

*Nathaniel Worth had good reason to cut himself off from all contact with other men . . . but he'd forgotten what it was—!*

# THE JOURNAL OF NATHANIEL WORTH

ROBERT F. YOUNG

Illustrated by Steve Fabian

October 6th, 1877:

HAVING BEEN coddled during my youth and provided with a private tutor until the age of twenty-one, I was late in stepping forth into the world; hence, it is not surprising that I should have found the world little to my liking. "The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, the pangs of dispriz'd love,"—all grow unendurable after a time, and upon coming into a modest fortune during my twenty-fifth year after the tragic death of both my parents in a train derailment, I decided to free myself once and forever from the derision that was my lot, and to realize that sweet dream of seclusion to which I had long been host. The small offshore island which I have purchased here in the western section of the state and the mansion which I have had built thereon have devoured the lion's share of my inheritance, but the supplies which I have set by will sustain me for at least twelve months, by the end of which time I hope to have attained a self-sufficiency comparable to that attained by the late Mr. Thoreau. I shall by no means, however, strive for the simplicity about which he became so rhapsodic. Having lived in luxury all my life, I intend to go on doing so.

My mansion was built in accordance with plans drawn up by myself, and it is appointed throughout with custom-made furniture and supplied with custom-made equipment. No doubt, the architecturally cynical would refer to it deprecatingly as an "American Gothic monstrosity", but I am disinclined to take seriously the biased opinions of *soi-disant* experts, regardless of their calling; hence, to me, my mansion is an edifice of rare and wondrous beauty. Its single steepled tower is centrally located and enhances the magnificence of the facade; its gable roof, in addition to two great chimneys, boasts a trio of identical cupolas; its mullioned windows are the last word in elegance. Situated at it is in a grove of haw-thorn trees (a species which abounds on the island to the virtual exclusion of all others), with its gray stone walls and steepled tower, its aura of impregnability, it calls to mind a medieval castle.

This impression is even more pronounced when one is approaching the island from the wooded mainland—a perspective which I value highly, as it will not be mine again for many months to come. I shall return to civilization for supplies once a year—definitely no more often than that—but to all intents and purposes, I have forsaken forever the company of my fellowmen. Nor is it likely that I shall be plagued by visitors. The only settlement in the vicinity—the village of W—,—is located at least fifteen miles inland, and neither its inhabitants nor the husbandmen, who work the surrounding farms, are apt to take time off from their dawn-to-dusk labors to swim or fish. Further to ensure my privacy, I had all my work done by workmen and artisans from the city of B—, and saw to it that they, as well as my supplies, material, furniture and equipment, came by lake schooner rather than overland. Neither the villagers nor the husbandmen are aware of my existence.

It is my intention to spend my time climbing further out on the various branches of knowledge to which my tutor gave me access. My library is my pride and joy. I employed a printing concern to turn out personal editions of every volume in my possession, and they stand now, row upon row, on shelves scarcely newer than they are, awaiting my perusal. I anticipate, then, a life of scholarly pursuits, to be

interrupted only by those tasks necessary to the maintenance of my island demesne and to the replenishment of my larder. Perhaps, if the mood strikes me, I shall write a volume or two for post-humous publication and leave the mss. in the hands of the same person to whom I have bequeathed my property—a distant cousin (distant in the sense that he lives faraway) whom I have never met and who is my only living relative. The idea of being a literary giant has always appealed to me.

The custom-manufactured clock on my study mantel is chiming mid-night, and the embers in the study fireplace are growing gray. Putting my mansion in order has depleted my physical resources, and I am exhausted; therefore, I shall bring to a close this initial entry in my journal before I begin nodding over the page.

*November 10th:*

ONE'S INTELLECTUAL perceptions can become blunted from excessive probing; hence, I spent this afternoon not in broadening my academic horizon, but in exploring my island demesne. I knew not nearly as much about it as I had surmised, and was disconcerted, while walking along the base of the shale cliffs that comprise its southern shore, to come upon a natural cave.

I say "disconcerted" rather than "surprised" (although I experienced surprise too), because there was a quality about the high, narrow mouth that evoked an unpleasant association in my mind. While under the guidance of my tutor. I was constrained to study the Anglo-Saxon epic poem, *Beowulf*, and to render my own translation of its passages, and I fear that the ordeal has left its mark on me. For an ordeal it was. I disliked intensely the atmosphere of pessimistic gloom that pervades the crude, alliterative lines, and the monster Grendel filled me with unspeakable horror. That this horror still resides in my mind is borne out by the fact that when I viewed the cave mouth I saw not the entrance to a perfectly ordinary fissure in the cliffs but the underwater entrance to Grendel's grotto, which he shared with his hideous dam.

However, I did not let my disquietude dissuade me from exploring the cave's interior. What a drear place it is, with its gray shale walls and perpetually dripping ceiling! It is much wider than its narrow entrance would lead one to believe, and extends deep into the cliffs. Truly, it *could* accommodate creatures of the fearful dimensions of Grendel and his dam, and would be a fit abode for them as well. I shall never go near it again. No Beowulf am I!

After leaving the place, I circled the rest of the way round the island, finding it, to my amazement, to be much larger than indicated by the land company's survey. The survey map shows a length of about three miles and a width of about one and a half. I am positive that these figures are grossly inaccurate and some time in the near future I am going to pace off both distances.

The weather has turned appreciably colder and I live in daily expectation of the first snowfall. I was going to write "dread", but I realized, to my delight, that I do not in the least dread the coming of winter. Why should I? At my written behest, the workmen who assisted the artisans in the construction of my mansion cut and split me a year's supply of wood; I am well-stocked with oil for my lamps; and my larder is full. No grass-hopper am I, Nathaniel Worth, but the wisest and most provident of ants. Come then, fierce breath of Boreas. Swirl your white skirts, then, Old Dame Winter. Nathaniel Worth fears you not!

*December 24th:*

STRANGE INDEED, but until a moment ago I was unaware that tonight is Christmas Eve! A three-year old Christmas issue of *Ballou's Monthly Magazine*, included by chance in a case of books which I just got around to opening, drew aside the curtain that my severance from society had lowered before my cognizance, and let the wondrous light shine through.

But it has turned out to be not quite so wondrous a light after all. Christmas Eve is something more than a date on a calendar. It is warm firelight and heady wine and the creak of runners on hard-packed snow. It is the sound of laughter, the rosinness of cheeks—smiles, gaiety and good cheer. I have the

firelight and the wine, but while the one is warm and the other heady, neither is quite enough.

But together, they will suffice. What do I want with smiles?—with gaiety and good cheer? Of what worth is a drop of kindness if it must be paid for with a pitcherful of ridicule? Let them have their precious Christ-mas Eves—I shall be content with mine.

But the mood lingers, despite all I can do to dispel it. The Christmas issue of *Ballou's Monthly* lies beside my journal, opened to the first page, and on the first page there is a black--and-white drawing of an attractive young lady with a spray of mistletoe in her hair. The spray is arranged so that it seems to be part of her coif-feur, and around her shoulder, another spray is arranged so that it gives the impression of being a design in her V-necked, high-collared blouse. The drawing is entitled "The Mis-tletoe", and illustrates a poem of the same title that begins on the next page. In common with all the literary trash which such periodicals abound with, the poem is probably simplistic and sentimental, and I shall never read it. Nevertheless, I find my eyes returning again and again to the pic-tured young lady. Can it be that I have forgotten so soon that the likes of her are not for me, never have been and never will be? I will throw her into the fire this very moment and watch the flames blacken her loveliness, watch the ashes of her drift up into my Christmas chimney! No shadows out of the past shall be per-mitted to darken Nathaniel Worth's hard-won *Lebensraum!*

*January 6th, 1878:*

**T**HE WINTER is becoming increas-ingly severe and during the past week the cold has been so intense that I have been forced to spend all of my time indoors. I find this largely to my liking; nevertheless, for the past few days a strange restlessness has afflicted me, sending me on several occasions to pacing my study floor. Perhaps, in shutting myself off from everything and everyone that would in any way bring to mind my malad-justment, I have unwittingly obviated that maladjustment and in the process undermined my motivation for being here. If this be true—if I have, in-deed, put my sense of inferiority to rout—then I shall do everything pos-sible to maintain my new *status quo*, restlessness or no restlessness. Is not the reality of anything dependent upon the presence of its opposite? Could there be coldness if there were no warmth? We say a young lady has light hair, but could she have light hair if there were no darkness to compare it to? We call a large hill a mountain, but would the distinction exist if all hills were large? If all men had been giants since the beginning of time, would there have been such a word in any of the languages? And would there be such names as "Polyphemus", "Goliath", "Ymir" and "Paul Bunyan" in folklore and reli-gion? I submit that there would not be, and I submit further that the very existence of such names strongly suggests that their holders were of euhemeristic origin.

*January 29th:*

**A**BRIEF THAW has permitted me to pace off my island. I discovered its true length to be approximately seven miles and its true width to be approximately three and one-half—dimensions markedly at variance with those recorded by the land-company surveyor. I have altered the figures on the survey map to conform with my findings, not out of any desire to enhance the commercial value of my property, but to assuage my craving for accuracy—a craving that is as much a part of my makeup as my craving for seclusion. The commercial value of my property concerns me not at all, since I have not the slightest intention of selling it and care not one iota whether or not the distant cousin, into whose hands it will fall upon my demise, profits from its acquisition.

*February 19th:*

**T**WO WEEKS of sub-zero temperatures have climaxed a wintry act of betrayal begun late in December: the lake is completely frozen over—or that part of it, at least, which separates my demesne from the mainland. No longer does my tiny ship of state ride serene and inaccessible upon a watery waste, but lies locked instead in the rigid embrace of a snowcovered desert that anyone can cross with

ease. It is, without doubt, a development which I should have foreseen; but had I foreseen it, would there have been anything I could have done to avert it? Besides, my is-land was never truly inaccessible to begin with: all one ever needed to gain its shores was a small boat or a proficiency in the art of swimming. It was just that being surrounded by water gave me a sense of security. Now, that sense has departed, and, to make matters worse, the five months I have spent in my own company have made me even less desirous of coming into contact with my fellow-men than when I first arrived here. If I see a visitor approaching across the ice, I shall surely secure my shutters and lock my doors, and perhaps se-cret myself in the cellar till he—or she—departs.

*February 26th:*

**F**OR THREE weeks now, Old Dame Winter has been swirling her white skirts with scarcely a moment's re-spite, and, as I write this, the gusts of her sub-zero breath are shaking the house. I have hardly budged from my chair before the fire all day long, and I dread making the trek upstairs to my unheated tower bed-chamber. The lake, I fear, will remain frozen well into spring.

*March 15:*

**A**SPELL of relatively warm weather has set in, and all day long the wind has been sweeping up from the south. The ice, however, has yet to reveal the faintest fissure. Still, I cannot complain: no human has yet appeared upon my horizon, and it is unlikely that one will. I was wise indeed to choose a retreat so remote from the haunts of men, although my motivation for doing so eludes me at the moment. Why did I so desperately want to be alone? What did I have to fear from creatures like myself? A glance back through my journal en-tries provides me with not the faintest clue. "The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, the pangs of dispriz'd love,"—are not these afflic-tions the lot of all of us? More confus-ing yet, I cannot, in retrospect, recall a single instance of any of them—and yet my determination to remain here for the rest of my life is stronger than ever. It may well be that I no longer fear or dislike my fellowmen, but it is nevertheless apparent that I want no part of them.

*April 3rd:*

**T**HE VERNAL EQUINOX has long since passed, but Old Dame Winter still lingers in the land. Her days, how-ever, are numbered: her skirts are bedraggled now, and her icy shouts few and far between. Soon, she will he gone.

Deo gratias!

*April 21st:*

**T**HE SNOW is no more than a memo-ry, but the cursed ice still remains! It is porous, and rotten to the core; but to anyone intrepid enough to essay the crossing, it could still serve as a bridge between the mainland and my island. (I am more at a loss than ever to understand my aversion to visitors. Why should I, Nathaniel Worth, of sound mind and body, dread the sight of mortals like myself?)

*April 25th:*

**T**HE ICE is breaking up at last! Spring, in her infinite compassion, has at last taken pity on one, Nathaniel Worth!

*April 26th:*

**M**Y EXCESSIVE brachiations in the tree of knowledge having temporarily depleted my mental

reserves, I de-cided today to begin my garden. The workmen who, at my written behest, cut and split me a year's supply of wood, also, at that same behest, cleared and spaded up a sizable plot of ground behind my mansion. I have been reworking the soil all day, and have found the task, after my winter of physical desuetude, somewhat ar-duous. However, I do not mind. It was good to be outdoors, watching my island come to life around me. As I worked, a large robin came and perched in the hawthorn tree by the back porch and surveyed its surround-ings, no doubt with a good nesting-site in mind. It is more than welcome to take up residence wherever it chooses. No one will bother it here—not in Nathaniel Worth's de-mesne. Tomorrow, I am going into the woods to cut some saplings for poles, after which I am going to try my hand at birdhouse building. It will serve as an excellent hobby and make my life even more complete than it has already become.

*April 30th:*

**I** AM NOT ALONE on my island after all, nor have I been from the beginning! Goddess-tall, she stands, this giantess whom I came upon this afternoon. She is magnificent! Beautiful! No, not merely beautiful, for the very bounteousness of her beauty renders her sublime.

The cave in the cliffs would have told me of her presence, had I but examined it more closely; but no, in my irrational repugnance I confined myself to a mere cursory appraisal, and then departed posthaste. And all because of an absurd association! No Grendel she, this lean and lovely giantess—no, nor Grendel's dam!

I came upon her quite by accident when my quest for tall, straight sap-lings took me into the vicinity of the island's southern shore, and it was awe, rather than physical fear, that kept me from revealing myself to her. She was kneeling upon a strip of sandy beach, not far from the begin-ning of the cliffs, roasting a catch of lake trout over a driftwood fire. Nearby, lay a crude fishing pole of considerable length. Despite the dis-tance between us (I had halted within the fringe of the forest), and despite the fact that she was kneeling, her great size was at once manifest to me, and I estimated her height to be about twice my own. I am six feet, two.

Her hair is bright yellow and falls in tangled tresses to her shoulders. Her eyes, as nearly as I could ascer-tain from such a distance, are light blue. With its rather high cheekbones and gently rounded chin, her face, for all its thinness (obviously she has been half-starving all winter while I sat basking before my fire, warm and well-fed!), is a uniquely attractive one. Her single tunic-like garment is ragged and torn, and corroborates the story of deprivation told by the hol-lows in her cheeks. Her feet are bare.

She devoured the trout—probably they were still half raw—without re-moving them from the crude spit she had fashioned. Afterward, I followed her at a discreet distance down the beach and along the base of the cliffs, and watched her slip into the dark and dismal confines of her cavern-home. Then I hurried back through the lengthening afternoon-shadows to my mansion, picking up on the way the several saplings I had cut, and began penning this entry. To think that a giantess shares my island king-dom! I can barely contain my excite-ment!

*May 1st (morning):*

**A**S IS MY WONT, whenever I am confronted by the seemingly inexplicable, I wasted no time in climbing out upon the branch of knowledge in-volved. My library, fortunately, is well-stocked with volumes devoted to folklore and fable, as well as to re-lated religious material, and a single night's expenditure of midnight oil has enabled me to come up with a theory that not only explains my gian-tess' presence, but which throws con-siderable light upon the subject of giants in general. It is euhemeristic in nature, and breaks down as follows:

*Imprimis.* There is a race of giants inhabiting the face of the earth and their precursors were the so-called gods described in the *Younger Edda*—the giant-gods of the Asgard pantheon. Successive generations of this basic race spread throughout the whole of civilization, giving rise to the various legends with which the folklores of all countries abound, and in some cases finding their way into the major religions" (e.g., the race of Rephaim, alluded to in 2 Samuel 5:18).

Secondly. This race of giants was progressively outnumbered by the various races of normal men, and as a result the giants were persecuted and forced into exile. Their size was a hindrance rather than an advantage, for it did them but little good against the vastly superior numbers of their foes, and in many cases merely succeeded in intensifying their foes' hatred. Normal men crave monsters, and tend to indulge that craving whenever they view the outsize. Burke betrays this tendency when, in *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, he says, "It is impossible to suppose a giant the object of love. When we let our imagination loose in romance, the ideas we naturally annex to that size are those of tyranny, cruelty, injustice, and everything horrid and abominable." I am disposed to believe that if there are monsters on the face of the earth, normal men alone are responsible for them. Charles Byrne is well over eight feet tall, and he *is* unquestionably of human origin; but are his other dimensions in proportion to his great height? Indeed they are not. He is a beanpole, not a giant—a true monster if there ever was one.

Thirdly. The descendants of the giant-gods of the Asgard pantheon were the true discoverers of America. They sailed here in some manner of seaworthy craft thousands of years before the Pinta, the Nina and the Santa Maria left the harbor of Palos, Spain. This is borne out in American-Indian folklore, where they are referred to by such names as Oh-Mah, Sasquatch and Wendigo.

Fourthly. Throughout history, most giants have been benevolent. Our own Paul Bunyan is an example of this sort of giant, although very little is known about his true stature because of the grossly exaggerated tales ignorant and impressionably lumber-jacks have recounted concerning his legendary exploits. However, there have been malevolent giants too. Polyphemus was one. So were Grendel and Grendel's dam. Goliath was probably characterized as malevolent for the sole reason that he was on the wrong side. But malevolent or not, none of these giants, with the exception of Grendel and his dam, were monsters.

Finally. With her yellow hair and blue eyes, the young giantess whom I have discovered here on my island is a living testimony to the Scandinavian ancestry I have predicated. I do not, of course, know her exact reason for living all alone in a cave, but I am sure that it is directly or indirectly related to the persecution of her people, which I have outlined above.

I can scarcely wait to make contact with her.

*May 1st (afternoon):*

**T**HIS MORNING, I came upon her footprints not far from my mansion and concluded, after examining them, that she had approached the house as closely as she dared and had stood there in the darkness, gazing into my study window all the while I was burning my midnight oil! Undoubtedly, she has been aware of my presence all along, but has been afraid to reveal herself because I am normal, and hence a creature to be feared. As though she need fear me!

Following her footprints to the cave in the cliffs, I made an additional discovery: some of them were flecked with blood. A giantess with bleeding feet! For some reason, it was almost too much for me to bear, and when I came within view of the cave mouth I could hardly refrain from walking boldly up to it and calling out to her. That I did not do so can be attributed to my fear of alarming her and frightening her away. Somehow, I must contact her in such a manner as to convince her that I am no vain and boasting Beowulf, no cruel Ulysses, no merciless David; that I have no sling hidden behind my back, or fiery stake or vaunted sword.

But how?

*May 1st (evening):*

**U**NABLE ANY LONGER to endure the thought of the blood-flecked footprints and their implications, I returned this afternoon along the island's littoral to the southern shore and crept around the base of the cliffs till I obtained a good view of the cave. Crouching down behind a pile of fallen shale, I began observing the entrance, trying to peer into the interior in the hope of catching sight of its huge occupant. I maintained this uncomfortable position for about an hour without seeing any signs of life, and

I was about to stand up and approach the cave openly when a Lilliputian avalanche comprised of broken shale came rattling down the cliff-face and scattered all around me. Looking upward, I found myself gazing directly into the bluest pair of eyes that I had ever seen, and I realized that all the while I had been lying there at the base of the cliff, trying to observe *her*, the giantess had been lying on the top of the cliff, observing *me*.

That the dislodging of the shale had been accidental was borne out unequivocally by the expression of stammer upon her face. And yet she did not withdraw her head, as I momentarily feared she might do, but continued to look down at me as though I were as strange a phenomenon in her eyes as she was in mine. Here, then, was the opportunity I so desperately needed—the opportunity to prove to her that my intentions were amicable, and that, far from wanting to harm her, I wanted to help her. To accomplish this end, I had but a single weapon at my disposal, and I made haste to employ it to its maximum extent. I smiled at her, and into the smile I put all the warmth and the kindness and the good will that I possess.

For a long time my effort went unrewarded. Fright continued to distort her countenance, and there was a quantity of panic in her eyes that refused, at first, to disperse. At length, however, the lovely Brobdingnagian face lost some of its rigidity, the blue eyes some of their fear, and the smile that presently broke forth upon her lips was as warm and friendly as the sun coming up over a hill, and filled with a wistfulness so poignant that it wrenched my heart.

Without taking my eyes from her face, I arose to my feet, moving slowly so as not to alarm her, and called up to her in the gentlest tone of voice I could manage. "Please don't be frightened," I said. "I mean you no harm. My name is Nathaniel Worth and I wish to help you."

I was not surprised when my words evoked not the slightest glimmer of understanding in her blue eyes. Living as she had all her life as far from the haunts of normal humans as possible, she could hardly be expected to be familiar with the English language, and probably knew only the language of the giants. This assumption was strengthened, if not actually substantiated, when, at length, she uttered several words which I was certain were related to one of the Scandinavian tongues. Being unversed in any of them, however, I found her words as unintelligible as she had found mine, and oral communication between us ceased before it had even begun.

Undaunted, I resorted to the universal language of signs, managing, by means of a series of rather strenuous gesticulations, to make her understand that I wished her to proceed back along the top of the cliffs and meet me on the beach. She appeared undecided for a moment, and the panic that had so recently departed from her eyes, returned. Presently, however, it went away again, and she nodded, and withdrew her head.

I cannot describe the medley of emotions that beset me as I made my way back along the base of the cliffs toward that memorable rendezvous. That fear was a major ingredient, I cannot deny, for, despite my staunch conviction that the malevolence of giants has been unjustifiably imputed to them my lesser mortals, I could not quell the atavistic dread of the outsize that mounted within me with every step I took. Nor can I describe the entirely different medley of emotions that overwhelmed me when, rounding the last shale shoulder of the cliffs, I saw her standing on the beach less than a dozen feet away. I know only that my fear transmuted once and for all to awe, and that for many moments I could not move from the spot where my suddenly paralyzed legs had stranded me.

Hugeness viewed from a distance differs from hugeness viewed at close range. Size is relative, and cannot be fully appreciated without a nearby familiar object to use as a criterion. In this case, the familiar object was one which by its very nature was best calculated to give me maximum awareness of the diverse dimensions involved: my own body.

As I stated earlier, I am six feet, two inches in height—a giant in my own right; and yet this giantess towers over me not by merely twice my height, but by twice my height *and almost half again besides!* Fully fifteen feet tall, she stands, and every part of her—every line, every curve, every hollow—is in exquisite proportion to her stature. Her legs, colossal columns though they may be in one sense, are the legs of a young and lovely girl; her arms, for all her undernourishment, possess an almost Grecian symmetry; her breasts are lofty, landscaped hills upon the burgeoning countryside of her body; while her neck is a gleaming white pillar round which float cloud-like tresses of her yellow hair and above which

flowers the blue-eyed beauty of her Brobdingnagian face.

How long I stood there unmoving, I do not know. Perhaps I would be standing there yet, had not the panic come back into her eyes and jarred me out of my paralysis. Recovering myself, I smiled up at her reassuringly, and the smile she gave me in return was even warmer than her first had been, and its wistfulness even more acute. It was the sort of smile you see upon the lips of a forsaken child—a smile that simultaneously proffers friendship and begs friendship in return. It told me what I had to do. “Come with me,” I said, and, stepping forward, reached up and took her hand.

I led her along the beach and thence into the grove of hawthorn trees where my mansion stands. She accompanied me like a docile little girl. Upon setting eyes upon the house (probably the first time she had viewed it in daylight), she gasped, and, again like a little girl—an enchanted one, this time—pressed both hands against her breast.

Throughout our walk, I had been concentrating on the problem which accommodating so huge a creature in so relatively small a dwelling presented, and had arrived finally at the only solution. Indicating that I wished her to remain where she was, I went inside, and, after proceeding directly to the drawing room, shoved all the furniture it contained into the library. Next, I made several trips upstairs and brought down all my extra mattresses and bedding, after which I made a bed for her upon the drawing-room floor. This task completed to my satisfaction, I opened the front door and beckoned to her to come inside.

Fortunately, my ceilings are high, my halls and doorways wide. She had considerable difficulty gaining the drawing room, of course—I had expected that—but with practice she will be able to get in and out of it with ease; and, while its height does not permit her to stand up straight, its length and width are more than ample for her to move about and to stretch out full-length upon her bed. And she will never be cold: I shall see to it that on chill nights there is always a fire burning in the drawing-room fireplace, and, as soon as I find the time, I am going to sew some of the blankets which I gave her into a master blanket with which she can cover herself. Certainly, her new quarters are vastly superior to the dark and dismal cave in which she has been shivering for God knows how long, and certainly, the warm meal that I prepared for her excelled by far the primitive fare to which she has been accustomed. She must have been half-starved, poor thing, judging from the way she wolfed the food down. Fortunately, I have a large platter which makes an adequate plate for her to eat from; my largest cup, however, is hardly more than a thimble in her huge hand, while my eating utensils are useless to her.

She is resting now as I write this in my study, and her breathing is a soft summer wind in the next room. Before she lay down, I heated water for her so that she could soak her cut and bleeding feet, and I confess that carrying in the wooden tub—the largest in my possession—and then filling it, painful by painful, has worn me out. But I do not mind. Indeed, I find it somehow exhilarating to wait upon so magnificent a creature, and the almost dog-like gratitude that comes into her eyes each time she looks at me is a far greater reward than any I have ever received for services rendered in the past. In addition to the cuts upon her feet, there are numerous deep scratches on her arms and shoulders—put there, probably, by the cruel thorns of the hawthorn trees. What a terrible world this is, where giants must hide themselves from the sight of normal men and suffer in drafty caves and hostile forests! I shall never condone it—never!

The summer wind sighs in the next room, grows softer. She sleeps—my little-girl giantess sleeps.

*May 8th:*

**H**ER NAME is Frederika. I have shortened it to Erika.

She has grown more beautiful since I have taken her in. Good food has filled out the hollows in her cheeks and set roses to blooming in their stead. Kindness has driven away—forever, I hope—the fear that once resided in her eyes. The scratches on her arms and shoulders still linger, but her feet have healed completely (though what to do about shoes for her is a problem that dismays me). When she walks now, there is a queenly majesty about her, and her tread, once timid, is now firm and purposeful.

We go walking together often, when my studies and her sewing permit (she has fashioned herself a



de-lightful tunic out of a spare pair of hangings to replace her old one), and sometimes I take her hand and some-times she takes mine, and we breast hills side by side and share each new vista that bursts upon us. Occasion-ally, she forgets to match her pace with mine, and I find myself being half-dragged alone at her side; then she will remember, and laugh ten-derly down at me, after which she will walk so slowly that even I could outdistance her if I so desired.

I am more fearful now of visitors than I was before. The reason behind my original fear is buried somewhere in the hinterlands of my mind; now, I fear because of her. Were my fellow-men ever to learn of her presence here on the island, she would have to seek out another sanctuary and I might never see her again. This, I do not believe I could endure. I have made it as clear to her as the lan-guage of signs permits that, should she see a boat approaching, she must hide, and I am sure she understands. In all probability, her natural instincts would cause her to hide anyway; but there is no way for me to keep the lake under constant surveillance, hence either of us can be caught unawares at any time.

I have been trying to teach her En-lish, but thus far I have made not the slightest progress. Perhaps I shall have to give up and learn her tongue instead, if I can persuade her to teach it to me. In any event, I am not par-ticularly concerned: a communication seems to exist between us that tran-scends all ordinary forms—a communi-cation compounded of a reciprocity of feelings, of likes and dislikes, of hopes and fears. A most remarkable rapport. It is there each time our eyes meet, each time there is a touching of our hands; each time a bird *of* unusual hue rises out of the brush before us, or a ray of sunlight slants a certain way through an unpremeditated pat-tern of branches and trees.

I have never known a spring as sweet as this one. Mayflowers vie with one another in their efforts to give off the headiest fragrance and to adorn themselves in the pleasantest possible colors. The buds on the trees seem eager to burst forth and take over their duties *as* leaves. The sun seems anxious to warm the land, and the rain, when it comes in the night, falls gently upon the face of the earth, as though reluctant to risk injuring a single blade of grass or a single meadowflower.

It is night and it is raining now, and the rain is a gentle susurrus in the hawthorn tree without my study window. In the next room, Erika lies contentedly upon the bed I have made for her, secure in the room which I have assured her is her very own. She is looking at the illustrations in one of my encyclopaedia sets, and although I cannot see her eyes, I know that they are' wide with won-derment. What is this new quality that pervades the house and enriches the very air I breathe—this quality compounded of warmth and wanted-ness, of tenderness and peace? Whence came it? Why? It does not matter. It is enough that it is here.

*May 11th:*

OUR WALKS CONTINUE, and I sense an awakening in my young giantess, a coming into being of emotions she has never known before. All day long, lines from Baudelaire's *La Geante* have kept running through my mind:

*Du temps que la Nature en sa verve puissante  
Concevait cheque jour des enfants monstrueux,  
J'eusse aime vivre aupres dune geante,  
Comme aux pieds (Tune reine un chat voluptueux.*

*J'eusse aime voir son corps fleurir avec son ame  
Et grandir librement dans ses terribles jeux,  
Deviner si son Coeur couve une sombre flarnine  
Aux humides brouillards qui nagent dans ses yeux—*

She is glorious, my *geante!* The spring sun has caressed her creamy skin and given it tones of gold. A comelier hue than the sun itself is her lustrous yellow hair. When she runs and plays, it dances about her face in bright abandon, and when the wind is brisk, it sometimes streams straight out behind her.

Gaiety has taken up permanent residence in her blue eyes and makes them sparkle like a starlit summer sea. I do not believe that in all my life I have ever seen anyone quite so happy or so carefree.

My own happiness is less effervescent in nature. It pervades me like a warm ray of sunlight, glowing quietly throughout my entire being and turning the most prosaic of happenings into moments of wonder and delight. Until I met Erika, I did not know that such moments could exist; but then, I had never been in love before, or, if I had, had never had my love returned.

Yes, I love Erika, and Erika loves me. I can see her love kindling in her eyes each time she looks at me. I can feel it in the touch of her hand, sense it in the way she walks when she knows that I am watching. But our love for one another has in it none of the passion ordinarily present in such relationships. It has the tenderness, yes, and the affection and the concern; but it is on a much more exalted plane than the purely physical, perhaps because of our mutual knowledge that it could not otherwise endure. This, I do not know. I only know that our love exists, and that is all I need to know.

We still "converse" in the universal language of signs. My language seems to be beyond her powers to master, while hers—why, I do not know—eludes me utterly. Perhaps I do not want to learn it; perhaps I want our relationship to remain exactly the way it is. Half of loving someone lies in not knowing everything there is to know about her. Knowing everything there is to know about someone often ushers in disillusionment, just as physical intimacy often ushers in carnality. I have kissed my *geante* many times upon the cheek, and she has kissed me many times on mine; but we do not know each other's lips.

*May 22nd:*

**I**N MY ABSORPTION with Erika, I had forgotten my garden completely, and it was only when I saw her in it this morning, working the soil with a spade, which in her giantess-hands seemed toy-like, that I remembered. I went out and worked beside her, and now—thanks to our combined efforts (hers Herculean, mine on a much smaller scale)—we will be able to begin planting tomorrow. So there will be a crop after all—a small one, perhaps, but enough of a one to augment our provisions sufficiently to see us through the winter. I had hoped, also, to augment them by felling some of the small game with which the islands abound, but discovered to my dismay that I have mislaid the only firearm I brought with me—an excellent Morse magazine rifle. Well, there is nothing for it, I suppose; in any case, I do not intend to return to civilization for supplies till next spring. By then, perhaps, I will have devised some means of snaring enough small game to round out our diet, although we must go sparingly on such items as salt and sugar and flour. Yes, it is still with me—this fear of my fellowmen. I had thought it gone, but it is not. It is present in Erika too, and to a much greater degree: I can tell from the look that sometimes comes into her eyes when she gazes across the water to the mainland. But in her such an attitude is understandable. She has reason to fear my fellowmen. I have not.

*June 9th:*

**T**HE LAKE has warmed to such an extent that bathing in it is now possible, and during the last few days Erika and I have been trying our hand at swimming. She is as inept in the science as I am, and we have spent many a merry hour laughing uproariously at each other's awkward efforts, rendered the more awkward by our heavy underclothing. When we tire of our pastime, we come out of the water and lie down side by side on the beach and let the therapeutic sunlight lull us to sleep. Each time, I am reminded of the closing lines of Baudelaire's wistful reverie—

*Et parfois en été quand les soleils malsains,  
Lasse, la font s'étendre à travers la campagne,  
Dormir nonchalamment à l'ombre de ses reins,  
Comme un hameau paisible au pied d'une montagne—*

And each time I am, indeed, "a quiet village sleeping at the foot of a hill".

*June 11th:*

*Then by headlands afroth with foam,  
Came Grendel with monstrous mien,  
Eager once more his blood-thirst toslake  
In Hrothgar's antlered hall*

I CAN THINK of no better way to describe the coming of this blond and bearded giant who has invaded our island than by recourse to my own rendition of *Beowulf*; no better way to convey the horror that overwhelmed me when I ran to the window in re-sponse to Erika's scream and saw him striding up from the shore toward the mansion. The whiteness of Erika's face would have told me, if her ter-rified scream had not already done so, that here was the one whom she feared above and beyond all others, that here was the creature responsible for the naked terror I had sometimes seen come into her eyes when she gazed across the water toward the mainland. We were able to bolt all the doors and secure all the shutters before the monster got here, but it is at best but a temporary measure. In his fury, he has already torn down the verandah, and now he is hammering on the front door with his huge, hairy fists. Soon, it will give way before him. Erika cowers on the drawing-room floor, weeping, and I am at a loss as to what to do. Clearly, this blond ogre is a suitor whom she has rejected and who wishes to do her physical harm, perhaps kill her. Equally clearly, I must protect her. But how?

The pounding on the door increases in din, and the whole house trembles. Grendel's roars of rage rattle the win-dowpanes. I must act without further delay.

*Midnight:*

ALL IS LOST—all. I write this by lantern-light in Erika's cave, lying in her arms. Each time I breathe, my shattered ribs pierce my lungs, and I am constantly spitting blood. Sporadically, from the distance, come the pain-crazed screams of the blinded Grendel as he stalks, mortally wounded, about the island, searching for his nemesis.

I am his nemesis. I, Nathaniel Worth, put out this vindictive ogre's eyes.

The idea came to me when, tiring of pounding on the door, he smashed open one of the shutters and thrust his great hand through the window-pane. The afternoon had been unsea-sonably cool, and I had built a fire in the hearth to ward off the chill. I had been stirring it, intending to add more wood, when Erika's scream and the shattering of glass drew my atten-tion to the window. The poker I was using had grown so hot I could barely hold onto it; rushing to her side, I thrust its glowing end into Grendel's questing hand, and the huge fingers instinctively closed around it. The scream that burst forth from the giant's throat was compounded as much of rage as it was of pain; nevertheless, he withdrew his hand and desisted, for the moment, in his attempts to batter down the house. This provided me with the time I needed to carry out the plan that the incident had given birth to.

Directing Erika to build up the fire, I slipped out into the backyard and brought back two of the saplings I had cut and trimmed for birdhouse-poles. After sharpening their bases, I bound them together with stout wire and thrust the two pointed ends into the flames. One fiery stake had been enough for Ulysses, but my Polyphemus had two eyes.

He began pounding on the door again, more furiously than before, and I started fanning the fire, directing Erika to do likewise. The pointed ends were flaming when I carried the poles upstairs, and I inadvertently set fire to one of the hangings in the hall. I did not stop to extinguish the flames—there was no time—but plunged into the front room, which formed the base of the tower and overlooked the front entrance. Unfas-tening the shutters, I flung them wide. Grendel's eyes, almost on a level with my own, presented a per-fect target as I thrust the fiery pole-ends through the windowpane. I could not miss—nor did I.

He screamed, fell back, raising his hands to the scorched sockets where his eyes had been. As he

did so, one of his mighty forearms struck the lashed-together poles, which had been wrenched from my grasp, and sent them crashing against my chest with such force that I was catapulted across the room and crashed into the wall. After that, darkness came, and when at last it dissipated I found my-self down on the beach, cradled in Erika's arms. Grendel's screams were resounding through the night, and my beloved mansion, set ablaze by the very weapon with which I had sought to save it, was a flaming pyre brightening the sky.

Sobbing, Erika set me gently down and tried to launch Grendel's heavy boat. But he had drawn it so far up on the shore that even her great strength was unequal to the task. The screams crescendoed, and, desisting in her efforts, she picked me up again and made her way along the beach to the beginning of the cliffs and thence along their base to the cave. She saved as many things from the fire as she could, but she concentrated on those items which she believed I treasured most; hence, while I have my journal and the steel box in which I keep it, and pen and ink with which to write and a lantern to see by, we have no blankets to ward off the damp chill of the cave, and nothing what-soever to eat. I have tried as best I could to persuade her to take my small boat and row to the mainland. But she refuses to do so, and I know why. She is as aware as I am that I am dying, and she is determined not to leave my side. I also know that after I am dead, she will remain here till she dies too. I know these things because of this wondrous love that ex-ists between us—this radiant love that reduces ordinary love to the mere flickering of a candle flame, this un-selfish love that has enriched both our lives; this love that is a love which can only come into being between two outcasts—two children of the night.

*Later:*

**G**RENDEL'S screams have died away, and all is still. Somehow I know that he is dead. Perhaps the near-dead have perceptions in such matters that the living are denied. As I write this, Erika's arm creeps round my shoulders and her gentle fingers caress my face. Wearily, I lay my head upon the soft slope of her breast. Are those stars I see in the cavern-sky? They wink out, one by one. The light from the lantern dims. Good night, sweet, gentle *gêante*, good night ...

#### ADDENDUM

**T**HE FOREGOING JOURNAL came into my hands through a friend who happens to be a descendant of the cousin to whom Nathaniel Worth bequeathed his island, and who recently inherited the property himself. Previous generations of his family had always regarded the place as a white elephant—an attitude traceable to their attachment to the state where they live and to their disdain for the other forty-nine—and, aside from posting the land, they ignored it utterly. My friend, however, recognized at once the island's potential as a beach resort and journeyed posthaste to the village of W—, rented a small boat and set forth to explore his property.

He was intrigued by the ruins of Nathaniel Worth's dwelling, although they consist of but little more than a rubbish-choked cellar; but it wasn't until he came upon the cave in the cliffs and found and read the journal that his curiosity really became aroused. Knowing my interest in gigantism, he brought his find to me at once, along with three items that he had dug out of the files of the vil-lage of W—'s only newspaper. He maintains that, while these three items are the only ones that could conceivably tie in with the journal, none of them makes sense; and he also maintains that the two skeletons that he found in the cave beside the journal make even less sense.

I submit that both the items and the skeletons make excellent sense.

Let us go back to the journal for a moment. In the entry dated January 6th, 1878, Worth asks the following rhetorical questions: "Is not the re-ality of anything dependent upon the presence of its opposite? Could there be coldness if there were no warmth? We say a young lady has light hair, but could she have light hair if there were no darkness to compare it to? We call a large hill a mountain, but would the distinction exist if all hills were large? And giants—are not giants subject to relativity too? If all men had been giants since the begin-ning of time, would there have been such a word in any of the

languages?"

A very neat bit of reasoning, when you consider that the reasoner was entering into as classical an act of self-deception as any man has ever pulled on himself. At that particular moment, in fact, he was half aware of what he really was and half aware of what he really wasn't.

What *was* he then, aside from the combination snob and simpering sentimentalist his lucubrations reveal him to be?

Consider his choice of an island, the dominant tree of which is the hawthorn.

Consider the Scandinavian characteristics of Erika.

Consider his "mislaying" of his Morse magazine rifle—a rifle that, in common with all rifles, could be miniaturized only to a degree in keeping with the diameter of its bore.

Consider the fact that the rubbish-choked cellar that my friend examined was not a large one.

Consider that when a man creates a reality that pleases him and lets that reality get the upper hand, he will make every single object, animate or inanimate, that subsequently enters into that reality *conform to that reality*.

Now, consider the three news items. The first is dated April 22nd, 1878, and describes the disappearance of a Swedish immigrant girl from the house of her husband, one Lars Nilsson, whom she had recently journeyed to America to marry. The second is dated June 14th, 1878, and describes the disappearance of Lars Nilsson from the village and its environs. The third is dated November 3rd, 1903, and describes the discovery of a man's skeleton upon the nearby island of M—.

I think that we can safely assume that the skeleton mentioned in the final item was that of Lars Nilsson, and I think that we can also safely assume that one, of the two skeletons that my friend found in the cave is that of Nilsson's Swedish immigrant bride, who undoubtedly was guilty of the crime of being mentally retarded, who probably, before fleeing across the ice to the island, had never had a kind word spoken to her in all her life, and who probably had been severely beaten by her husband time and time again.

We now have one skeleton left—a diminutive one that my friend believes to be that of the woman's child. However, there is no evidence that would indicate either that she had a child, or was with child at the time of her disappearance. All of which leads up to the key question: *Whose skeleton is it?*

Well, it could hardly be that of a six-foot, two-inch man, which *seemingly* rules out its being Nathaniel Worth's.

But it could, conceivably, be that of a two-foot, six-inch dwarf.

—ROBERT F. YOUNG