and part Indian. He was also (we have his own word for this) one-sixteenth Corsican, and he was the great-great-grandson of the Emperor Napoleon the First Himself. Amos was caretaker of the old Holy Ghost Burial Grounds.

Captain John Diehard was buried in a substantial monument in this burial grounds, and these words were graven on the monument:

Captain John Diehard, born Jan. 1, 1800, died Dec. 31, 1899. He took his own death hard, and he said that he would be back.

"Captain John was old even when he was young," Amos said. "He was sixty-one years old when he first became a soldier and a captain for the Confederacy."

The monument rose only an inch above the ground, and an iron pipe came out only an inch above the monument. It had an iron cap on it. Old Amos turned a key in that cap, and then he screwed the cap off.

"Captain John Diehard!" old Amos called down into the pipe. "It's Halloween Night, time for your yearly waking-up." But there was no sound out of the pipe that went down into the grave.

"I have a Galton whistle with me, Amos," Hector O'Day said. "Dogs and dead people can hear it, but live people can't. Shall I blow it and try to wake him up?"

"Brandy is better," old Amos said. From his basket he took a brandy snifter and a bottle of Royal Hanover Brandy, filled the one from the other, and let it down into the pipe in a little net. And then there was the sound of waking up in the grave below. A voice that sound like a squeaky gate was heard down in that hole. "There's nothing like Hanover Brandy for waking the dead," the voice wheezed. "Ah, this is the same stuff that took all the fur off the possum's tail. But to the gist of the matter. Has the south riz again yet, Amos?"

"Not yet, Captain John, not yet," Amos said, "but I have some good boys here who'd like to shake your dead-man hand."

"Reach me your hands and voices then," the rusty voice of the dead man said. "I'm avid for company. I always wake up lonesome."

"I'm Hector," said Hector O'Day putting his arm down the pipe, "and I'm pleased to meet you, Captain John. Ah, it's like shaking hands with a pine

board hull of splinters."

"Aye, my bones do feel splintery, I suppose," Captain John Diehard said from below, "but it's a manly grip you have yourself."

"You're next, Barnaby," old Amos said. "Then Laff and Grover and Dirty Dugan."

"It's a good grip you also have, Barnaby," the dead man in the grave gave his praise. "If we'd had you at Sharpsburg, the South might not have lost. One man could have the difference it was that close."

But I myself didn't do very well at shaking hands with the dead man. I trembled, and I sure didn't have a strong grip. The touch of his bare rat-gnawed bones almost made the hair rise off my head.

"There is something amiss here, Laff," the wheezy, squeaky voice uttered. "I am a prophet as well as a captain of the Confederacy. And in my role as prophet I know that your father came from the north."

"So did yours," I said in a jittery voice, and I never did know who put such words in my mouth.

"It's true, it's true," the rusty voice admitted. "My father was born in Pennypack, Pennsylvania in 1750, but he was still a suckling when he went south. But our cases are the same. You are no more under suspicion than I am, and I myself am above suspicion."

Grover Whelk put his arm down the pipe.

"Yours is the hand of a surgeon," said the rusty voice below. "And we'll need good surgeons when the combat is joined again."

And when the dead man shook the hand of Dirty Dugan he said, "'Tis the hand of a seaman. Am I not right, lad?"

"Almost, Captain John, almost," Dirty Dugan said. Well, Dirty Dugan lived on a houseboat. Yes, there were houseboats on the Arkansas River at Tulsa in 1924.

"Dirty Dugan," the squeaky, dead-man voice went on, "rotten as you are, there will likely be a role for you to play. Did you know that I used to be called Dirty Diehard? When I went on decoy I'd go upwind of a company of Unionists, and they'd cry out: There they are! No, there! There must be a thousand of them from the smell of them! Let's get them!' Then they'd all come after me and my smell. And then is when my men would take them from behind of them and slaughter them. But to business! Amos Centenary Black, did you place bets for me at the dog track?"

"I sure did, Captain John," old Amos said. "I bet six dogs to win: Tom Talley in the first, Muscadine in the second, My Gal Sal in the third, Mule Whiskey in the fourth, Gray Ghost in the fifth, and Calaboose in the sixth."

"But Gray Ghost is here in the grave with me right now keeping me company," the dead-man voice protested. "He's a patronymic dog which means that he's named after me his human father. I was called 'The Gray Ghost' in my combat days, when I wasn't called 'Dirty Diehard'. The dog Gray Ghost is here with me."

"So he is, Captain John," old Amos agreed, "but he will leave you when it is time for him to run in the fifth race. He will appear in the midst of them then, the doors and windows being closed as it says in Scripture, in the ready room just behind the starting gates. He will appear there just when they are about to scratch him, and this will astonish most of the dog handlers. But not all of them, for several of them have already caught on that he is a ghost dog."

"This is the fifth year that we'll win big on the last night of the dig season," the dead-man voice wheezed. "It should be a tidy sum that you have banked for me now, Amos. Enough to clothe and equip a company, maybe even a regiment."

"It's a tidy sum, yes, Captain John," old Amos said.

"Listen, you five boys," the dead man rambled on. "There is a lot you can do while waiting for the news that the South has riz again. You can provide yourselves with guns and ammunition. The fun to get is the Mannings 1855 Territory Rifle. 1855 was a good vintage year for both Mannings and

Territory Rifles and for Royal Hanover Brandy. Just fill my brandy snifter for me one more time, Amos."

"Maybe there aren't any more Mannings 1855 Territory Rifles left, Captain John," Barnaby Sheen voiced a doubt.

"There are as many left as there ever were, Barnaby," the dead man argued, "since those premier rifles never wear out. More than three hundred of them were made, so more than three hundred of them still exist. As to gunpowder, use white powder only. Black powder will leave a smoke to give away your position. Get your copper sleeves from Coopertown Coppersleeve Company; they're the best. And pour your lead into molds made by Leadbelly's Lead Mold Company Limited.

"Do not use straight lead. It lacks elegance. Let your shot mixture be ninety-five percent lead and five percent pewter. If you do not have pewter, use tin for the five percent in the mixture. Nothing else has quite the shine of a bullet made from this mix. It is the fact behind the legend of the silver bullet. But a silver bullet will not kill either ghost or devil, and this bullet will kill both. Amos, why don't you give each of these fine boys a drink of graveyard cider. Then we'll roll the bones a but before I return to my death for another year."

"All right, Captain John," old Amos said, and he pulled five paper picnic cups and a jug of graveyard cider out of his basket. He poured our cups full. "The graveyard apple trees never have any apples growing on their branches at all," old Amos said. "The apples grown on the tree roots underground. And they are the best cider apples in the world."

Ah, they were. That graveyard cider was the best cider ever.

"Now we will roll the bones," said the dead man in his grave. "They buried me without my dice but with my bowie knife. So after I'd been dead about fifteen years and time was hanging heavy on my hands, I whittled me a pair of dice out of my own ankle bones. And they are the luckiest dice I ever had. Amos! take that pair of dice out of your basket and I'll play each of you in turn Prime Seven for a dollar. First seven wins."

Amos rolled his dice on the top of the monument by the light of his railroad lantern. "Four, is it not?" cried the dead man from his grave below. Well, if you're dead and eyeless, you aren't bound by the regular rules of line-of-sight. Anyhow, we saw that Amos had rolled a four.

"Now I roll," the dead man said, and his ankle-bone dice made a nice rattle in his bony hand. "I have a seven," the dead man said. "You owe me a dollar, Amos."

The bunch of splintered bones that was the dead man's hand rose out of the throat of the pipe. Old Amos put a dollar bill in the hand which closed over it and then withdrew back into the grave.

"You next, Hector," said the dead man below us, and Hector O'Day roiled. "Snake eyes, is it not?" the dead man called it; and, yes, Hector had rolled a two. Then the ankle-bone dice rattled below. "Seven," said the dead man, and his hand came up from the pipe, "you owe me a dollar." Hector put a bill in the bony hand which withdrew down below again.

"You next, Barnaby," wheezed the dead-man voice. Barnaby rolled the dice on the top of the monument by the light of the railroad lantern. "Eleven," came the rusty dead-man voice below, and it was indeed an eleven that Barnaby had rolled. "Now I roll," said the dead man, and the ankle-bone dice rattled. "Seven," said the dead man. "You owe me a dollar, Barnaby."

"How do I know you rolled a seven?" Barnaby demanded.

"Oh, I'll show you," the dead man said, and his bony hand came up from the pipe with the dice in it. It was a seven the hard way, six and one. Barnaby put the dollar in the hand beside the dice, and it all disappeared into the iron pipe.

"You next, Grover," the dead man spoke, and Grover Whelk rolled the dice by the light of the railroad lantern. That railroad lantern made all our faces look almost as bony as the dead man's hand. "You have beat me, Grover," the dead man said, "you have rolled a seven. Here is your dollar." Grover had



rolled seven, yes, a five and a two. And the bone hand came up with a crumpled paper in it, which Grover took.

"That doesn't look like a greenback, Grover," Hector O'Day protested.

"It isn't," old Amos said. "It's a faded gray-back now, but in its youth it was a yellow-back, a golden-back. The colors of Confederate bills fade after a few years, especially in the stuffy atmosphere of the grave." It was a Confederate One Dollar Bill that Captain John Diehard had given to Grover Whelk.

"The dog Gray Ghost has left me now," the dead man spoke below them, "but he always was a come-and-go dog! remember at the Battle of Pea Ridge, he would be with me, and then he would be gone; but as a ghost dog, he put the fear of Old Clootie into the Unionists. Yes, I guess it's time for him to run his race. You next, Laff."

I rolled a three. Dead man Captain John said that he had a seven. I put a dollar bill in his bony hand when it came up. I shivered when I touched its bones. I was never meant to play games with a dead man.

"You next, Dirty Dugan," the dead man said. Dirty Dugan rolled a six. "I have a seven," the dead man said. "You owe me a dollar, Dirty."

"I don't have a dollar," Dirty Dugan said sullenly.

"I knew you didn't, Dirty," the dead man said. "Houseboat kids never have any money. Now, instead of owing me a dollar, you owe me a trick. When you find out what the trick is, in a week or a year or five years, it'll scare you liverless. But pay it you must."

"No, you won't scare me liverless, dead man," Dirty Dugan said. Dirty left us then and disappeared into the dark. But we heard him go into the river, and then we heard him swimming with strong but splashy strokes, home to the houseboat.

There was a great increase in the volume and delight of the noise at Electric Park, the dog track. "That was Gray Ghost winning the fifth race," old Amos said. "He's a favorite with the Tulsa dog track fans."

"There was a dog racing very early in the Old South," dead man Captain John spoke up informatively. "there was even an early mechanical rabbit. It was invented by Yves Denis Montalba in New Orleans in 1850. The rabbit ran on steam. It ran only once. It blew up and killed eleven dog-racing patrons. But humanity builds on such mistakes and moves ever forward."

"How do you pick dog-race winners for Captain Diehard, Amos?" Grover asked him. (Captain Diehard was snoring loudly now.)

"Oh, I get the winners from him, though he is not conscious of the part that he plays," Amos said. "He has mantic bones. Though he's quite dead, except possibly on this one night of the year. I have but to stand on his monument here and call out to him below, and his bones will guide my hand in making the Xs opposite the names of the dogs that will win."

"The way I envision things," said dead man John Diehard, waking up (well, the return from the dead is a very spotty and broken thing), "is that about ten thousand of us great leaders of the Confederacy shall all rise from out graves at the same time. For best effects we should not be fleshed but should rise in our skeleton bones only; and yet we will be lively and completely competent skeletons. Coming so, we will send a wave of fear through all our enemies. On our rising we will raise our great voices like ten thousand powerful doomsday trumpets, and the entire South will rise with us.

"Our horses will likely rise out of the earth also, saddled and bridled and ready to ride, but the details of that are in the hands of the appropriate gods. My preference for my own horse (for I had eleven different horses during the various campaigns) is Roan Rex who was shot from under me at Vicksburg. No better horse ever lived. No better horse will ever rise out of the ground and live again.

"Well, that's enough talk and stuff for one night. I'll return to my death for another year."

"Just a minute, Captain John Diehard," Hector O'Day spoke sharply

"This already begins to seem like a dream. Could you give us some sign

so we'll know that it was real? A lightning bolt, maybe?"

"It would be better if I blew the Resurrection Reveille on my bugle. It's the regular reveille with some exceptionally hot licks added. I notice though that wasps have made a nest in the mouthpiece of the horn. I'll clear them out if I can, and you may be able to hear my bugle when you're on your way. A lightning bolt I can do, yes. That should be good enough sign for the moment. And then good night to you until a year from tonight."

Then there was a lightning flash you wouldn't believe. The lights of Electric Park shone black for a moment as though they were a negative of the lightning. The runt apple trees stood out like X-ray pictures of themselves in the lightning. The thunderclap was instantaneous and earth-shaking, and sudden rain could be heard in the distance. Then everything was wet - well, everything was wet except the dog Gray Ghost. He had appeared suddenly, with a winner's blue ribbon around his neck, and dry as a bone. He yipped a hello. Then he disappeared right down through the stone top of the monument and yipped another hello to dead man Captain John Diehard there below.

The four of us boys ran hard for Electric Park through the banging rain. Barnaby's father, Anselm Sheen, was trying to put the side curtains on his Overland touring car and it wasn't easy to do in the high wind that was blowing.

"What are mantic bones, papa?" Barnaby Sheen asked his father.

"I don't know, Barnaby," Anselm Sheen said. "We'll look it up in the dictionary when we get home." Anselm always made an effort to find answers to his son's questions.

He finally got the side-curtains on the car with our help, and we rode back into Tulsa. We were soaking wet but we sure did feel good. We sang one hundred rousing songs on our ride back to Tulsa (hey, we sure did sing good), we sang:

"We saw a man without a foot, and one without a head,  
And one without no legs at all, and all of them were dead."

"Did old Amos give you some of his graveyard cider?" Anselm Sheen asked. "Oh, did he!" Hector cried, "three big cups of it each." We sang:

"Jack of Diamonds, lack of Diamonds, your real name is mud! In your hand are four aces, all covered with blood."

Hey I didn't know we could sing like that. Whenever we missed a beat it was supplied by a dozen enraptured winged spirits outside of us. We sang:

"Oh give me a nickel, give me a dime.  
It does cost money to bury this body of mine."

"That graveyard cider was hard," Anselm Sheen said. "You've all got a snootful." We sang:

"Down with the dead men. Down with the dead men, Down with the dead men let him lie!"

We sang ninety-nine other songs on our ride back to town. We were getting some amazingly hot licks in our singing, but we didn't know where we were getting them till we pulled up at the Sheen's and Anselm Sheen shutoff the motor of the car. Then we heard it, loud and total, the "Resurrection Reveille" with the hottest licks this side of Hell. We should never have doubted that dead man Captain Diehard would get off that bugle song for us. And we knew that he hadn't bothered to clean that wasp nest out of his bugle. He was blowing right through those angry wasps: they were the dozen enraptured (were they mad, boy') winged spirits. We heard that bugle from four miles away.

We had a lot of fun that Halloween night.

LE HOT SPORT

The Dukkerin Daily was something of a fun newspaper for the four days of its publication. It seemed loaded with whetted axes ready to swing. It was witty and novel and titillating. "For the present, subscriptions will not be

accepted," it announced, but it was everywhere on the newsstands. And every morning it had at least three "Jokes of the Day" that were better than the "Jokes of the Day" of any other morning paper anywhere. But the slippery heart of the paper was to be found in its "Predictions". That first day there was a whimsical story: "Two-dollar guitar launches local boy on thirty-nine-year stardom in musical world." But the boy's name, Randy Lautaris, was not known to the reading public. The interview with Randy had been done the day before, and nine-year-old Randy had indeed bought a guitar from a friend for two dollars. But the strings and frets and parts to put it into working condition would cost more than thirty dollars, and then it would still be an inferior guitar. Nevertheless, the Dukkerin Daily gave a lot of information of Randy's thirty-nine-year career which lay entirely in the future: the combos he would put together, the concerts in which he would star, the long list of songs he would write that would pass the ten million mark, the Cine-Melody Movies he would make. Randy Lautaris was a quick-witted and well-spoken nine-year-old boy, and likely he would have a successful career in something.

"Why only thirty-nine years stardom?" Randy had asked George Hegedusis who had interviewed him. "I'll be only forty-eight years old at the end of that stardom."

"I didn't say that it would end," Hegedusis told him. "It's simply that I can't see more than thirty-nine years into the future, nor can anybody else. If anybody else says that he can see further than that, he is a shameless confidence man."

George Hegedusis, appearing suddenly as a newspaper publisher, was the fairly rare combination of a passionate violinist and a shameless confidence man. He played the violin at baptisms and weddings and funerals, and also at award banquets. (Somebody better keep his eyes on that award every second or Hegedusis will have preempted it for himself.) And for some years before this he had been in show business. He called himself The Romany Houdini and he had some good escapist acts. And he was a fine practitioner of the "Fallen Angel Act". Now he was a little bit too old to be a show person, but one never gets too old to be a confidence man. But he had never dabbled in the newspaper business before, nor made predictions, nor done interviews.

"You are skating on mighty thin water, George the Fiddler," Karl Staripen of the local police bunko squad told George that first morning when the Dukkerin Daily had been on the newsstands for less than nine minutes. If any new con popped up, Karl Staripen always knew about it within ten minutes.

"Prove malice on my part, or prove me wrong in any of my predictions or facts," Hegedusis said, "or else do not interfere with me in my pure-hearted activities."

(Karl had often arrested George, and yet they had remained tolerably good friends.) "What am I supposed to do, wait thirty-nine years to see if you're right in your story about Randy Lautaris and his two-dollar buisted guitar?"

"You might as well, Karl. You won't be doing anything else important for the next thirty-nine years, will you? But you can catch me up lots quicker if I'm wrong on the facts of other of my stories. Did you read my piece on Moxie Masterman?" That piece, also in the first morning's run of the Dukkerin Daily, was headed "Moxie Masterman begins one-hundred-and-one game hitting streak" and the text ran:

"Moxie Masterman, hot-and-cold first baseman for the Louisville Lions in the new Deep South Major League, got his first hit of the young season yesterday, after twenty-nine times at bat without a hit. It was a pathetic, patsy eight-inning single that nobody could be very proud of. Nevertheless, it was the beginning of a hundred-and-one-game hitting streak, a world's record to be set by Moxie. The streak will not be broken until August the third of this year when Moxie will once more go hitless after hitting in one hundred and one."

"How do you like that story, Staripen?" Hegedusis asked the bunko cop. "Hang me on that one if Moxie misses today, or any day for a while now. But he

won't."

"I remember Moxie when he was in the Texas League," Karl said. "George, why is Moira in this room of yours? Does that mean my death, or yours?"

"Probably mine. I'll be predicting my own death, tomorrow likely." Moira was a strange and beautiful lady. Sometimes people could see her d'nd sometimes they couldn't. But she was always a bad omen.

"Four of the twelve stories in this first edition of your paper will give me a chance to nail you cold today or tomorrow or the next day, George," Karl Staripen said, "and I'm waiting to pounce on your. What's your object in all this."

"Unrequited genius demanding a voice, Karl. When you're better than anybody else at a thing, then there comes a time when you just have to go public." But George Hegedusis didn't slip that day, nor the next day, nor the next day after that. It wasn't till the fourth day that his newspaper publishing was brought loan end. And then he didn't slip, didn't make a false prediction. It was his totally hair-raising true prediction that caused the very stones to cry out "Enough!" against him.

2

This was the outrageous prediction: "Eleven-year-old Caspar Lampiste didn't seem very much worried when I told him that he had only one day to live, that he would be killed by an automobile then. 'What kind of automobile?' he laughed. 'Shouldn't I get to pick what kind of automobile I want to be killed with?' 'It will be a foreign car name Le Hot Sport,' you faithful reporter, I, George Hegedusis, told him. 'Oh wow. Oh wow. Oh wow!' young Caspar sang out. 'That's the rarest car there is. There are only four Les Hots Sports in the United States.' 'There will be five of them,' I said, 'and you will be killed by that fifth one.' It is rather sad, really, that a young boy should be killed like that, but I only see and report the pending happenings. I don't cause them to happen. Caspar Lampiste, an eleven-year-old boy of this city will be killed by a Le Hot Sport automobile about one o'clock this afternoon."

That couldn't be disregarded. Karl Staripen, a captain on the police bunko squad, took George Hegedusis, the new newspaper publisher, into custody quite early that morning. And he also called in Rich Frank Lampiste, an executive of great scope and power who was the father of young Caspar Lampiste. Then the three of them went out to the Lampiste mansion and headquarters and they were quickly surrounded by a swarm of young executives who were in the employ of Rich Frank Lampiste. After a while, young Caspar Lampiste was brought in and set in the midst of them where he could be watched every second. "This is my office and headquarters and also one of my fortresses," Executive Rich Frank Lampiste said, "and it occupies the entire sixth and top floor of my mansion here. It is in a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree circuit of wonderfully clear see-out glass which is also bullet-proof and shatterproof. We are high on a hilltop here, and no automobiles are ever allowed within a thousand yards of the mansion. I don't like automobile fumes. I have a man in TV communications with us at each of the four Les Hots Sports in the United States; and with each of them is the owner of that particular automobile who swears that it will not be moved today. My young executives, of course, were already at work on this problem before Karl Staripen called me, but thanks anyhow, Karl. All the Les Hots Sports in the United States are at least thirteen hundred miles from here. I intend to prevent my son from being killed by any of those four automobiles at about one o'clock this afternoon. Where do you get your nonsensical predictions, Hegedusis? And where, if ever, did we meet before?"

"We've met. I played the violin at your wedding twelve years ago."

"Did you ever play at any hangings, Hegedusis? I'm angry enough to have you hanged out of hand. And I've always liked that tune 'The Gypsy Hangman' when done by a lively violinist."

"I did play 'The Gypsy Hangman' at your wedding, Rich Frank. And I've always been a lively violinist. And, oddly enough, I did play the violin at a hanging once, at the special request of the man being hanged. But my own death will be otherwise, not by hanging. You all are so entranced by the little story on page one of my paper this morning that you may have missed my prediction of my own death of page eight."

"What is Moira doing here?" Rich Frank Lampiste suddenly demanded 'Chief of Security' O'Brien, couldn't you keep her out?"

"She is a ghost, Mr. Lampiste," O'Brien said. "I can't keep ghosts out."

"I can," Frank Lampiste said. "Fade out, Moira. Be you gone! You are a mistaken omen this time. My son will not die today."

"I read your account of your own death, Hegedusis," the bunko cop Karl Staripen said. "But it's phony. No Romany, whatever else he can predict, can predict his own death. It's his blind spot. There is something very ulterior about that item of yours."

"It's interesting though!" said Rich Frank Lampiste. "It goes, as I recall it, 'George Hegedusis' death will take place about ten minutes after one o'clock this afternoon. He will be flung to his death from a sixth-floor window of Frank Lampiste's executive suite on the top of his mansion. If they claim it was a suicide, do not believe them. It is murder. If my body is not found, it only means that they have hidden my body. It will be murder, and it will cry to Heaven for vengeance. And if there should be a grotesque or incredulous aspect to it, then the Lightning that is the father of me, George Hegedusis, will come and take away all that is grotesque and incredulous, and I will have died clean.' George, George, is nothing but some of your bleak fun?"

"No, the fun has all gone out of my life since I have come under the compulsion of predicting true."

"Moira is still in the room," the security chief O'Brien said.

"Not to me, she isn't, O'Brien," Frank Lampiste stated.

Suddenly the bunko cop Karl Staripen was all over George Hegedusis. He shackled his arms behind him, and he shackled his legs to the modernistic steel framework of the executive suite. "However you go out of here, it will not be by a window, George," Staripen said.

"Every Romany man comes sometimes in his life to his 'Days of Power'," Rich Frank Lampiste spoke as though he were lecturing. "Usually, for the good of the world, these days are as short as they are grotesque. Now you come to the end of your short and grotesque and ridiculous 'Days of Power', George Hegedusis."

"They must not be remembered as grotesque or ridiculous," Hegedusis protested in a thick voice. "My father the Thunder will save me from that."

"You told my son, Hegedusis, that there would be five and not four Les Hots Sports in the country. What is the fifth one? Is the fifth one in the country yet?" Frank Lampiste demanded of the shackled George Hegedusis. "I don't know. It's probably crossing the border just about now."

"How?"

"Oh, by air, in a powerful but unregistered craft. it's Le Hot Sport that was stolen in Morocco last week."

"Yes, that's the one that has me worried. You really are onto something. The odds are towering against us being in any flightway of that powerful but unregistered craft. The odds are prohibitive against the automobile somehow falling out of that craft. And it's very long odds against that automobile falling through the very strong steel roof here and killing my son."

"Yes, the latter odds are prohibitive, Rich Frank Lampiste," Hegedusis agreed. "There is no way that the automobile could fall through this roof here and kill your son in this place. Because your son is not here. Do you believe that fate is an imbecile? This is not your son, not the boy I talked to yesterday. This is a look-alike. Are you trying to trick Cod, Lampiste?"

"No, I'm trying to trick an lesser and meaner demiurge who plays such bloody tricks on poor humans. Maybe you've spoiled it now Maybe he's heard

you. No, my son couldn't have remained silent all this while. But this nephew of mine here usually says something when he talks, and my son doesn't."

"How far is your son removed from here, Lampiste?" Hegedusis asked. "I'll not tell you that. Certainly I'll not tell it out loud. But he is in a fortress of none that is stronger and more secret than this one, an underground bunker, not so very distant from here. Oh, God, help me now. Myself am having a 'far-seeing'! My son has left the fortress where I had him placed. He has started back this way, furtively and through the swamp-jungle. Why did he not stay where I had him placed? Henry, Henry, can you hear me? How did it happen?"

"He said he wanted to check the override lock on this underground bunker himself, Mr. Lampiste. And then he was out of that door and into the swamp-jungle which you yourself had constructed to be impassable. He was like a fox with his tail on fire. We cannot spot him yet, but we can hear his voice. He keeps crying, 'I have to meet something. I have an encounter I must keep.' But surely we'll be able to seize him against shortly."

"Surely you'd better."

"I believe that I'll begin my own 'Days of Power' today," said eleven-year-old Ronald Lampiste, the look-alike of his cousin Caspar Lampiste, "for I am a Romany man already. Oh, my Days of Power and Speed! ~ I work up early momentum, my days should go on almost forever. But I will need a spacious place to operate in. Where will I find it, where will I find it? Most Romany men do not come into their 'Days of Power' early enough."

"I've always believed that three million dollars is too much money for a two-passenger sports car that doesn't hold the road very well at over two hundred miles an hour," said the bunko cop Karl Staripen. "And, to me, it hasn't much style. There's a lot of ballyhoo has gone into that price. And yet the maker has sold twelve of the little buggers at three million each. He has to employ a lot of legend to do that, of course, and your item will help the legend, Hegedusis. It is said that eleven of the twelve Les Hot Sports have killed a person, and that twelfth one (the one that was stolen in Morocco last week, the one that may presently be airborne over our own country) is jealous of the others and is trying for a spectacular kill. It will bring as much as nine million dollars on the American market if it does attain a showy and spectacular kill."

"And it's said that each of the twelve is indwelt by an evil spirit," Rich Frank Lampiste mumbled. "That rumor has helped to get the base price up to three million dollars. Oh, the whole thing is shot through with such obvious fraud, and yet I tremble for the safety of my son. If my son's life is spared, I will give him any gift he wishes in the whole world."

"Would you give him a Le Hot Sport automobile, Uncle Frank?" the nephew in the room asked. "Then I bet he'd take me for a ride in it lots of times."

"Yes, Roland, I would give him, I will give him Le Hot Sport. And if he does not survive to receive the gift, then life is empty for me forever. Ah, we've made positive identification. The powerful but unregistered craft that left Morocco last night and left a jungle clearing in Yucatan two hours ago is indeed over our country now. And, unfortunately, we seem to be approximately on its flightway. Yes, yes, Henry, keep me posted, and see if you can't get it a little bit clearer on the screen. Oh, why doesn't it veer off a little bit? Karl, do you think that crazy George Hegedusis here really has something to do with this? And is there any way we could trade him in to fate to get a better bargain? How odd! All three of us here are Romanies."

"All four of us here are Romanies, Uncle Frank," said the nephew Roland Lampiste.

"It takes one to catch one," said the bunko cop Karl Staripen. "I always get the Gypsy cases, but I never was much good at solving them. Yes, I wish there were some way to trade in Fiddler George here for a better bargain. That's what your name, George Hegedusis, means: George Fiddler."

"I know it," said the fiddler man and fate-predictor. "And your name,

Karl Staripen, means Karl Jailhouse."

"But my own name is somewhat more rare," said Rich Frank Lampiste. "I doubt whether either of you know what my name Lampiste means?"

"Its common meaning is a sad-sack or a hard-luck Charley," said George Hegedusis. "But its original meaning is 'scapegoat'. Aye, you are one who must take on you the sins of a whole people."

"Mine is a spooky name in the present context," Rich Frank Lampiste said, "but my mansion here is built of steel. It is impervious. If I see that there will be a direct hit on us here, we can drop down to the floor below us, or to five floors below us, in one second. Your estimate of the time is about right, Fiddling George. It will be just about one o'clock when the plane arrives, and we are approximately in its path."

"Is your son also approximately in its path?" George asked. "Oh, my God, yes. I can see him in my scanner now. He's climbed up out of the jungle-swamp and onto the road, and he's running this way with his arms flung wide. I can even read his mouth. He keeps crying, 'I have a joyous encounter that I must keep,' and that encounter may be only minutes or seconds away. Oh, either shorten or lengthen the time, God."

"Oh, God, make time go away completely!" They had several clear views of the powerful but unregistered plane on their scopes. In particular they had a good view of the belly of it. And the belly was badly torn. The craft had made a rough belly landing in the jungle clearing in Yucatan (what illicit cargo had it delivered there?) and now it flew with landing gear permanently down and with an awful wobble. That plane was not in good health.

3

"Oh, my God!" Rich Frank Lampiste cried again. "The monitoring screen shows that the belly of the plane has burst open and the uncrated La Hot Sport automobile is falling out!" And so it was happening. But La Hot Sport, having a mind of its own, or possibly a mindful spirit in it, was into a high-speed glide. These cars always had the tendency to haze and float at above two hundred miles an hour, and they would actually become airborne at approximately three hundred miles an hour. It was thus that most of them had made their kills. The car had left the plane at about twenty thousand feet but it had inherited most of the plane's speed. It circled in a wide, fast glide. "It is scanning and searching," Frank Lampiste said. "It is looking for my son. Oh, it knows that I have switched boys. Or does it? It is going to hit us dead, or it is going to fill our nostrils with its reek."

"Hadn't we better drop below?" the bunko cop Karl Staripen asked. "You go down if you wish, Karl. And unshackle George Hegedusis and take him with you. I will stay here."

"And I will stay here," said nephew Roland Lampiste. "And I will stay here," said the shackled George Hegedusis. "Should I not watch the end of my own prediction?"

"I'll stay too then," Karl Staripen growled. Le Hot Sport came dead at them. Then it swerved past and filled their nostrils with its reek. It landed easily on the road three hundred yards beyond the mansion house, with hardly a jolt, and its speed had fallen below two hundred miles an hour. And the son Caspar Lampiste was seen on a scanning screen, running open-armed toward the insane car. The boy Caspar Lainpiste had lost his wits, or his wits were trammled. Le Hot sport had braked and slowed, and it came to the encounter at no more than twenty-five miles an hour; and the boy, the Caspar-goat, was running open-armed toward it at least half that speed. The way he went down when he met the car, it was clear that the joyous boy was killed instantly.

"The debt, whatever it was, is paid. The sin, whatever it was, is subsumed. The impediment on the power of special men is removed!" the nephew Roland Lampiste was jabbering inconsequently. "Now our family name is no more 'Lampiste' or 'scapegoat'. Our family name becomes 'Langa' or 'flame' now. I am Roland Langa now." The nephew was very excited. "All right, Roland,"

mumbled Rich Frank, who was crying. "I'll have our names changed legally today. Yes, Henry, bring the body of my son here. Then have the mortician come for him in a quarter of an hour. Bring Le Hot Sport here also. I am impounding it. I will pay the list price of three million dollars to the Moroccan from whom it was stolen, but I will prevent by litigation its ever going back."

"Will you give it to me, Uncle Frank, now that Caspar is dead?" the nephew Roland Langa asked. "Yes, Roland, I give it to you. You become my son now. You become a Romany man in his full powers."

"But my name will be Robert Langa and not Roland Langa," the boy said. "As Roland Lampiste I was included in the bloodlust of the car, but it won't know that I am the same person with both of my names changed."

"All right, Roland, Robert," said his uncle, his new father, Rich Frank Langa. "George Hegedusis, why are you white and why are you trembling? Your prediction came true."

"He is trembling because the Power has left him," Roland-Robert taunted. "Four days isn't very long to have the power, Fiddler George. and my own totemic name will be Le Hot Sport. And you are wrong in I intend to have it for more than forty years. I will drive Le Hot Sport, your own prediction, that of your own death, George Hegedusis."

But the suddenly-much-older Rich Frank Lampiste-Langa was weeping as only a Gypsy man can weep. "Why do you still mourn, Rich Frank?" Karl Staripen asked. "You have your son again, reborn into the body of your nephew Roland."

"Yes, I have him again, but for less than ten minutes."

"Have you your Gypsy up, Rich Frank? Do you also predict?" Karl asked.

"Yes, also predict. And Moira is standing in the room with us again."

"I am wrong in none of my predictions," the trembling George Hegedusis the riddler jittered. "I am no longer shackled, men, though it appears that I am. But I was an escape artist when I was in show business." Hegedusis stood up, free of his shackles. "I had to study a bit to see the hidden hinge on the encircling windows, but I knew there had to be a hinged section." Suddenly the unshackled Hegedusis was across the big room. He swung out a narrow section of the encircling glass. He stepped out. And he fell six stories. "God receive his ghost," Frank Lampiste-Langa spoke with emotion. "But at least we didn't fling him out."

"Yes, I hung him out, but not with hands," Roland-Robert spoke in a sort of power rapture. "I killed him. He didn't want to die but he foresaw it, and I compelled it. And I inherited his father the Thunder. And his losing the power killed him."

"Maybe not," said the old bunko cop Karl Staripen. "Hegedusis was possibly the finest practitioner in the world at the 'Fallen Angel' act. As an aerialist, he would miss his trapeze and fall eighty feet. And the horrified crowd would believe that he was dead. And then, after a powerful and dramatic interval, the 'Fallen Angel' would rise up from the sawdust and walk out painfully but triumphantly. He really knew how to fall. I think he remembered how to fall just now, either consciously or subconsciously."

"He looks dead enough," Rich Frank Lampiste-Langa commented, looking down and still sobbing. "Fallen Angel, rise up again!" Roland-Robert Langa commanded in a loud and rough voice. "We are onto your tricks. Rise up, and slink away." And George Hegedusis did rise up, slowly and torturously, like a zombie, from the flagstones below the encircling windows. He dragged himself a few feet, trembling and seething with black despondency. "What will happen to him now?" Frank Lampiste-Langa asked. "He can't live with the shame of his lost power."

"What will happen is what he predicted would happen," jeered Roland-Robert. "His father the Thunder will come and kill him presently. And his family is already on the way here with propitiative music for his funeral." Men brought the dead body of the boy Caspar Lampiste up into the big room then. And on his dead face was the look of radiant happiness. "You and I are cousins-closer-than-brothers," Roland-Robert spoke softly to the dead boy. "We pledged that, whichever of us should die first, he would give one-seventh



of his soul to the other one. You have kept your pledge, Caspar. You have yielded only six-sevenths of your soul to God. And you still have the seventh portion tight in your hands for me. Release from your hands to mine now." And the dead boy, in some fort of post-mortem relaxation, did open his tightly clenched hands, and his brother-cousin did take something from them. Then the mien of dead Caspar Lampiste was completely peaceful. "And now, Fiddling George Hegedusis must not die in his miseries. He must die in his powers," Roland-Robert-of-the-powers said. "His last prediction must come true. His father must take him out of his shame and unhappiness. His shame and unhappiness. But wait, wait, his father the Thunder is my father now too."

"Do what you have to do, Roland-Robert," the choked-up Frank Lampiste-Langa uttered, but his attention was on his dead son Caspar.

"Ostrafil, O two-tined lightning!" Roland-Robert called out loudly as he looked down on George Hegedusis collapsed against a nearby stone fence, perishing in his dejection. "Two-faced and double-dealing lightning, come and kill him. Come and get him, and he will play the fiddle tonight during the supper for all your high company in Nebos in Electric-Cloud Land. One thing he can do, lightning, is play the fiddle." There was a small thunder out of the cloudless sky, but the two-faced, two-pronged lightning did not strike yet.

"Oh go away, Moira!" Karl Staripen the bunko cop spoke sharply to the ghostly lady. "There is one death, and there may be another. But death does not happen in this room itself. You are wrong. Get out."

"Let her alone," weeping Frank Lampiste-Langa spoke hollowly.

"This is not an ordinary person who asks this," Roland-Robert was railing up at the lightning-bolt that still withheld itself. "I am a Romany man who has entered into my powers at the present moment. I have subsumed one part of the soul of my dead brother-cousin here, and now I am an enchanted man. I own a Le Hot Sport automobile, and there are only twelve of those wonders in the world. I am Le Hot Sport in my totemic name, and there is only one of such wonders as myself in the world. My new family name is Langa or 'flame' and it is given to me to command. Come down, come down, Strafil the double lightning-thunder. Oh, surely there is a more spacious place where I can revel in my new power! Oh, I want to go in my power to that more spacious place right now'. Strike, two-faced Strafil, strike!" Then the double-pronged lightning-thunderbolt did come down. One Prong killed and crisped George Hegedusis as he slumped against the stone fence in his dejection. And the other prong came right into the room and killed the boy-man Robert-of-the-powers. He died with a cry of delight, and fell across his dead brother-cousin Caspar Lampiste. Robert Langa had found a more spacious place where he could revel in his sport-styled powers.

"It was quite a short 'Days of Power' that he had," Karl Staripen the bunko cop spoke sadly in a voice that was always like gravel.

"Are you satisfied, pernicious Moira thou ghost?" Frank Lampiste-Langa asked tearfully. "I have seen you look several times before. You smile that treacherous smile, but you cry tears at the same time. Your tears should be analyzed. I will inter Le Hot Sport in the same crypt with my son Caspar and my nephew-son Roland-Robert. They can drive it forever in that More Spacious Place. Oh, it'll roar and rev in there, and there will grow the legend of lively happenings in the crypt. What is that violin music drifting in through the swung-out window section, Staripen?" Frank Lampiste-Langa was red-eyed and he spoke with a curiously red and choking voice.

"It's the family and mourners of dead George Hegedusis, come to take him away with weeping and violin-playing," Karl said as he looked down. "And the tune, it's our oldest tune, the everlastingly happy tune that we play at birthings and weddings and funerals, all of them. It's 'The Gypsy Hangman', Rich Frank."

"Ah yes. It's sad and happy at the same time. I remember now that George Hegedusis did play it at my wedding twelve years ago. Now they will play it for his funeral." And Rich Frank smiled curiously and tapped the desk table before him to the music. No Gypsy, whatever his straits, can completely resist

the happy lilt of "The Gypsy Hangman".  
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