

PREMIERE ISSUE

ROD SERLING'S

# THE TWILIGHT ZONE

MAGAZINE

APRIL 1981 / \$2

ALL-NEW TALES OF SUSPENSE,  
HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL  
IN THE TRADITION OF THE  
CLASSIC TELEVISION SERIES

**STEPHEN KING**

AN INTERVIEW BY  
CHARLES L. GRANT

ORIGINAL STORIES BY  
**ROBERT SHECKLEY**  
**GEORGE R. R. MARTIN**  
**FELICE PICANO**  
**RON GOULART**  
AND OTHERS

PLUS  
**'THE ROSE WALL'** BY  
JOYCE CAROL OATES

**THEODORE STURGEON**  
ON BOOKS

**GAHAN WILSON**  
ON FILMS

FULL-COLOR PREVIEW  
**JOHN CARPENTER'S**  
**NEW MOVIE,**  
**'ESCAPE FROM**  
**NEW YORK'**

SPECIAL  
**'TWILIGHT ZONE':**  
**THE FIRST TV SEASON**  
A COMPLETE  
SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE

**'TWILIGHT ZONE'**  
**CLASSIC TV SCRIPT**

**WIN \$1000 IN THE**  
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**'GRAIL'**  
A NEW STORY BY  
HARLAN ELLISON

JIM WARREN



## An invitation to re-enter the Twilight Zone

**twilight zone** . . . an ill-defined area between two distinct conditions, categories, etc., usually comprising certain features of both; an indefinite boundary: *a twilight zone between fantasy and reality.*

—*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*

"The Twilight Zone" has become part of our everyday language. The other day I saw an article in the paper that began, "When Walter F. Mondale entered the twilight zone of the vice-presidency," and that same week I saw Ronald Reagan described as "a man who, for many years, has made his living in the political twilight zone between appearance and reality." My young friend in college has a professor who refers to a "twilight zone" period of history, while a former secretary of state has spoken of "the twilight zone of international relations." *Saturday Night Live*, the rock group Manhattan Transfer, and dozens of TV commercials have all seen fit to capitalize on the expression. There's a twilight zone defense in basketball, and even a kind of twilight zone in boxing: when fighter Archie Moore was kayoed, he's said to have exclaimed, "Man, I was in the Twilight Zone!"

And yet as familiar as the phrase is, the meaning is elusive; even the dictionary admits that it's "ill-defined." But that's just part of the mystery and the magic. Even though "the Twilight Zone" resists definition, it's something all of us have experienced. Somewhere in your mind a door opens, you enter, and you're there. You know the place; you've walked through it hundreds of times—maybe in a dream, maybe in a nightmare, or maybe in that haunting half-sleep when you slow-motion your way across a not-quite-familiar landscape where reality goes tilt and commonplace recollections take on a new dimension of tension . . . or fear . . . or strangeness.

In the following pages we invite

you into this wondrous land. The ordinary laws of the universe do not apply here; no luggage is required for the trip. All you need bring is your imagination.

Don't look for a space opera with super-heroes, and don't expect a spook show with rattling skeletons. The stories you're about to read deal with all aspects of the *human* condition, past, present, and future, and are as varied as man's dreams and fears. They may be fanciful, nostalgic, satirical, frightening, or merely bizarre—but all show a concern for taste and adult sensibilities.

My husband, Rod Serling, set high standards for the *Twilight Zone* television series, and I know that he'd have been pleased to see the show's tradition carried on by this magazine.

In this issue you'll meet a wisecracking cat, an incompetent demonologist, a man who escapes into his past and a man whose past pursues him, a writer whose identity is stolen and a child whose identity is lost, a Vietnam vet who spends a lifetime looking for True Love, and an artist who unleashes the ultimate darkness.

This, then, is your invitation to re-enter the Twilight Zone. We hope you'll enjoy the stories, as we have, and that their strange beauty, fanciful humor, chilling terror, and provocative ideas will help sustain you in this less-than-perfect world that we all must inhabit.

*Carol Serling*  
Associate Publisher



# ROD SERLING'S THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

Cover art by Jim Warren

April 1981

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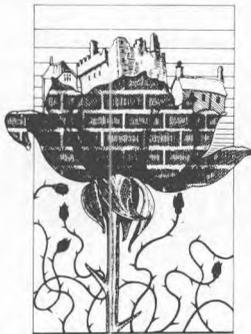
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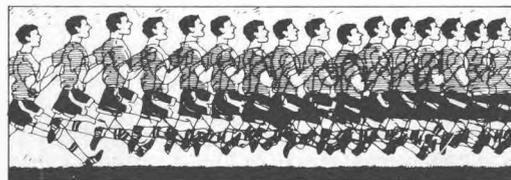
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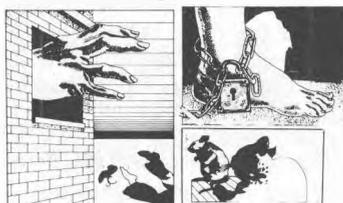
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# Your hosts for this issue . . .



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Ellison

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Picano

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Goulart

Campbell

Sullivan

Shapiro

Zicree

Sturgeon

Wilson

Appropriately, we inaugurate our monthly TZ Interview with **STEPHEN KING**—not only America's preeminent horror writer but, book for book, one of the half-dozen most popular writers in the world today. To interview him, we made an equally logical choice—**CHARLES L. GRANT**, who, as both writer (with over a dozen sf and fantasy novels to his credit) and editor (of Doubleday's *Shadows* series), is in touch with all aspects of the fantasy scene. *The Nestling*, his major horror novel, is due next year. **HARLAN ELLISON** is, by reputation, totally unpredictable. He's written tales as savage as "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream" and as tender as "Jeffty Is Five" (both Hugo winners); he's an outspoken social critic and groundbreaking editor of the *Dangerous Visions* books. Yet in one sense he's predictable enough, for he brings to all his work a ferocious intelligence, irreverent wit, and the courage—as in "Grail"—to tackle big questions. **ROBERT SHECKLEY**, responsible for such celebrated collections as *Untouched by Human Hands* and *Citizen in Space*, serves today as fiction editor of *Omni*, but we expect to see a good deal more of him in TZ. For now, there's the black humor of his "Three Cautionary Tales." **FELICE PICANO** offers a cautionary tale of his own in the manner of Hawthorne, whose mortals strive mightily for divine perfection—often with tragic results. Picano, a best-selling novelist of modern-day suspense (*Eyes*, *The Mesmerist*, *The Lure*), here recreates an elegant 19th-century sensibility. **GEORGE R. R. MARTIN** spins a brilliant horror tale of our own day about that seemingly gentlest of figures, the flower child—yet this one embodies the dark side of the Sixties. Martin, who won two Hugos last fall, is the author of *Fevre Dream*, an upcoming horror novel from Pocket Books. **JOYCE CAROL OATES**, one of America's most gifted writers, has turned her hand to poetry, literary criticism, and fiction, including the highly acclaimed novel *Bellefleur*. In "The Rose Wall" she contributes a haunting childhood memoir that seems at once a story as old as Eden and an allegory of the penalty we all must pay for growing up. **RON GOULART**, even more prolific, has more than 100 books behind him: fantasy, sf, and mystery, as well as studies of comics, pulps, and hard-boiled detectives. He's also—as "Groucho" proves—laughing-out-loud funny. **RAMSEY CAMPBELL** makes his home in Liverpool and writes, quite simply, the most terrifying horror tales of anyone now alive. Latest novel: *The Parasite*, from Macmillan. **THOMAS SULLIVAN** has specialized in sf, but his forthcoming *Case White* is a novel of international suspense. His "Death Runner" illustrates the danger of letting your imagination run away with you—especially if it's wearing track shoes. **FRED SHAPIRO** is a *New Yorker* staff writer who's never before published fiction and who's never watched *The Twilight Zone*; yet in "Author's Query," written as an exercise in "what if," he's come up with a tale that's squarely in the *Twilight Zone* tradition. **MARC SCOTT ZICREE**, on the other hand, knows the Zone inside and out; his forthcoming book, *The Making of The Twilight Zone*, will be the definitive work on the subject. Zicree, who's written synopses for *The Film Buff's Bible* and cartoon scripts for television, will provide TZ's readers with an ongoing guide to the *Twilight Zone* series. As for our two regular reviewers, **THEODORE STURGEON** and **GAHAN WILSON**—master fantasist and celebrated cartoonist—more on them next issue.

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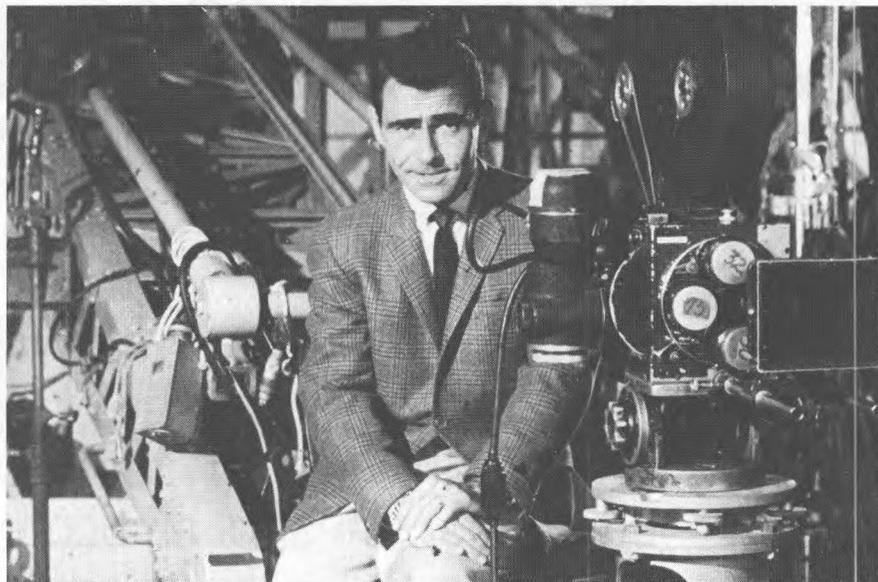
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# Rod Serling

## FIRST CITIZEN OF THE TWILIGHT ZONE

"You unlock this door with the key of imagination. Beyond it is another dimension: a dimension of sound ... a dimension of sight ... a dimension of mind. You're moving into a land of both shadow and substance, of things and ideas. You've just crossed over into—The Twilight Zone."

—opening from *The Twilight Zone's* final season

When Rod Serling died on June 28, 1975, he was just fifty years old, yet he had crowded into his lifetime enough accomplishments for a dozen talented men. He left behind him a unique legacy—scores of brilliant, socially responsible television dramas, a voice and style still widely imitated, and a gallery of weird and wonderful characters who've become a part of American folklore: the tired middle-aged executive who escapes his high-pressure existence for the small-town world of his childhood ... the convict condemned to years of isolation on a distant planet, whose only companion is a robot ... the soldier who can recognize when one of his comrades is about to die in battle ... the compulsive talker who has his vocal cords removed in order to win a bet that he won't speak for a year ... the beautiful woman scorned as hideous by a world of monsters ... the

time-traveler from our own day who tries to prevent Abe Lincoln's assassination ... the man who mistreats machines until, one day, they rebel ... the distraught shopper who discovers she's really a mannikin ... the sidewalk pitchman who cons Death out of a victim ... the drunken department-store Santa Claus who becomes a real Santa at Christmas ... and literally hundreds more.

He also left a phrase that, to Americans in all walks of life, has become synonymous with the realm of Imagination—"The Twilight Zone."

From 1959 through 1964, in more than 150 memorable episodes, Rod Serling was our guide through that Fifth Dimension where reality merges into dream. He expanded our universe.

Serling's imagination transformed his childhood memories into the idealized America of "Walking Distance," "A Stop at Willoughby," and other stories. His daughter Anne remembers him as, "in many ways, a little boy. He had that rare quality of being able to hold on to the things one usually leaves behind. There was a soft side to him, a gentle intensity. He kept a box full of old letters from childhood friends, his parents, and his brother, which he'd look through in nostalgic moods. I don't think he was ever able to let go completely.

This is evident in many of his stories which deal with the theme of 'going back.'"

In his forthcoming book *The Making of The Twilight Zone*, Marc Scott Zicree recounts those early years:

Rodman Edward Serling was born in Syracuse, New York, on December 25, 1924. ("I was a Christmas present that was delivered unwrapped," he later said.) Shortly thereafter, Rod and his family—his brother Bob, seven years his senior, and his parents, Samuel Lawrence Serling and Esther Cooper Serling—moved to Binghamton, a small city in upstate New York where, throughout his childhood, his imagination and creativity were allowed to flourish.

"Rod was about the greatest extrovert you could ever hope for," says Bob Serling, himself a bestselling author (*The President's Plane Is Missing, Wings*). "He was a good-looking kid and he knew it. Very popular, very articulate, very outspoken. He had no arrogance—it was confidence. There was a hell of a difference.

"We were fairly close as kids in our early childhood, and we played together a hell of a lot, despite the seven-year difference. The two of us used to read *Amazing Stories*, *Astounding Stories*, *Weird Tales*—all of the pulps. If we saw

a movie together, we'd come home and act it out, just for the two of us. Our bikes became airplanes with machine guns on them. We were always playing cowboys."

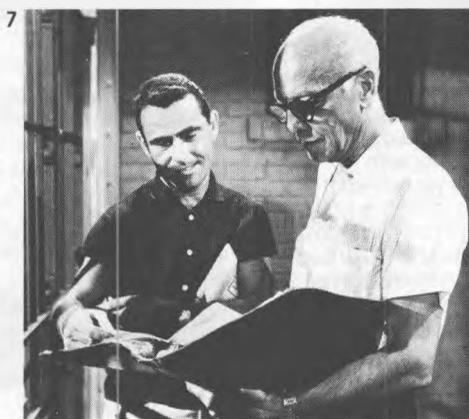
Rod was not bookish by any means: he was outgoing, enthusiastic, loved to be center stage, and changed little as he entered his teens. "He was that way all through school, that I can remember," Bob explains. "A class leader, always into dramatics. He'd try out for anything. There was some kind of compulsion in him to do something that nobody else—the ordinary kid—wouldn't do. And this included joining the para-

troops in World War II. He was a damn fool to do it."

The day he graduated high school, Rod enlisted in the U.S. Army 11th Airborne Division. During basic training, he took up boxing for extra pay and privileges. Fighting in the catchweight (now flyweight) division, he enjoyed a seventeen-bout winning streak. In the eighteenth fight a professional boxer was brought in who broke his nose in two places, sent him to defeat in the third round, and thoroughly convinced him to give up boxing. Earlier, a regimental newspaper had praised his ability, noting that he had "the ring in his

blood." Later Serling was to ruefully recall that, in truth, "I'd left a helluva lot of my blood in several rings!"

Following basic training, he was sent to the Pacific as part of an assault and demolitions team. In 1945, while Rod was fighting in the Philippines, his father died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-two. "We notified Rod through the American Red Cross," recalls Bob, who had just gotten out of the army. "He asked for an emergency leave and was refused." When Rod was finally able to return to Binghamton, it was to a home lacking forever the security and stability he had known as a child.



(1) Rod in 1947, a student at Antioch College. (2) In 1949, now a married man with a writing career under way, he enjoys the amenities of trailer life. (3) His screenplay for *The Rack* (1956) is based on his 1955 U.S. *Steel Hour* teleplay. (4) By 1959, with three Emmys behind him, he is ready to launch *The Twilight Zone*. (5) That same year, Rod—always a storyteller—reads to daughters Anne, 4, and Jodi, 7, in their Pacific Palisades home; and (6) with wife Carol. (7) Rod confers with director Mitchell Leisen on the set of *The Twilight Zone*'s sixth episode, "Escape Clause."

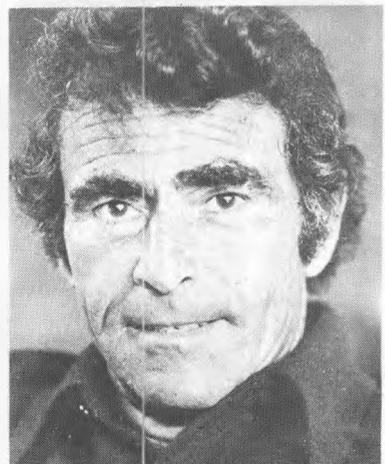
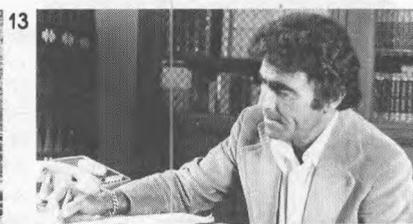
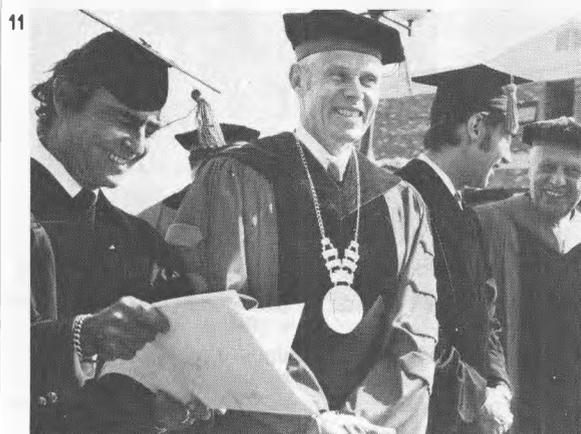
Without World War II, there is no way of knowing whether or not Serling would have become a writer, but the war broadened his experience and placed an emotional pressure on him that demanded catharsis. "I had been injured with the paratroopers"—a severe shrapnel wound in the wrist and knee requiring hospitalization—"and I was bitter about everything and at loose ends when I got out of the service. I think I turned to writing to get it off my chest."

Upon his discharge from the army in 1946, Rod enrolled at Antioch College

in Yellow Springs, Ohio, on the G.I. Bill. "I really didn't know what the hell I wanted to do with my life. . . I majored in physical ed that first year because I was interested in working with kids."

But physical education couldn't fill the pressing need he had for self-expression. He soon changed his major to language and literature and began looking for a creative outlet. Radio seemed as suitable a medium as any, so he became manager of the Antioch Broadcasting System's radio workshop and wrote, directed, and acted in weekly full-scale radio productions which were

broadcast over WJEM, Springfield. During the 1948-49 school year the entire output of the workshop was written by Serling, and, with the exception of one adaptation, all the scripts were entirely original. Later he would call this work "pretty bad stuff," but for the time being it was providing him with invaluable training and discipline. (Of his early writing, Serling said: "Style is something you develop by copying the style of someone who writes well. For a while you're a cheap imitation. I was a Hemingway imitator. Everything I wrote began, 'It was hot.' ")



(8) When *The Twilight Zone* leaves the air in 1964, the crew gives a lavish farewell party. (9) Rod marks his fortieth birthday with a parachute jump, recalling his World War II paratroop experience. (10) He makes a point during a 1971 TV writing seminar at Ithaca College, which (11) awards him a Doctorate of Letters—his third honorary degree—in 1972. Rod is the featured commencement speaker. (12) With daughter Anne, one year later, on vacation in upstate New York. (13) In 1975, at work on a screenplay in the study of his Palsades home. (14) Rod Serling at fifty—a final portrait.

In the fall of 1946, Rod met Carolyn Louise Kramer; a strikingly attractive, articulate, no-nonsense young lady of seventeen who was majoring in education and psychology. Serling was twenty-one. Says Carol of their first meeting, "He struck me as being bright, with a wonderful sense of humor. And there was something about him that fascinated me. I had never met anyone who was as self-assured before."

Here Carol Serling herself picks up the story:

The two of them, both still in college, were married in the summer of 1948. There was little money at first; they lived in the most primitive of campus housing—a war surplus trailer with no running water. In 1949, however, their luck changed: a script that Rod had sent to a contest sponsored by the *Dr. Christian* radio show took second prize, winning him five hundred dollars and a trip for them both to New York. "Going from that trailer to the Savoy Plaza, where they put up the winners, was like a dream," Mrs. Serling recalls. "The college newspaper ran a story about it with a headline that said, 'Serling Goes to Christian Reward.' In New York we also met another of the prizewinners, Earl Hamner, who later worked with Rod on *The Twilight Zone*—before going on to create *The Waltons*."

"I think this experience was one of the reasons Rod was able to relate so well to the college kids he taught; he knew how important it is to get that first break."

It took hard work, too. That initial break was followed by dozens of rejection slips; in fact, the Serlings papered their bathroom wall with them. When Rod eventually made his first professional sale, bringing in \$150, he was so proud that he kept the check for three months before cashing it, even though they needed the money.

"It's an incredible event," he said of a writer's first sale, speaking in a *Writer's Yearbook* interview. "For the very first time in your life something written has value—and *proven* value, because somebody has given you money for the words that you've written. And that's terribly important. It's a tremendous boon to the ego, to your sense of self-reliance, to your feeling about your own talent."

Graduating from Antioch in 1950, Rod went to work for a Cincinnati radio station, and later for a TV station there. Meanwhile, on his own time, he was turning out more scripts. By 1952, when he was twenty-eight years old, he was able to quit his job and support himself and his family—which soon included two daughters, Jodi and Anne—solely from free-lance writing. In 1954 they moved to Westport, Connecticut, in order to be closer to the television industry, for he was now selling to virtually every dramatic show on the air: *Lux Video Theatre*, *Armstrong Circle Theatre*, *Studio One*, and *Ford Theatre*. It was *Kraft Television Theatre's* broadcast of *Patterns*, however, on January 12, 1955, that first brought him to national attention. A harrowing glimpse of power struggles in the corporate boardroom, *Patterns* went on to become the first drama in the history of television ever to be repeated by popular demand—and won for Rod the first of six Emmy Awards for Best Dramatic Writing.

Success led on to success. Rod had twenty dramas televised in 1955 alone, including *The Rack* on the *U.S. Steel Hour*, and the following year his Emmy-Award-winning *Requiem for a Heavyweight* further established his reputation. Aired on *Playhouse 90*, it was the first original ninety-minute drama ever written expressly for TV. *The Comedian* (also an Emmy-winner) followed in 1957, *The Time Element* (an hour-long forerunner of *The Twilight Zone*) in 1958, and *The Rank and File* in 1959—along with many others.

"My father was only thirty-one years old when he received the Emmy for *Patterns*," says Anne Serling, "and *Requiem* was just a year later. Yet success never tarnished him. He was a compassionate man who truly gave a damn and who hated prejudice and inequality. His stories offered more than entertainment. They often forced you to examine the uglier, darker side of life. They made you sit up and take note."

When writing about social themes, Rod didn't believe in pulling his punches. *Time* hailed him as "a man who has served TV with some of the most tightly constructed, trenchant lines it has ever spoken." But not everyone was so happy. "Initially the creative people had had more con-

trol, but as television became big business the reins were taken from their hands," notes Mrs. Serling. "Some of Rod's scripts were totally emasculated because of pressure from sponsors or the networks themselves."

It was his anger and frustration at censorship, she says, that drove him, quite literally, into *The Twilight Zone*. "As he told someone in an interview, 'Things which couldn't be said by a Republican or Democrat could be said by a Martian,' and Rod felt that by doing a show set in outer space or in some totally imaginary place he could do what he wanted."

Indeed, as *The Twilight Zone's* creator—and because of the show's metaphorical nature—Rod enjoyed an unusual degree of artistic control. To him fell the responsibility of selling the series to a somewhat skeptical television industry (see "America Enters the Twilight Zone," page 86); it was he who appeared as its host and who wrote the bulk of its episodes. The latter task was a formidable one, but writing had always come easily to him; as a colleague put it, "Where his peers might have anguished over the creative process, Rod woke up each day saying, 'Let me tell you a story.' That was his badge, his trust, his passkey into our lives."

*The Twilight Zone* went off the air in 1964, the year that *Seven Days in May*, with a Serling screenplay, was released. More screenplays followed, among them *The Doomsday Flight* (1967) and *Planet of the Apes* (1968)—with co-author Michael Wilson. Later, TV movies occupied his time: *A Storm in Summer*, aired on *Hallmark Hall of Fame*, won an Emmy in 1969; *Night Gallery* (1970) became a series one year later, and *The Man* appeared in 1972.

His energies were not limited to entertainment; the final decade of his life was also devoted to education, specifically to the encouragement of young writers. His lecture tours took him to dozens of campuses each year, and from 1968 to 1975 he taught seminars in writing at Ithaca College in New York.

In his scripts, in his classes, in his influence over a growing new medium—and by the example of his own life—Rod Serling inspired others to live up to what's best in themselves.

This, too, was his legacy. ☐

# Screen

by Gahan Wilson

## Eraserhead

(Libra)

Written and directed  
by David Lynch

## The Elephant Man

(Paramount)

Directed by  
David Lynch;  
Screenplay by  
Christopher DeVore, Eric Bergren,  
and David Lynch

## The Awakening

(Orion)

Directed by  
Mike Newell;  
Screenplay by  
Allan Scott, Chris Bryant, and  
Clive Exton

## Motel Hell

(United Artists)

Directed by  
Kevin Connor;  
Screenplay by  
Robert Jaffe and Steven Charles Jaffe

Monsters are real, of course. Very real. Sometimes almost too real to bear. If they weren't, cavemen wouldn't have fretted endlessly about them over their dimming fires, ancient Egyptians wouldn't have left us precise hieroglyphic instructions on how to placate them in the afterlife, and producers of films about them wouldn't own nearly as many swimming pools as they do.

The films made about them have varied, to put it mildly, ranging from some of the most brilliantly innovative work ever done (for monsters have traditionally produced deep resonances in the creative psyche) to disgusting trash (for monsters, when the moon is full and the sales cycle right, can sell the most godawful hackwork a greedy cynic can spew out). The people associated with the making of these films have been equally varied,

including actual thugs, numbering a vast legion of forgettable mediocrities, and happily counting a small group of dedicated artists who have made all the rest worth the bother.

David Lynch is, I think, one of that last group. He is a sincere and serious craftsman, he is lucky enough to be talented, and he is obsessed by monsters.

For some years now, the movie which made his reputation, *Eraserhead*, has been skulking about the art-movie circuit, showing only at special midnight presentations and quietly becoming an underground legend.

The first time I saw it was in a posh theater directly across the street from Bloomingdale's—you're not going to get *me* into an art movie emporium at midnight!—where it had been allowed to show itself for one week in broad daylight because the following attraction booked was Lynch's first aboveground movie, *The Elephant Man* (more on that later), and either Lynch or his manager is one tough cookie, for if ever I saw a deal which had been pushed through over frantic protest, this was it.

Outside they'd put a blow-up of the entire review from *Time* magazine, so that you could see a respectable, grown-up magazine had actually *liked* it, and they'd designed a nice poster to let you know it was *artistic*. But once inside the lobby, the whole brave sham fell apart. I hadn't got my wallet halfway out of my pocket before the hennaed lady at the ticket counter stopped me with a disapproving glare.

"You know what kind of a movie this is, mister?" she asked me.

I informed her I understood that it was in bad taste.

"Hm," she said. She hadn't liked my little joke. "I just want to make sure you realize before you buy a ticket."

I put myself beyond the pale by making the purchase. Walking off, I heard her start the whole unique routine with the following customer and wondered what kind of a movie it might be.

Well, lady, it's a very *good* movie. Flawed, maybe—bits of it flake off here and there, the control sometimes slips, and the budget, provided mostly by a grant from the American Film Institute, forced limited selection in the talent hired before and behind the camera—but it's good.

Essentially it's a comedy done by a conscientious student and a passionate lover of the movies. Its format, its whole development, is unwaveringly based on the old silents, with a touch of early Marx Brothers and W. C. Fields. It is shot in black and white, but that's just for starters. It has the same flat lighting, the same brash cutting, and its music is played far off and faintly on a wheezing movie-palace organ. Henry, its doomed hero, played with jumpy stoicism by John Nance, wears a fright wig owing everything to Stan Laurel's hair, and his rabbit shuffle, constant clothes-adjustments, and pale despair have all been tenderly borrowed from the past. We have seen his like destroyed many times before.

The only difference between this film and the ones it's based on is a matter of degree, of upping the *severity* just enough to turn the pratfall into a bloody splatter, the grotesque misadventure into a fatal accident, the howling baby of Punch and Judy into a horrendous mutant. *Eraserhead* never once violates the old-timey rules; it follows them scrupulously over the edge.

*The Elephant Man* is also very much a continuation of hallowed origins: Karloff as *Frankenstein's* horror, trying to make friends, *King Kong*, a tender lover, barred forever from his lady on account of extreme ugliness.

This movie, too, is shot in black and white—a deliberate choice this time, for sure; no tight budgets here. Hitchcock reverted to black and white for *Psycho*, explaining that his audiences wouldn't be able to take all that blood in Technicolor, but the way he shot Perkins—thin and angular, those weird, wide shoulders—he was making Karloff's monster walk again, even if only in spirit, and it wouldn't

have worked in color. David Lynch does the same, and also conjures up *Freaks* and the Lugosi *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, among others. You really have to be a horror movie buff, you have to have seen all those lovely old shockers, to push all the buttons Lynch does.

The makeup by Christopher Tucker is truly extraordinary, and John Hurt's acting in it—and with it—can't be faulted. We see the horrid revelation of it only by degrees, for again everything is handled in the

classic fashion. When Lynch strips the Elephant Man to the waist and slowly turns him round in black and white, yet another button is pushed: Charles Laughton's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

One fascinating difference between the two films is their divergence in respect to death. In *Eraserhead* it is regarded most unsympathetically, the last, unfunniest joke the cosmos plays on man. It takes the form of a dreadfully insipid lady entertainer who sings us dismal little songs about how nice heaven will be as

she dances awkwardly about, killing embryos on the sly. In *The Elephant Man*, however, death is flatly denied. "Nothing dies," the soundtrack assures us, and we see the stars zipping by us, a little too reminiscently of the interstellar space-drive effect of *Star Wars*.

Both attitudes are feasible extensions of their particular movies. In *Eraserhead* every aspect of life—certainly the way it reproduces itself among the mammals—is viewed as totally disgusting. The beaten hero is



Courtesy/Libra Films



Courtesy/Libra Films



Courtesy/Libra Films

"Bits of it flake off here and there . . ."

Young filmmaker David Lynch has described his surreal *Eraserhead* as a "dream of dark and troubling things," but reportedly the movie's real inspiration was the five years Lynch spent at art school in Philadelphia, a city he calls "decaying, degenerate, one of the sickest places in the world."

"... A fright wig owing everything to Stan Laurel's hair."

John Nance plays Henry Spencer, *Eraserhead*'s oddly somnolent hero. He lives in a seedy rooming house where, when not lost in reveries of death and transformation, he spends his time playing nursemaid to a monstrous little baby—his own, presumably—that resembles a cross between a sheep fetus and a vulture.

"Death is the last, unfunniest joke the cosmos plays on man."

Henry fantasizes his own decapitation, but that's just the beginning: a small boy later sells his head to a pencil factory where, after undergoing suitable alterations, it's turned into rubber erasers.



Courtesy Orion Pictures

"Absolutely terrific stuff, those props. . ."

Charlton Heston plays archeologist Matthew Corbeck in *The Awakening*, which pits him against the spirit of a long-dead Egyptian queen so evil she is known to history only as "the Unnamed." Here, as the "stranger from under Northern skies" foretold in legend, he enacts an ancient ritual designed to bring the murderous monarch back to life—believing that in doing so he'll be insuring the safety of his daughter. Little does he know. . .

only too glad to have it burnt out of him with a blinding light, once and for all. Life is also disgusting in *The Elephant Man*. Extreme ugliness and poverty and cruelty abound. But in this film, life does not defeat its heroes (and there are a number of them in *The Elephant Man*); it loses. And so, logically following, does death,

*The Awakening* is based on Bram Stoker's *Jewel of the Seven Stars*, and doesn't really work as a movie. It makes us wonder how the author succeeded so splendidly with *Dracula*

and failed so consistently thereafter. No doubt the movie's meant to be the first of a series, for it stars Charlton Heston (you can't beat Charlton Heston for kicking off a series), and God knows everything is very "What next?" at its end. Lots of mean, double-punch deaths in the *Omen* tradition, and some of the best Egyptian tomb sets and props I think I've ever seen. Absolutely terrific stuff, those props, and if the rest of the movie had been up to them it would have been a pip.

*Motel Hell* tries very hard to be a

hilarious spoof or a whole bunch of horror movies, but the humor is oddly timid and unsure, and keeps sinking out of sight into various pools of blood. One example: the villains plant their victims in a kind of a garden with only their heads above ground, and then force-feed them with an arrangement of tubes and funnels, intending to sell them for meat. I confidently expected that, when the victims broke loose, we'd see that they'd all gotten hilariously fattened up. But such was not the case; for some reason, the joke was abandoned before its punch line. 17

"We see the horrid revelation of it only by degrees...."

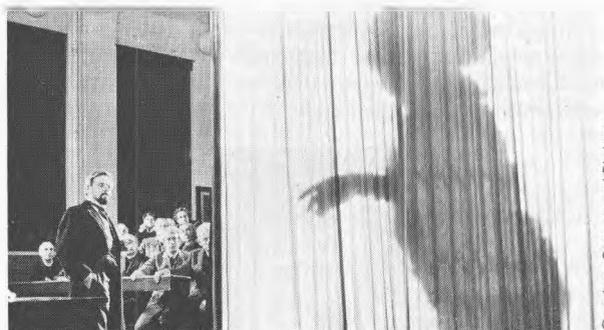
Anthony Hopkins, as the celebrated English surgeon Frederick Treves, attempts to interview a masked and silent John Merrick (played by John Hurt) in David Lynch's *The Elephant Man*. Hopkins was also a doctor in the thriller *Audrey Rose*, and played the demented ventriloquist in *Magic*; Hurt has been seen on British TV, sans mask and grotesque makeup, as Quentin Crisp, Raskolnikov, and Caligula, and as the luckless parasite-host in the 1979 hit *Alien*.

"When Lynch strips the Elephant Man to the waist...."

Treves shows off his discovery to his fellow doctors. The real-life John Merrick, a victim of the condition known as neurofibromatosis, was so appallingly deformed that he could barely speak, and was unable to sleep lying down lest he suffocate from the weight of his massive head. After being exhibited throughout England and the Continent as a sideshow freak, he was befriended by the kindly Dr. Treves (later Queen Victoria's private surgeon) and spent his few remaining years as a resident of London Hospital, Whitechapel, dying in 1890 at the age of twenty-five.

"Extreme ugliness and poverty and cruelty abound."

Freddie Jones plays Bytes, the sleazy entrepreneur who exploits Merrick's deformity. The Mel Brooks production takes many liberties with Merrick's story, turning Bytes into an inhumanly brutal villain out of Victorian melodrama. Jones himself is no stranger to such roles, having played the terrorist in *Juggernaut*; he's also been seen as Dr. Frankenstein in a 1974 Ringo Starr production of *Son of Dracula*, and as Pompey in the 1973 *Antony and Cleopatra* starring and directed by Charlton Heston.



Courtesy Paramount Pictures



Courtesy Paramount Pictures



Courtesy Paramount Pictures



Courtesy United Artists

"... a kind of garden with only their heads above the ground." Farmer Vincent (Rory Calhoun) and his sister Ida (Nancy Parsons) survey their handiwork in *Motel Hell*, where rows of human beings, vocal cords severed, are fattened to be sold as meat. The picture—which goes the cannibalistic *Sweeney Todd* one better—was released, somewhat optimistically, as a comedy.

# Books

by Theodore Sturgeon

"The critics," said Benjamin Disraeli, "are the men who have failed in literature and art."

Fortunately, I have never called myself a critic. To me, the term has much altitude; it bespeaks a person who has a respectable track record of his own, who has done real work in researching the techniques and the art of criticism, of evaluation, of wide-spectrum judgment. An Edmund Wilson, a George Bernard Shaw, a Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Although it is certainly true of some, I would apply Disraeli's savage dictum only to those self-termed "critics" who, having little stature of their own, use their privilege as a fortification while they shoot at those more talented than they. These are the ones who write the bloodiest reviews. Nothing pleases the jackal more than to nip a lion—nor a hyena more than to feed on one, should he find him sick, dying, or dead.

Perhaps it is a misunderstanding of the word "criticism" which tempts small minds to snarl at their betters, conceiving its meaning as adverse, even hostile; perhaps this is really what they think they are supposed to do. If so, I suggest a good dictionary. Criticism need not be vandalism.

It has been said quite often that my own reviews are benign and even kindly. The reason for this is that I very seldom review books I don't like. It's as simple as that. There is, of course, one difficulty: it might lead to the supposition that if I don't review it, I don't like it. This is unfair. I don't read everything because I simply can't. The only time you'll see me drag out the heavy artillery is when I catch a really good writer writing badly; and even then, I'm more likely to write to the author—or occasionally, in private, to his editor—than to organize a public hanging.

I shall share with you what I like and try to say why, and to be as sensitive as I can to what *you* may like if our tastes differ. And that's a promise. If I do anything you don't



like, tell me. I'll listen. I may not obey, but I assure you, I'll listen.

I have clung to fantasy and science fiction for well over forty years because I love it; because, outside of poetry, there is no other literature so free in concept and experiment. I have done this contrary to the frequent



advice of my creditors and my loved ones, who have felt I might have done much better elsewhere. Fantasy derives from a deep-seated sense of wonder and belief in magic. As a matter of fact, as the late Fletcher Pratt once remarked, *all* fiction is fantasy. But you and I know what we mean by the fantasy we'll be seeing here.

My definition of science fiction goes back to etymology and the Latin *scientia*, which means simply "knowledge." Science fiction, then, is "knowledge fiction," and, as I see it, that means knowledge of the hard sciences and their extrapolations and hypotheses—but also the knowledge of the brain, the mind, and the heart. Therefore I draw no strict taxonomic lines between hardcore and soft, new wave and old, nuts-and-bolts and what-have-you; if it's "knowledge fiction," I'll report on it. In just the same way, I draw no lines between hardcover and paperback, large publishers and small; I have a great love of nonfiction as well. A book is a book and may speak for itself, no matter where it comes from.

Of course, my emphasis will be on new books; but I have felt for a long time that to disqualify a book from a review just because the ink is no longer wet is a disservice to everyone concerned. So I reserve the right, from time to time, to tell you about some treasure that I happen to remember from the past, whether that past is weeks or years. I'll try not to do this with books which are unavailable to you, but I can't always keep that promise; sometimes this is a way to gig a publisher into reissuing some almost-forgotten masterpiece. It may be, too, that I have simply overlooked something I'll really want you to see, and will make amends this way. Nobody can read everything that's being published in this field nowadays, and oversights happen quite easily.

One thing I mean to give you as a firm and devout promise. The crafting of a piece of fiction is often a meticulous, most careful effort by the author to place conflict and turns of

plot in the exact place they should be, and to keep the astonishment of a surprise ending where it belongs for the reader's benefit. Time and again I have seen the suspense of a well-structured story utterly destroyed by an insensitive, purblind reviewer or so-called "critic" who blurts out all the



book's nurtured secrets. The story is told of a London theater which was showing a murder mystery, and where it was customary to tip the usher after he showed the playgoer to his seat. A customer one night failed to come up with the sixpence, whereupon the usher leaned close and whispered: "The butler did it!"

Well, there are reviewers who do the same thing, and without involving sixpence. I think it derives from the imprinting by some high-school or freshman comp. instructor who demands a complete synopsis to prove that the student has read the book all the way through. I faithfully assure you that I shall never do this to any book or any author.

One final warning: Every sentence I write herein and hereafter is prefaced with the understood phrase "in my opinion." I have no short line to Basic Truth. Got it?

I have been allowed by your editors to give certain books "one-liners"—very brief acknowledgments or comments. With this privilege I am able to cover a lot more titles when it seems necessary, or when a longer review has taken up most of the column. This month, because some

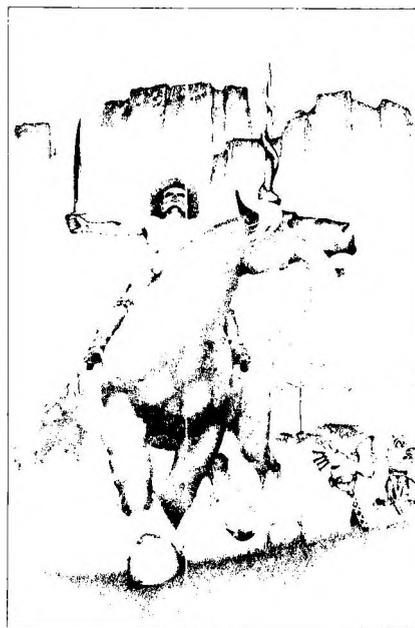
words of introduction and greeting seemed in order, I find myself with a cascade, a waterfall of books, and my space is running out. So what follows will have to be little more than a listing, with maybe a word here and there; if any items demand further treatment, you'll have it in the next issue.

Swords and sorcery have never been my top favorites because the hero always wins, at least by the end of the book. But if you like it, you'll be pleased by the re-release of the Eric Van Lustbader trilogy from Berkley/Putnam at \$2.50 a throw: *The Sunset Warrior*, *Shallows of Night*, and a March schedule for *Dai-San*. Michel Parry gives us an interesting study of the form with an anthology of three oldies (Moore, Kuttner, Clark Ashton Smith) and four more recent ones, from Ramsey Campbell to Robert E. Howard: *Savage Heroes* (Taplinger, \$9.95). Parke Godwin's *Firelord* (Doubleday, \$12.95) is yet another retelling of the Arthurian legend, better than most because he's done a lot of homework, but less fun than T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, the novel on which *Camelot* was based. Joy Chant's *The Grey Mane of Morning*, from Bantam (\$7.95), is a big, beautiful paperback with fine illustrations by Martin White.

In fantasy, Ardath Mayhar has a nice one in the sequel to *How the Gods Wove in Kyranion*, entitled *The Seekers of Shar-Nuhn* (Doubleday, \$8.95). An authentic poet, Steven Bauer, gives us a real find in *Satyrday* (Berkley/Putnam, \$11.95; illus by Ron Miller). *The Shapes of Midnight*, by Joseph Payne Brennan, has an intro by Stephen King (Berkley, \$2.25). A blood-curdler. Likewise *The Dark*, by James Herbert (NAL, \$2.95). A truly fine anthology of new stories is *Edges*, compiled by Virginia Kidd and Ursula Le Guin, who know what they're doing (Pocket Books, \$2.50).

For you scholarly types, the tireless team of Martin H. Greenberg and Joseph D. Olander have produced two new, careful critical studies, *Ray Bradbury and Ursula K. Le Guin* (Taplinger, each \$12.95 in hardback, \$5.95 in paper). They're part of a series on *Writers of the 21st Century*. And S. T. Joshi, who exhibits the most obsessive quest since Galahad sought the Holy Grail, has written/edited

*H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (Ohio University Press, \$15.00), containing nearly two dozen essays on the misty Arkhamite, and he is planning an edition of HPL's complete works.



Science fiction's doing just fine. Kit Reed has *Magic Time* (Berkley/Putnam, \$10.95 hard and \$2.25 paper); oddly, Ed Naha's *The Paradise Plot* (Bantam, \$2.25) takes off from roughly the same context, a paradise/pleasure-dome in the future, with ominous undertones. Both good; Reed writes better. There's a new slam-banger from Jerry Pournelle, *King David's Spaceship* (Simon & Schuster, \$11.95), and one from Gene Wolfe, *The Claw of the Conciliator* (Simon & Schuster, \$11.95). I'll have something to say about them next time. Brian Aldiss emerges with *An Island Called Moreau* (Simon & Schuster, \$10.95). There's also a new John Varley, the sequel to *Titan*, called *Wizard* (Berkley/Putnam, \$12.95), and what Phil Farmer claims is the very last of his *Riverworld* series (hah!), *The Magic Labyrinth* (Berkley/Putnam, \$11.95).

Absolute Best Buy: *The Arbor House Treasury of Modern Science Fiction*, compiled by Robert Silverberg and Martin H. Greenberg (Arbor House/Priam, \$9.95)—754 pages, some forty stories, all of them magnificent.

Out of time, out of space, out of breath. 17

# Stephen King:

## “I LIKE TO GO FOR THE JUGULAR.”

T Z I N T E R V I E W

**TZ Interviewer Charles L. Grant** reports:

*Stephen King's "overnight" success was, of course—as in the case of so many other writers—anything but overnight. Preceding it were years of collecting rejection slips, of publishing short stories in obscure or generally unnoticed magazines while he supported himself by teaching high school, followed by the publication of his first novel, Carrie (1974), to less than overwhelming buyer reaction. There followed in quick succession Salem's Lot (1975), The Shining (1977), and The Stand (1978).*

*It was a combination of the film version of Carrie and the incredible paperback sales of Salem's Lot which finally brought King to the attention of a readership that extends far beyond the dark fantasy genre. 1979's The Dead Zone spent more than six months on the New York Times bestseller lists, and his latest novel, Firestarter, has at this writing just completed its third month in that same position. All told, over twenty-five million copies of his books have been sold worldwide in hard- and softcover, two have already been made into feature films (with at least two more on the way), and one, Salem's Lot, became a four-hour TV production. In 1980 King was named People magazine's Writer of the Year and received a special World Fantasy Award as the writer who had done most for the field.*

*King is thirty-three, married to fellow Maine native Tabitha Spruce King (whose first novel, Small World, is about to be published), and has three children. He continues to live in Maine, dividing his time between a monstrous Victorian mansion in Bangor and a more contemporary but no less imposing home in the western part of the state. On the last day of the World Series he grows a beard more suited to a lum-*

*berjack than a writer, shaving it off when the weather grows too warm and he's ready to play baseball. He's a voracious reader, an addicted horror film buff, and of a gentleness that utterly belies the stories he writes.*

**TZ:** Let's start with *Carrie*, your first published novel. How did you come to create it?

**King:** I don't remember. That's the truth. I was publishing stories in *Cavalier* at the time. Just before I got married in 1970, I sold a story to them, and another, and from then on I could sell them almost anything. I tried to sell them a story about a corpse that came back to life, but Nye Willden, the editor, said the corpse would have moldered away after a hundred years. I thought that was a really nasty quibble.

Then, as I started to publish more, some woman said, "You write all those macho things, but you can't write about women. You're scared of women." I said, "I'm not scared of women. I could write about them if I wanted to."

So I got an idea for a short story about this incident in a girls' shower room, and the girl would be telekinetic. The other girls would pelt her with sanitary napkins when she got her period. The period would release the right hormones, and she would rain down destruction on them. (I have to admit, though, that this hormone thing wasn't very clear in my mind.) Anyway, I did the shower scene, but I hated it and threw it away. My wife fished it out of the wastebasket and read it. She said, "I think this is pretty good. Would you go on with it?" So I did. And I really got sadistic about it. I said, "I can't have her rain destruction on them yet; they've got to do more to her." So they did more, and they did more—and finally it wasn't a short story, it was a novel. But I can't remember the real kernel, where the idea came from.

**TZ:** How about *Carrie* herself? Where did she come from?

**King:** She was based on a couple of real people—who, of course, weren't telekinetic. You meet kids like this when you teach school. Somehow they don't fit in, they're out of any peer group, and everybody turns on them. One of the girls was a kid I went to school with, and the other was a student of mine.

The one I went to school with was a very peculiar girl who came from a very peculiar family. Her mother wasn't a religious nut like the mother in *Carrie*; she was a game nut, a sweepstakes nut who subscribed to magazines for people who entered contests. And she won things—weird things. She won a year's supply of BeBop pencils, but the big thing she won was Jack Benny's old Maxwell. They had it out in the front yard for years, with weeds growing up around it. They didn't know what to do with it.

This girl had one change of clothes for the entire school year, and all the other kids made fun of her. I have a very clear memory of the day she came to school with a new outfit she'd bought herself. She was a plain-looking country girl, but she'd changed the black skirt and white blouse—which was all anybody had ever seen her in—for a bright-colored checked blouse with puffed sleeves and a skirt that was fashionable at the time. And everybody made *worse* fun of her because nobody wanted to see her change the mold. Later she married a man who was a weather forecaster on top of Mt. Washington—a very strange man, a man as peculiar as she was. She had three kids and then hung herself one summer.

**TZ:** Did she look like Sissy Spacek?

**King:** No. She looked like *Carrie*.

**TZ:** Not many authors are fortunate enough to have a film made of their first novel—much less one directed by Brian De Palma that turns out to be a big hit.

It's a shame, though, that the movie didn't do more, with the destruction scenes at the end.

**King:** Well, Paul Morash produced the film, and he almost didn't get it produced at all. When he started off, he'd bought the film rights for a song. I think he went to Twentieth Century first, tried Paramount, and finally got this deal with United Artists. But they wouldn't go a penny more than two million. And for two million, they just couldn't destroy the town the way *Carrie* did in the novel.

There's *something* of it in the film, though. After *Carrie* leaves the prom, and just before those people run the pickup truck at her, you see a fire truck screaming through the night, presumably to the school. In the book there were fire trucks from five or six towns, not just one. But that's my one fire truck from *Carrie*. I treasure that.

**TZ:** Your next book was *Salem's Lot*, a modern-day vampire novel. Had you written about vampires before?

**King:** Yes, among the stories I'd submitted to *Cavalier* was one I thought had a really nice twist. It was about a vampire who's a coal miner—so he can more or less be on the job all the time, since he's underground where it's always dark. There's a cave-in, and this vampire drinks all his mates' blood while they wait for the others to dig them out. Of course, when he goes out into the sun, he sort of evaporates.

**TZ:** But *Salem's Lot* was considerably more ambitious. You were dealing with an entire town, not just a group of miners. What made you think, with all the vampire films and books around, that you could get away with it?

**King:** There was no reason in the world to think that I could. But I wanted to do it because I wanted to play off *Dracula*. Whether or not I could get away with it never really entered my mind, because at the time I was writing it, I hadn't even sold *Carrie*. I was halfway through *Salem's Lot* when Doubleday bought *Carrie* for the princely sum of twenty-five hundred dollars. When I'd started *Salem's Lot*, my wife and I were talking about what it would be like to have *Dracula* in a present-day small town, and what would happen. And I ran into the most bizarre problems with that. I wanted all the traditional trappings. For instance, according to tradition, you kill a vampire by driving a stake through its heart—which assumes that if you de-

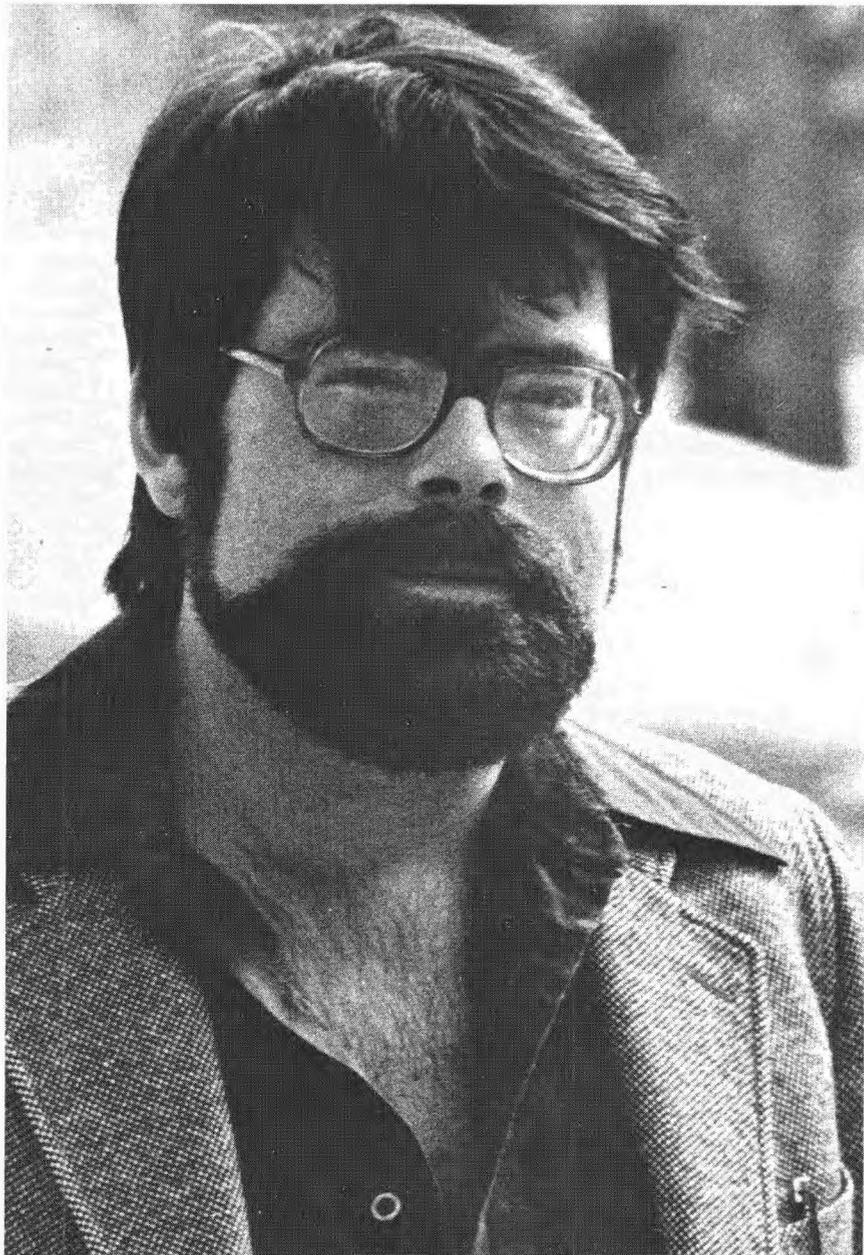


Photo by Deborah Wan

"People were saying, 'Aren't you afraid you'll be typed as a horror story writer?' I said, 'My God, I've been writing horror since I was ten years old.'"

stroy the heart the vampire is destroyed. But today, when they do an autopsy on somebody, they take all that out. You're eviscerated. So I sort of slid over that.

Anyway, the book was accepted for publication, but there were cold feet for a while. "Maybe this isn't the book to go with," people were saying. "Aren't you afraid you'll be typed as a horror story writer?" I said, "My God, I've been writing horror since I was ten years old." I'd done other stuff, but the stuff that came through with some force was the horror.

So when people say, "Do you write this kind of stuff for the money?" I say, "No, I was always writing this kind of stuff." The money found *me*, and I wouldn't want to kick it out. Anybody who throws money out the door has got

to be nuts.

**TZ:** You don't do it for the money, then?

**King:** I do it because I love it. It's what I do.

**TZ:** Is that a question frequently asked?

**King:** Yes, people are always asking why you write those things, which I think is a question that can't be answered. The mind is like a table, and it's on a tilt; you put a marble on it and it rolls in a different direction from mine. Some people collect stamps, and they have interesting stamps. The same with coins. I doubt that anyone goes up to Louis L'Amour and asks him why he writes western stories. He does, and they accept it. But they always ask horror writers things like that.

The other question everyone asks is, why do people *read* horror

stories—which presupposes the whole idea that things like that are morbid and unhealthy.

**TZ:** How healthy are *you*?

**King:** I decline to answer that! I like to scare people, and people like to be scared. That's all there is to it.

**TZ:** You make scaring people sound like fun.

**King:** Yeah, that's the whole idea. It's a funhouse sort of thing. I'm the fluorescent ghost—or actually, I'm more like a stage manager or a puppeteer. I'm running the ghost, which is more fun than being the ghost. I know where all the trapdoors are that people are going to fall into.

**TZ:** How do you feel when you spring the trapdoors on your own characters? Do you get any satisfaction from killing people off in your fiction?

**King:** Well, it's murder by proxy, for one thing. You get this feeling of tremendous power, being able to jerk a character right out of a story.

**TZ:** Do you ever feel bad when you like a character and you realize that he or she has to go—and in a particularly bloody way?

**King:** Yes, sometimes. But there are also times when I'm glad to see characters go. Like Susan Norton, in *'Salem's Lot*. I began to have serious problems about that character, because I'd conceived of her as being a really independent Maine girl. I started to say to myself: "This girl is twenty-three years old and out of school—yet she's still living with her parents and not working." Belatedly I realized that I had to get her out of that situation, and it wasn't very long before I decided, "Well, I'll kill her off." It gave me great satisfaction to get rid of her. And I also thought that the reader's reaction would be: If Susan Norton can go, anybody can go. Nobody is protected.

**TZ:** Which makes the book even scarier.

**King:** Right. I want to scare the shit out of you if I can. That's what I'm there to do. I like to go for the jugular.

**TZ:** Do you ever get *too* horrific?

**King:** Well, there was a lot of stuff edited out of *'Salem's Lot* that the editors thought was too strong. I stood by and let it happen; I wasn't in the position I am now. Still, I never want to be in the position where I can refuse editorial advice. One of the things I've found out is that a lot of editors know what they're doing. Someday, though, I want to do a definitive *Lot* and put it all back in.

For example, *Dracula* is supposed to be able to control the lower animals, like rats and wolves and things like that. And in the original draft of *'Salem's Lot* I had all the rats leaving the town dump at the end and going to the basement of the boarding house to guard the vampire. In the published version of the book, the doctor is impaled on knives; in the original draft he went downstairs and the rats got him. They were running in his ears and down his clothes and in his mouth and everything else.

**TZ:** It's been said that the literature of "terror" inspires a sense of cosmic awe, whereas mere "horror" just revolts us. Would you say the scene you just described is terror? Or horror?

**King:** I don't want to make that distinction between what's terror and what's horror, what's frightening and what's revolting. A little revulsion is good for the soul.

**TZ:** An awful lot of readers must think so, too. The book did well, didn't it?

**King:** *'Salem's Lot* sold more than three million copies in paperback. As to who bought it, it's hard to say. I mean, the mail I got on *Carrie* came from a lot of young girls and boys who felt ugly and could identify with a character like that. But the letters on *'Salem's Lot* came from everybody. And most of them were favorable.

**TZ:** Your next book, *The Shining*, sold even better: over four million copies so far, and it's still selling. One of the strongest elements is probably the setting itself, that massive old hotel isolated in the Rockies. How'd you come up with such a place?

**King:** Oh, it's a real place. We were there, my wife and I. We were on a trip, a vacation, and we stopped at this hotel; and as I wandered around those long halls and empty rooms, I knew I had to do something with it. Once I got the idea about the boy, Danny, being telepathic, it all came together. Don't ask me how.

**TZ:** Well, however it came together, it certainly was effective. When you're writing this sort of thing, don't you ever just plain scare yourself?

**King:** Occasionally. The scene in *The Shining* where the woman in the bathtub gets out and goes for the little boy didn't really scare me initially. I thought I had a good scene when I first wrote it, but a funny thing happened when I was rewriting the book. As I worked, I found myself thinking, "In about eight days I'll be rewriting the

bathtub scene." Then it was, "In five days I'll be rewriting the bathtub scene." And then it was, "Today—the bathtub scene!" And I really got tense and nervous about doing it, because when you write, you live your story, and no reader ever has a reaction as tight about your book as your own.

**TZ:** Maybe that scene works so well because Danny just gets a glimpse of what's in the tub.

**King:** Yeah, I like that kind of stuff—the way he hears that thump when something comes to greet him, the way that knob starts to go back and forth. . . Boy, things like that really get to me. In the movies they drive me crazy!

**TZ:** But you write them anyway.

**King:** Sure. If it drives me crazy, maybe it'll drive the reader crazy, too.

**TZ:** The bathtub scene was also a highlight of the movie—though Stanley Kubrick handled it differently. How did you feel about his version of *The Shining*?

**King:** There are some parts of it that I liked, and some parts that I didn't like at all. If you add it all up, it comes out to a zero. Kubrick said he wanted to make a horror movie, but I don't think he knew what that was. What he ended up with was just a domestic tragedy.

**TZ:** It must be somewhat unsettling to have your work interpreted by a stranger. Does it bother you when a movie isn't faithful to your book?

**King:** I love the movies. I love to go to good horror movies. As for my own books, well, you have to make a basic decision: do you want to sell to the movies or not? What it comes down to is, you have to take a "worst case" attitude—if they screw this up, how am I going to feel? I talked that over with myself, and what I came up with was: I don't care if they destroy it, if they make a terrible movie out of this book, because *they can't destroy the book*. The book stands. I'm a book person. Movies are very nice, but they're not high art the way I think books are high art. Sometimes a perfect book becomes a terrible movie. My favorite example of that is *The Day of the Dolphin*: I thought it was a lovely book, but Mike Nichols just didn't do it right. As far as I'm concerned, whatever they do to the movie, I still have the book. I wrote the book and I'm happy with it.

**TZ:** How do you feel when other people *aren't* happy with it—especially the critics?

**King:** I hate bad reviews. That's stan-

lard. They hurt, that's the thing; they hurt. For example, the *Sunday Times* review of *The Shining* was terrible. The guy really ran the book through a Mixmaster. To show you how sensitive I am, I'll immediately follow this by saying that the review in the daily *Times* was better. Though even in the daily review, Richard Lingeman couldn't avoid that Forrest Ackerman approach, a lot of puns and things. I don't know if you'd call them cheap shots, exactly, but they kind of poke fun at the whole horror field.

The thing about this field—if you visualize American Literature as a town, then the horror writer's across the tracks on the poor side of town, and that's where the "nice" people won't go. On the other hand, it's never been ghettoized like science fiction or mysteries, because you see horror sold more or less as mainstream fiction. I don't know if it's because horror has an element of allegory or what, but it's never been put into that kind of ghetto, even in the days of Fritz Leiber's *Conjure Wife*.

**TZ:** Why do you suspect that's true?

**King:** I don't know. I have no idea. But I do know that when you look at the reviews . . . well, take *Burnt Offerings*, for example. It didn't get very good re-

views, yet I thought it was an excellent book.

**TZ:** You're someone who's well-read in the field. What other writers have influenced you?

**King:** Ray Bradbury was an influence. I read *The October Country*, and I've never forgotten the effect of great stories like "The Jar" and "The Crowd." But the first one that really hit me was Robert Bloch. I picked up his Belmont collection, *Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper*, and that really made an impression. I also like Jack Finney, because he deals so well with ordinary life. He's very good at evoking the humdrum, and then introducing that little skew that goes off into the unknown, adding those other elements little by little. I think this kind of story works best.

And then there's William Sloane. *The Edge of Running Water* reminds me in some ways of Arthur Machen. Machen said something once that I've never forgotten: that true evil is when a rose begins to sing. I'm not sure I understand perfectly what he meant, but the feeling of the statement is so clear! I read H. P. Lovecraft, of course, when I was young. I went through a stage when I was ordering his books from Arkham House, and they published a

big collection of novellas, *At the Mountains of Madness*, that really got to me. I have my favorite Lovecraft stories that will stand out and last forever, but the man's style is a real roadblock. I think he appeals to you when you're younger and can accept that rococo style.

I love Charles Beaumont, too. And I think that Richard Matheson is fantastic. When he's at his best, he has no peer. Some of the stories he's done are classics. "Duel" is beautiful. He's another writer who goes for the jugular. He doesn't play around, no games; he goes right for the effect he's after. He did a story called "Mute" that's a personal favorite of mine.

**TZ:** Who do you like among the newer writers?

**King:** Peter Straub is one of the best. I know I'm chewing off a big bite here, but I think *Ghost Story* is one of the best gothic horror novels of the past century. And then there's *Shadowland*, his new book. It's really spooky, really something.

I also like Ramsey Campbell and Dennis Etchison; and James Herbert's books have a lot of raw vitality, a lot of really powerful things that just grab you by the throat and don't let go. Some of the early things by John Farris I like; you can't do much better than the opening sequences in *All Heads Turn When the Hunt Goes By*. Just close your eyes and picture that scene in the chapel, when the bride takes hold of the ceremonial sword.

But there's a lot of garbage out there, too. I think some writers are doing the usual thing, getting on the bandwagon while the getting is good. It'll all work out in the end; they'll fall by the wayside, I hope, and the good ones will last.

And there are some who just don't get me—at least the way I think I should be gotten by a horror story. I don't like Robert Aickman, for instance, because I admit I don't know what he's about. I feel like I'm lost in there. I also don't get off on stories like Brian Lumley's "Cthulhu" stuff or the Lin Carter types. Their stuff just doesn't work for me; it's too much like too many things that have already been written by guys who've been dead for a hundred years.

Another thing that disturbs me, that I think a lot of people have taken advantage of in the genre, are novels—and they're usually the novels



Courtesy United Artists



Courtesy Warner Bros.



Courtesy Warner Bros.

1 "I said, 'I'm not scared of women. I could write about them if I wanted to.'" Sissy Spacek clutches Piper Laurie in *Carrie*.

2 "... what it would be like to have *Dracula* in a present-day small town." Reggie Nalder and James Mason provide the haunting in *Salem's Lot*.

3 "What he ended up with was just a domestic tragedy." Jack Nicholson gives Shelley Duvall a hard time in *The Shining*.

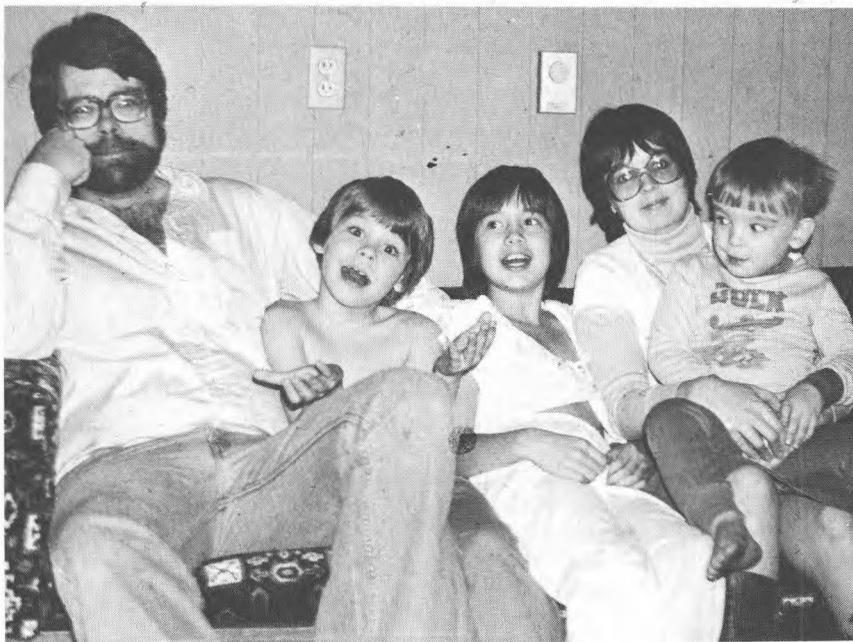


Photo by Deborah Wian

"I think children are lovely people: innocent, sweet, honorable, and all those things." The Kings at home in Maine with Joe, Naomi, and Owen.

that I don't like—about children as objects of horror, objects of fear.

**TZ:** But aren't children treated that way in your own books, when you consider what terrible powers they have? There's Carrie, who wrecks a whole community, and Charlie, the little girl in your new book, *Firestarter*, who can start fires with her mind. . .

**King:** Yes, but Carrie isn't what I think of as bad. By the time she's done all that stuff—destroys the town and hurts all those people—she's crazy, she's lost her mind, she's not responsible for what she's doing. And Charlie, in *Firestarter*, is a kid who's been through a hell of a lot. She's mad, and she hits back just like a kid will hit back—only she has something more.

I have, of course, written stories where children are downright evil. There's a story called "Suffer the Little Children," for instance, that wasn't in my *Night Shift* collection because it's a lot like a Stanley Ellin story, which I wasn't aware of when I wrote it. It's about a schoolteacher who finds out that all her children are monsters. She leads them down to the mimeograph room one by one and murders her entire class. She looks out the corner of her eye, see, and these sweet little faces are turning into these grotesque, bulbous-eyed things that are coming to get her. And I've written a couple of others like that on the "evil children" idea. . . . But mostly I see children as either victims or as forces of good.

**TZ:** You don't, then, have the ambivalence toward children that Ray Bradbury seemed to have in his early stories—stories like "The Small Assassin," in which an infant murders his parents.

**King:** No. I think children are lovely people. They're innocent, sweet, honorable, and all those things. I know that's a romantic idea, but to me they seem good.

**TZ:** How do you account for all the monstrous kids that populate books and movies today? There's *The Exorcist*, *The Omen*, *The Changeling*, *It's Alive* . . .

**King:** My own feeling about this is that almost all horror stories mirror specific areas of free-forming anxieties. And that sounds like a mouthful, a lot of intellectual bullshit, but what I mean is, when you read a horror novel or see a horror film, you make a connection with the things you're afraid of in your own life. Why was *The Exorcist* the hit that it was? I tend to think it's because it came at the height of the youth revolution, that hallucinogenic experience we were all going through. I mean, kids were coming home and saying, "Nixon's a war pig," and the parents were saying, "What did you say?" And the kids were growing their hair long. Even now, people forget how terrible it was when boys let their hair grow long; they took a lot of shit for something like that. Like in Bangor—boy, it was bad news! So *The Exorcist* comes along and what happens? You have a nice middle-class girl who's respectful to her mother and outgoing and friendly and all the things that parents want their children to be—and she turns into this foul-talking, ugly, straggly-haired, screaming, killing monster. And it seems to me that, symbolically, there's a very satisfactory parallel to what happened to the kids in the Sixties.

Same way with those bug movies in the Fifties: *Them*, *The Beginning of the*

*End*, *Rodan*. . . What were people afraid of in those days? The Cold War, the Atomic Bomb. We were on the edge of doomsday, not just another world war but the end of the world. And all those monsters?—it was radioactivity. They all came out of White Sands Proving Ground or some atoll in the Pacific.

I admit that slobbering, 1950s-type monsters are fun to work with. I've done it, too, in "The Mist," that short novel in *Dark Forces*.

**TZ:** It's clear that horror can reflect society's current fears, but how about our more personal fears? It's been suggested, for example, that all horror fiction has a strong sexual element. Do you think this is true?

**King:** Yes, but I don't think sex has been dealt with the way it needs to be, or the way it could be. Horror stories appeal to teenagers, usually boys, who are very doubtful about their own sexual potency, what it is that they're supposed to do. Boys at that age know, according to tradition, that they'll be the sexual aggressors, and they're very doubtful about how to go about it. I think that the horror story serves as an outlet or a catharsis for these deep-seated fears that are really about sex. That all sounds very Freudian, but people like Howard, Lovecraft, Poe—they all had their problems.

**TZ:** Isn't there some common denominator here? Some appeal that goes deeper than just current concerns or even sexual fears?

**King:** Well, on another level, all this stuff is only a rehearsal for our own death. That's the deep reason people read it. In fact, one of the reasons the field is so open to criticism is because it deals with morbidity, because it deals with mortality. That Faulkner story, "A Rose for Emily"—which is really a horror story—is the most morbid thing I can think of. The way the house starts to stink, and the men from the town put quicklime around it to take away the smell because they assume a sewer main has broken—Faulkner's very careful about how he says this—and the way the smell disappears because the flesh has gotten past the stage where it's ripe. . . Her lover's body was up in her bed. We really don't know what she was doing with it, if she was sleeping with it, but there's that hint of necrophilia there.

**TZ:** Could this rehearsal for our death be, somehow, an attempt to reassure ourselves about death? To make us

more comfortable with it?

**King:** That's what Stanley Kubrick says: it doesn't matter whether the supernatural forces are good or evil; all that matters is that they exist. It means that after this life, there's more.

**TZ:** And that, of course, is a comforting thought. Do you yourself believe in the hereafter?

**King:** Yes.

**TZ:** In what sense?

**King:** Well, I believe in God, but I don't think any of us has a line on Him, on what God is like. All of us may get a big surprise. We may expire on our deathbeds and rise through dark clouds to whatever hereafter there is and find out that God is Mickey Mouse.

**TZ:** Do you regard yourself, then, as a Christian?

**King:** I don't think so—but I don't know. I think there's a real possibility that Christ may have been divine, but I don't think it's been proven. How can you prove a thing like that? Of course, you have to take it on faith. In fact, the whole tenet of Christianity is that you have to take these things on faith. Well, that's fine. If you can reject your intellect enough to have faith, that's fine.

**TZ:** Yet even a skeptic might somehow find a certain religious element in most horror fiction.

**King:** Yes, a lot of the books deal in religious terms, even when they don't deal with standard religions. I think most of Lovecraft has religious overtones, in the sense that people in his stories worship various good and evil gods, with set rituals for calling them forth. There's a kind of doctrine in his fiction. There's even a Bible, the *Necronomicon*.

But even more than that, there's a great revival of mystical ideas today. Look at the society in which we're living, with all manner of technological horrors. Just take the difference between now and the time Bram Stoker wrote *Dracula*, when all the heroes were technological men. Seward put his diaries on a phonograph, which was very cool for his day. Van Helsing was a surgeon, gave transfusions, was even a psychologist, I think. Stoker was very taken by all this, the idea that technology was the wave of the future, the savior of mankind. But look at it now: fluorocarbons, cancer scares, pollution in the water, all this stuff. People are beginning to see that maybe technology is its own dead end. And so they've come to see mysticism as a possible al-

ternate route.

**TZ:** Some people have seen mystical overtones in your fourth novel, *The Stand*. In fact, it's been called a Christian allegory.

**King:** Well, *The Stand* starts with a plague that wipes out most of the world's population, and it develops into a titanic struggle that Christianity figures in. But it's not about God, like some of the reviews claimed. Stuart Redman isn't Christ, and the Dark Man isn't the Devil. It's the same with *Salem's Lot*—Christianity is there, but it isn't the most important thing. The important thing is that we are dealing with two elemental forces—White and Black—and I really do believe in the White force. Children are part of that force, which is why I write about them the way I do. There are a lot of horror writers who deal with this struggle, but they tend to concentrate on the Black. But the other force is there, too; it's just a lot tougher to deal with. Look at Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings*; he's much better at evoking the horror and dread of Mordor and the Dark Lord than he is at doing Gandalf.

**TZ:** What you're saying is that the Black, at least logically, presupposes the White. If there are werewolves, there are also probably good fairies.

**King:** Yes. But werewolves, of course, are a lot more fun.

**TZ:** Maybe they're more fun because they appeal to the savage in us all—the thing that sneaks out and reminds us of what we've repressed.

**King:** Yeah! Oh yeah. That David Keller story, "The Thing in the Cellar," is a classic example of that idea. That's what's so marvelous about the horror story. It's a kind of interface between the conscious and the subconscious, where you can go off in fifty different directions.

**TZ:** With the possibility of going off in so many directions, you still manage to keep to just one. What kind of discipline do you impose on yourself in order to maintain such a prolific output? Is it true you try to write a set number of pages every day of the year?

**King:** Yes, every day but Christmas and my birthday. I work on what's important to me in the morning, for three hours. Usually, in the afternoon, I have what I call my "toy truck," a story that might develop or might not, but meanwhile it's fun to work on. Sometimes it's a story and sometimes it's a novel that might germinate. I begin to pile up

some pages, and eventually it'll get shifted over to the morning. I try to do my correspondence then, too, but I'm always terrible about that.

**TZ:** There've been announcements about a nonfiction book you've written—a survey of the horror field. Is this something you've always wanted to write?

**King:** No. As a matter of fact, at first I didn't want to write it at all. Bill Thompson, now of Everest House, was my editor at Doubleday. Awhile ago he asked me if I'd like to do this sort of book, and I said I really didn't think I wanted to. Then he said to me, "How many times have people asked you why you write this stuff?" And I said, "A billion times." And then he said, "How many times have people asked you what your favorite horror movies are?" And I said, "A billion times." So he said to me, "Then write it all down, and when they ask you again, you can tell them to buy the book." So I did. It's called *Danse Macabre*, and it should be out this spring.

**TZ:** And after that?

**King:** The next book will be a straight horror novel, called *Cujo*. That's for this fall. Right now, I'm working on a magnum opus kind of thing that's a monster, a real monster. I don't know how long it will be, but I won't be surprised when I hit two thousand pages. It's a horror story, too, and I'm letting out all the stops. When I'm finished with that, I'm going to go away for a while, hide out, and let my brain put itself back together. After that . . . who knows?

**TZ:** How about films?

**King:** There are a couple of things. I like George Romero's work a lot, and we're doing a film called *Creep Show*. It's five stories linked together. Then I've just finished a four-hundred-page script for *The Stand*. It has to be cut down. What I'd like is to make two films out of it: end part one with a hell of a climax and pick up in part two. What's going to happen, though, I don't know.

**TZ:** It looks, then, as if you intend to stay in the field.

**King:** Sure. Of course. I don't feel the urge to change. I don't always intend to do horror, but somehow things almost always head that way. If they don't, I'm not going to fight it. You go where you feel you have to go. Writing is like that. You can't always tell yourself you're going to write one particular thing and that's that. You get the story, and the story takes hold, and away you go. 17

# GRAIL

## By HARLAN ELLISON

TO CRACK THE VAULT WHERE TRUE LOVE LAY BURIED, HE NEEDED AN EXPERT FROM HELL WITH A GIFT FOR OPENING LOCKS.

Years later, when he was well into young adulthood, Christopher Caperton wrote about it in the journal he had begun to keep when he turned twenty-one. The entry had everything to do with the incident, though he had totally forgotten it.

What he wrote was this: *The great tragedy of my life is that in my search for the Holy Grail everyone calls True Love, I see myself as Zorro, a romantic and mysterious highwayman—and the women I desire see me as Porky Pig.*

The incident lost to memory that informed his observation had taken place fourteen years earlier, in 1953, when he was thirteen years old.

During a Halloween party from which chaperoning adults had been banished, it was suggested that the boys and girls play a kissing game called "flashlight." All the lights were turned off, everyone paired up, and one couple held a flashlight. If you were caught kissing when the flashlight was turned on, you, then it became your turn to hold and flash while the others had free rein to neck and fondle in the dark.

Because he was shy, Christopher volunteered to be the first holder of the light. Because he was shy, and because he had, as usual, been paired with Jean Kettner, who adored him but whom he could not find it within himself even to like. Across the room the most beautiful girl he had ever seen, the improbably named Briony Catling, sat on the lap of Danny Shipley, who played baseball and had blond, wavy hair.

Chris Caperton ached for Briony Catling with an intensity that gave him cramps.

Another rule of the game was that if the wielder of the flashlight caught another couple "doing it," he or she could demand a switch in partners.

Because he was shy, because he was paired with Jean Kettner, and because he knew exactly where he would shine the flashlight after allowing several minutes to pass in which the couples could become too interested in kissing to prepare themselves.

He caught Briony and Danny Shipley, and demanded a switch. Of the four involved in the transaction, only Christopher felt elation. Briony Catling had no interest in Christopher Caperton. She ached for Danny Shipley with an intensity that gave her cramps.

But they switched, and when the light went out Christopher hugged Briony frantically and shoved his face toward hers. The kiss splatted somewhere between her nose and her mouth.

She blew out air, made a yuchhing sound, swiped at the slaver on her upper lip, and jumped off his lap.

Fourteen years later the shame and the pain still lurked in his unconscious like pariahs.

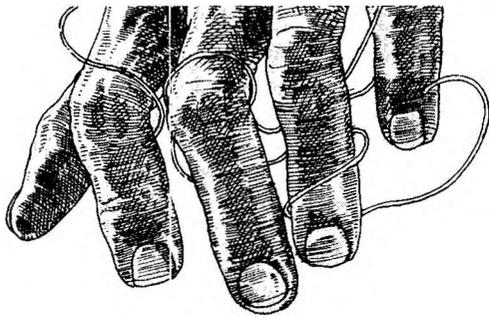
Briony Catling had not been his first great love. That had been Miss O'Hara in the third grade, who had shone down on him at the age of eight like the field lights at a night baseball game. He had loved her purely and with all his heart; and the present he gave her at the Christmas party held by his home room had cost him all the money he'd made raking leaves through that autumn. She had been embarrassed and had kissed his cheek lightly, never knowing it caused his first erection.

After Miss O'Hara, it had been the actress Helen Gahagan in the 1935 version of *She*, which he saw at the Utopia Theater on a re-release double-bill. When he belatedly went to see *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* on one of its periodic reissues, he recognized at once that Disney had appropriated the garb and look of Helen Gahagan as She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed for the character of the wicked Queen Grimhilde; and when he learned of the foul campaign Richard Nixon had waged against her in the 1950 senatorial race, when she had become Helen Gahagan Douglas, he vowed a revenge that only manifested itself when he twice voted for Nixon's presidential opponents.

The year before Briony Catling filled him with self-loathing, he fell desperately in love with the Swedish actress Marta Toren. He watched her vamping Dick Powell in *Rogue's Regiment* on the *Late Late Show* and made a point of being in the audience the night *Paris Express* with Claude Rains opened. Miss O'Hara, Helen Gahagan and even Briony Catling paled by comparison. She was precisely and exactly the embodiment of True Love in his eyes. Four years later, six months after Christopher had lost his virginity to a young woman who bore only a passing resemblance to Marta Toren, he read in the newspaper that she had died from a rare brain trauma called a subarachnoidal hemorrhage that struck like Jack the Ripper and killed her within forty-eight hours.

He closed himself in his room and tore at his clothes.

In February of 1968, attached to General Wil-



liam Westmoreland's headquarters in Saigon, Capt. Christopher Caperton, age twenty-eight, stumbled upon the astonishing fact that True Love, in a physical form, existed. The *Tet* offensive had begun and Saigon was burning. Had he not had his own assigned jeep and driver, he would not have been able to get around: there was virtually no public transportation and the cyclos and taxis had been commandeered for the wealthy trying to flee. The hospitals were so crowded that only emergency cases were being accepted; patients were sleeping on the floors, jamming the corridors. Coffins lay unburied for days; the gravediggers had gone south. Chris's business was good.

Chris was in the business of helping GI's cope with the anguish of serving in a war they had come to despise.

In business with, and in love with, his lover and business partner, a thirty-nine-year-old Eurasian of French and Thai parentage, Capt. Chris was the main conduit for "J's," "O.J's," Binoctal, and a luscious black opium from the Laotian poppy fields to America's fighting men in Indochina.

Because their goods—marijuana joints, joints dipped in liquid opium; the French headache killer; and the most potent smoking opium—were superlative goods, Christopher Caperton and Sirilabh Doumic had established a flourishing trade in I and II Corps. And from this enterprise they had managed to bank over a million and a half dollars (converted to Swiss francs) in an unnumbered Zurich account, despite the crushing overhead and the payoffs to officials of Thieu's provincial government.

And because he was in love in a terrible place, and because he and his love wanted nothing more than to survive, to win release from that terrible place, he felt no guilt about the traffic. There was no self-delusion that he was engaged in humanitarian activities, neither the war nor the drug traffic; what he *did* feel was a sense of keeping busy, of working at something that held light and hope at its conclusion, that without the dope some of his clients would either go mad or turn their rifles on the nearest 1st Lieutenant. But mostly he was in love.

Siri was small and light. He could lift her with one arm to carry her to the bed. Her features were fine and delicate, yet they changed dramatically with each noticeable variation in the light. Monet would have had to do her portrait eighteen times, as he did the Rouen Cathedral, from dawn to sunset, to capture even one expression. She was the daughter of a French attaché in the Bangkok consulate and a young temple dancer Doumic first saw at the Kathin ceremony marking the end of the Buddhist Lent. From her father she inher-

ited a wiliness that kept her alive in street society, from her mother—who had come from Chumphon to the south—a speech filled with musical inflection. How she had come to Saigon ten years before was not something she cared to talk about. But Chris winced every time they made love and his hands brushed the thick scars on her inner thighs.

On that night in February of 1968, they were just sitting down to a dinner of beef satay Siri had made in their apartment on Nguyen Cong Tru Street when a 122mm shell came across the Saigon River and hit the face of the building opposite Caperton's. The rocket round ripped the building out of the ground like a rotten tooth and threw shrapnel in every direction.

Not the biggest chunk, but big enough, it came straight through the window and tore into Siri's back, taking off most of her left shoulder.

There was no use trying to move her; it was obvious she would never make it down the stairs, much less across the city to the American hospital that had been opened at Tan Son Nhut.

He tried to stanch the flow with a bedspread and all the white tennis socks in his drawer, and miraculously, she lived for almost an hour. In that hour they talked, and in that hour of farewell she gave him the only gift in the world he wanted, the only thing he could not get for himself. She told him how he could find True Love.

"We have talked of it so many times, and I always knew."

He tried to smile. "In a business partnership like ours there shouldn't be any secrets. How else can I trust you?"

**P**ain convulsed her and she gripped his hand till the bones ground. "We've no time for foolishness, my love. Very soon now you'll be alone again, as you have been so often. I have this one thing I can give you in return for the love you gave me . . . and it will take some believing on your part."

"Whatever you tell me I'll believe."

Then she instructed him to go to the kitchen and get an empty condiment bottle from the spice rack. When he brought back the bottle labeled chopped coriander leaves, which was empty because they had been unable to get fresh coriander since a Claymore mine had gone off in the central market, she told him he must not argue with her, that he must fill it with her blood. He argued, wasting precious minutes; but finally, filled with a vaguely familiar self-loathing, he did it.

"I have always sought perfection," she said. "Always knowing that one must die to reach perfection, for life is imperfect."

He tried to argue, but she stopped him. Sternly.

"Chris! You *must* listen to me."

He nodded and was silent.

"For each woman there *is* a perfect man; and for each man there *is* a perfect woman. You were not perfect for me, but you were as close to what I sought as I ever found. But I never stopped searching . . . though my movement was very slow since we met. I should have been content. It's easy to be smart, later.

"But knowing what I knew, that True Love is a real thing, that it can be picked up and turned in the hands, that it can be looked at and understood . . . that kept me always dissatisfied. As you have been.

"Because somehow, without possessing the knowledge I chanced upon ten years ago, you knew it was real. And now I will tell you how to go about finding it. And that, my dearest, is the best way I can apologize to you for not giving up the search when we met."

Then with her voice fading off and coming back a little less strong each time, she told him of an artifact that had never been described, that had first been unearthed during Evans's excavations of the Palace of Minos at Knossos in 1900.

It was taken from a walled-up niche behind an elaborate fresco painted on a wall of the Corridor of the Procession, and had been hidden there since 2000 B.C. Where it had come from before that time, not even the archeologist who discovered it and smuggled it away from Crete could begin to guess.

He recognized it for what it was the instant the light of his torch fell on it. He disappeared that night and was presumed to have returned to England; but was never seen again. Record of his find was revealed in 1912 during the dying reminiscences of Bessie Chapman, one of the 711 survivors of the sinking of the *Titanic* picked up by the *Carpathia*.

Suffering from extreme exposure and seemingly delirious, the immigrant passenger babbled a story heard only by those few *Carpathia* deckhands and ministering survivors who tried to make her last hours easier. Apparently she had been a London doxy who, after an evening of sport with "a real elegant nob, a brick 'e was," actually saw the artifact. She spoke of it with such wonder that when she died it seemed she had passed over having known all there was to know of joy in this life.

One of the deckhands, an Irish stoker named Haggerty, it was later reported, hung about the dying woman and seemed to be paying close attention to her story.

Haggerty jumped ship on the return of the Cunard liner to New York.

Sgt. Michael James Haggerty was killed during the battle of Ypres, November 9th, 1914. His kit bag, scavenged by a German soldier when the French and British trenches were overrun (it was reported by a survivor who had played possum and been overlooked in the random bayoneting of corpses), disappeared. Others in Haggerty's company said he slept with the

kit bag under his pillow, that it seemed quite heavy, and that he once broke the arm of a messmate who playfully tried to see what the Irishman was carrying in it.

Between 1914 and 1932 the object—while never described—turned up three times: once in the possession of a White Russian nobleman in Sevastopol, twice in the possession of a Dutch aircraft designer, and finally in the possession of a Chicago mobster reputed to have been the man who gunned down Dion O'Banion in his flower shop at 738 North State Street.

In 1932 a man visiting New York for the opening of the Radio City Music Hall just after Christmas reported to the police who found him lying in an alley on West 51st Street just below Fifth Avenue that he had been mugged and robbed of "the most important and beautiful thing in the world." He was taken to Bellevue Hospital, but no matter how diligently he was interrogated, he would not describe the stolen article.

In 1934 it was reputed to be in the private art collection of the German architect Walter Gropius; after Gropius's self-imposed exile from Nazi Germany it was reputed to have passed into the personal collection of Hermann Goering, 1937; in 1941 it was said to be housed with Schweitzer in French Equatorial Africa; in 1946 it was found to be one of the few items not left by Henry Ford at his death to the Ford Foundation.

Its whereabouts were unknown between 1946 and February of 1968. But Siri told Chris, her final love, that there was one sure, dangerous way of finding it. The way she had used originally to learn the hand-to-hand passage of the artifact that was True Love from the Palace of Minos to its present unknown resting place.

Then she released his hand, realizing she had squeezed it so hard while telling her story that it was as white as unsmoked meerschaum; and she asked him very softly if he would bring her the little cloisonné minaudière he had bought her in Hong Kong.

He gave it to her and she clutched it far more tightly than she had his hand. Because it was a minute later, and the pain was much worse.

"Do you remember the flea market?"

"Yes," she said, closing her eyes. "And we were holding hands in the crowd; and then you let go and I was swept along; and I thought I'd lost you; and you were gone for fifteen minutes . . ."

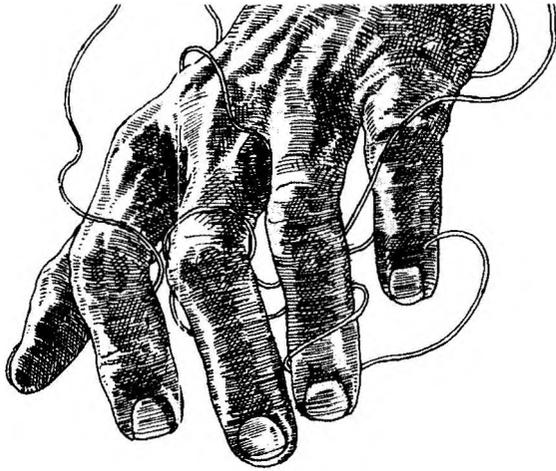
"And you panicked."

"And when I got back to the car there you were."

"You should have seen your face. What relief."

"What love. That was the moment I slowed the never-ending search. And you smiled and held out this to me." And she opened her hand where the exquisite blue and gold minaudière lay in her palm, now filmed with moisture.

But her story had worked its magic. He knelt beside her on the floor, lifted her head and the pillows,



and cradled them in his lap. "What is this True Love? What does it look like?"

"I don't know. I've never seen it. It cost too much the first time, just to get the information. The actual search has to be done without . . ." and she hesitated as if picking the exact words, the words that would not frighten him, because he was beginning to look more frightened than anguished, ". . . without special assistance."

"But how could you have learned all this?"

"I had an informant. You must seek him out. But go very carefully. It's dangerous, it costs a great deal; care has to be taken . . . once I didn't take care . . ." She paused. "You'll need my blood."

"An informant . . . your blood . . . ? I don't . . ."

"Adrammelech, Supreme Ruler of the Third Hour."

He could not help her. She was dying, he felt the stiffness in his throat, he loved her so much, and she was raving.

"An Angel of the Night, Chris."

Bewildered and suffering, nonetheless he went to the bedroom and fetched the brass-and-silver-bound chest she called a bahut. He brought it back to her and she said, "Look at it. Do you see how it opens?"

He studied it but could find no lock or clasp that would open the coffer. "It is made of agalloch, lign aloes, the wood of the aloe, according to the directions of Abramelin. The cross-spines are of almond-tree wood. Are you beginning to understand, do you believe me?"

"Siri . . ."

"You'll need Surgat to open it. Look."

And she touched a symbol, a character cut into the rounded top of the chest:



"He won't harm you. He serves only one purpose: he opens all locks. Take a hair from my head . . . don't argue with me. Chris, do it . . . please . . ." And because her voice was now barely a whisper, he did it. And she said, "He'll demand a hair of your head. Don't give it to him. Make him take mine. And this is what you say to invoke his presence . . ."

In her last minutes she went over it with him till he realized she was serious, that she was not delirious, that he ought to write it down. So he transcribed her words exactly.

"Once you get the bahut opened, all the rest will

be clear. Just be careful, Chris. It's all I have to give you, so make the best of it." Her eyes were half-closed and now she opened them completely, with effort, and looked at him. "Why are you angry with me?"

He looked away.

"I can't help it that I'm dying, dear. I'm sorry, but that's what's happening. You'll just have to forgive me and do the best you can."

Then she closed her eyes and her hand opened and the cloisonné herb container fell to the carpet; and he was alone.

He spoke to her, though he was alone. "I didn't love you enough. If I'd loved you more it wouldn't have happened."

It's easy to be smart, later.

**B**y the time he was twenty-five, Chris had read everything he could find on the arcane subject of love. He had read Virgil and Rabelais, Ovid and Liu Hsiao-Wei, Plato's *Symposium* and all the Neoplatonists, Montaigne and Johannes Secundus; he had read everything by the English poets from the anonymous lyrics of the 13th to 15th centuries through Rolle, Lydgate, Wyatt, Sidney, Campion, Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne, Marvell, Herrick, Suckling, Lovelace, Blake, Burns, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Emily Brontë; he had read as many translations as existed of the Sanskrit *Kama Sutra* and the *Anangaranga*, which led him to the Persians; he read *The Perfumed Garden* of the Sheik Nefzawi, the *Beharistan* of Jami and the *Gulistan* of Sa-Di, the anonymously-written *Ta'dib ul-Nisvan* and the *Zenan-Nahmeh* of Fazil Bey, which led him to seven Arabic handbooks of sex, which he quickly put aside: sex was not the issue, he understood that as well as anyone need to. Understood it well enough to write in his journal:

*I was making love to Connie Halban when her husband Paul came back unexpectedly from a business trip. When he saw us he began crying. It was the most awful thing I'd ever stood witness to. I was reminded of Ixion, tied to a turning wheel in Hades as punishment for making love to Zeus's wife, Hera. I'll never touch another married woman. It simply isn't worth the torture and guilt.*

And so he was able to avoid all the texts that dealt solely with physical love in its seemingly endless permutations. He made no value judgments; he understood early on that everyone sought True Love in often inarticulate ways they often did not, themselves, understand; but his was an idealized, traditional concept of what True Love was, and his search for the grail need not be sidetracked or slowed by excursions into those special places.

He read Waley's translation of *The Chin P'ing Mei* and everything even remotely pertinent by Freud; he sought out *La Fleur Lascivie Orientale* and the even

rarer English translation of *Contes Licencieux de Constantinople et de l'Asie Mineure*; he dipped into the memoirs of Clara Bow, Charles II, Charlie Chaplin, Isadora Duncan, Marie Duplessis, Lola Montez and George Sand; he read novelists—Moravia, Gorky, Maupassant, Roth, Cheever and Brossard—but found they knew even less than he.

He absorbed the thoughts of the aphorists, and believed every utterance; Balzac: "True Love is eternal, infinite, and always like itself. It is equal and pure, without violent demonstrations: it is seen with white hairs and is always young in the heart." Molière: "Reason is not what directs love." Terence: "It is possible that a man can be so changed by love as hardly to be recognized as the same person." Voltaire: "Love is a canvas furnished by Nature and embroidered by imagination." La Rochefoucauld: "When we are in love, we often doubt what we most believe."

Yet even nodding his agreement with every contradictory image and representation of love—seen as Nature, God, a bird on the wing, sex, vanity—he knew they had perceived only the barest edge of what True Love was. Not Kierkegaard or Bacon or Goethe or Nietzsche, for all their insight, for all their wisdom, had any better idea of what True Love looked like than the commonest day-laborer.

The *Song of Solomon* spurred him on, but did not indicate the proper route to discovery.

He found the main path on that night in February of 1968. But once it was found, he was too frightened to set foot upon it.

Surgat, a subordinate spirit to Sargatanas who, in the Descending Hierarchy from Lucifer to Lucifuge Rofacale, opens all locks, came when Chris Caperton summoned him. He was too insignificant a demon to refuse, no matter how ineptly couched the invocation. But he was less than cooperative.

Chris used Siri's blood to draw the pentagram of Solomon on the floor. He didn't think about what he was doing . . . that he was dipping his finger in the blood of the woman who lay covered with a sheet on the sofa . . . that he had to do it repeatedly because it was getting thick . . . that he had been warned all ten sides of the five-pointed star enclosed in a circle must be without break . . . he just did it. He did not cry. He just did it.

Then he set candles at the five points and lighted them. Every apartment in Saigon in those days had a supply of candles.

Then he stood in the exact center of the runes and lines and read from the dictation he had taken. Siri had assured him if he stayed within the pentagram he would be safe, that Surgat only opened locks and was not really powerful enough to cause him trouble . . . if he kept his wits about him.

The words were contained in the *Grimorium Verum* and Siri had said they need not be spoken pre-

cisely, nor need Chris worry about having done the special cleansing necessary when summoning the more powerful Field Marshals of Lucifer's Infernal Legions.

He read the words. "I conjure thee, Surgat, by the great living God, the Sovereign Creator of all things, to appear under a comely human form, without noise and without terror, to answer truly unto all questions that I shall ask thee. Heretunto I conjure thee by the virtue of these Holy and Sacred Names. O Surmy ✕ Delmusan ✕ Atalsloym ✕ Charusihoa ✕ Melany ✕ Liamintho ✕ Colehon ✕ Paron ✕ Madoin ✕ Merloy ✕ Bulerator ✕ Donmeo ✕ Hone ✕ Peloym ✕ Ibasil ✕ Meon." And on and on, eighteen more names, concluding with "Come, therefore, quickly and peaceably, by the Names Adonai, Elohim, Tetragrammaton! Come!"

From across the Saigon River he could hear the sound of the city's rockets, flattening Charlie's supposed emplacements. But in the little apartment on Nguyen Cong Tru Street everything began to shimmer and wash down like the aurora borealis.

It was an apartment no longer. He stood on the polished wood floor, inside the pentagram of Solomon, but the polished wood floor came to an end at the edges of Siri's dried blood. Beyond lay a fallen temple. Great gray stones, enormous and bearing the marks of claws that had ripped them loose from mountains, tumbled and thrown carelessly, rose up around Chris. And out of the shadows something came toward him.

It slouched and dragged its arms behind as it came out of the darkness. When the flickering illumination from the candles struck it, Chris felt sick to his stomach. He clutched the paper with Siri's words as if it would save him.

Surgat came and stood with the point of one goat-hoof almost touching Siri's blood. Chris could smell where it had been and what it had been doing when he had interrupted its dining. He felt faint and could not breathe deeply because of the smell Surgat had carried from its mess hall.

The head of the demon changed. Toad to goat to worm to spider to dog to ape to man to a thing that had no name.

"Open the lock of the casket," Chris yelled. He had to yell: the sound of wind was overpowering, deafening, insane.

Surgat kicked the bahut. Chris had left it, as Siri had instructed, outside the pentagram. Surgat kicked it again. No mark was put on the coffer, but where the demon's foot had rested in the dust of the fallen temple's floor, a cloven footprint burned and smoked.

"Open the lock!"

Surgat leaned forward and shrieked. Words poured forth. They made no sense to Chris. They were from a throat that was not human. If a hyena had been given the ability to speak with the tongue of a man, it would have sounded less guttural, less deranged, less terrifying.



Siri had said the demon would be troublesome, but would finally do as bidden. It had no choice. It was not that important or powerful a spirit. When Chris remembered that assurance, and perceived just how staggering was the sight before him, he trembled at the thought of one of Surgat's masters. "Open it, you god-dam ugly sonofabitch! Open it right now!"

Surgat vomited maggots that hit an invisible plane at the edge of the pentagram. And babbled more words. And reached out a lobster-claw that stopped just outside the invisible plane. It wanted something.

Then Chris remembered the hair from Siri's head. It will want the hair of a fox, she had said. Forget that. It will try to get a hair from *your* head. Whatever you do, don't let it have one. All of you is contained in each hair; you can be reconstructed from a hair; then it has you. Give it mine.

He extended her long, thick strand of hair.

Surgat screamed, would not take it. Chris extended it through the invisible plane. Surgat pointed to Chris's head and pulled long strips of bleeding flesh from its body and threw them against the fallen stones where they plopped with the sickening sound of meat against concrete. Chris did not move. The hair hung down outside the invisible plane.

Surgat screamed and capered and tore at itself.

"Take it, you disgusting sonofabitch!" Chris yelled. "Take it and be damned, she *died* to give it to you, puking garbage dump. Take it or get nothing! Nothing's worth this, not even that thing she looked for all her life! So *take it*, you crummy piece of shit! *Take it* or go back where you came from and let me alone!"

The words Surgat spoke became very clear, then. The voice modulated, became almost refined. It spoke in a language Chris had never heard. He could not have known that it was a tongue unspoken for a thousand years before the birth of Christ: Surgat spoke in Chaldean.

And having spoken, having acknowledged obedience at the threat of being dismissed without the proper license to depart, the threat of being trapped here in this halfway place of fallen stones, and the wrath of Asmoday or Beelzebuth, the lock-picking demon ran its tentacle forward and took Siri's hair. The hair burst into flame, the flame shot up toward the shadowed ceiling of the fallen temple, Surgat turned the flame on the casket . . . and the flame washed over the wood . . . and the casket opened.

Quickly, Chris read the final words on the paper he held. "O Spirit Surgat, because thou hast diligently answered my demands, I do hereby license thee to depart, without injury to man or beast. Depart, I say, and be thou willing and ready to come, whensoever duly exorcised and conjured by the Sacred Rites of Magic. I conjure thee to withdraw peaceably and quietly, and may the peace of God continue forever between me and thee. Amen."

And Surgat looked across the pentagram's protective plane and said, in perfectly understandable English, "I do not go empty-handed."

Then the demon slouched away into the shadows, the aurora borealis effect began again, rippling and sliding and flowing down till he was in his own apartment again. Even then he waited an hour before leaving the charmed circle.

To discover that as Siri had promised, everything had its price. Surgat had not gone empty-handed.

The body of his lover was gone. He could not look at what had been left in its place.

He began to cry, hoping it *had* been an exchange; hoping that what lay on the sofa was not Siri.

**T**he bahut contained more items than its outside dimensions would have indicated. It held grimoires and many notebooks filled with Siri's handwriting. It held talismans and runic symbols in stone and silver and wood. It held vials of powders and hair and bird-claws and bits of matter, each vial labeled clearly. It held conjurations and phials and philtres and maps and directions and exorcising spells. It held the key to finding True Love.

But it also held Siri's observations of what had happened to her when she had summoned the entity she called "the supreme hideousness, the most evil of the ten Sephiroths, the vile Adrammelech." He read the ledgers until his eyes burned, and when his fingers left the pages, the paper was smudged with his sweat. He began to tremble, there in the room where the smell of Surgat's dining table lingered, and knew he could not summon the strength to summon this most powerful of dark beings.

He read every word on every page Siri had written; and he vowed silently that he would pick up her quest where she had fallen. But he could not go to her informant. His assistance had cost her too much,

and she had been unable to go on. The price was too high.

But there were clues to the trail of the artifact that was True Love. And he took the bahut and left the apartment on Nguyen Cong Tru Street, and never returned. He had money to continue the search, and he would do it without help from things that dragged long, rubbery arms through the dust of fallen temples.

All he had to do was wait for the end of the war.

By 1975 Christopher Caperton had traced it to New Orleans. He was thirty-five years old; he had been married and divorced because in a moment of weariness he had thought *she* might suffice in place of True Love; and he wrote this in his journal: *It is the vanity of searching for embodiments. Flèches d'amour. Incarnations which are never satisfactory, which never answer all longings and questions.*

Once, when he had thought he might die of a jungle fever contracted while running down a false clue in Paramaribo, he heard himself cursing Siri's memory. If she had not told him it actually existed, he might have settled for something less, never knowing for certain that there was more. But he *did* know, and in his tantrum of fever he cursed her to Hell.

When he recovered, he was more than ashamed of himself. Considering who she had been, where she had gone, and the owners of her spirit, he might have called down a sentence on her that she did not deserve. One never knew the total cost, nor at what point the obligation was considered voided.

After he had been rotated home in 1970 he spent a few months tying up all previous relationships—family, friends, business associates, acquaintances—and set out on the trail that had grown cold since 1946.

Without dipping into capital he was able to underwrite his expenses handsomely. Even though the gnomes of Zurich had done away with unnumbered, secret accounts, he had made his money in a way that caused no concern among the assessors, customhouse officials, tithe-seekers and running-dogs of the IRS desiring duty, levy, tribute, tallage, liver and lights. He moved freely under a variety of passports and a number of names. He came to think of himself as a nameless, stateless person, someone out of a Graham Greene suspense novel.

There were clues, beginning with one of the appraisers who had worked on the Ford bequests. He was quite old by the time Chris located him in a retirement trailer camp in Sun City, but he remembered the item clearly. No, he had never seen it; it was crated with specific instructions that it should not, under even the most extreme circumstances, be opened. If he was lying, he did it well. Chris was paying a high enough premium for the information that it didn't matter

either way. But the trail picked up with the old appraiser's recollection that whatever the crate had contained, it had been bequeathed to a contemporary of Henry Ford's, a man with whom he had been friends and then fallen out, fifty years before.

Chris managed to locate the bills of lading and traced the crate to Madison, Indiana. The recipient of the crate had been deceased for fifteen years. The contents of the crate had been sold at auction . . .

And so it went. From place to place. From clue to clue. And each clue indicated that having been in touch with the artifact, the owner had known great joy or great sorrow; but all were dead. The Holy Grail always lay just ahead, always out of Chris's reach. Yet he could never bring himself to take the easy way out: to summon up the horror Siri had called Adrammelech. He knew if he finally gave in, that even if he found True Love he would never be able to savor it.

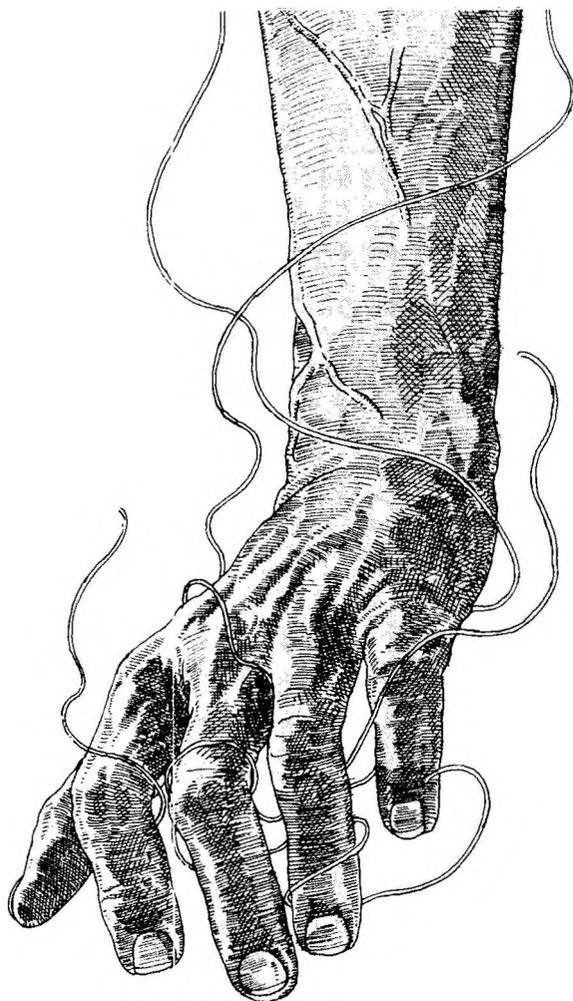
In January of 1975 Christopher Caperton followed a clue from Trinidad to New Orleans. His source had assured him that the artifact had passed into the hands of a *houngan*, a priest of the *conjur*, a disciple of the voodoo of Doctor Cat, a pioneer of mail order Voodoo in 1914.

On Perdido Street, in a back room lit only by votive candles in rubyglass jars, Chris met "Prince Basile Thibodeux," whose title at birth had been merely Willie Link Dunbar. Prince Basile swore he had known and loved the real and true Marie Laveau. As the old black man looked no more than sixty—though he claimed to be ninety-two—such a claim was, either way, highly dubious. Absolute proof exists that Marie Laveau, the first of the many Marie Laveaus, died on June 24th, 1881, at the approximate age of eighty-five. Two years before Willie Link "Thibodeux" had been born, if he was ninety-two; and thirty-four, if he was lying.

Christopher Caperton did not care what lies Prince Basile told to sell his worthless hoodoo goods in the drugstore of Love Oils, Goofer Dust, Devil's Shoe Strings, and War Water, as long as he told him a straight story about the artifact.

When he walked into the little back room, washed in bloody shadows from the candles, he was prepared to pay a premium price for the information he sought; or to assure Prince Basile that there were two men living on Prytania Street who would, for only a fraction of that premium price, inflict great bodily sorrow on a sixty- or ninety-two-year-old black man, and he would worry about the black goat dancing on his grave at a later time. But Prince Basile took one look at him and fear filled the withered face. "Doan put dat *gris-gris* on me, mistuh," he pleaded. "Jus' whatever you want, that's be what you gone get. Ah'm at y'service."

And Chris walked out of the little back room on Perdido Street with the information—that he knew to



be absolutely reliable because no one that terrified could lie without dying in the act—that Willie Link Dunbar had worked on a smuggling operation from the Islands to the Keys in 1971 and he had seen the artifact. He swore before Da nballa that he could not remember what it looked like . . . but it had been as lovely as anything he knew. His face, when he said it, was a strange mix of terror at the sight of Chris and joy at the last scintilla of memory of what he had seen.

And he told Chris the name of the smuggler who had taken the item from the boat.

And when Chris asked him why he was so frightened of just another white man, Prince Basile said, "You been kissin' the Old Ones. I kilt a hunnerd crows and cocks and I couldn't save mah soul if you was t'touch me, mistuh. I be jus' playin' at whut I does, but *you* . . . you knows the fire."

Chris shuddered. And that was only from a minor, weak servant of Adrammelech. He left hurriedly.

He stood in the darkness of the alley off Perdido Street and thought about it, about True Love, whatever it was. He had wanted it for so long, had sought it in so many women, had glimpsed hints of its totality so many times, that he only now paused to examine what he had become. Even if he got it, would he be worthy of it? Wasn't the one who found the Holy Grail supposed to be pure in every way, perfect in every way, without flaw or blemish or self-doubt? Knights on white chargers, saints, defenders of the faith; those were the can-

didates for the honor: Prince Charming always won Snow White, not Porky Pig.

Without flaw. No, not without flaw. He had come too far for perfection. He had had to experience too much.

Yet he knew he was closer to True Love than anyone had ever been. Not even those who had possessed it had known what to do with it. He knew he had it within himself to become one with True Love, as no one before him ever could. No one. Not one of the perhaps thousand owners of it before and since it found its way to the Palace of Minos, no matter how fine or great or deserving they had been.

Christopher Caperton knew his destiny was to hold True Love in his hands. Known to demons, casting no shadow, he walked away from the fear in Perdido Street.

The final clue was so mundane he could not even breathe a sigh of relief. True Love had been sold in blind bid auction at Sotheby's in April of 1979. It now belonged to a man who lived high above the rest of the human race, in a tower overlooking New York, where almost eight million people gave a portion of each day to wondering where True Love resided.

From Siri's notebooks Chris recognized the name of the man. In 1932 he had visited New York City for the opening of the Radio City Music Hall. The artifact had been stolen from him. He had spent forty-seven years trying to regain his lost property. In the process, somehow, he had become enormously powerful, enormously wealthy, enormously secretive.

Home again, home again, jiggedy jig.

Christopher Caperton took one final look at the cover of the December 1980 issue of *Esquire*. It showed a woman in a seductive bridal gown. The cover illustrated an article called *Looking for a Wife* and the slug-line read, "With all the beautiful, intelligent women out there, why is she so hard to find?"

He smiled thinking they might have done the reverse on *Ms.* magazine, with a photograph of an equally unreachable male.

The model they had selected for the shot was achingly innocent, yet seductive; poised in a timeless moment of utter perfection. Had he been anyone else, this might well have been the physical manifestation of True Love for him.

But it was only the most recent in a congeries of photos, motion pictures, billboards and women glimpsed in cars going past on city streets who were idealized manifestations of what he sought.

Tonight he would hold the real thing. Tonight he would obtain True Love.

He put the last of the vials from Siri's bahut he might need in the capacious pockets of his London Fog topcoat, and left the hotel. It was thirty degrees in the Manhattan streets, and the wind was blowing in off the

East River. By tomorrow, perhaps before two A.M., there would be snow. It was the sort of evening he had always imagined for this final leg of the journey.

Christopher Caperton was forty years old.

Every bribe had been well-placed. The boiler room door was unlocked. The key to the private service elevator had been properly copied. No one stopped him.

He walked through the palatial tower suite in darkness. He heard a door closing away off in the rear of the apartment. The floor-plan he had been given was precise and he touched nothing as he walked quickly to the door of the master bedroom.

The old man was lying in the exact center of the huge bed. As reported, he was dying.

Chris closed the door behind him. Only one light near the bed illuminated the room. The old man opened his eyes and looked at Chris. His eyes were very blue.

"There's never enough money to buy silence, boy. You can buy entrance, but not silence. There's always some mouth that's hungrier."

Chris smiled and walked to the bed. "I would have tried to bargain with you if I'd thought it would do any good. I'm not a thief by profession."

The old man snorted softly. He didn't seem to be in pain. "No price."

"Yes, I rather thought that might be the case. But look on the bright side: you can't take it with you, it won't do you any good on the other side; and I've been looking for it for a long time."

The old man laughed gently, no more strenuously than he had snorted. "What the hell do I care how long you looked for it, boy? Not as long as I looked for it."

"Since Christmas, 1932."

"Well, well. You did your homework, did you?"

"I've paid as much as you, in all kinds of coin."

"Not my concern, boy. You'll never find it."

"It's here. In this room. In the safe."

The old man's eyes widened. "Smarter than I thought. Didn't stop any of that cash you were doling out; got good people working for me; didn't see any reason why they shouldn't pick up a few extra dollars; they've got families to take care of. Didn't expect you'd know about the safe."

"I know about it."

"Doesn't matter. You'll look forever and never find it. Even if you do, you'll never get it open." He coughed shallowly, smiled at the ceiling and recited: "Hidden where you can't find it; but if you do you'll be looking at six-foot-thick walls of concrete reinforced with molybdenum-steel alloy cords, backed by a foot of tempered high-carbon high-chromium steel, another foot of unseamed silico-manganese shock-resisting steel and six inches of eighteen-tungsten, four-chrome, one-vanadium high-speed industrial tool steel. The vault door is stainless steel faced, an inch and a half of

cast steel, another twelve inches of burn-resisting steel, another inch and a half of open-hearth steel, and the pneumatic hinges are inside the sandwich. The vault door has twenty bolts, each an inch in diameter: eight on one side, eight on the other, two top and two bottom. This holds the door into a sixteen-inch jamb of moly-tungsten high-speed steel, set into eighteen inches of concrete crosshatched by burn-resisting steel bars running horizontally and vertically." He coughed once more, pleased with himself, and added as a fillip, "The door's precision-made so you can't pour nitro in between the seam of the door and the vault."

Chris let a beaten look cross his face. "And I suppose that isn't even all of it. I suppose there are thermostats that trip some kind of trap if the temperature rises . . . if I used a torch."

"You got some smarts, boy. Tear gas. And the floor gets electrified." He was grinning widely now, but what little color had been in his face was gone. His eyes were closing.

"You beat me," Chris said. "I guess it's yours to keep."

But the old man only heard the first part. By the end, Chris was talking to himself. The old man was gone.

"On the other hand," Chris said softly, "there's no lock that can't be opened."

He stood by the bed for a while, staring down at the previous owner of True Love. He didn't seem to have died happier or sadder for having passed on with it in his possession.

Then Christopher Caperton got down on his knees in the center of the great bedroom and took out the vial Siri had labeled *Blood of Helomi* and he unstoppered the vial and began sprinkling out the dusty contents in lines that formed the pentagram of Solomon. He placed the candles and lit them; and he stood in the center of the design. And he read from a smudged piece of paper twelve years old.

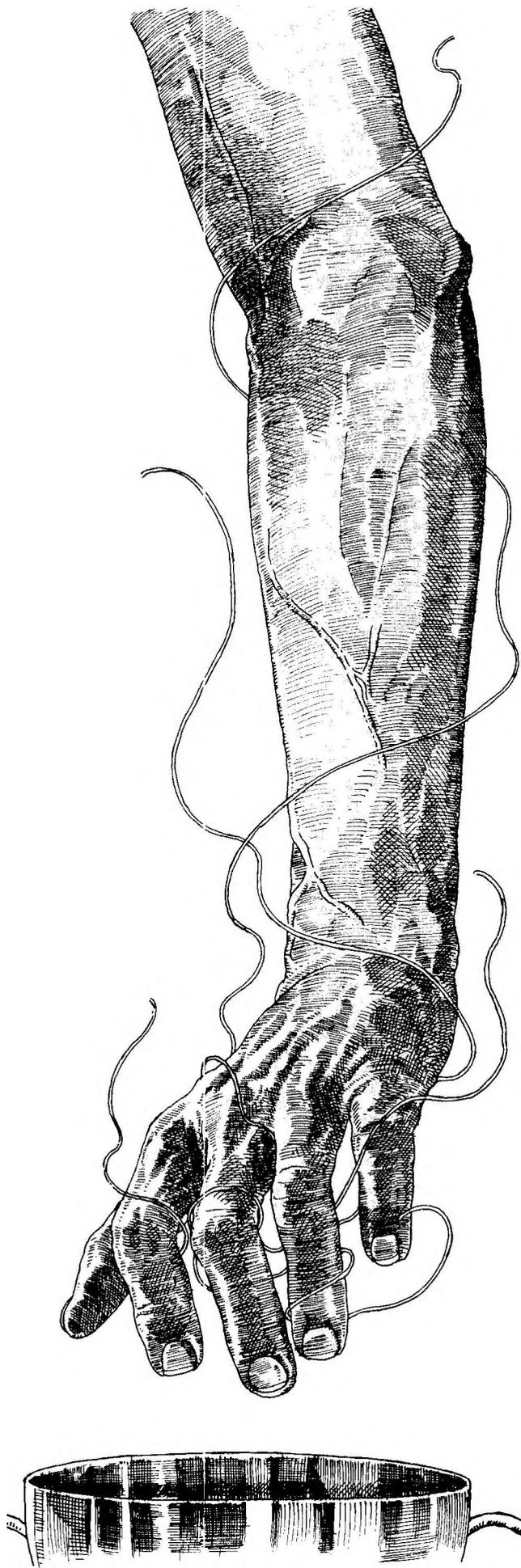
And Surgat came again.

This time it came to the tower suite; this time it did not take Chris to the fallen temple. And this time it spoke in the soft, refined voice it had used when taking Siri's body.

"So soon?" Surgat said. "You need me again so soon?"

Chris felt nausea rising in this throat. The demon had not been dining this time. It had been indulging in whatever passed for fornication among demons. Its love-partner was still attached. Whatever it was, it wasn't human. (A momentary thought shrieked through Chris's skull. Might it ever have *been* human; and might it have been . . . ? He slammed the lid on the thought.)

"Twelve years . . . it's been twelve years . . ." Chris said, with difficulty.



Surgat let a human face appear in its stomach and the human face smiled offhandedly. "How time flies when one is enjoying oneself." The love-partner moaned and gave a spastic twitch.

Chris would not think of it.

"Open the safe," he ordered the demon.

"I'll need you out here to assist me. In one of my very difficult rituals." The voice was a snake's hiss, from the moth's head.

"Go fuck yourself. Open the safe."

"But I *need* you," the demon said, wheedling disingenuously.

Chris fished in his topcoat pocket for a scrap of parchment from the bahut. He began to read. "By the powerful Principality of the infernal abysses, I conjure thee with power and with exorcism; I warn thee hearken forthwith and immediately to my words; observe them inviolably, as sentences of the last dreadful day of judgment, which thou must obey inviolably . . ."

As he began to speak, a sweat of pus and blood began to break out on the demon's armored flesh. Soft purple bruises appeared, as if Surgat were being struck from within.

"I hear. I obey!"

And it reached for the hair. Chris took the vial of fox hairs from his pocket, withdrew one and handed it across the invisible plane. The hair burst into flame as before, and Surgat turned, aiming the flame at the ceiling. The fire washed the ceiling of the tower suite bedroom and the ceiling opened and the central section of the floor on which Chris stood rose up on hydraulic lifts into a chamber above the penthouse.

Then Surgat turned the flame on the stainless steel door of the vault that formed the wall of the chamber above, and the door swung open ponderously. And the vault within was revealed.

Then Chris intoned the license to depart, but before Surgat vanished it said, "Master, powerful Master, may I leave you with a gift?"

"No. I don't want anything more from you, not ever again."

"But Master, you will need this gift. I swear by my Lord Adrammelech."

Chris felt terror swirl through him. "What is it?"

"Then you willingly accept my gift without condition or let?"

Chris heard Siri's voice in his memory: *He won't harm you. He serves only one purpose: he opens all locks. Just be careful.* "Yes, I accept the gift."

Surgat caused a pool of stagnant water to appear just beyond the protective design. Then the human face appeared again. In the thorax of the insect Surgat had become, and the human face smiled invitingly and said, "Look," and Surgat sucked in within itself and grew smaller and smaller and then vanished.

Leaving the pool of foul water in which Chris saw—

A scene from a motion picture. He recognized it. A scene from *Citizen Kane*. A day in 1940. The interior of the skyscraper office of the old man, Bernstein. He is being interviewed by the newsreel researcher, Thompson, who asks him what Charles Foster Kane's dying word, "Rosebud," meant.

Bernstein thinks, then says, "Maybe some girl? There were a lot of them back in the early days and—"

Thompson is amused. He says, "It's hardly likely, Mr. Bernstein, that Mr. Kane could have met some girl casually and then, fifty years later, on his deathbed—"

Bernstein cuts in. "You're pretty young, Mr.—" he remembers the name, "—Mr. Thompson. A fellow will remember things you wouldn't think he'd remember. You take me. One day, back in 1896, I was crossing over to Jersey on a ferry and as we pulled out there was another ferry pulling in." Everett Sloane, as the aged Bernstein, looks wistful, speaks slowly. "And on it there was a girl waiting to get off. A white dress she had on . . . and she was carrying a white parasol . . . and I only saw her for one second and she didn't see me at all . . . but I'll bet a month hasn't gone by since that I haven't thought of that girl." He smiles triumphantly. "See what I mean?"

And the scene faded, and the water boiled away, and Chris was alone in the dimly-lit vault room above the tower suite. Alone with the dawning fear that he had learned too much.

He saw himself suddenly as a human puppet, controlled from above by a nameless force that held every man and woman on the end of strings, making them dance the dance, manipulating them to seek the unobtainable, denying them peace or contentment because of the promise of a Holy Grail out there somewhere.

Even if the strings were broken, and puny mortals wandered the blasted landscape of their lives on their own, they would finally, inevitably, tragically return to the great puppeteer; to try and retie the strings. Better to dance the hopeless dance that lied about True Love than to admit they were all alone, that they might never, never find that perfect image to become one with. He stood in the center of the pentagram of Solomon and thought of the achingly beautiful girl on the cover of *Esquire*. The girl who was not real. True Love. Snare and delusion? He felt tears on his cheeks, and shook his head. No, it was here. It was just inside the threshold of the vault. It existed. It had a form and a reality. The truth was only a few footsteps from him. Siri could not have died for it if it weren't real.

He stepped out of the magic design and walked to the door of the vault. He kept his eyes down. He stepped over the raised jamb and heard his footsteps on the steel floor.

The vault was lit by hidden tubing at the

junction of walls and ceiling. A soft off-white glow that filled the vault.

He looked up slowly.

It sat on a pedestal of silver and lucite.

He looked at True Love.

It was an enormous loving cup. It was as gaudy as a bowling trophy. Exactly one and a half feet high, with handles. Engraved on the face were the words *True Love* in flowing script, embellished with flourishes. It shone with a light of its own, and the glow was the brassy color of an intramural award.

Christopher Caperton stood with his arms hanging at his sides. It was in him, at that moment, to laugh. But he had the certain knowledge that if he laughed, he would never stop; and they would come in to get the old man's body this morning and find him still standing there, crying piteously and laughing.

He had come through a time and a distance to get this real artifact, and he would take it. He stepped to the pedestal and reached for it. Remembering at the last moment the demon's gift.

Surgat could not touch him; but Surgat could reach him.

He looked down into the loving cup that was True Love and in the silver liquid swirling there he saw the face of True Love. For an instant it was his mother, then it was Miss O'Hara, then it was poor Jean Kettner, then it was Briony Catling, then it was Helen Gahagan, then it was Marta Toren, then it was the girl to whom he had lost his virginity, then it was one woman after another he had known, then it was Siri—but was Siri no longer than any of the others—then it was his wife, then it was the face of the achingly beautiful bride on the cover of *Esquire*, and then it resolved finally into the most unforgettable face he had ever seen. And it stayed.

It was no face he recognized.

Years later, when he was near death, Christopher Caperton wrote the answer to the search for True Love in his journal. He wrote it simply, as a quotation from the Japanese poet Tanaka Katsumi.

What he wrote was this:

"I know that my true friend will appear after my death, and my sweetheart died before I was born."

In that instant when he saw the face of True Love, Christopher Caperton knew the awful gift the demon had given him. To reach the finest moment of one's life, and to *know* it was the finest moment, that there would never be a more golden, more perfect, nobler or loftier or thrilling moment . . . and to continue to have to live a life that was all on the downhill side.

That was the curse and the blessing.

He knew, at last, that he *was* worthy of such a thing. In torment and sadness he knew he was *just* that worthy, and no more.

But it's easy to be smart . . . later. 17



HIS COLLEGE DAYS, THE LOVE-INS, THE FLOWER-CHILD FANTASIES— ALL HAD VANISHED LIKE A PUFF OF POT-SMOKE . . . OR SO HE THOUGHT. BUT THEN AN UNWELCOME VISITOR TAUGHT HIM THE IMPORTANCE OF

## REMEMBERING MELODY

BY GEORGE R. R. MARTIN

**T**ed was shaving when the doorbell sounded. It startled him so badly that he cut himself. His condominium was on the thirty-second floor, and Jack the doorman generally gave him advance warning of any prospective visitors. This had to be someone from the building, then. Except that Ted didn't know anyone in the building, at least not beyond the trade-smiles-in-the-elevator level.

"Coming," he shouted. Scowling, he snatched up a towel and wiped the lather from his face, then dabbed at his cut with a tissue. "Shit," he said loudly to his face in the mirror. He had to be in court this afternoon. If this was another Jehovah's Witness like the one who'd gotten past Jack last month, they were going to be in for a very rough time indeed.

The buzzer buzzed again. "Coming, dammit," Ted yelled. He made a final dab at the blood on his neck, then threw the tissue into the wastebasket and strode across the sunken living room to the door. He peered through the eyehole carefully before he opened. "Oh, hell," he muttered. Before she could buzz again, Ted slid off the chain and threw open the door.

"Hello, Melody," he said.

She smiled wanly. "Hi, Ted," she replied. She had an old suitcase in her hand, a battered cloth bag with a hideous red-and-black plaid pattern, its broken handle replaced by a length of rope. The last time Ted had seen her, three years before, she'd looked terrible. Now she looked worse. Her clothes—shorts and a tie-dyed T-shirt—were wrinkled and dirty, and emphasized how gaunt she'd become. Her ribs showed through plainly; her legs were pipestems. Her long stringy blond hair hadn't been washed recently, and her face was red and puffy, as if she'd been crying. That was no surprise. Melody was always crying about one thing or another.

"Aren't you going to ask me in, Ted?"

Ted grimaced. He certainly didn't *want* to ask her in. He knew from past experience how difficult it was to get her out again. But he couldn't just leave her standing in the hall with her suitcase in hand. After all, he thought sourly, she was an old and dear friend. "Oh, sure," he said. He gestured. "Come on in."

He took her bag from her and set it by the door,

then led her into the kitchen and put on some water to boil. "You look as though you could use a cup of coffee," he said, trying to keep his voice friendly.

Melody smiled again. "Don't you remember, Ted? I don't drink coffee. It's no good for you, Ted. I used to tell you that. Don't you remember?" She got up from the kitchen table and began rummaging through his cupboards. "Do you have any hot chocolate?" she asked. "I like hot chocolate."

"I don't drink hot chocolate," he said. "Just a lot of coffee."

"You shouldn't," she said. "It's no good for you."

"Yeah," he said. "Do you want juice? I've got juice."

Melody nodded. "Fine."

He poured her a glass of orange juice and led her back to the table, then spooned some Maxim into a mug while he waited for his kettle to whistle. "So," he asked, "what brings you to Chicago?"

Melody began to cry. Ted leaned back against the stove and watched her. She was a very noisy crier, and she produced an amazing amount of tears for someone who cried so often. She didn't look up until the water began to boil. Ted poured some into his cup and stirred in a teaspoon of sugar. Her face was redder and puffier than ever. Her eyes fixed on him accusingly. "Things have been real bad," she said. "I need help, Ted. I don't have anyplace to live. I thought maybe I could stay with you awhile. Things have been real bad."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Melody," Ted replied, sipping at his coffee thoughtfully. "You can stay here for a few days, if you want. But no longer. I'm not in the market for a roommate." She always made him feel like such a bastard, but it was better to be firm with her right from the start.

Melody began to cry again when he mentioned roommates. "You used to say I was a *good* roommate," she whined. "We used to have fun, don't you remember? You were my friend."

Ted set down his coffee mug and looked at the kitchen clock. "I don't have time to talk about old times right now," he said. "I was shaving when you rang. I've got to get to the office." He frowned. "Drink your juice and make yourself at home. I've got to get dressed." He turned abruptly and left her weeping at the kitchen table.

Back in the bathroom, Ted finished shaving and tended to his cut more properly, his mind full of Melody. Already he could tell that this was going to be difficult. He felt sorry for her—she was messed up and miserably unhappy, with no one to turn to—but he wasn't going to let her inflict all her troubles on him. Not this time. She'd done it too many times before.

In his bedroom, Ted stared pensively into the closet for a long time before selecting the gray suit. He knotted his tie carefully in the mirror, scowling at his

cut. Then he checked his briefcase to make sure all the papers on the Syndio case were in order, nodded, and walked back into the kitchen.

Melody was at the stove, making pancakes. She turned and smiled at him happily when he entered. "You remember my pancakes, Ted?" she asked. "You used to love it when I made pancakes, especially blueberry pancakes, you remember? You didn't have any blueberries, though, so I'm just making plain. Is that all right?"

"Jesus," Ted muttered. "Dammit, Melody, who said you should make *anything*? I told you I had to get to the office. I don't have time to eat with you. I'm late already. Anyway, I don't eat breakfast. I'm trying to lose weight."

Tears began to trickle from her eyes again. "But—but these are my special pancakes, Ted. What am I going to do with them? What am I going to *do*?"

"Eat them," Ted said. "You could use a few extra pounds. Jesus, you look terrible. You look like you haven't eaten for a month."

Melody's face screwed up and became ugly. "You bastard," she said. "You're supposed to be my *friend*."

Ted sighed. "Take it easy," he said. He glanced at his watch. "Look, I'm fifteen minutes late already. I've got to go. You eat your pancakes and get some sleep. I'll be back around six. We can have dinner together and talk, all right? Is that what you want?"

"That would be nice," she said, suddenly contrite. "That would be real nice."

"Tell Jill I want to see her in my office, right away," Ted snapped to the secretary when he arrived. "And get us some coffee, will you? I really need some coffee."

"Sure."

Jill arrived a few minutes after the coffee. She and Ted were associates in the same law firm. He motioned her to a seat and pushed a cup at her. "Sit down," he said. "Look, the date's off tonight. I've got problems."

"You look it," she said. "What's wrong?"

"An old friend showed up on my doorstep this morning."

Jill arched one elegant eyebrow. "So?" she said. "Reunions can be fun."

"Not with Melody they can't."

"Melody?" she said. "A pretty name. An old flame, Ted? What is it, unrequited love?"

"No," he said, "no, it wasn't like that."

"Tell me what it was like, then. You know I love the gory details."

"Melody and I were roommates back in college. Not just us—don't get the wrong idea. There were four of us. Me and a guy named Michael Englehart, Melody and another girl, Anne Kaye. The four of us shared a big run-down house for two years. We were—friends."

# HE WASN'T GOING TO LET HER INFLICT ALL HER TROUBLES ON HIM. NOT THIS TIME.

"Friends?" Jill looked skeptical.

Ted scowled at her. "Friends," he repeated. "Oh, hell. I slept with Melody a few times. With Anne, too. And both of them talled Michael a time or two. But when it happened, it was just kind of—kind of *friendly*, you know? Our love lives were mostly with outsiders. We used to tell each other our troubles, swap advice, cry on one another's shoulders. Hell, I know it sounds weird. It was 1970, though. I had hair down to my ass. Everything was weird." He sloshed the dregs of his coffee around in the cup and looked pensive. "They were good times, too. Special times. Sometimes I'm sorry they had to end. The four of us were close, really close. I loved those people."

"Watch out," Jill said, "I'll get jealous. My roommate and I cordially despised each other." She smiled. "So what happened?"

Ted shrugged. "The usual story," he said. "We graduated, drifted apart. I remember the last night in the old house. We smoked a ton of dope and got very silly. Swore eternal friendship. We weren't ever going to be strangers, no matter what happened, and if any of us ever needed help, well, the other three would always be there. We sealed the bargain with—well, kind of an orgy."

Jill smiled. "Touching," she said. "I never dreamed you had it in you."

"It didn't last, of course," Ted continued. "We tried, I'll give us that much. But things changed too much. I went on to law school, wound up here in Chicago. Michael got a job with a publishing house in New York City. He's an editor at Random House now, been married and divorced, two kids. We used to write. Now we trade Christmas cards. Anne's a teacher. She was down in Phoenix the last I heard, but that was four, five years ago. Her husband didn't like the rest of us much, the one time we had a reunion. I think Anne must have told him about the orgy."

"And your house guest?"

"Melody," he sighed. "She became a problem. In college, she was wonderful: gutsy, pretty, a real free spirit. But afterwards, she couldn't cut it. She tried to make it as a painter for a couple of years, but she wasn't good enough. Got nowhere. She went through a couple of relationships that turned sour, then married some guy about a week after she'd met him in a singles bar. That was terrible. He used to get drunk and beat her. She took about six months of it, and finally got a divorce. He still came around to beat her up for a year, until he finally got frightened off. After that, Melody got into drugs—bad. She spent some time in an asylum. When she got out, it was more of the same. She

can't hold a job or stay away from drugs. Her relationships don't last more than a few weeks. She's let her body go to hell." He shook his head.

Jill pursed her lips. "Sounds like a lady who needs help," she said.

Ted flushed and grew angry. "You think I don't know that? You think we haven't tried to help her? *Jesus!* When she was trying to be an artist, Michael got her a couple of cover assignments from the paperback house he was with. Not only did she blow the deadlines, but she got into a screaming match with the art director. Almost cost Michael his job. I flew to Cleveland and handled her divorce for her, gratis. Flew back a couple of months later and spent quite a while there trying to get the cops to give her protection against her ex-hubby. Anne took her in when she had no place to live, got her into a drug rehabilitation program. In return, Melody tried to seduce her boyfriend—said she wanted to *share* him, like they'd done in the old days. All of us have lent her money. She's never paid back any of it. And we've listened to her troubles, God but we've listened to her troubles. There was a period a few years ago when she'd phone every week, usually collect, with some new sad story. She cried over the phone a lot. If *Queen for a Day* was still on TV, Melody would be a natural!"

"I'm beginning to see why you're not thrilled by her visit," Jill said dryly. "What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," Ted replied. "I shouldn't have let her in. The last few times she's called, I just hung up on her, and that seemed to work pretty well. Felt guilty about it at first, but that passed. This morning, though, she looked so pathetic that I didn't know how to send her away. I suppose eventually I'll have to get brutal and go through a scene. Nothing else works. She'll make a lot of accusations, remind me of what good friends we were and the promises we made, threaten to kill herself. Fun times ahead."

"Can I help?" Jill asked.

"Pick up my pieces afterwards," Ted said. "It's always nice to have someone around afterwards to tell you that you're not a son-of-a-bitch even though you just kicked an old dear friend out into the gutter."

He was terrible in court that afternoon. His thoughts were full of Melody, and the strategies that most occupied him concerned how to get rid of her most painlessly, instead of the case at hand. Melody had danced flamenco on his psyche too many times before; Ted wasn't going to let her leech off him this time, nor leave him an emotional wreck.

When he got back to his condo with a bag of Chinese food under his arm—he'd decided he didn't want to take her out to a restaurant—Melody was sitting nude in the middle of his conversation pit, giggling and sniffing some white powder. She looked up at Ted happily when he entered. "Here," she said. "I scored some coke."

"Jesus," he swore. He dropped the Chinese food and his briefcase, and strode furiously across the carpet. "I don't believe you," he roared. "I'm a lawyer, for Chrissakes. Do you want to get me disbarred?"

Melody had the coke in a little paper square and was sniffing it from a rolled-up dollar bill. Ted snatched it all away from her, and she began to cry. He went to the bathroom and flushed it down the toilet, dollar bill and all. Except it wasn't a dollar bill, he saw as it was sucked out of sight. It was a twenty. That made him even angrier. When he returned to the living room, Melody was still crying.

"Stop that," he said. "I don't want to hear it. And put some clothes on." Another suspicion came to him. "Where did you get the money for that stuff?" he demanded. "Huh, where?"

Melody whimpered. "I sold some stuff," she said in a timid voice. "I didn't think you'd mind. It was good coke." She shied away from him and threw an arm across her face, as if Ted was going to hit her.

Ted didn't need to ask whose stuff she'd sold. He knew: she'd pulled the same trick on Michael years before, or so he'd heard. He sighed. "Get dressed," he repeated wearily. "I brought Chinese food." Later he could check what was missing and phone the insurance company.

"Chinese food is no good for you," Melody said. "It's full of monosodium glutamate. Gives you headaches, Ted." But she got to her feet obediently, if a bit unsteadily, went off towards the bathroom, and came back a few minutes later wearing a halter top and a pair of ratty cutoffs. Nothing else, Ted guessed. A couple of years ago she must have decided that underwear was no good for you.

Ignoring her comment about monosodium glutamate, Ted found some plates and served up the Chinese food in his dining nook. Melody ate it meekly enough, drowning everything in soy sauce. Every few minutes she giggled at some private joke, then grew very serious again and resumed eating. When she broke open her fortune cookie, a wide smile lit her face. "Look, Ted," she said happily, passing the little slip of paper across to him.

He read it. OLD FRIENDS ARE THE BEST FRIENDS, it said. "Oh, shit," he muttered. He didn't even open his own. Melody wanted to know why. "You ought to read it, Ted," she told him. "It's bad luck if you don't read your fortune cookie."

"I don't want to read it," he said. "I'm going to change out of this suit." He rose. "Don't do anything."

But when he came back, she'd put an album on the stereo. At least she hadn't sold that, he thought gratefully.

"Do you want me to dance for you?" she asked. "Remember how I used to dance for you and Michael? Real sexy. . . . You used to tell me how good I danced. I

could of been a dancer if I'd wanted." She did a few dance steps in the middle of his living room, stumbled, and almost fell. It was grotesque

"Sit down, Melody," Ted said, as sternly as he could manage. "We have to talk."

She sat down.

"Don't cry," he said before he started. "You understand that? I don't want you to cry. We can't talk if you're going to cry every time I say anything. You start crying and this conversation is over."

Melody nodded. "I won't cry, Ted," she said. "I feel much better now than this morning. I'm with you now. You make me feel better."

"You're *not* with me, Melody. Stop that."

Her eyes filled up with tears. "You're my friend, Ted. You and Michael and Anne, you're the special ones."

He sighed. "What's wrong, Melody? Why are you here?"

"I lost my job, Ted," she said.

"The waitress job?" he asked. The last time he'd seen her, three years ago, she'd been waiting tables in a bar in Kansas City.

Melody blinked at him, confused. "Waitress?" she said. "No, Ted. That was before. That was in Kansas City. Don't you remember?"

"I remember very well," he said. "What job was it you lost?"

"It was a shitty job," Melody said. "A factory job. It was in Iowa. In Des Moines. Des Moines is a shitty place. I didn't come to work, so they fired me. I was strung out, you know? I needed a couple days off. I would have come back to work. But they fired me." She looked close to tears again. "I haven't had a good job in a long time, Ted. I was an art major. You remember? You and Michael and Anne used to have my drawings hung



up in your rooms. You still have my drawings, Ted?"

"Yes," he lied. "Sure. Somewhere." He'd gotten rid of them years ago. They reminded him too much of Melody, and that was too painful.

"Anyway, when I lost my job, Johnny said I wasn't bringing in any money. Johnny was the guy I lived with. He said he wasn't gonna support me, that I had to get some job, but I couldn't. I *tried*, Ted, but I couldn't. So Johnny talked to some man, and he got me this job in a massage parlor, you know. And he took me down there, but it was crummy. I didn't want to work in no massage parlor, Ted. I used to be an art major."

"I remember, Melody," Ted said. She seemed to expect him to say something.

Melody nodded. "So I didn't take it, and Johnny threw me out. I had no place to go, you know. And I thought of you, and Anne, and Michael. Remember the last night? We all said that if anyone ever needed help. . . ."

"I remember, Melody," Ted said. "Not as often as you do, but I remember. You don't ever let any of us forget it, do you? But let it pass. What do you want this time?" His tone was flat and cold.

"You're a lawyer, Ted," she said.

"Yes."

"So, I thought.—" Her long, thin fingers plucked nervously at her face. "I thought maybe you could get me a job. I could be a secretary, maybe. In your office. We could be together again, every day, like it used to be. Or maybe—" She brightened visibly. "—maybe I could be one of those people who draw pictures in the courtroom. You know. Like of Patty Hearst and people like that. On TV. I'd be good at that."

"Those artists work for the TV stations," Ted said patiently. "And there are no openings in my office. I'm sorry, Melody. I can't get you a job."

Melody took that surprisingly well. "All right, Ted," she said. "I can find a job, I guess. I'll get one all by myself. Only—only let me live here, okay? We can be roommates again."

"Oh, Jesus," Ted said. He sat back and crossed his arms. "No," he said flatly.

Melody took her hand away from her face and stared at him imploringly. "Please, Ted," she whispered. "Please."

"No," he said. The word hung there, chill and final.

"You're my *friend*, Ted," she said. "You *promised*."

"You can stay here a week," he said. "No longer. I have my own life, Melody. I have my own problems. I'm tired of dealing with yours. We all are. You're nothing but problems. In college, you were fun. You're not fun any longer. I've helped you and helped you and helped you. How goddam much do you want out of me?" He was getting angrier as he talked. "Things change, Melody," he said brutally. "People change. You can't

hold me forever to some dumb promise I made when I was stoned out of my mind back in college. I'm not responsible for your life. Tough up, dammit. Pull yourself together. I can't do it for you, and I'm sick of all your shit. I don't even like to see you anymore, Melody, you know that?"

She whimpered. "Don't say that, Ted. We're friends. You're special. As long as I have you and Michael and Anne, I'll never be alone, don't you see?"

"You *are* alone," he said. Melody infuriated him.

"No, I'm not," she insisted. "I have my friends, my special friends. They'll help me. You're my *friend*, Ted."

"I used to be your friend," he replied.

She stared at him, her lip trembling, hurt beyond words. For a moment he thought that the dam was going to burst, that Melody was finally about to break down and begin one of her marathon crying jags. Instead, a change came over her face. She paled perceptibly, and her lips drew back slowly, and her expression settled into a terrible mask of anger. She was hideous when she was angry. "You bastard," she said.

Ted had been this route too. He got up from the couch and walked to his bar. "Don't start," he said, pouring himself a glass of Chivas Regal on the rocks. "The first thing you throw, you're out on your ass. Got that, Melody?"

"You scum," she repeated. "You were never my friend. None of you were. You lied to me, made me trust you, used me. Now you're all so high and mighty and I'm nothing, and you don't want to know me. You don't want to help me. You never wanted to help me."

"I did help you," Ted pointed out. "Several times. You owe me something close to two thousand dollars, I believe."

"Money," she said. "That's all you care about, you bastard."

Ted sipped at his scotch and frowned at her. "Go to hell," he said.

"I could, for all you care." Her face had gone white. "I cabled you, two years ago. I cabled all three of you. I needed you, you promised that you'd come if I needed you, that you'd be there, you promised that and you made love to me and you were my friend, but I cabled you and you didn't come, you bastard, you didn't come, none of you came, none of you came." She was screaming.

Ted had forgotten about the telegram. But it came back to him in a rush. He'd read it over several times, and finally he'd picked up the phone and called Michael. Michael hadn't been in. So he'd reread the telegram one last time, then crumbled it up and flushed it down the toilet. One of the others could go to her this time, he remembered thinking. He had a big case, the Argrath Corporation patent suit, and he couldn't risk leaving it. But it had been a desperate

telegram, and he'd been guilty about it for weeks, until he finally managed to put the whole thing out of his mind. "I was busy," he said, his tone half-angry and half-defensive. "I had more important things to do than come hold your hand through another crisis."

"It was *horrible*," Melody screamed. "I needed you and you left me all *alone*. I almost *killed* myself."

"But you didn't, did you?"

"I could have," she said, "I could have killed myself, and you wouldn't even of cared."

Threatening suicide was one of Melody's favorite tricks. Ted had been through it a hundred times before. This time he decided not to take it. "You could have killed yourself," he said calmly, "and we probably wouldn't have cared. I think you're right about that. You would have rotted for weeks before anyone found you, and we probably wouldn't even have heard about it for half a year. And when I did hear, finally, I guess it would have made me sad for an hour or two, remembering how things had been, but then I would have gotten drunk or phoned up my girlfriend or something, and pretty soon I'd have been out of it. And then I could have forgotten all about you."

"You would have been sorry," Melody said.

"No," Ted replied. He strolled back to the bar and freshened his drink. "No, you know, I don't think I would have been sorry. Not in the least. Not guilty, either. So you might as well stop threatening to kill yourself, Melody, because it isn't going to work."

The anger drained out of her face, and she gave a little whimper. "Please, Ted," she said. "Don't say such things. Tell me you'd care. Tell me you'd remember me."

**H**e scowled at her. "No," he said. It was harder when she was pitiful, when she shrunk up all small and vulnerable and whimpered instead of accusing him. But he had to end it once and for all, get rid of this curse on his life.

"I'll go away tomorrow," she said meekly. "I won't bother you. But tell me you care, Ted. That you're my friend. That you'll come to me. If I need you."

"I won't come to you, Melody," he said. "That's over. And I don't want you coming here anymore, or phoning, or sending telegrams, no matter what kind of trouble you're in. You understand? Do you? I want you out of my life, and when you're gone I'm going to forget you as quick as I can, 'cause lady, you are one hell of a bad memory."

Melody cried out as if he had struck her. "No!" she said. "No, don't say that, remember me, you *have* to. I'll leave you alone, I promise I will, I'll never see you again. But say you'll remember me." She stood up abruptly. "I'll go right now," she said. "If you want me to, I'll go. But make love to me first, Ted. Please. I want to give you something to remember me by." She smiled a lascivious little smile and began to struggle out

## HE HAD TO END IT ONCE AND FOR ALL, GET RID OF THIS CURSE ON HIS LIFE.

of her halter top, and Ted felt sick.

He set down his glass with a bang. "You're crazy," he said. "You ought to get professional help, Melody. But I can't give it to you, and I'm not going to put up with this anymore. I'm going out for a walk. I'll be gone a couple of hours. You be gone when I get back."

Ted started for the door. Melody stood looking at him, her halter in her hand. Her breasts looked small and shrunken, and the left one had a tattoo on it that he'd never noticed before. There was nothing even vaguely desirable about her. She whimpered. "I just wanted to give you something to remember me by," she said.

Ted slammed the door.

It was midnight when he returned, drunk and surly, resolved that if Melody was still there, he would call the police and that would be the end of that. Jack was behind the desk, having just gone on duty. Ted stopped and gave him hell for having admitted Melody that morning, but the doorman denied it vehemently. "Wasn't nobody got in, Mr. Cirelli. I don't let in anyone without buzzing up, you ought to know that. I been here six years, and I never let in nobody without buzzing up." Ted reminded him forcefully about the Jehovah's Witness, and they ended up in a shouting match.

Finally Ted stormed away and took the elevator up to the thirty-second floor.

There was a drawing taped to his door.

He blinked at it furiously for a moment, then snatched it down. It was a cartoon, a caricature of Melody. Not the Melody he'd seen today, but the Melody he'd known in college: sharp, funny, pretty. When they'd been roommates, Melody had always illustrated her notes with little cartoons of herself. He was surprised that she could still draw this well. Beneath the face, she'd printed a message.

I LEFT YOU SOMETHING TO REMEMBER ME BY.

Ted scowled down at the cartoon, wondering whether he should keep it or not. His own hesitation made him angry. He crumpled the paper in his hand and fumbled for his keys. At least she's gone, he thought, and maybe for good. If she left the note, it meant that she'd gone. He was rid of her for another couple of years at least.

He went inside, tossed the crumpled ball of paper across the room towards a wastebasket, and smiled when it went in. "Two points," he said loudly to himself, drunk and self-satisfied. He went to the bar and began to mix himself a drink.

But something was wrong.

Ted stopped stirring his drink and listened. The

water was running, he realized. She'd left the water running in the bathroom.

"Christ," he said, and then an awful thought hit him: maybe she hadn't gone after all. Maybe she was still in the bathroom, taking a shower or something, freaked out of her mind, crying, whatever. "*Melody!*" he shouted.

No answer. The water was running, all right. It couldn't be anything else. But she didn't answer.

"Melody, are you still here?" he yelled. "Answer, dammit!"

Silence.

He put down his drink and walked to the bathroom. The door was closed. Ted stood outside. The water was definitely running. "Melody," he said loudly, "are you in there? Melody?"

Nothing. Ted was beginning to be afraid.

He reached out and grasped the doorknob. It turned easily in his hand. The door hadn't been locked.

Inside, the bathroom was filled with steam. He could hardly see, but he made out that the shower curtain was drawn. The shower was running full blast, and judging from the amount of steam, it must be scalding. Ted stepped back and waited for the steam to dissipate. "Melody?" he said softly. There was no reply.

"Shit," he said. He tried not to be afraid. She only talked about it, he told himself; she'd never really do it. The ones who talk about it never do it, he'd read that somewhere. She was just doing this to frighten him.

He took two quick strides across the room and yanked back the shower curtain.

She was there, wreathed in steam, water streaming down her naked body. She wasn't stretched out in the tub at all; she was sitting up, crammed in sideways near the faucets, looking very small and pathetic. Her position seemed half-fetal. The needle spray had been directed down at her, at her hands. She'd opened her wrists with his razor blades and tried to hold them under the water, but it hadn't been enough; she'd slit the veins crosswise, and everybody knew the only way to do it was lengthwise. So she'd used the razor elsewhere, and now she had two mouths, and both of them were smiling at him, smiling. The shower had washed away most of the blood; there were no stains anywhere, but the second mouth below her chin was still red and dripping. Trickles oozed down her chest, over the flower tattooed on her breast, and the spray of the shower caught them and washed them away. Her hair hung down over her cheeks, limp and wet. She was smiling. She looked so happy. The steam was all around her. She'd been in there for hours, he thought. She was very clean.

Ted closed his eyes. It didn't make any difference. He still saw her. He would always see her.

He opened them again; Melody was still smiling. He reached across her and turned off the shower, get-

ting the sleeve of his shirt soaked in the process.

Numb, he fled back into the living room. God, he thought, God. I have to call someone, I have to report this, I can't deal with this. He decided to call the police. He lifted the phone, and hesitated with his finger poised over the buttons. The police won't help, he thought. He punched for Jill.

When he had finished telling her, it grew very silent on the other end of the phone. "My God," she said at last, "how awful. Can I do anything?"

"Come over," he said. "Right away." He found the drink he'd set down, took a hurried sip from it.

Jill hesitated. "Er—look, Ted, I'm not very good at dealing with corpses. Why don't you come over here? I don't want to—well, you know. I don't think I'll ever shower at your place again."

"Jill," he said, stricken. "I need someone right now." He laughed a frightened, uncertain laugh.

"Come over here," she urged.

"I can't just *leave* it there," he said.

"Well, don't," she said. "Call the police. They'll take it away. Come over afterwards."

Ted called the police.

"If this is your idea of a joke, it isn't funny," the patrolman said. His partner was scowling.

"Joke?" Ted said.

"There's nothing in your shower," the patrolman said. "I ought to take you down to the station house."

"Nothing in the shower?" Ted repeated, incredulous.

"Leave him alone, Sam," the partner said. "He's stinko, can't you tell?"

Ted rushed past them both into the bathroom.

The tub was empty. Empty. He knelt and felt the bottom of it. Dry. Perfectly dry. But his shirt sleeve was still damp. "No," he said. "No." He rushed back out



to the living room. The two cops watched him with amusement. Her suitcase was gone from its place by the door. The dishes had all been run through the dishwasher—no way to tell if anyone had made pancakes or not. Ted turned the wastebasket upside down, spilling out the contents all over his couch. He began to scabble through the papers.

"Go to bed and sleep it off, mister," the older cop said. "You'll feel better in the morning."

"C'mon," his partner said. They departed, leaving Ted still pawing through the papers. No cartoon. No cartoon. No cartoon.

Ted flung the empty wastebasket across the room. It caromed off the wall with a ringing metallic clang.

He took a cab to Jill's.

It was near dawn when he sat up in bed suddenly, his heart thumping, his mouth dry with fear.

Jill murmured sleepily. "Jill," he said, shaking her.

She blinked up at him. "What?" she said. "What time is it, Ted? What's wrong?" She sat up, pulling up the blanket to cover herself.

"Don't you hear it?"

"Hear what?" she asked.

He giggled. "Your shower is running."

That morning he shaved in the kitchen, even though there was no mirror. He cut himself twice. His bladder ached, but he would not go past the bathroom door, despite Jill's repeated assurances that the shower was not running. Dammit, he could *hear* it. He waited until he got to the office. There was no shower in the washroom there.

But Jill looked at him strangely.

At the office, Ted cleared off his desk, and tried to think. He was a lawyer. He had a good analytical mind. He tried to reason it out. He drank only coffee, lots of coffee.

No suitcase, he thought. Jack hadn't seen her. No corpse. No cartoon. No one had seen her. The shower was dry. No dishes. He'd been drinking. But not all day, only later, after dinner. Couldn't be the drinking. Couldn't be. No cartoon. He was the only one who'd seen her. No cartoon. I LEFT YOU SOMETHING TO REMEMBER ME BY. He'd crumpled up her cable and flushed her away. Two years ago. Nothing in the shower.

He picked up his phone. "Billie," he said, "get me a newspaper in Des Moines, Iowa. Any newspaper, I don't care."

When he finally got through, the woman who tended the morgue was reluctant to give him any information. But she softened when he told her he was a lawyer and needed the information for an important case.

The obituary was very short. Melody was identified only as a "massage parlor employee." She'd killed herself in her shower.

"Thank you," Ted said. He set down the receiver. For a long time he sat staring out of his window. He had a very good view; he could see the lake and the soaring tower of the Standard Oil building. He pondered what to do next. There was a thick knot of fear in his gut.

He could take the day off and go home. But the shower would be running at home, and sooner or later he would have to go in there.

He could go back to Jill's. If Jill would have him. She'd seemed awfully cool after last night. She'd recommended a shrink to him as they shared a cab to the office. She didn't understand. No one would understand . . . unless . . . He picked up the phone again, searching through his circular file. There was no card, no number; they'd drifted that far apart. He buzzed for Billie again. "Get me through to Random House in New York City," he said. "To Mr. Michael Englehart. He's an editor there."

But when he was finally connected, the voice on the other end of the line was strange and distant. "Mr. Cirelli? Were you a friend of Michael's? Or one of his authors?"

Ted's mouth was dry. "A friend," he said. "Isn't Michael in? I need to talk to him. It's . . . urgent."

"I'm afraid Michael's no longer with us," the voice said. "He had a nervous breakdown, less than a week ago."

"Is he . . . ?"

"He's alive. They took him to a hospital, I believe. Maybe I can find you the number."

"No," Ted said, "no, that's quite all right." He hung up.

Phoenix directory assistance had no listing for an Anne Kaye. Of course not, he thought. She was married now. He tried to remember her married name. It took him a long time. Something Polish, he thought. Finally it came to him.

He hadn't expected to find her at home. It was a school day, after all. But someone picked up the phone on the third ring. "Hello," he said. "Anne, is that you? This is Ted, in Chicago. Anne, I've got to talk to you. It's about Melody. Anne, I need help." He was breathless.

There was a giggle. "Anne isn't here right now, Ted," Melody said. "She's off at school, and then she's got to visit her husband. They're separated, you know. But she promised to come back by eight."

"Melody," he said.

"Of course, I don't know if I can believe her. You three were never very good about promises. But maybe she'll come back, Ted. I hope so.

"I want to leave her something to remember me by." 17

# AUTHOR'S QUERY

BY  
FRED C. SHAPIRO



## HOW COME M. X. DAVIS KNOWS MORE ABOUT MY LIFE THAN I DO?

For a work dealing with the life of the American monetarist David Marx, I would appreciate hearing from friends, associates, and former students, and would like to obtain access to his unpublished or unfinished manuscripts.

M. X. Davis  
P. O. Box 117  
New York, N. Y. 10011.

**T**here. The short filler box seems almost to jump off the page at me from beneath the detective-story column in the Sunday *Times* book review section. Nothing exceptional at all about it typographically—they use these things all the time—except that I am David Marx, the American monetarist. Imagine coming across this completely unforwarned and unprepared—and on a Wednesday, four days after its publication.

I am probably fortunate to have seen it at all; I have been falling further and further behind on my *Timeses*. I don't seem to be able to get through even the book reviews any more by the time the next Sunday paper comes along. But wouldn't you have thought that, if I have now become so famous that a book is being written about my life, by this time someone would have called to tell me about this query?

Is M. X. Davis a man or a woman? The initials mask gender, and the surname does not register upon my memory. Still, I am becoming forgetful, and it is possible that this is the name of one of my students from years ago who has now found a university so desperate for tuition that it is willing to accredit a dissertation on anything—even the author of only two thin volumes—that could conceivably be classified as scholarship on fuel currencies. All I can learn about this Davis from the query itself is that he has rented a post office box near my apartment in Chelsea, and from there, apparently, he expects to receive “access” to my “unpublished or unfinished manuscripts.”

Why, the very wording of this impertinent query makes it sound as if I am already dead and my papers long since scattered. This is very definitely *not* the case. Just this week, in fact, I had hoped to find the time to complete, for the very same section of the *Times*, an overdue critique of a book on petrodollars. (The thought crosses my mind that this query could possibly be a ploy on the part of the editors there to pull this review out of me; I can hardly contact the book review for information about M. X. Davis without subjecting myself to embarrassing questions about my own procrastination.—there now, I admit it—and, to

be frank, I am having more trouble than usual reading through this book.)

Nevertheless, I have hardly ceased to function. I continue to fill both professional and personal responsibilities. After all, I am a family man. I have a wife, two children, and, for that matter, a mistress. Actually, I had expected to have been divorced by now, but that, too, seems to have bogged down—lost in some court pigeonhole, I imagine. Fortunately, my wife Edna has employment of her own and requires no support from me. Our parting was cordial enough, and I took this one-room efficiency only a few blocks from my former apartment in order to remain in the neighborhood for the sake of the children.

There are two. The boy must be eighteen or nineteen by now. I know he's out of high school—we quarreled about that the last time we spoke. It occurred to me, I don't know, some time last year, that he should be about to graduate, and when I phoned to ask he told me the ceremony had already been held. And why wasn't I invited, I demanded to know. He gave me a vague excuse, something about an insufficiency of tickets. I told him that, in that case, he needn't look to me for a present, and he answered—well, what difference is it what he answered? I have lost him, that is plain, but my daughter is younger, and I still have time to reinstate myself there. I must call her next week, after I see what I can find out about M. X. Davis.

It is two weeks now since publication of the Author's Query in the *Times Book Review*, and I am only a little closer to solving this mystery—and for that, I offer no thanks to the *Times*. I finally brought myself to call the editor who assigned me the book on petrodollars, but he has retired, and I find that his successor apparently chooses to spend his entire working day in conferences; my calls were not returned, and eventually I had to try to explain my problem to a secretary who was polite but not very forthcoming. All she would tell me was that it was the policy of the paper not to divulge any information beyond that which it publishes. If I wanted to inquire further, she suggested I write the post office box number designated in the query.

Obviously that course of action had already occurred to me—and equally obviously, I had already rejected it. What would be my profit in responding to M. X. Davis? I did determine to try the post office,

## AUTHOR'S QUERY

however. It was a simple enough matter to walk to the Chelsea Station on Eighteenth Street. To make inquiries there, one knocks on a door marked "Supervisor of Window Services." A few minutes of knocking, and eventually a woman responds. She has trouble understanding what it is I want—the rental record of box 117—and before long I have to explain my request to three or four postal employees who, one by one, join her at the door. Several are opposed to helping me at all, but then someone on their side of the door says, "It is a matter of public record," and at last a ledger is brought out and grudgingly shown to me. There, next to the number 117, is this Davis's signature. His first name, it seems, is Mark.

That is all I am to learn at the post office. I have framed other questions, but when I attempt to put one of them—how many letters have been received in box 117?—the woman Supervisor of Window Services becomes angry. "I know *that's* no matter of public record," she says, and the door is rudely shut in my face. Well, no matter.

What does matter, though, is what I am to discover on returning to my apartment. While I have been out tracking Mark X. Davis, he has obviously found me. Nothing but the landlord's furniture is as I have left it. My key still in the lock, I step back into the hallway to see if somehow I might have walked into the wrong apartment by mistake. But no, the room is mine, even if everything in it has been transformed.

To begin with, my books, my entire collection of texts on geopolitical monetarism, even the unreviewed work on petrodollars, are gone, replaced on their shelf by other books, equally or better bound, but totally unfamiliar. In the closet, my two brown suits have been removed with their hangers; in their stead are three gray suits. In the drawers of the dresser, shirts, socks, underwear, all are unfamiliar. Even the soiled clothes in the shopping bag I use as a hamper are not mine; in fact, the shopping bag itself has been replaced by a canvas bag. I run to the desk, and there, for certain, is my greatest loss. Where are all my papers—even the fragments of ideas that I have been jotting down on tablet sheets and allowing to pile up on top of the desk? And all those "unpublished and unfinished manuscripts" that Mark X. Davis has sought access to—now, apparently, they are in his possession.

In their place I am left another, even larger, pile of papers, disconnected notes I can make no sense of, a carbon copy of a book-length manuscript entitled "Urban Chromatics," and a number of typed articles that appear to deal with the lengths and frequencies of light waves. I scan the jackets of three of the books that now stand closest to hand on my shelf: *Color Theory*, *The Elements of Color*, and *Colour Measurement and Mastery*. Finally and most inexplicably of all, a television set, a new color television set, now squats in the place of my old Underwood typewriter.

My first thought, of course, is to call the police but what am I to tell them? That a madman has stolen my two brown suits and presented me with three gray suits—of better quality? That I have lost an old typewriter and gained a new television set? That all my obscure monetary reference volumes have been replaced by incomprehensible texts on the characteristics of light waves? Strange, I know the name of the criminal; what I can't comprehend is the nature and motive of M. X. Davis's crime—or what response I can be expected to make to it.

If not the police, then whom can I call? My mistress. I dial; there is a single ring, a click, and I am informed by a recording that her number "has been disconnected at the subscriber's request." Another obstacle—in effect, two obstacles: Walking to my mistress's apartment would be a matter of moments, but presenting myself to her there would certainly necessitate a change of clothing. The jacket I am wearing now is wrinkled; my shirt is grimy in the cuffs and frayed at the collar. It occurs to me that I might at least try on the clothing that Mark X. Davis has left here. Well, what harm?

The shirt I select is a little large, perhaps half a size around the neck. The first at hand of the gray suits is likewise just a little too big, but the sleeve and trouser lengths are acceptable. I find also that I have been left with a more fashionable collection of neckties.

I am, in fact, much better turned out than usual when I walk around to my mistress's apartment. But my journey there is in vain. Her place is empty—cleaned out of furniture, clothing, everything down to the newly painted walls. I inquire of the building superintendent where she has gone and am handed the change-of-address card she has filled out. It directs that her mail be forwarded to Post Office Box 117, New York, N. Y. 10011.

So Mark X. Davis has taken my mistress, too. I cannot call the police, I certainly cannot explain this to my wife and children, and yet I feel I must talk to *someone* about it. As I walk home again, an idea seizes me; I find a phone book and turn to *his* name. There is, in fact, a *Davis, Mark X.* listed. But the address and phone number that follow are my own. I drop the book on the floor of the booth and run back to my apartment building. There, in the vestibule, I find that the nameplate on my mailbox has been replaced with one reading Mark X. Davis.

Several weeks have passed. I have by now figured out the transposition of our two names. Turn David Marx around and you come up with an approximation of Mark X. Davis. If the fit is not exact, it is at least as close as our two clothing sizes. I have come to realize, too, that this Mark X. Davis intends to usurp my identity, and that he is willing to incur a considerable expense to induce me to do his. In the mail several

days ago I found a sheaf of attorneys' papers which proved to be a confirmation that Mark X. Davis is the beneficiary of some sort of irrevocable trust, the regular payments from which are being deposited in a specified bank account. The following day came a statement of this account and a package of checks printed up with his name and this address, along with a blank signature card. Obviously all I have to do to gain access to these funds is to sign the card with Mark X. Davis's name and mail it back. I shall probably do so soon—what other option do I have? My own David Marx bank card has been swallowed up by a cash dispensing machine. When I inquired of a teller, I was informed, somewhat rudely, that this account had been closed.

However, the life of Mark X. Davis does not appear to be without its own obligations. I am now receiving—or I should say the phone in this apartment is receiving—calls from his creditors and past associates. The most troubling of these calls comes from a woman who persists in refusing to believe that she is not talking to Mark—our voices, too, must be alike—and who implores me to “drop this masquerade” for the sake, she says, of our two children.

Under this barrage, I have taken to calling my own family more frequently, possibly to prove to myself at least that I am still David Marx. The reception afforded these calls makes it apparent that my wife and children also are sharing the largess of Mark X. Davis. My son comes to the phone to thank me formally for the payment of his first year's college tuition; he promises that his academic career will uphold the standards of the family name. *Which one?* I wonder to myself. I also receive the thanks of my daughter for a handsome gift on her birthday—which, of course, I had completely forgotten. Even my wife becomes almost kittenish, not her usual style at all, over the telephone. “I meant to call to thank you for the checks,” she says, “but I know how you hate to be interrupted when you're busy writing. You know,” she goes on, “you really should tell us when you have something about to be published so the children might show it to their friends. Your review in last Sunday's *Times*—”

Astonished, I find an excuse to cut her off, and then I have to root through the unread newspapers in a stack beside my bed to find the *Book Review*. I don't even need to turn to the table of contents; the critique of the book on petrodollars begins on the first page. Aghast, I race through it. The lead is one I remember trying out on one of the tablet scraps that Mark X. Davis took from my desk. Also featured prominently is a theory I had been developing on the emergence of isotopic currencies, a prediction of the expulsion from the marketplace of fossil-fuel specie and its replacement by curiefraunces. Beyond that, the balance of the article matches passages I dimly remember from my partial reading of the book with concepts standard to

monetary scholarship. Nothing extraordinary there but the writing: the style, unlike anything I have ever set down, is just technical enough to be influential and just colloquial enough to be widely read. I don't really know whether to be delighted or depressed; certainly I am confounded, both by the prominence given the review and by the identification of its author in a small box at the bottom of a column: “David Marx is a leading American monetarist.”

**M**onths have passed. I no longer call my family. I find that Mark X. Davis has completed his work of supplanting me there, too, even with my daughter. She had been so plaintive in her request to see me that I had made a promise to come by and take her out to dinner. The inevitable happened; I forgot the date, but when I called later to apologize, she got on the phone and before I could speak she began chattering on about how glad she had been to see me and the good time we had had together.

Really, I don't see how Mark X. Davis has the time to impersonate me like this, particularly with all the professional work he is doing now. Frequently I see mention of David Marx in both the financial and news sections of the *Times*. First he is appointed to the President's Council of Economic Advisors, then he is selected to make the keynote address to the United Nations Conference on Isotope Specie in Vienna. Now I find on the very day of its publication (as you can imagine, I am reading the newspaper more diligently now) a review of a new David Marx book, *Nuclear Numismatica*. Page one again, and very favorable, of course. And I must suffer the further indignity of having to wait to read what is being published under my name until it appears in the bookstores. Really, there is no alternative to the realization that Mark X. Davis, damn him, has beaten me at my own game—at every one of my own games—and has left me only his game of chromaties.

Playing it, however, has not proved as intimidating as I originally feared. Having worked my way through the books on color that were left on my shelf, I have been able to follow the methodology of the research on wavelengths and light frequencies that Davis dumped in frustration on my desk. His difficulty, obviously, was that he did not seem able to draw the chromatic conclusions that so obviously arise from his own studies. I have bought another typewriter to draw up formal specifications that will be necessary for color-form research that I feel I now am prepared to perform on my own. At the same time, however, a few important aspects of my predecessor's theories continue to elude me. I am certain, however, of being able to resolve them after further familiarization with his background in the field. Tonight I compose and send off to the *Times Book Review* an author's query on Mark X. Davis. 17

# THE ROSE WALL

BY JOYCE CAROL OATES

HER CHILDHOOD WORLD LAY SECURE WITHIN THE WALL. ESCAPE WAS EASY— BUT THERE WAS A TERRIBLE PRICE TO PAY.

**T**hroughout the protracted summers of my childhood and well into autumn, frequently as late as November, the wall at the base of our garden bloomed with climber roses. The bushes were luxuriant—they were carefully tended—and grew to a height of nine or ten feet. There were clusters of red roses bright as drops of blood; there were small, rather anemic pink roses that grew across the archway over the garden gate; there were rich yellow roses—my favorite—that glowed with light on even overcast or mist-shrouded days.

The rose wall, I called it—that section of the wall. The rose wall, which was so beautiful.

The wall itself, the real wall, was made of granite. It surrounded our house and grounds on all sides—an enormous rectangle—sturdy and functional and rather ugly except at the base of the garden where the roses bloomed. Most days I never noticed the wall. None of the children noticed the wall. You couldn't see it because it was always there, there was nothing to see or think about, everything was in its place and never changed. At the foot of the long gravel drive there was an enormous gate made of oak and iron which was kept bolted most of the time, so that the gate too was part of the wall, and invisible.

One day I asked our nursemaid why there were "sharp things"—spikes—growing out of the top of the wall. Without troubling to look toward the wall she told me that they had always been there. Yes, but why?—I asked. She did not reply. Why? I asked. Annoyed with her—our female servants were usually sullen and slow, and not very bright—I pulled at her arm and made her look at the wall, at the spikes: *Why* are they there? I asked. But her gaze was stubbornly averted; her reply was so low I could not hear. Ask them yourself, I seemed to have heard. *Ask someone else*, she must have said.

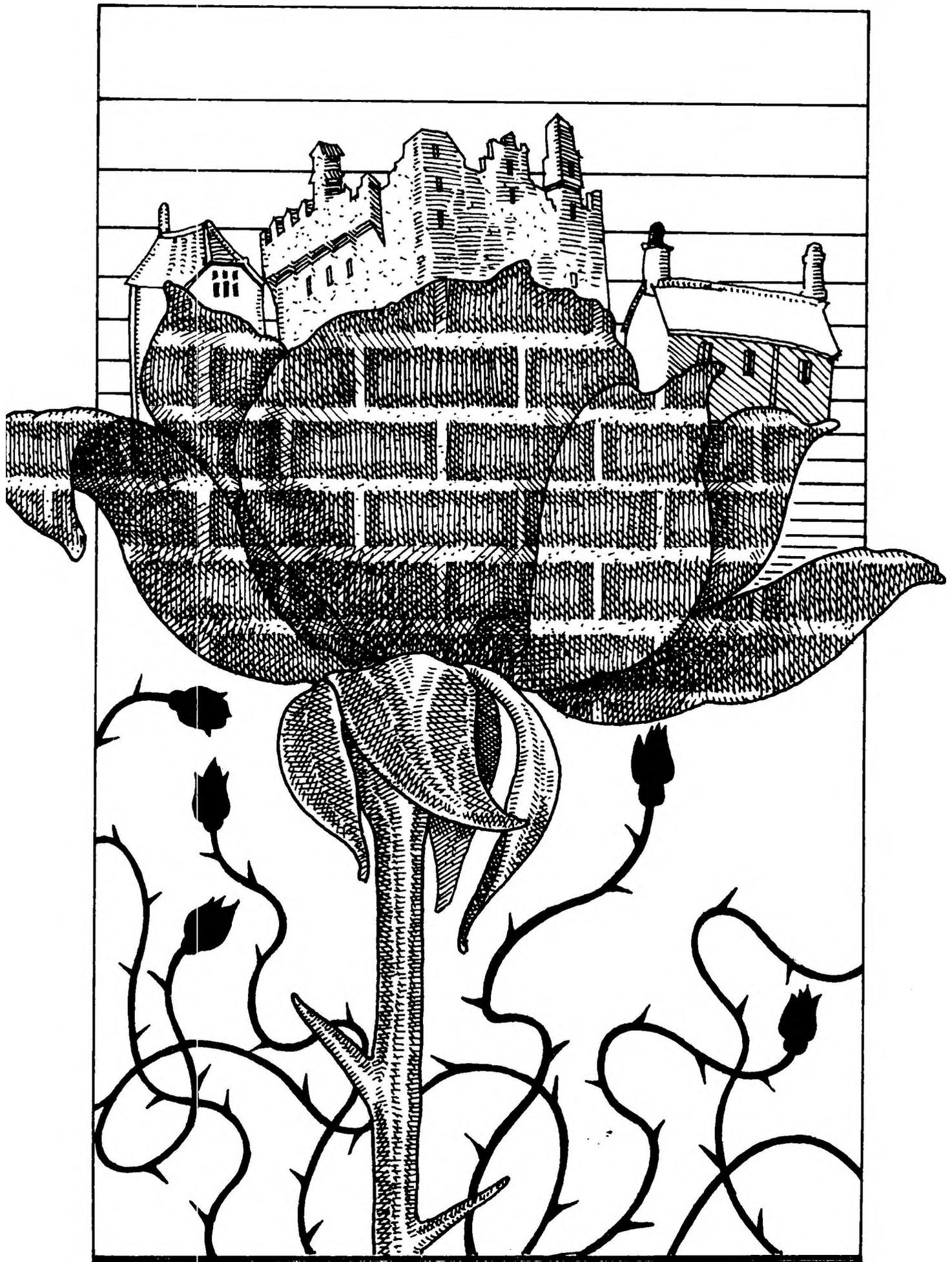
When my mother came to kiss me good-night that night, after my bath, I asked her about the sharp things and she looked startled. Sharp things, she said,

what sharp things? What do you mean?

In all our city, my father said, only a half-dozen houses were so grand as ours; and all were in our hilly district, behind high walls of stone or brick or granite. From our playroom on the third floor we could see the city sloping away below—chimneys, orange-tiled roofs, church spires, the tower and cross of the great cathedral, and the blue-glittering surface of the Aussenalster. How lovely! On exceptionally clear days, when the mist burned off by mid-morning, we could even see the highest towers of the old castle many miles to the north. Sometimes it looked like an ordinary stone building, faint and near-colorless with distance; at other times it looked glowering and iridescent, like a reflection quivering in water.

How lovely, visitors to the playroom would exclaim, leaning on the windowsill and breathing deeply the fragrant air that arose from the garden below. Oh yes, my mother or grandmother or one of my aunts would say, laughing, oh yes certainly—from *here*.

In my childhood there were many servants. No one could keep their names straight. It didn't matter—they came and went, speaking their strange dialects, nursemaids and cooks and handymen and gardeners and drivers and maids and washerwomen. Some lived inside the wall with us, in the servants' wing; others came by way of a rear gate, and entered the house by way of the kitchen. What a gabble we children heard if we eavesdropped! Most of the servants were peasants, difficult to train—and difficult to trust. They lied, they stole, they sabotaged things; they disappeared and my father was forced to send the police after them, to have them arrested. Where do they come from, we children asked, and the reply was always the same: From *out there*. One of the adults would make a careless gesture of the hand, indicating the city, or the countryside in the distance—the world beyond the wall. Where do they come from? Oh, from out there, where else?—*out there*.



## THE ROSE WALL

Why are they so stupid, we asked, why do they talk funny?

They can't help it, it's the way they are, we were told. *Out there* it's the way people are.

Tutors came as well, more refined men and women. A piano instructor who played the piano so beautifully that tears flooded my eyes; a riding master with long curly moustaches. Though we were driven to mass at the cathedral two or three times a week, the priest frequently came to visit us; and the archbishop, who had been a friend of my grandfather's. And messengers and special deliverymen, bringing pastries and great baskets of fruit and wonderful chocolates of all kinds from my parents' favorite shops in town. . . .

You must never forget how fortunate you are, everyone said. You must never forget how God has blessed you.

Kneeling at prayer, in the drafty cathedral or at the side of my bed. Dear God thank you for the blessings you have bestowed upon me. . . . Dear God thank you. . . . Thank you. . . . But my mind slipped away, grew bored and slipped away. Tiresome old God! He was another of the adults, older than Grandmother, spying at us from doorways.

God loves you, God has blessed you, an old servant-woman told me one day, with a queer peevish smile. She was looking directly at me as if she were seeing me—which was not the way anyone in our house looked at us children. I made an impatient gesture, or murmured something in embarrassment. I would have slipped away but she showed me a heart-shaped locket she wore around her scrawny neck which contained the photograph of a young girl with dark braided hair, thick straight dark eyebrows, and a defiant upper lip. God has blessed *you*, the old woman said.

What did I care about an ugly girl in a locket around an old woman's neck? I held my breath when servants stood too close.

Another time one of the laundresses, a large soft woman with carrot-red hair and teeth missing in her lower jaw, began to talk with me in a queer harsh dialect. I was prowling the house, I had wandered into the kitchen hallway in order to eavesdrop; but I did not want to talk with anyone. They have hurt little girls like you, the woman said, little girls prettier than you, she said, giving off a yeasty beery odor, actually touching my arm to detain me. Your people, soldiers, young soldiers from this town. . . .

I should have pushed rudely away and escaped, but for some reason I stood there, unable to move. The woman's cheeks and forehead were flushed as if windburnt, there were two teeth missing in her lower jaw, and the rest of her teeth were badly stained. Her hands too were reddened—the skin stretched across the oversized knuckles was scraped raw. Sniffing, half-sobbing, she told me an angry incoherent story of an eleven-year-old girl . . . her family lying dead amid

rubble . . . soldiers marching by on a road, in the mud. . . . Her dialect was so throaty and harsh, I could not understand most of the words. Stop, I don't want to hear, I hate you, you stink, I wanted to say, but I stood paralyzed while she continued: repeating herself, mumbling, wiping her nose on the back of her clumsy hand. Soldiers discovered the girl, soldiers were laughing and excited, they "did things to her" and afterward pushed her back down in the rubble, in what had been the cellar. She was bleeding, some of her teeth had been knocked out. . . .

I wasn't afraid, but I started to cry. I hated the woman and didn't believe her, and couldn't understand most of her words, but I started to cry.

So she was frightened, and let me go. And I ran and ran and hid in my mother's bedroom.

(And I never saw that woman again—she must have been dismissed. A tall soft-bodied woman with red hair, a watery gaze, a mouth that looked as if it were lewdly smiling. . . .)

**M**y father was a very tall broad-shouldered man with sandy whiskers and clear pale eyes. My mother was a pretty, nervous woman who wore her hair—but what color was her hair?—in heavy coils around her head. My father wore dark colors, and dazzling white shirts; my mother wore dresses of all colors and all materials. (The dressmaker was always at our house. Often she and her two assistants stayed for a week at a time.) My father seemed vaguely embarrassed and impatient in my mother's presence, but then they were not together often. Though of course they shared the same bedroom. But during the day, in daytime, they were not often together.

It was my father who told me that I was forbidden to go outside the wall. Except of course when I was in the company of others, driven in one of our cars. The entire family went out to church, naturally; and we often went visiting, in the homes of families nearby; but there was no need for any of us children to leave the grounds because we had everything we wanted there—ponies, pets, a beautiful dark pond in which carp lived, a pretty wooden swing freshly painted white.

My mother said nothing about the wall, my mother did not see it. And anyway the garden gate—the gate at the rear of the garden—was always kept locked.

Except—not always.

Whenever I played in the garden, whenever I could slip away from the others, I would try the doorknob of the gate. Because the climber roses grew so profusely here I had to be careful of thorns. (Sometimes thin tendrils brushed against my face as if caressing me.) The gate was locked, the gate was always locked, except one afternoon when I turned the handle hard—so hard my fingers hurt—the gate came open!

**"THEY  
HAVE HURT  
LITTLE GIRLS  
LIKE YOU,"  
THE  
WOMAN SAID,  
"LITTLE  
GIRLS PRETTIER  
THAN YOU."**

I could not believe it. But it was true. The gate had not been locked after all, or perhaps the lock had broken under the strain. . . . The iron fixtures on the gate were rusted and moss grew so thickly underfoot, I had to wrench the gate open with all my strength. But it *did* come open, it *did* stand open. And I slipped through.

And was no one watching? Neither of my sisters, or my grandmother, or the freckled silent girl from the country who was supposed to watch closely over me . . . ?

I did not worry that my mother would see: she had better things to do than spy on her children.

So I slipped through the gate. And found myself on a cobblestone street. Of course it was familiar—it was the street that bordered our property on one side—I had been driven along it hundreds of times—but for some reason it looked unfamiliar. The slanted lighting, perhaps (it was late afternoon); the startling noise of the traffic; new odors I could not define. It looked unfamiliar, but I wasn't in the least afraid.

Did I hear a voice behind me?—scolding and alarmed?

I pulled the gate shut, giggling, and ran out into the street.

And ran and ran. . . .

I had never been on foot before, outside our wall. But I wasn't in the least afraid.

The traffic was heavy: automobiles, delivery vans, even several horse-drawn carriages: what a rumble of wheels, what a commotion! I tasted grit, my eyes smarted. Beside me the wall was high and blank, nothing grew on it, on this side. Or was it our wall, now?—I had been running downhill—I might have left our wall behind—but it didn't matter because I would have no difficulty making my way back.

Though—to be truthful—I did not really think about it, then, in those first elated minutes, *making my way back*.

I ran, breathless and giggling, glancing back over my shoulder to see if they were following, and it seemed to me that I had never really run before in my life, with such gaiety, with such surprising strength in my legs and feet: no one could catch me!—not even my father, or one of my brothers! I was running downhill, the cobblestone street on my right, the high rough

featureless wall on my left, and my beating heart, and even the noisy turbulence of the street and its odors, delighted me. To run and run and run—what a prank, what an adventure!

Several times I heard voices behind me, shouts, pleas, but I never stopped running, and when I paused, out of breath, panting, at a busy intersection where five streets ran together—where the wall at last had disappeared—there was no one behind me. I wiped my sweaty face, and peered up the hill, which was a very steep hill, and saw no one. My heart leapt with mischievous delight!—I had slipped through the rose wall and escaped my pursuers and now I would explore the city on foot: *I would do exactly as I wanted for the rest of the day*.

No one followed. No one appeared suddenly beside me to seize my arm, and give me a good scolding, and take me immediately back home.

For some time I walked wherever my fancy led me, still in high spirits. If passersby noticed me and remarked upon me—for I was very small to be unaccompanied—I ignored them, and hurried past. I began to tire, but the elation of my escape stayed with me. How large and noisy the city was, and how fascinating!—what a clamor! Beefy-faced men and women of a kind I had never seen before, speaking in a strange guttural accent; shabby carriages and vans, driven recklessly by men not in uniform; a narrow makeshift bridge over a canal where I stood leaning against the railing for a half-hour, resting and watching the boats—mainly barges—that passed beneath, rocking on the oily waves.

The afternoon began to darken. I glanced around, thinking that someone from the house might be approaching. But I saw only traffic, which passed by in a continual stream, and strangers who gave me no notice.

I headed in the direction of our house, but found myself in a park I had never seen before. At the edge of a refuse-littered lagoon a few people stood tossing chunks of bread at a lazy group of geese and swans. The birds' feathers, particularly their breast feathers, were soiled with what looked like grease, but they were large handsome birds; I stood staring at them for a while. My eyelids grew heavy. A pair of geese paddled my way, curiously, then saw that I had nothing for them and turned indifferently aside.

My mouth watered at the sight of bread in the water. Bobbing on the surface, dipping and rising. A black swan snaked its head down to jab at a piece of bread with his salmon-pink bill, and I felt an absurd pang of hunger.

I left the park and began to climb the long cobblestone hill, which was much steeper than I remembered. My mouth was dry with dust, my eyes stung. It was nearly sundown. Lurid orange clouds like torn

## THE ROSE WALL

fabric lay across the sun and gave an eerie dreamlike cast to the cobblestones and the facades of buildings. I had never seen this district before, but an instinct led me dully on.

A bad girl, a naughty girl, *very* bad, *very* wicked, you will have to be punished all day tomorrow—you will have to stay in your room.

No—no tea-cakes, no chocolates. No. You will have to stay in your room.

My pale teary-eyed mother, stammering at me; my tall unsmiling father, not condescending even to touch me. But perhaps Grandmother would relent, and take me in her arms? In the doorway the freckled girl in her white uniform, her eyes smudged with tears. (For surely she would be dismissed.—She pushed me out of the garden and shut the gate on me, I would cry, she did it, it was her fault!)

The wind rose from the Aussenalster as it often did at dusk, and tiny goosebumps prickled on my bare arms and legs. The cobblestone hill had no end. Carriages rattled past, horses' hooves rang on the street, now and then a face in a window peered at me, but without recognition or interest. I was walking alongside a wall now but I could not determine if it was our wall. It might have been ten or fifteen feet high—I could not judge—and it was so rough-textured, so blank—no roses showed—not even a stray branch or tendril overhead.

Where is our wall, where is our house?—where is the gate that leads into the garden?

I began to sob with weariness and fear, running my hand along the wall. Was the wall made of granite?—or another kind of stone? I could not see a gate or a door of any kind. Not even the enormous gate at the end of the driveway.

I was very hungry. My pulses throbbed with fear.

You are a very, very naughty girl: we've been watching you. Your punishment will be to go without supper . . . to spend the night alone, outside the wall.

I climbed the hill, sobbing, running my fingers along the wall until they began to bleed. Where were they hiding, why didn't they call out my name! Just at dusk I came upon an entranceway of some kind—a door made of solid wood painted black, and now slightly peeling, set into the wall as if into a hill. It did not look familiar but I began to knock at it, and then to pound, fist over fist, sobbing, Let me in, let me in, I hate you, I won't be bad again, let me in—!

I pounded at the door until my fists were numb with pain. I kicked at it, sobbing and screaming.

But of course no one answered—no one heard.

Let me in, I want my supper, I want to go to bed, I hate you, I hate you, I hope you die, let me in, let me in—! So I screamed and screamed until I was exhausted, and sank down on the pavement.

And must have fallen asleep. Because when I

came to my senses again it was dark, and quite chilly.

I got to my feet shakily. Nothing had changed: the high black door was before me, the wall on either side, blank and featureless and faint with light, reflected light from the sky. I saw now that this door—it was a garage or stable door—did not belong to my family, and in any case it was pointless for me to hammer on it.

It was pointless for me to stay here, I would have to go somewhere else, I would have to explain that I was lost and ask someone to take me home.

All this came to me with a peculiar chilling clarity. And I did not cry, because I had exhausted my tears.

Many years have passed since that night. I might almost say—many lifetimes.

I have cried a great deal, though never with anger or passion: for such emotion (one soon learns, outside the rose wall) is quite pointless.

My childhood is now distant. And cannot hurt. I see that child, that wretched little girl, as if through a distorting glass or the wrong end of a telescope. Please can you help me, please can you take me home, she begs of passersby, please, I'm lost, I can't find my house. . . .

They draw away, annoyed.

There are so many beggars in the square, in the streets near the cathedral and the great hotels. Even children, very small children. Unaccompanied by adults.

Please can you help me. can you take me home. . . .?

Sometimes a man or a woman, or a strolling couple, would stop to listen: but for some reason they could not understand me. They scooped to hear, they peered frowning into my face, but they could not understand what I was saying.

I'm sorry, I'm sorry for being bad, I cried, I won't do it again, I want my supper and my bath, I want



# "YOUR PUNISHMENT WILL BE TO GO WITHOUT SUPPER . . . TO SPEND THE NIGHT ALONE, OUTSIDE THE WALL."

my Momma, I won't do it again. . . .

They queried me, they shook their heads impatiently, what on earth was I saying? Their own dialects were strange: harsh and guttural, or high, sharp, and sibilant. I could recognize only a few words, tumbling over one another like pebbles in a stream.

In the end they shook their heads impatiently or pityingly. Sometimes with an amused smile, glancing behind me to see if—in a doorway or around a corner—an older beggar was hiding.

I walked on, jostled by the crowd. I had lost track of all time. Hours might have passed; or an entire day; or several days. I ate by snatching bread away from the mourning doves and pigeons (who were fed quite generously in the cathedral square) . . . I drank from the magnificent Roman fountain in the Royal Park . . . ladies took pity on me and tossed tinsel-wrapped chocolates in my direction, soldiers in uniform, some of them hardly older than my brother, tossed pennies at me and chuckled as I scrambled after them across the cobblestones. What a quick, frisky little thing! Is it a little girl? Eh? A little girl, so bold?

I wandered along the canals at the heart of the city. Where the costly shops are located beneath stone arcades, to protect shoppers from the rain. Clothing shops, gold shops, shops selling jewelry, antiques, china, linen, stationery, ladies' hats, ladies' shoes, the very best pastries and chocolates and fruit. The season must have changed overnight for now everyone wore coats and carried umbrellas against the chill slanting rain.

A gentleman resembling my father was walking some distance ahead of me, carrying his ebony-topped cane. He was with one of my uncles, a white-haired uncle with a sly teasing wink whom all the children loved. Both strode along the damp pavement and did not hesitate for a moment when I called after them.

Pappa! Pappa! Wait, Pappa—

I ran close behind them but they did not slacken their pace.

I was certain they heard me: but they gave no sign.

Pappa, please wait—Pappa—I'm sorry—

My tall broad-shouldered impatient father in a dark topcoat, soft gray gloves, gleaming leather boots. His imperial profile, his sandy full moustache and

beard. My uncle who adored whipped cream in his coffee, and teased us in the playroom by poking his head through the doorway and clapping his hands loudly. . . .

Pappa! Uncle! Wait—

At last my father turned toward me and I saw that it was indeed my father: but he showed no recognition. His eyebrows arched quizzically, his thin-lipped mouth stretched in a grimace. Yes? What? Who is it—?

I pulled at the sleeve of his topcoat, tried to take hold of his cane.

I want to go home now, Pappa, I said, whining, I'm sorry for what I did, it wasn't my fault, the gate locked behind me—I want Momma—

My father drew back, staring. His nostrils were pinched as if he were in the presence of an abominable odor.

Pappa please! I screamed, clutching at his knees.

He pushed me aside, stepped adroitly away, and with a brisk gesture tossed a coin in my direction. It struck my chest lightly and rolled across the cobblestones. Instinctively I scrambled after it. If the coin should drop into a drain, or be snatched up by another beggar—!

But I got it. My fingers closed greedily over it. And when I looked up my father and uncle were just getting into a horse-drawn cab.

Pappa, I cried angrily, on my hands and knees, Pappa, I screamed, don't you know who I am?—don't you love me anymore? Wait—

But they did not hear. They climbed into the cab, closed the door behind themselves, and the cab rolled smartly away.

Don't you love me anymore?—don't you love me?

**B**ut I got the coin, the gold coin: for it *was* a gold coin and not a mere penny. And with it I went into the closest chocolate shop, and sat at one of the pretty little wrought iron tables, and ordered a plate of small cherry-topped cakes and a cup of hot chocolate, in a voice nearly as composed as that of my mother or grandmother.

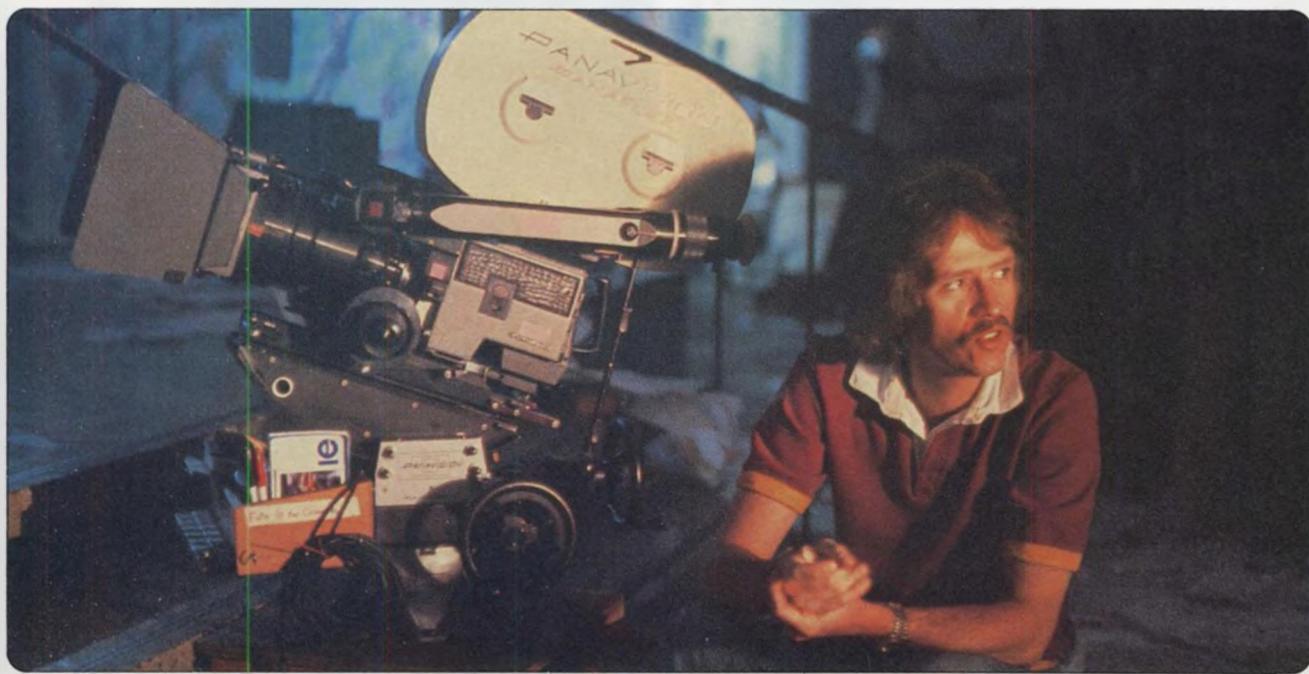
I was faint with hunger, saliva flooded my mouth. My heart still beat painfully with the anger of my father's betrayal. But when the waitress brought my order I was not even ashamed of my filthy trembling hands; nor did I blush when she stared in unsmiling astonishment at me.

Isn't it a sight, that poor little thing!—ladies at a nearby table whispered. A child my own age in a pink woolen coat stared rudely at me. *Isn't* it shameful! the ladies whispered.

I ignored them. I ate greedily, for I was hungry.

I was *very* hungry. But then I have never lacked appetite. 

# Escape from New York



Carpenter on the set: *Escape* is the thirty-three-year-old director's most ambitious film yet.

FRESH FROM GHOSTLY ENCOUNTERS IN *THE FOG*, DIRECTOR JOHN CARPENTER GIVES US AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE FUTURE—A FUTURE AS HORRIFYING AS *HALLOWEEN* AND AS GRIM AS *ASSAULT ON PRECINCT THIRTEEN*.

**New York, 1997:** A city long plagued by crime has at last been given over to the criminals. Ringed by waters filled with deadly electricity, its bridges mined and walled, Manhattan has been turned into a vast penitentiary from which there is no escape. Radar installations scan the perimeters; helicopters circle endlessly overhead; the Statue of Liberty is now just another guard tower housing officers in infra-red goggles who blast on sight anyone foolish enough to try to get out.

Locked in a desperate struggle for survival, the prison-city's three million inmates have no contact with the outside world save for monthly food drops into Central Park. Warring street gangs rove the surface, while the world below is occupied by "crazies," the criminally insane, who

live in subways and sewers, swarming up from manholes in rat-like hordes to attack whomever and whenever they can. For diversion the bloodthirsty populace periodically converges on Madison Square Garden to watch gladiatorial contests in which warriors try to kill one another with nail-studded baseball bats.

Into this maelstrom of violence and madness, a plane crashes. It is *Air Force One*, hijacked by criminals, and the President is aboard bearing papers crucial to the survival of the United States. He is taken hostage by the Gypsies—the most powerful gang in the city. The price for his freedom: the immediate release of all convicts.

The man sent in to rescue the President is "Snake" Plissken, himself a master criminal, who gains entry to the

city by secretly landing a glider atop the World Trade Center. To ensure that he doesn't back out of the mission, the government has implanted two explosive devices in his head, set to go off at a prearranged time and which only they can defuse. Snake's attempts to rescue the President, and his adventures in the embattled city, give *Escape from New York* its driving momentum—and suspense that never lets up.

Suspense is, in fact, the hallmark of all John Carpenter's work: from *Dark Star* (1974), with its serenely suicidal computer and comic-yet-menacing alien, to *Assault on Precinct Thirteen* (1976), with its besieged cops and civilians; from the terrified teenagers of *Halloween* (1978) to the isolated townspeople of *The Fog* (1980), prey to malevolent spirits from the past. Carpenter himself has frequently noted that in all these films people find themselves trapped—a theme that reaches its logical culmination in the forthcoming *Escape from New York*, where an entire population has been forcibly cut off from the rest of society.

Budgeted at seven million dollars—Carpenter's biggest yet—the movie is scheduled for release by Avco-Embassy this July. With a screenplay by Carpenter and Nick Castle (who played the killer in *Halloween*), *Escape from New York* has been produced by Larry Franco and Debra Hill, and marks the third collaboration—following *Halloween* and *The Fog*—between Carpenter and producer Hill.

It was the phenomenal success of *Halloween*, which yielded the highest profit-rate of any independent film in history, that made Carpenter and Hill "overnight" sensations in the film business, but Carpenter has also come to national attention as the director of two made-for-TV movies: *Someone Is Watching Me* (co-starring Adrienne Barbeau, now Carpenter's wife) and *Elvis*, Carpenter's first opportunity to work with Kurt Russell, who plays the lead in *Escape*.

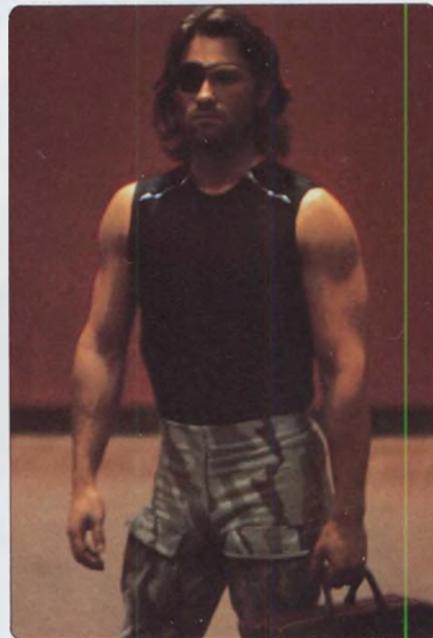
Only thirty-three years old, Carpenter has already fulfilled the promise he showed as an award-winning student filmmaker at the University of Southern California. *Escape from New York* should not only cement his reputation as a winner in Hollywood's money sweepstakes, but should also pave the way for creative achievements still to come. 17



1 Donald Pleasence, the British actor who starred in Carpenter's first hit, *Halloween* (and whom readers may also remember from "The Changing of the Guard" on TV's *Twilight Zone*), plays a future President of the United States taken hostage by a criminal gang.



2 Carrying the President to an urgent summit meeting, *Air Force One* is hijacked and crashes amid the squalid criminal society of 1997 Manhattan.



3 Kurt Russell (who played the title role in Carpenter's TV-movie *Elvis*) stars as "Snake" Plissken, a celebrated 1990s criminal recruited by police to rescue the captive President.



4 Lee Van Cleef, a perennial bad guy in Westerns from *High Noon* to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (and, incidentally, another *Twilight Zone* alumnus, featured in "The Grave"), here plays Commissioner Hawk, the ruthless police chief who forces Snake to attempt the dangerous rescue mission.



**5** Jazz musician and composer Isaac Hayes plays "the Duke," here shown in full regalia. An aristocrat in New York's topsy-turvy criminal society, he leads the city's most powerful gang, the Gypsies.



**6** In a radical departure from her role in TV's *Maude*, Adrienne Barbeau—who starred in two previous Carpenter productions, *Someone Is Watching Me* and *The Fog*—portrays Maggle, another convict who joins Snake in his rescue mission. Here she prepares for action amid the stacks of the New York Public Library, now a primitive energy center complete with functioning oil pump that supplies power to the city.



**7** Captured by the Duke's gang, Snake is forced to take on the sadistic "Slag" (played by wrestler Ox Baker) in a no-holds-barred combat staged at New York's Madison Square Garden, now a gladiatorial arena where the criminal populace of New York watches fights to the death.



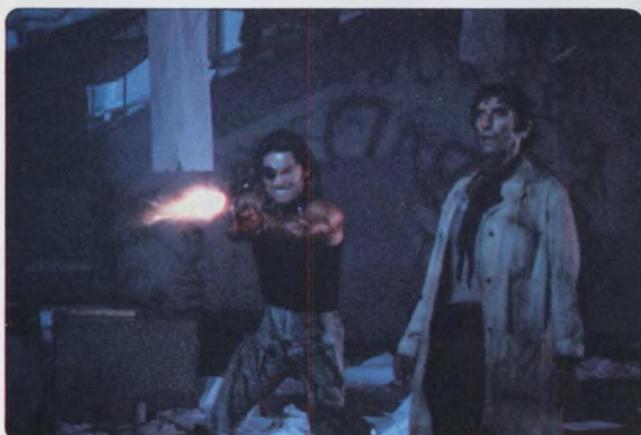
**8** Alone in the uncharted criminal world of New York, Snake enlists the aid of a convict-turned-cabbie, played by Ernest Borgnine.



**9** Snake persuades a reluctant "Brain" (Harry Dean Stanton, last seen in *Allen* and *The Rose*) to help him gain entrance to the gang's stronghold.



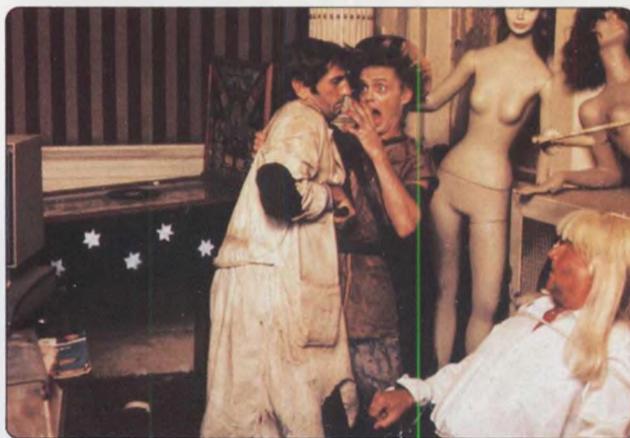
**10** Criminals all, the cabbie, Brain, Maggie, and Snake join forces to free the captive President.



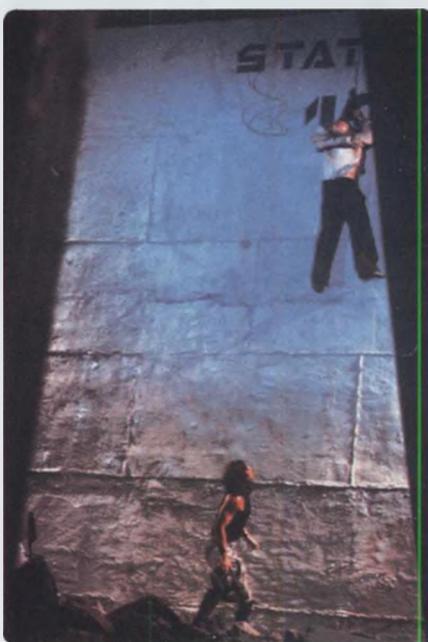
**11** Finding himself and Brain suddenly surrounded by the Duke's murderous band of outlaws, Snake attempts to hold them off.



**12** Maggie joins Snake and Brain in a daring raid on the Gypsies' stronghold.



**13** Inside the stronghold, Brain dispatches one of the President's captors, the Medusa-haired "Romero" (played by Frank Doubleday), while a bound and humiliatingly bewigged President looks on helplessly.



**14** As the President is hauled up the sheer wall that blocks the 59th Street Bridge from the mainland, Snake waits nervously for his own chance to escape.



**15** With the explosive device in his skull timed to go off in moments, Snake finds his bid for freedom thwarted by the Duke. To find out who wins, you'll have to wait till summer, when *Escape from New York* hits the screen. **17**

# THE DEATH RUNNER

BY THOMAS SULLIVAN



## A JOGGER DISCOVERS THAT HIS DEADLIEST OPPONENT IS HIMSELF...

**R**ound and round you go, and where you stop . . ." Cy Harvey, country boy turned track star turned old man, repeated the phrase to himself as he ran. It was what he said to his wife when she nagged about running. How could a woman understand? How could a man, until his dreams were clouded and he turned inward? When you're over the hill, you run against yourself.

The five A.M. track at Barker High School was a phantom place in the spring. Half night, half day, its infield flashed with dewdrop emeralds, its cindered surface was richer than velvet, and over all there hung a mist that reached from the distant rim across the bowl to the elevated tennis courts.

From one end Harvey could just see the spars of the far upright framed against the nether blackness of woods and river, and beyond that the ghostly battlements of Durfey Hospital. When he covered the one hundred thirty-seven steps, give or take two, that kept him on the pace, he would be at the far curve, able to see the high school gym on the hill.

In his hand he held a stopwatch. He could not actually read it as he ran. Mist and movement conspired to blur the numbers. But he saw the position of the sweep hand in relation to the stem, and familiarity told him his splits. Even without it he knew. He knew within two seconds each quarter. The whole two miles must be evenly split—1:44 a quarter. No negative splits, no pace changes, he must run perfect quarters. He wished . . . he wished he could pace himself, that he could race a hologram of himself taken from one of those perfect days. Such are the musings of a runner in transit.

When he was done he passed slowly up the hill, through a break in the trees, and into his own backyard. For a long while he sat on the terrace, and then, when he heard his wife stirring, he went in to take a shower.

"Honestly, you're going to get mugged out there," she chided.

"For what? My stopwatch?"

"They don't need a reason nowadays."

"Nonsense."

"I know it's important to you, but it's not worth your life. You're going to die running. Honestly."

He nodded happily. A good way to die. It takes a quiet spring morning with only a jay calling from the woods, and a perfectly black oval on a green apron, and a secluding mist that shapes fantasies, to kick your heart and stir your pulse. That is your setting, predictable and constant. And you are the variable for which it was made. You are the free will, the creator of change. Your footprints tear the early morning lace; your breathing is the metronome.

The next morning was the first day of fall. He wore his blue track suit and a new pair of Nikes. The shoes left crisp prints on the first lap. He listened to their meter and his own biological rhythms filling the dell.

Pad, pad, pad. . . .

He was the clock, sweeping harmoniously around the face of the visible world.

As he ran that morning he thought very hard about pace. He could almost divide it by steps, by units of energy. Residual quanta still remained from yesterday's analysis. They hung in the air like a miasma from

Illustration by Robert Neubecker



## THE DEATH RUNNER

the decomposed echo of that vanished runner—and of other days, too.

He thought more and more about this each time; and more and more his own presence seemed already there, lurking behind the goalpost, running just ahead, accumulating somehow into shadows and currents. On this particular morning he had trouble sorting the sound of his steps from their return off the far wall of the dell. They were out of sync. Source and echo seemed to have strayed—or multiplied. Every few measures the cadence was broken: pad-pad-tap-pad-pad-tap. . . . He had the eerie feeling of being watched, as his gaze traveled up the hill to Durfey Hospital. Someone was throwing rocks on the track, he decided, and stared hard at the mist to separate a flash of blue at the far turn.

Turns.

His next quarter was 1:42.

That was the beginning. A break in the pace.

He knew it the next morning, because the echoes and flashes were back, diametrically opposite. Louder and brighter. And on the final lap he saw and heard them move ahead. Two seconds. Exactly two seconds. A 1:42.

The 1:42.

For a long time he stood on the infield looking for it, waiting for it to pass. But it didn't, of course. The race was over. Eight laps. Two miles. If it was still there, it was waiting also. Opposite him.

He knew what he must do.

At dawn the next day he came down the rim, crossed the dewy grass at the same point, and ran in place several seconds. Then he started. Slowly. Slower than he had ever run before. Immediately he saw the crease of color pass behind the far goalposts.

Good. It was locked into the pace—yesterday's pace. It had to be yesterday's, because the slip of color

wasn't blue this time, but white. He had worn white yesterday. At his near walk, he knew it would close quickly, and he was glad—until he heard the multiple thuds behind him and glanced back into the mist.

Now there were *two* flickers. One white, one blue.

Suddenly they were there, and he quickened his pace. Stride for stride. A thrill of power invested him. He had a peripheral awareness of white track pants unzipped at the cuffs and Nike Trainers kicking out next to his. And he knew it was himself. Atom for atom. Not the Cy Harvey in shirt and tie, not the meek husband of Edith Harvey, but the real one—the runner!

He knew it existed yesterday. It didn't even know he was here. But that didn't matter. Pace was communion.

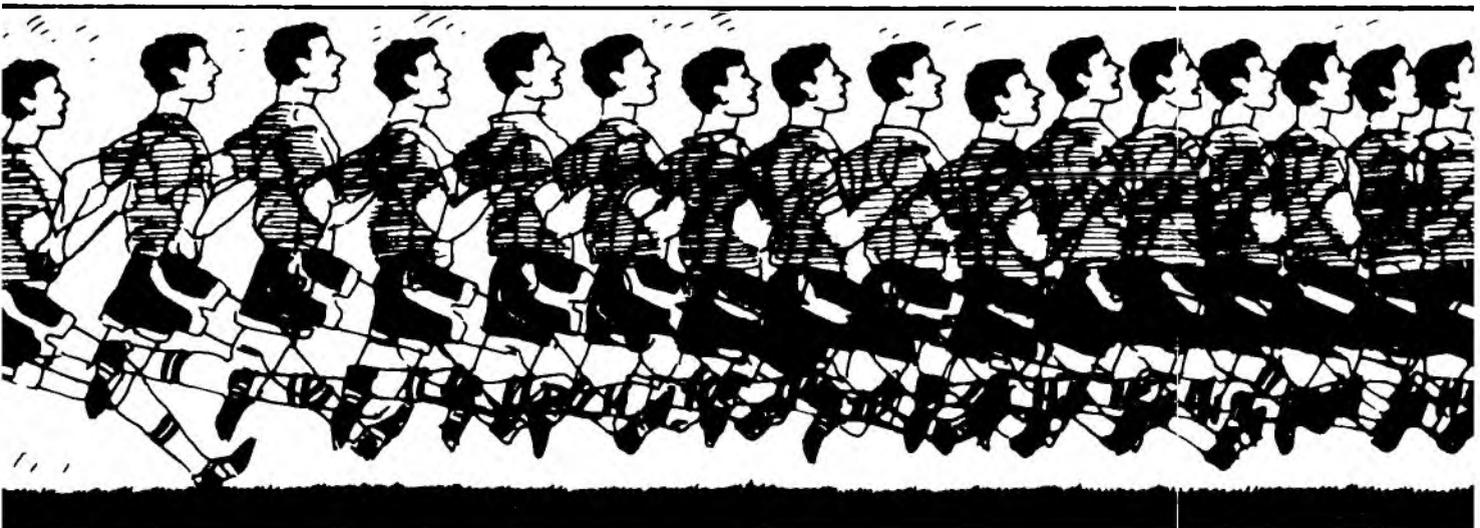
A grueling, killing pace.

And at the end the self from two days ago—in a blue track suit—pulled out. That was the 1:42. Tomorrow there would be a fourth runner, he thought.

And there was.

And each day another, multiplying his joy. Edith clucked and pondered his sudden, secret strength, and finally went back to warning him: "Someday you'll find yourself facing a gang of those crazy drug fanatics. Then you'll run. You'll run for your life!"

Run for his life. Of course he ran for his life. The literal meaning of that became clearer each day. There were almost thirty of them out there now. A great silent horde rumbling two miles at the inviolable pace, dredged up each dawn by the solitary being who existed "now." All alone one minute, he would start it with a quick kick, and suddenly they were breaking through whatever it was that defined time from energy.



HIS BOWELS  
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GAPING MOUTHS.  
BUT  
THE REAL  
HORROR WAS  
THAT FINAL  
RUNNER. . . .

Crescendoing at his heels. The sound made him sweat, made him tremble. He no longer dared look around.

And then there was the lone runner way behind, the echo of the day he ran the slow lap to let them catch up. The pack continued to lap that one. It didn't bother him until the morning he finished and turned quickly. His bowels were awash to see so many images of himself lunging across the finish with silent, gaping mouths. But the real horror was that final runner—the one that was lapped. Because just before he staggered across the finish and faded, Cy Harvey saw that his face was covered with blood, his track suit torn and smeared.

He had been trampled.

Cy Harvey no longer came in the dawn with a clear heart. Because running had been his small acknowledgment. *Yes, I am physical. Evolution gave me a body I must use.* But now the surrogate manhood was becoming real. The danger was real. The chase called him at sunrise, and he came. Because if there was danger, there was victory. And he couldn't be a man without victory.

He began to understand something else, too. That yesterday's pace would never change, though today's would. And he promised himself—all his selves—he wouldn't quit. The day he couldn't keep up, couldn't stay the extra step ahead of yesterday's pace, he would accept the consequences. And each day until then would be a victory. . . .

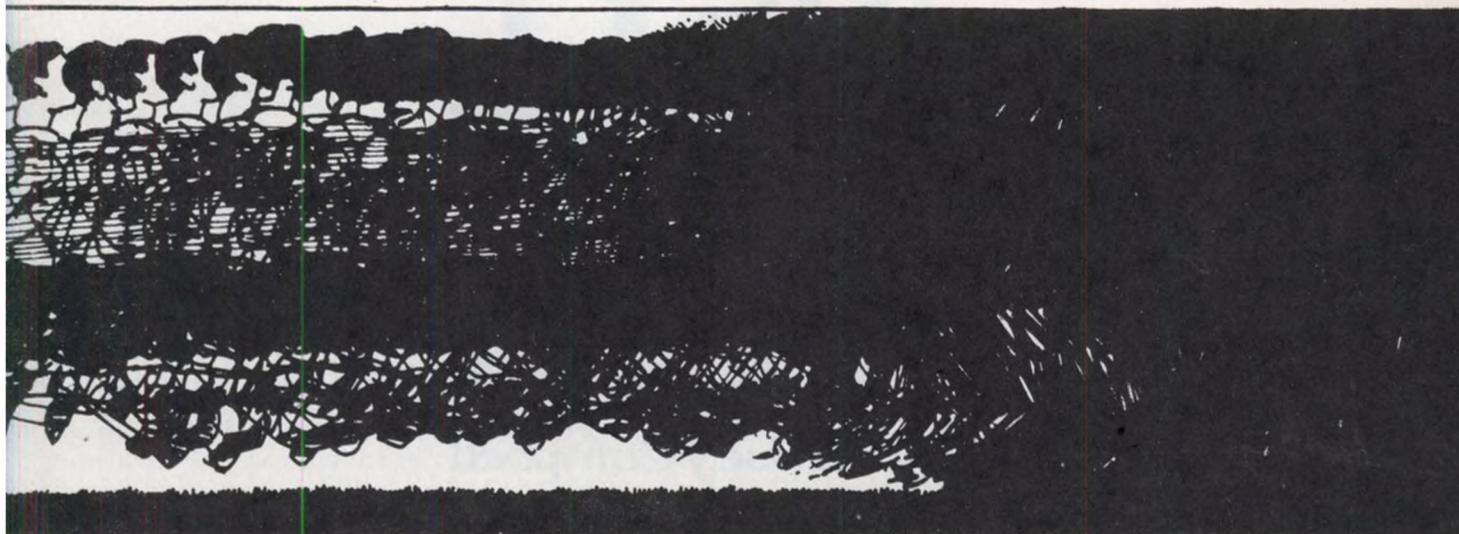
But one night a simple thing happened, something he had not thought about. It rained. There hadn't been a heavy, soaking rain at night for a long time. It didn't occur to him that it would change anything. Everyone ran the same track. He came down the hill onto a surface that had drained but was soft and slow.

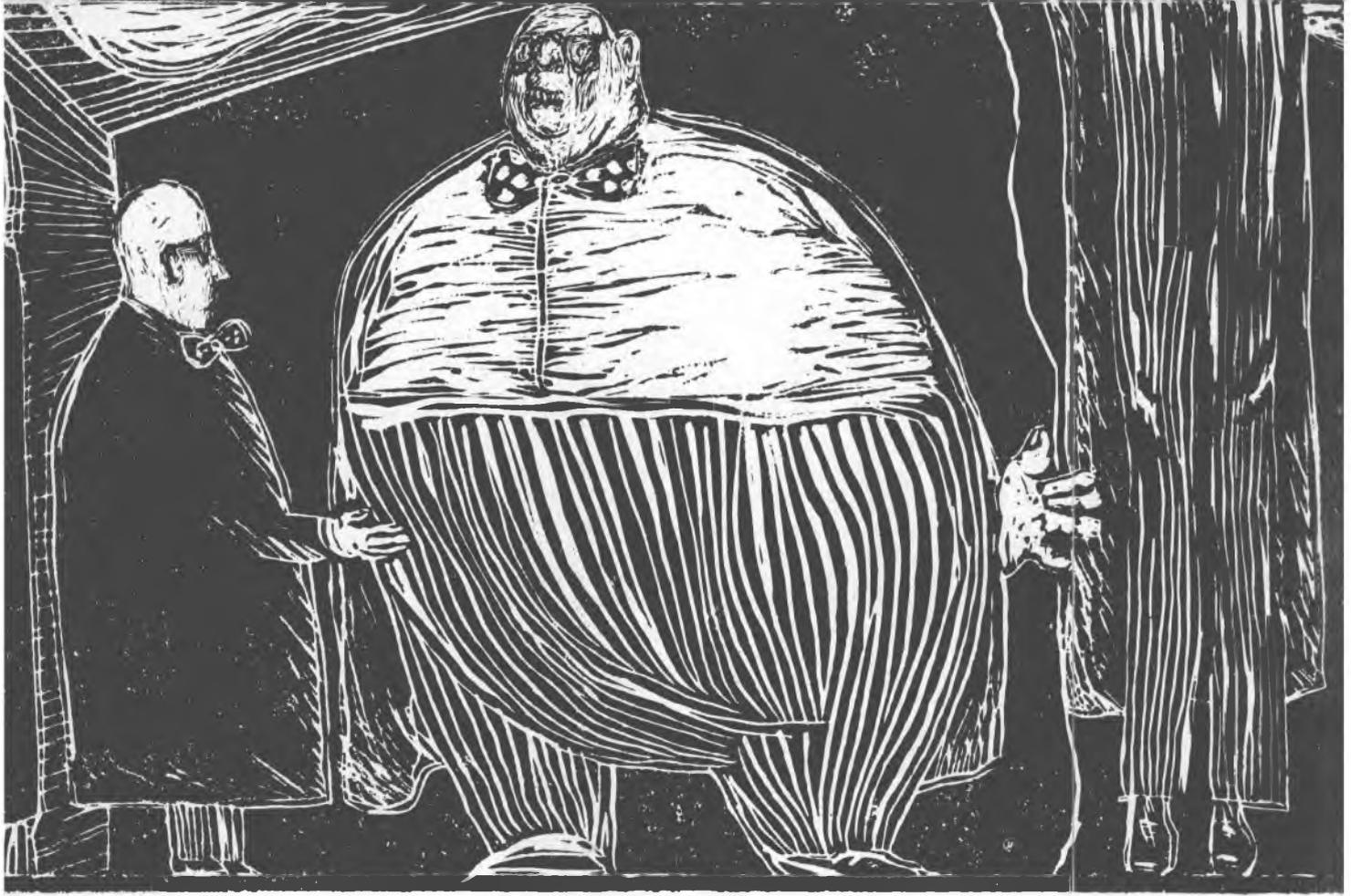
In the serene stillness he kicked it off—kicked the door open for the furious mob. For the next thirteen minutes and fifty-two seconds they would thunder around on his heels. But it was yesterday's track for them, and all the days' before. His track was today's.

He gulped lungfuls of air and returned cotton. There was no rhythm, no pace. Today was a sprint.

The tennis coach saw his body from the courts at eight; it was lying in the mud. "Looked like a tractor ran over him," he told the other teachers at lunch. But his wife knew that, of course, he had been beaten by unknown assailants.

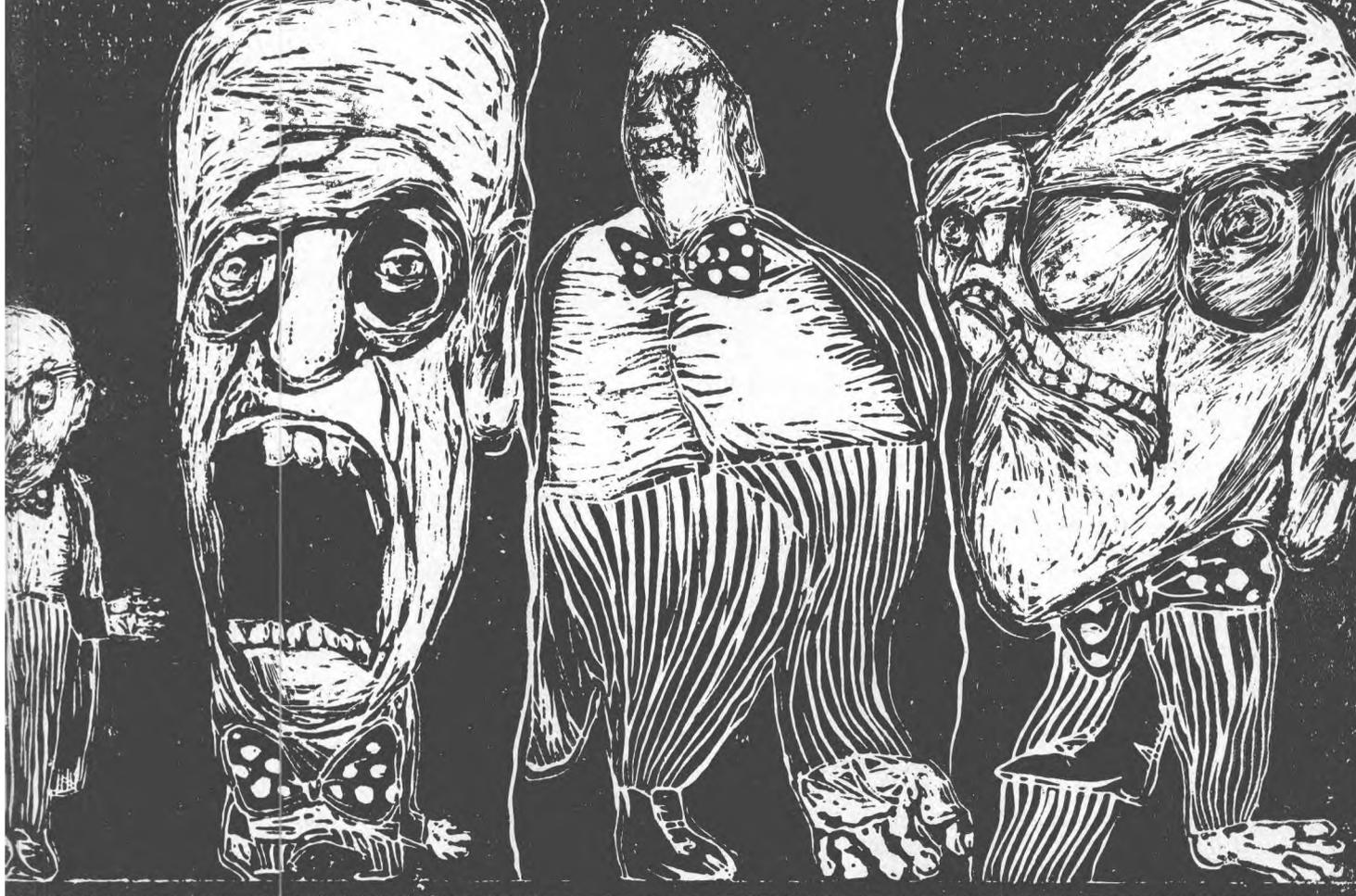
She found instructions attached to his will in their safe deposit box and dutifully had the headstone inscribed: *Round and round you go, and where you stop. . . .* 17





# THE NEXT SIDE SHOW

by Ramsey Campbell



## STEP RIGHT THIS WAY FOR THE MIRROR MAZE! YOU'LL NEVER BE THE SAME .

**A**s Gray passed the locked kiosk, it began to rain. Water came pattering through the layers of autumn leaves still clinging to the trees; the dark lake plopped. Beyond the park, the auras of the tower blocks sparkled.

There was no use hurrying home. His key was locked in, and his wife wouldn't be home for at least half an hour; that was why he'd decided to stroll in the park. The kiosk rumbled like a drum. Its scrawny arch offered no refuge. Perhaps if the rain became too heavy he could shelter beneath the trees.

At least the hectic glistening made the paths more visible. The rest of the park was black and smudged as a soaked drawing. Clouds massed overhead, darkening the night; they looked close and thick as foliage. Once he glimpsed the lights of the park road he would have his bearings.

Underfoot the path felt less like concrete than mud. Had the gardeners been moving earth, or had he missed his way? He stumbled onward, blinking; rain poured down his forehead into his eyes. Was that a shelter ahead, among the streaming trees? But there was no such building on his route home. Then he heard rain scuttling on metal. The dark shape was a caravan.

There were several, huddled like beasts beneath the trees. Raindrops traced veins through the dirt on their dim windows. Had the caravans any right to be there? They were robbing him of shelter. As he trudged past they rattled like maracas.

One pair of curtains was untidily parted. Beneath it, light slumped on the drowned twitching grass, and illuminated a section of a notice. Gray made out a few words: MAZE, FREAK SHOW, WELCOME. The letters squirmed under trickles of rain. Had the notice been laid there for passers-by to read? It looked more as though it had fallen into the mud.

If the sideshows were open, perhaps he should take refuge there—but he'd never seen a freak show, and didn't intend to start now. He knew deformity existed; that was no reason to become involved in its exploitation.

As he picked his way along the squelching path, he started. Why? It had only been a glimpse of a face peering between curtains. He hadn't had time to distinguish it properly. It must have been his thoughts of freaks that had made the impression seem so unnatural.

The curtains had drooped shut now. Next to their caravan stood a low construction without wheels. Was it the freak show? No, he could just make out the sign that dangled slightly askew in the entrance: MIRROR MAZE.

The entrance was unlit. Within it, to the left, the cramped barred aperture of the paybox yawned, a cowl full of darkness. Sagging tendrils of hair trained rain down his neck; his clothes and his eyebrows were sodden. He heard a new onslaught of rain rushing across the lake. Shivering, he dodged into the entrance.

## THE NEXT SIDESHOW

Beside him a voice said, "Nowhere to go?"

He recoiled. He'd noticed a dim oval within the paybox, but had assumed it was painted on, or adhering to, the back wall. "I'm just sheltering," he admitted, faintly embarrassed.

The lower portion of the oval gaped. The voice was soft as the downpour, and almost as vague. "Why stand out here? Go in and take a look."

"It isn't really my kind of thing." No need to sound apologetic. "I don't think much of freak shows," he said more aggressively.

"Isn't that for you?" Gray couldn't decide if the tone was wistful or mocking. "Try the maze then, if you've half an hour to spare," the voice said softly as a hypnotist's. "That's something you won't forget."

Gray stared into the night. The park might as well have been miles underwater, for all that he could distinguish of it. "How much?" he said eventually.

"Any coin."

Was that meant as a gesture of goodwill? Gray found the choice embarrassing. Eventually he dredged up silver from amid the crowd of copper in his pocket. A hand reached beneath the grille. Why was it wearing a discolored rubber glove so oversized that the rubber fingers splayed awry? But it wasn't wearing a glove. Gray couldn't help gasping.

**T**he hand lay palm upward on the narrow counter—challenging his gasp, or demanding more money? Abruptly the fingers closed over the silver, like a plant trapping its prey. One finger pointed, as best it could, toward a door which was now outlined by a razor-edge of light. "It's ready for you," the voice said.

As soon as Gray pushed open the door the oppressive heat seized him. His clothes felt humid and clinging; his coat began to steam. Sweat mixed prickling with the rain that coated his forehead. He stepped forward, and the door clicked shut behind him.

The first mirrors were dusty; his advancing reflection was vague. The ceiling loomed perhaps a foot above him. Overhead a light jerked, buzzing; he could hear a swarm of them deeper in the maze. He was glad

he hadn't paid more. Glancing back, he saw himself floating in a grubby mirror on the inside of the door, as though beneath mud.

He ventured along the narrow passage. If the building were as small as it had looked from outside, he would soon be through. Ranks of himself, stretching toward infinity on both sides, paced him. His own images barred his way dimly. He could turn either right or left. Toss a coin? Responding to a memory of something he'd read—he couldn't recall where or in what context—about a left-hand path, he advanced that way. At once he had to turn several times, amid a crowd of his own antics. Shouldn't this trick him back where he'd started? But he must have miscounted his turns, for he emerged into a different narrow passage.

How was it different? A light hovered, buzzing intermittently. He squinted at the blurred mirrors. Sweat salted his eyes; he dabbed at them, and pulled off his coat. Why did his reflected movements look unnatural? Suddenly he realized that all the mirrors were distorted.

Well, it was a gimmick. On one side of the passage he was inflated, a parody of pregnancy; on the other he was an hourglass with a face. Behind these reflections others gathered, far more bizarre. Had the proprietor tried to make up in oddity what the maze lacked in size?

Gray consulted his watch. He still had to find his way out. He strode forward. Swollen lumpy flesh uncoiled toward him, like a sluggish tenant of an aquarium. Which way at this mirror? Left again: at least he would know which direction not to take if he had to backtrack.

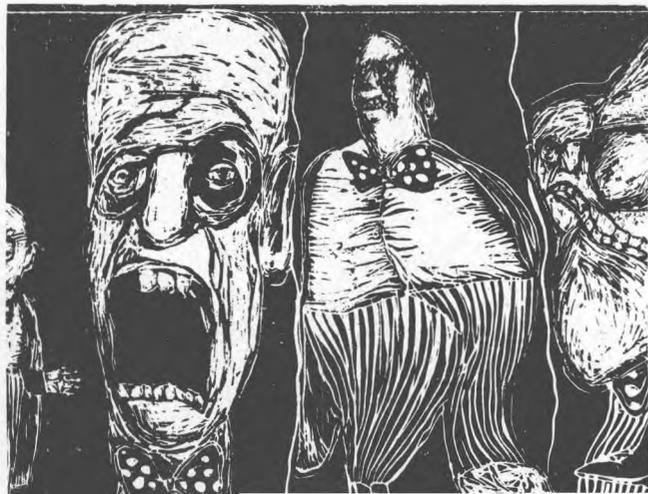
His dusty face came nodding forward at him. It was almost as tall as he was, and squashed his body to ankle-height. This was fascinating. If the mirrors had been cleaner—if the huge bobbing face had been less blurred—he wouldn't have felt uneasy at all.

The only exit from this passage was to the left. He must be near the end now; there couldn't be much more of the maze packed into the building. Again he had to turn several times, always left. His skin felt hot, and grubby as the mirrors. The closeness of distorted flesh oppressed him.

Ah, here was a longer passage. Dim flesh squirmed at the far end; perhaps that mirror concealed the exit. He hurried toward it, glancing aside at the riot of distortions that filled the walls. When he peered ahead again, the glass at the end of the passage was blank.

The mirror must reflect only beyond a certain distance. Perhaps it was a final attempt to confuse victims of the maze. He strode at the mirror, ready to push it aside. Then he faltered. Dusty though it was, there was no doubt that it was a sheet of plain glass.

What had he seen beyond it: peering through? Nobody could look like that. Of course, there must be



**Was the  
proprietor  
sneaking  
mirrors  
into  
new  
positions,  
for  
revenge?**

mirrors beyond; he'd seen a distant reflection of himself. Where was the exit? Irritably mopping his forehead, he turned left.

"You've never been in a maze like this."

He whirled. Flesh unfurled fatly around him. The voice was behind one or another of the mirrors: somehow the proprietor, or whoever had been in the paybox, had crept close to him. Gray kept his lips tight, though a pulse was leaping in his throat. He refused to admit he'd been startled.

"Not quite what you expected, is it? It's the same in all the sideshows. Never judge too hastily."

The tone of the soft voice seemed clearer now: oily, gloating. Was the proprietor trying to distract him, make him lose his bearings, because of what he'd said about freaks? All right, so the sight of deformity made him more uncomfortable than he'd admitted to himself: so what? He glared at his watch. He was damned if he'd ask the way out. He could bear ten more minutes.

He dodged through alcoves of mirrors: left, always left. Eyes peered at him from separated blobs of flesh; a tangle of disfigurements writhed around him. The buzzing of the unsteady lights seemed louder, as though a hive had burst. The relentless distortions made him dizzy. He had to halt and close his smarting eyes.

Surely he'd walked through the whole of the building by now. Was the proprietor sneaking mirrors into new positions, for revenge? Five minutes, then Gray would ask the way out—and by God, if the man didn't tell him at once he'd smash his way through.

As Gray opened his eyes, he saw movement at the end of the passage. Good God, what had it been? Himself, of course: he must have shifted inadvertently. Surely that was a parody of himself beneath the grime on the glass. Beyond the passage, to the left, he heard a click.

"These are the last of the mirrors," the voice said.

That must mean that he was nearly free. Gray headed for the voice, almost running. Overhead the buzzing jerked close; light twitched in the mirrors. He avoided glancing at the glass at the end of the passage. On the left a mirror had swung back. Shaking his head to clear it of dizziness, buzzing, oppression, he stepped through the gap.

The room within was smaller than a cell. An even

dimmer light crawled feebly in a tube, stuttering. He peered at the rectangles of glass on the walls. Surely they weren't mirrors. Were they paintings?

"These are what I started with." The voice was beyond the mirror at the far end—the exit, presumably. "A payment for services, that's what they were supposed to be. You meet strange folk on the road."

Gray faced one panel. No, it wasn't a painting; it was too luminous. Yet he could see the sun setting behind mountains. On one slope a small town bristled with turrets. How could the town glow more profoundly than the sky, as though with an inner light?

The image was receding. Momentarily he felt that he was watching it not through dusty glass but through a veil of mist. He stepped forward in pursuit, and the glass turned muddily opaque at once. Some kind of optical trick, nothing more—but he turned quickly to the other panels, into which images were retreating. Before he could reach any surface, all the glass was gray and dull.

"One more," said the voice.

One sheet of glass was not opaque: the one at the far end of the cell. He advanced, thrusting out his hand to shove it aside. His hand bulged in the mirror, pumped up like a balloon whose neck was his wrist. The glass made stumpy pillars of his legs, and dragged his head like soft wax halfway down his arm. His face . . . He couldn't take any more distortions; he felt giddy and nauseous. His eyelids fell shut.

**W**hen he heard the click, his eyes opened. The mirror had moved, exposing dimness. He stumbled quickly forward. He hadn't realized how dizzy he was; he could hardly walk or focus his eyes. But he must get out while he had the chance. Why? What was he escaping?

As soon as he was through, the mirror clicked shut. But it didn't feel like earth or concrete underfoot—more like a patchy carpet. He blinked his eyes toward focus. Good God, he was in a caravan! He opened his mouth to protest; he struggled to regain control of his lips.

"That mirror made me what I am," the voice said.

Gray staggered about, trying to keep his balance, to raise his head. Suddenly he realized that it wasn't only dizziness that troubled him; the caravan was moving. It was crowded; he heard squirming in corners and on bunks. As his eyes slowly focused, he saw something like a hand holding a hand-mirror toward him. In its oval, the reflection of the caravan's interior was undistorted. By God, they'd better let him out; they wouldn't distract him with any more nonsense. But as he glimpsed the hand that he was thrusting out to ward off the mirror, he began to moan. He had passed through the final distorting mirror in more, and worse, ways than one. **17**

# Absolute Ebony

by Felice Picano

## HIS QUEST FOR A COLOR "BLACKER THAN ANY BLACK BEFORE IT" OPENED A DOOR TO THE ULTIMATE DARKNESS.

On a hot and stifling Roman night in the middle of the last century, a desultory tête-à-tête between two markedly different Americans was enlivened by a sudden barrage of knocking and shouting several floors below at the level of the Via Ruspoli.

The younger-seeming of the two men went to the wide ledge of the window and, peering down, reported that two rough *contadini* were attempting to gain admission to the *pensione*.

"Leave them, William," his friend remarked, with the same torpor and indifference he had displayed during their reunion dinner, fragments of which now littered the uncovered trestle table in the large, gloomy dining chamber. "The housekeeper, good Antonia, will see to them."

"Shall I go?" William asked. "Would you like to rest?"

"All I have is rest in this infernal city during this most dreadful summer. No. Stay. Your talk and natural high spirits bring me much comfort."

Although his companion had reason to doubt the exact veracity of these words, an acquaintance that extended some years to their childhood across the ocean obligated him to remain. Even before William had set forth on his European journey, he had known of his friend's various misfortunes, and the consequent disordered mental condition they had imparted.

A man in the prime of his life, Michaelis, as he called himself and was so known now, had been an artist of such extraordinary promise that a lifetime of the greatest renown and most elevated rewards had once appeared to be his natural birthright.

As a lad, his talent in draftsmanship and the application of *aquarelles* had been so precocious as to attract the attentions of the venerable Charles Willson Peale. Under such tutelage, an inherent genius for the plastic arts was both nourished and coordinated. Upon the death of the old master, the young heir to his artistic mantle had but one course left open to him; leaving the young Republic, he set off to conquer Italy, the art capital of the world.

Michaelis's arrival in Rome a decade previous had initially been embroidered with accolades and much patronage. He worked long hours, happily fulfilling many enterprises in the spacious fourth floor apartments of a palace on the Caelian, rented out by an indigent contessa obliged by penury to reside with more prudence outside the city gates. Nor was the young artist's life one only of toil, no matter how satisfying and conducive to others' admiration.

The handsome and confident youth was early

sought out by representatives of the highest cultural circles the capital offered—not only artists and sculptors, but poets, musicians, and eventually scientists and philosophers of great subtlety and abstruseness. From these last intellects, Michaelis had learned the rarified art of exploring the ideal; and from their examples he had conceived of the possibility of useful relations between the ideal and his own work.

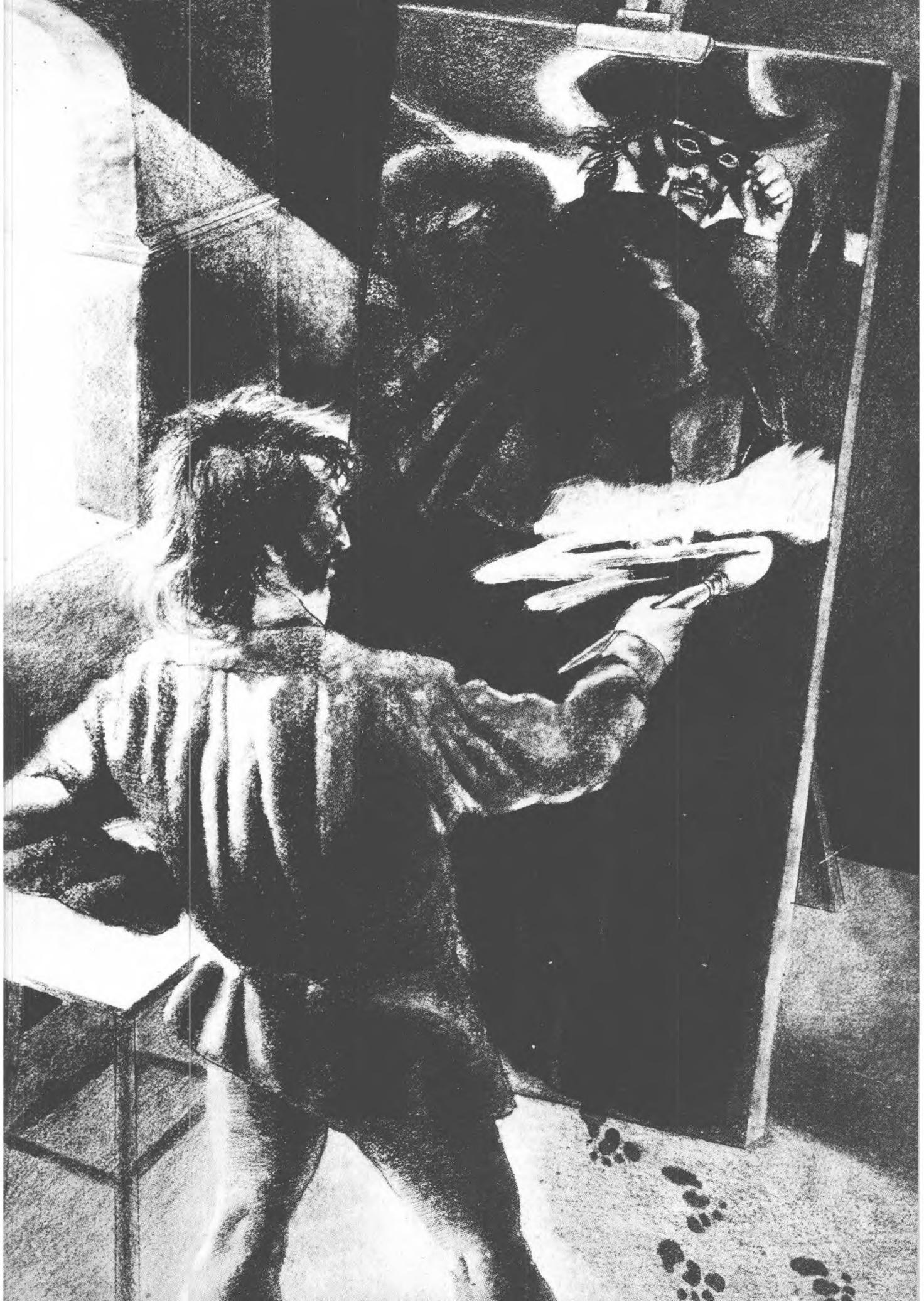
There were lighter matters to counterbalance such sobriety in the young man's life: teas, salons, dinner parties, balls, riding every fair day, churches with frescoes to be studied, and *palazzi* with paintings to be inspected. Nor was the fair sex absent or indifferent to Michaelis. Several women of various ages, ranks, and nationalities had secretly given their hearts to the dashing artist upon first meeting. In turn, Michaelis had selected his lady from among the four handsome daughters of the Anglican minister, unofficial director of the English-speaking community in the city.

Because the young woman, although apparently sensible and reciprocal in her regard for the artist, was underage at the time of their meeting, nearly six years passed before their engagement could be consummated. When they did wed, Michaelis's happiness was unsurpassed. He had recently completed the commission of a large mural for the reception chamber of one of the most powerful prelates of the Roman church. His work was never in higher favor or greater demand. His fame, and that of his colleagues and circle of friends, spanned the continent. And his Charlotte was the flower of his existence.

Such extreme content was to last only eight months. On a trip to the *campagna*, the Signora Michaelis was suddenly taken with a fever. Fragile by constitution, she succumbed within a fortnight.

As was to be expected, Michaelis was utterly distraught. His great disappointment in Charlotte's death caused a melancholia which deepened long after the natural period of mourning had passed. His clerical father-in-law of so short a duration listened with much anxiety and little aid to the young artist's words, which inclined dangerously to the heretical.

One year passed, then another, and Michaelis found himself still unable to renew his previous connections, nor, more importantly, to return to that labor which had once been the very mainspring of his life. Previously valued for his flights of fancy and unforced humor, he was now shunned by his friends for the various perorations of gloom he could evince on the least provocation. Former companions fell away or visited infrequently and only as a duty.



Michaelis's painting—at one time the joy of all who beheld it for its bright, noble evocation of youth and hope—underwent a transformation consonant with his altered sensibility. He began to espouse a new theory of art: that color itself was an aberration of the senses, a snare of illusion. He declared that all colors ought to be resolved to a more coherent system. Studying earlier theoreticians of chromatics, Michaelis found half-truths and errors to constitute the greater part of their writings. Finally, and by some never adequately explicated chain of reasoning, he decreed that only by a subtle yet complete mixture of the chromatic scale could color be true both to the mind and the senses.

When he picked up his brushes and palette at last, his tints began to darken; his hues became scarcely distinguishable from each other: reds diminished to deep indigos, brilliant cobalts became muddied midnight navies. His skills were as evident as before—intensified, his more discriminating colleagues attested. But few sitters wanted portraits so dark, so evidently colorless that a brace of candelabra were needed to illuminate even the penumbral backgrounds, and where details of feature or attitude were transitory as a taper's flicker.

Patronage dwindled, and Michaelis's renown was distorted into that of an eccentric—or worse, a fraud. That his new work was mocked and scorned only confirmed his belief that he had found the hidden truth of art. He applied himself with renewed vigor to elaborating the darkening of his palette, the complex obscurity of his vision. Bitterness and poverty gradually seeped into his life. Voluntary loneliness and desolation of joy in human activities coarsened his courtesies. Mistrust and misanthropy and a growing sense of enmity silenced him.

So had William found his friend, and so Michaelis remained during his visit despite all efforts to elevate him by recollections of shared youthful joys and follies. Nor was William persuasive in suggesting alternative courses of action to a future that even Michaelis himself foresaw as one of deepening decline. The American pleaded that his friend return with him in some two weeks to the less somber environs of their mother commonwealth, and to the more wholesome memories and occupations that the voyage would surely entail; but the painter could not entertain the idea of leaving the locale of his greatest happiness and most utter devastation. William was to go on to Venice day after next, return to Rome, then embark alone for Boston. Sadly, William acquiesced, again scanning the haggard appearance which once had bloomed so vigorously, as though he too were an artist and wished to memorize each cruelly imposed distortion of feature for a future portraiture.

Michaelis's continued silence, and his companion's own resultant silence, became suddenly intolerable. William had just stood back from the table, signal-

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ing his intention to depart, when there was a knocking on the apartment doors, which, while less disturbing than that earlier heard, had a more portentous resonance due to the echoing of the high-ceilinged rooms.

His host bade William stay a minute more while he answered the summons. From the outer corridor, William heard the housekeeper's rapid sputter of Italian, followed by his friend's morose accents in that same tongue, soon intertwined with another, lighter voice, speaking a dialect of the language.

Michaelis reentered the room with an astonishing alteration and, energetically gesturing, ushered in the two grimy *contadini* William had seen outside. They gazed about them with hesitancy and awe at the apartment's size and elegance. The artist meanwhile cleared a space across half the table and asked the men to set down their parcel and open it.

When the molding cloths had been removed and each of the peasants served a flagon of wine, Michaelis touched and fondled a rough stone the size and shape of a three-pound loaf of freshly baked bread. William was as perplexed by his friend's sudden alteration of mood—hectic, ruddy, enthusiastic now—as he was by the rock.

Taking up a small mallet such as marble-carvers use, the artist inserted an iron wedge into a hairline crack that ran along the top of the stone loaf and began to tap gently at it, all the while talking to his friend.

"These men, William, are from the countryside near L'Aquila in the Abruzzan Apennines, where lie the deepest charcoal pits in the peninsula: in all Europe, it is rumored. They assure me that what I am about to uncover is the finest, purest, blackest charcoal they or any they know have ever laid eyes upon.

"If they speak truthfully, then I have found at last the pigment I have been searching for these past three years; the inevitable, yet almost ideal result of my studies and experiments; the base color I shall have ground and mixed to make a linseed oil to complete my most perfect masterpiece—there!, that large, shrouded canvas you beheld earlier and questioned me on, which I would not show you or any man, and which has lain incomplete, awaiting this final color.

"If these men speak truly, William, we have before us what I have dreamed of, what I have required to prove my theory. Then will I be vindicated within the fortnight, when the new salon of Rome opens and my painting walks off with the greatest acclaim."

Michaelis tapped a final soft blow on the wedge,

and the stone gave off a sound soft as a sigh, before it fell sheerly onto the surrounding cloths. Within it, the size of a man's fist—of a man's heart—lay a mass of charcoal so black, so dense, that the *contadini* and William too were forced to gasp and draw back from it.

Michaelis stared, merely emitting a guttural murmur. "Ah, my beauty!"

William was unable to draw his eyes away from the dark mineral on the table. Its blackness was so intense that it seemed to recede from his vision, drawing his sight deeper within itself.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Only a fine chunk of charcoal now. But when it is made into a pigment, William, then it will be absolute ebony!"

William repeated the words, with growing discomfort.

"All colors composed of light mix to pure white," Michaelis explained. "Goethe proved that. But all colors composed of earthly material mix to black. Therefore I have painted a masterpiece in black so comprehensive as to make Rembrandt's darkest works seem like summer fripperies. We must see how this charcoal pulverizes. Good as its hue is, it must powder correctly or it will mix poorly."

So saying, he scraped one side of the wedge against the lump until a fine powder descended. This the artist held up on one finger, inspecting it by candlelight with great care and eventual satisfaction.

"It will do," the artist said, then sat down and sipped more wine, once more becoming pensive.

William believed the arrival of the *contadini* with the charcoal represented a turning point in his friend's life. He had never doubted Michaelis's skill or ingenuity, but he sensed disaster impending from this latest event. In applying to an all-black painting a pigment blacker still, the artist would surely seal his fate in Rome. His canvas would be completed, hung at the salon, scoffed at, made the butt of jokes and lampoons. Michaelis would be utterly crushed. Then William's arguments for a return to his homeland would be the only remaining alternative. Forced to consider his error like the virtuous and true man William knew Michaelis to be, the artist would return to a more moderately developed philosophy, to a life of light and color.

Yet the charcoal itself was strangely disturbing, and William was forced to busy himself in order to avoid having his eyes drawn to it. He paid the peasants out of his own pocket and, finding the housekeeper, sent her to fetch Castelgni the pigment maker for Signor Michaelis, who had urgent need of him.

The artist did not move from his seat. He sat regarding the charcoal with a concentrated attention, as though he foresaw more than vindication in it, as though he could envisage an entirely new universe potential in its depths

So entranced was the artist, William had to shake him out of reverie to take his leave. Passing out the front door of the *pensione*, William was greeted by the pigment maker hurriedly ascending the wide, dim stairway to Michaelis's studio.

After the pigment maker had scraped a chip off the lump of coal, he ground it to a fine point, then swept the powder into an old bronze dish well aged with many previous mixings. Water was sprinkled in, then the binder added—a concoction Castelgni had learned from his father, his father from his, going back, it was said, to the days and to the very studio of the great Veronese himself. When he had done, Castelgni called Michaelis, who meanwhile had been busying himself uncovering what seemed to the old Roman guildsman a large, obscure canvas.

"How does the color look, old man?"

"*Nerissimo*," the mixer replied. "Blacker than any black before it."

Indeed, the flat dish, barely coated with but a half inch of the new pigment, seemed to hold more than a pint of it, as though it had suddenly opened up to the size of a large flagon; as though ordinary laws of depth and foreshortening no longer held true.

"Chip and mix all of it—but carefully, mind you," Michaelis warned. "I'll need all of it. Bring it as soon as you're done."

He wrapped up the remainder of the charcoal, carefully sealing it back within its mantle of rock.

"As soon as you're done, you understand? No matter what the hour. Leave the dishful. I must test it."

When Castelgni had gone, the artist picked up the dish, looked once more into its depths, and brought it to the palette board, set up facing the uncovered painting.

Not even the Roman night was dim enough for the subtleties of darkness he had already committed to the canvas. The studio's arras were drawn double. Two dim candles in wall sconces were foreshaded by painted black baffles. Within this rare obscurity stood Michaelis's new painting, the summation of his life's work, unlike any work conceived of before.

It was a life-sized portrait of Michaelis himself, clad in the masquerade of a Spanish grandee of the previous era. In the painting he stood half turned from the observer, as though he had been walking away and, suddenly called to, had turned to face his caller—a most difficult view to achieve, even were it done with a model. For it to be a self-portrait was amazing, especially as Michaelis's care and technical skills insured that the portrait would be a compendium of every refinement of proportion and perspective.

But the unusual angle of the subject had another, more important purpose: to provide more than half the entire space of the canvas to one single

Michaelis felt as though he were seeing through a portal into an entirely new dimension.

area which he would fill in with the new pigment—the area of the full-length cape Michaelis wore. It fell heavily from his broad shoulders, plummeted leadenly, and swung slightly at the tops of his boots to reflect sudden movement as though by the exorbitant force of gravity.

This area was long prepared for the new color. For months he had covered it with a base of his own perfecting which would totally wed pigment to canvas. Once that had dried, the artist had painted over the area with lampblack, the darkest hue then available. To others, that might appear to be the end of the work. However, Michaelis had looked on it with pain, knowing how far from his ideal the lampblack proved to be. Yet after it too had dried, and he had tediously scraped the entire area of the painted cape, he was pleased to discover how well his base had held. The razor he wielded was so thin it almost sliced through the canvas at certain points, a person's face could be clearly discerned behind its fragile surface, yet it was black; front and back; fully primed for the final application.

Michaelis decided on one further refinement—almost a jest. He would leave a thin border of the lampblack to a half inch, outlining the new pigment with several more lines of lampblack as vertically flowing suggestions of folds. They ought to appear almost white against the new black.

He dipped a brush into the dish, careful not to miscalculate because of the curious depth. Emerging with a dab of utter darkness on the fine fat camelhair, he lifted it to the canvas.

The pigment almost sprang onto the portrait. Only a faint inkish stain remained on the brush. It was fully, instantly absorbed onto the prepared canvas, standing out against the other blacks like a spot of eternity.

Quickly, greedily, Michaelis dipped his brush and applied more of the pigment, broadening the spot, adding more, then more still, then all of it, until the dish was once more flat, and the pigment, to the size of a man's hand, covered the upper right-hand corner of the outlined cape.

"*Nerissimo.*" Michaelis whispered Castelgni's words. "Blacker than any black before it."

The artist pulled up a chair and sat staring at the canvas, pondering his work, admiring the new color, until it seemed that the hours of night were obliterated. When he finally left the studio in answer to his housekeeper's knocking, he was astonished to discover that it was already past dawn.

He slept briefly, fitfully, during the late morning and afternoon. Once he was partially awakened by William's voice outside: his friend seeking admittance

and firmly turned away by the artist's protective housekeeper.

At dusk, Castelgni arrived, accompanied by an apprentice who helped carry a large covered vat. When Michaelis had the lid prized up, he saw the intense depths of the black pigment. It had mixed beautifully.

The guildsman apologized for his tardiness. His wife, the old man said, would not allow the block of charcoal in her house. The superstitious old fool had lighted candles and muttered litanies all day. Castelgni had been forced to ask space in the atelier of a fellow craftsman to complete the mixing.

Upon hearing this, the simple-minded young apprentice, already frightened by the intense blackness of the pigment, whined and begged leave to depart.

"But it was a very easy pigment to make," the phlegmatic old man said with a smile. "Almost as though it was eager to become a paint for the Signore."

"It is said that the great Frans Hals knew twenty-seven different shades of black, and when to use each one of them for perfect effect. Rembrandt himself provided twenty-nine different shades of black for the hats and doublets and backgrounds, to differentiate each of the doctors in his mass portrait *The Anatomy Lesson*. The Chinese have an entire school of ink painting where no colors are admitted. Their gradations range from grays so indistinct as to seem the smudge of a virgin's finger upon the petal of a white chrysanthemum, to that deepest of blacks, which is used to write but one word in their curious visual language—that signifying eternal rest. Their blacks number thirty.

"Already I have discovered one more shade than they. Intimate to me as to those mandarins are these various tints, as though each had a name and character. There exists a spectrum of six black hues with iron oxide bases and the merest hint of scarlet, hues which seem to me the real colors of bloodlust in battle and the fevers of pestilences. Other tints of black, with browns and greens hinted at, are luxurious, as though embedded in velvet plush. Some blacks are the colors of certain practices of Roman courtesans I've heard whispered in my ears by masked women during lewd street celebrations, while other shades speak of quiet diplomacies, of saddened courtesies, of the final noble words spoken by high-born men and women meeting their ends by treacheries and the executioner's block. Other blacks are almost charming: one, with a hint of blue indigo, is as tart as a Parisian soubrette. Yet others are somber as widows' weeds, heavy as the unheard curses of decades-old prisoners in airless dungeons. I have acquainted myself with these varieties of despair and in turn invented new hues to reflect those new despondencies I have experienced.

"A pure lampblack from Liverpool is so black

that in bright light it glitters almost white. But there! That only proves my point. What I've wanted was a pigment that would not reflect outward, by prismatic, but inward, by secret refinements upon nature."

Michaelis ceased to speak, and fell into a brooding silence. William could do nothing but sigh.

"Will you begin tonight?" he asked.

"The very minute you leave me. And I will work on until it is done."

"Then goodnight. Tomorrow morning I ride for Pisa and thence to Venice. But I will be returned before the exhibit opens its doors. Promise me that day to return with me to America."

"After the exhibit, I will not need to go anywhere," the artist said. "I will have arrived."

It was in the earliest hours of morning, the following day, when Michaelis applied the last dregs of the pigment to the final uncovered square inch of canvas. As with every previous brushstroke, the paint seemed to leap off the brush onto the canvas, as though rejoicing that portion of itself divided in the act of application.

During the exhausting labor the artist had scarcely glanced at the canvas before him, or if he had, it was only to ensure that the new pigment lay evenly alongside the lampblack outline he had devised for its entire perimeter.

Now, finished, he stood back to inspect his portrait, and instantly felt a catch in the back of his throat. It was precisely as he had forevisioned it: the figure in its unusual attitude against its dim background, his face half hidden by the gleaming lampblack domino he lifted with one black-gloved hand, the shadows, the thirty other individual shades of black he had used for the costume, shadings of silver blacks crosshatched to suggest the sheen of satin, golden blacks delicately embossed for the silken expanses of his doublet and trousers, blue blacks and indigo blacks in whorls and miniscule circles to intimate the textures of a throat ruffle, of shirt cuffs bursting from each dark sleeve, browner blacks in careful streaks for details of facial hair and for the highlights of the broad-brimmed hat he wore, all wrought so ingeniously as to offer a palette as rich and complex as the bright chromaties of David and Delacroix, his contemporaries.

And even if one were so myopic as to misapprehend these many dark subtleties, dominating the self-portrait was the new pigment: the immense and utter blackness of the cape.

Looking at it, Michaelis felt as though he were seeing through a portal into an entirely new dimension intrinsically opposed to any ever seen by man before. Where the lampblack edging ended and the new paint began, so sharp a delineation occurred that it seemed to signal another reality existed. The dark cape curved inward by some curious property of the pigment, draw-

ing his vision into it, spiraling counterclockwise deeper and deeper within, until Michaelis felt weightless, unable to fix himself to any stable underpinnings of floor or walls or ceiling. Suddenly afraid that he would fall into the blackness of the cape, he pulled himself away from the canvas and meticulously sat himself down in an armchair at a fair distance from the easel.

That precaution availed little to dispel his impressions. From a dozen feet farther back in the room, the sense of the newly painted area being both more and less than a flat surface was intensified—as though he had assisted in representing the abysses of the heavens themselves, a starless heaven, one somehow pulsing alive with the very negation of matter.

A further curious side effect of the new pigment was that the large, gloomy studio seemed itself smaller, almost intimate, especially at that end of the chamber where the canvas was placed. One might infer that light itself could no longer exert its usual powers or proportions in the same locale as that utter lack of light.

It was a bitter triumph, this ultra-black painting, yet it was a triumph Michaelis experienced. So entranced was he with his creation that he sat hours in front of it, before falling asleep on the rough studio cot.

When he awoke from his extended yet unrefreshing sleep, the day outside his windows was damp and gray and airless. He was still fatigued, chilled by the sudden wetness that held the city in thrall all that day, and he passed the afternoon and evening, enraptured by his masterpiece, discovering, within its maw of absolute black, echoes of all the suffering and despondency he had so long felt.

Those moments he was able to draw himself away from the canvas, and particularly from the yawning chasm of the cape, were filled with a vague sense of unease and restlessness. He picked at his solitary dinner, distractedly began and then threw down unread a half dozen volumes of poetry and philosophy he had been wont to turn to as balm for his most melancholy hours before. That night, as he began to slip into slumber, he thought he heard the distant approach of flood waters rising.

The consequent days were spent by Michaelis in an attempt to overcome a sense of weariness that strangely persisted. His housekeeper said she hoped he wasn't ill, but as he could find no specific symptoms to complain of, the doctor that was sent for could find no matter wrong with the artist, and went off again baffled, prescribing rest.

Michaelis took advantage of this regimen to actively avoid all contact with others whose presence he had begun to find intolerable to his sensitivities. He asked that his food be set outside his apartment doors, where often enough Antonia would find it hours later untouched. He moved from sleep to waking through easier transitions than ever before, and a great deal more frequently during a single revolution of the

hours. Soon it became difficult for him to fully separate these two states of consciousness with his prior conviction.

Instead, he began to inhabit an intermediate state, and in this he would find himself gazing out the windows for hours, or—more frequently—leaning against the studio doorjamb, his work chamber grown tiny to his eyes, except for the portrait looming immensely, its awesome depths flickering and breeding odd presentiments.

He began hearing soft sounds, which seemed to derive from within the canvas: sounds like those he had first taken to be rising water, as though some liquid medium of great gravity had been stirred to life from an immense distance; and the movement caused a quiet yet distinct impression of a dark, viscous pond insistently, tediously lapping against the edge of the canvas.

He began to have inexplicable fantasies, sleeping or awake, of a small, misshapen creature—black as the blackness of the cape—who hid within the pigment, softly whimpering a dreadful because unfulfillable need.

Once that was heard, the delicate lapping ceased. But the whimpering continued, sometimes for hours; sometimes barely audible, at other times so loud he could not hear himself think. Nor could he escape it. He found he was unable to step beyond an invisible yet still-defined radius around the canvas without experiencing an unspecific though all-encompassing panic and actual physical pain in the form of megrims. At times he fancied the whimpering so near that it was within his very veins and arteries. He dared not nick himself, lest his lifeblood pour out not human scarlet, but absolute ebony too.

The childlike whimpering was approaching the door of his bedchamber. Although he slept and dreamed and knew he both slept and dreamed, it continued to advance through the precisely described dimensions and details of his bedchamber, black and small, almost viscous itself, moving slowly toward the edge of his bed. A fearful thing! He turned away, but could not awaken. It came to the bed's edge and slowly, viscously, climbed up onto the bedclothes, the whimper subsiding into a soft panting, not so much respiration as the inverse of breathing. Still unable to awaken or move away, he huddled further away from it within himself, dreading its approach, curling his body like an infant to avoid it. The maddening sound was in his ear now, the creature from within the canvas's chasm stretching itself slowly next to him, slowly, with infinitely minute pressure leaning its viscous form against his back, his legs, his neck, as a freezing child would timidly approach a sleeping stranger for warmth, causing him to tremble, then shiver, then shake so intensely with the sense of living blackness and nothingness sapping warmth and color and life from him that he awakened

with a start, leapt from the bed, and rushed out of the room.

In the dining-room cupboard he found a bottle of cognac and drank a cupful to warm and steady himself. Its half century of bottled spirits helped dispel the more immediate palpitations from the terrible nightmare, and he wrapped himself in his outdoors cloak and more deliberately sipped another cupful of the brandy until his hands no longer shook around the cup and his breath no longer frosted the cold edge of the metal. Yet he dared not fall asleep again, and passed the remaining hours before dawn huddled in the dining-room chair, peering alternately into the studio doorway left half ajar and, anxiously, out the window for the first rays of the morning sun.

The nightmare had shaken him from his previous week and more of lethargy. He bathed and dressed rapidly, and even before Antonia could come to him, he went down to the ground floor for the first time since the pigment had arrived, and asked leave to breakfast at the common table she daily set for her family and several other pensioners.

After so long and so complete an absence, all were pleased to see Michaelis among them, and congratulated him upon his recovery as evidenced by the new prodigiousness of his appetite.

Cheered, he gathered up a wide-brimmed hat against the hot Roman sun and decided on a long morning walk. Antonia was free to clean and air out his apartments, a task she anticipated after being denied her housekeeping there for so long.

Michaelis returned to the *pensione* past noon. Already most of the Roman citizenry had escaped the debilitating heat of the outdoors for cool afternoon siestas. The artist felt renewed, his fears of the night dispelled by the benign morning sunlight. He had just settled himself at his table and was reading through his weekly *Corriere*, attempting to catch up on news of the town and anticipating the coming evening's dinner with his friend who was expected back, when Antonia appeared before him, the various implements of her trade in hand and an arch expression on her face.

"You have worked very hard, Signore. Too much. It is poor for your health. When you first appeared at our table this morning, we were convinced you were some baleful spirit."

Michaelis murmured the appropriate response.

"Never have I met such a persevering artist," she said, shaking her finger to scold him. "Why, you even paint in your sleep!"

"How do you mean?"

"Come look," she said, leading him to the bedchamber. "What did I say. There! Those spots of black resisted all my efforts to remove them."

At the far side of the bed from where Michaelis slept, two spots of the new pigment lay on the floorboards. The artist wondered if he had been so dis-

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tracted during the last stages of his work on the canvas that, unawares, he had tracked them into his bed-chamber. He dismissed Antonia, assuring her he would ask the pigment maker for a solvent to remove them.

After she had gone, however, Michaelis returned to the side of the bed to look at the spots once more. Now they took on a more defined appearance. One was a mere half inch or so of smudge, the shape of an indistinct semicircle. But as he inspected them more closely, it struck him that the other mark could be nothing other than the pad and first three toes of a small foot: large, clear, the very impression that would be made by a child with paint on its feet leaning to climb onto the bed.

"I was certain the painting would be done by now," William protested. "You look as though you've worked on it without a minute of sleep since I've been away."

"Only one more night of work, then I am done," the artist replied, not unaware of his friend's vigorous health, almost a censure to his own appearance.

"Do you still mean to display it? The salon opens tomorrow."

"It will be done. Ready."

William was still to be appeased. "We were to celebrate its completion tonight. And also my return. We were to dine out. I have already accepted an invitation to a fête for us both at the Marchesa de B——'s."

"You must go alone. Tomorrow night, after the exhibit, we will celebrate. Have a little more patience with an old friend, I beg you."

"Tomorrow night for certain, then," William said brightly. "You'll have no way out, I assure you. I feel duty-bound to see you done with this canvas. Its last stages of work have taken a terrible toll of you, I fear."

Although exhausted and sad, Michaelis was calm, which William misperceived as the serenity of near-completion rather than the resignation it in truth signified.

"Let me only step into this pharmacy," the artist said. "I am promised a draft to sustain me during the last hours of labor."

William left his friend at the herbalist's shop. Michaelis received his prescription and ponderously took his way back to the *pensione*. Arrived, he mixed the potent stimulants the pharmacist had prepared into a flagon of strong, hot espresso and, sighing, brought the cup with him into the studio.

Two large cannisters sat in front of the shrouded

canvas, delivered, on his orders, by the pigment maker and his apprentice. Michaelis pried up their lids, downing the first of a half dozen cups of the espresso and stimulants he would consume in the coming hours.

A great initial effort was required for him to dip a paintbrush into the vat in front of him, an even greater effort to lift the brush to the area of the canvas where the absolute ebony had only just dried. But Michaelis made his nerves iron. Only his heart was a waste of icy emptiness the moment he applied the brush to the canvas and began the destruction of his masterpiece with the purest, thickest, whitest zinc white pigment to come from Castelgni's workshop.

Perhaps it was because of the precautions he had taken before beginning his work—the dozens of candelabras with the brightest tapers illuminating the room as though the grandest party were in progress—perhaps for other, unknown reasons, but he had already emptied one large cannister of the new pigment onto the canvas, and had begun dipping into the second, when he began to sense the pulsing of the remaining black pigment.

He worked faster, dipping the brush more rapidly, applying the white in swaths over large areas of black.

He became aware of the lapping sound, at first so quiet he merely sensed it: at the tips of his hair, on the very surface of his facial skin. But it went on, growing stronger, louder, until Michaelis could hear nothing else and worked with greater dispatch to cover the remaining areas of the terrible black. Several times he felt the brush he used almost twisted out of his hands by some force from within.

When only a square foot or so of the original pigment remained, he changed over to a larger, rougher brush. Then the whimpering started up. Like the lapping sound before it, it too began, scarcely audible, but as the artist dipped his brush and raised it with more zinc white to the canvas, it became louder, growing to a crescendo of piteous, fierce moaning so encompassing he was certain all in the surrounding dozen streets and houses could hear it.

He filled his ears with wax melting off the many candles around him and, temporarily protected, worked on feverishly.

Now only a few inches or so remained of the black. But when he dipped his brush into the zinc white, it came up dry. The pigment was used up, gone. He frantically scraped enough from the sides of the cannisters to cover a miniscule section, then cursed and kicked over the empty buckets.

The large canvas began bellying out, as though attempting to reject the application of the white—as though whatever existed within it was pushing through, to get out—at him.

Michaelis ignored its buffeting as best he could,

shuddering, concentrating all his distracted attention to devise how he could cover the last spot of black. His heart beat wildly with the memory of last night's visitor and the footprint he had seen, with the whimpering that now pierced through the wax that stuffed his ears as though the sound derived from within his brain.

Not a thimbleful of the white remained. It was four in the morning: impossible to secure more pigment. How could he cover it?

Michaelis almost went mad then. He sensed a power within that tiny remaining spot of black pigment that had to be obliterated lest it annihilate all else. The canvas continued to shudder from top to bottom, sometimes vertically, other times diagonally, as though to shake off the new paint. It would. It would, he knew, unless he covered every last bit of black.

As though by inspiration, he suddenly recalled his own supplies, not looked into for the past several years since he had turned to dark colors. Ah, and there in the small cupboard it was, not a great deal, but still clean, clear, unsullied, a tube of the ancient zinc white he had used for children's dresses and maidens' hands. Deafened, near to maddened by the piercing whine, he worked to extract the pigment into a dish. Looking up, he saw the canvas blowing in and out as though it were the topmost sail of a clipper under a typhoon.

He managed to get enough white pigment mixed with water and binder, rapidly stirring until he supposed it thick enough to completely coat that last spot of black.

He dipped his thick brush into the paint, swirled it to soak up every particle of the liquid. But as he lifted the brush from the palette dish to the spot, the billowing canvas went utterly flat. From the remaining portion of absolute ebony the color seemed to emerge as though the black had taken on full life. Before Michaelis's terrified eyes the pigment grew, forming itself into the grotesquely black lineaments of a small, unnaturally proportioned three-fingered hand reaching out.

He clenched his teeth to stifle an utterance of terror, then dabbed the brush at the fingers, covering them with lines, blotches, streaks of white. As he did,

the hand pulled back; simultaneously a shriek emerged from the canvas's black core, so high pitched, so fraught with fear and pain, as to send him reeling back from it.

The shriek ended as suddenly. When his head stopped hurting from the sound, he approached the canvas again. All was silent: the whimpering gone, the canvas still. He painted over that last spot once more; then, calmed, he inspected the canvas and returned his brush over every possibility of insufficient white, no matter how thread-thin the crevice, until he was satisfied that not an iota of the black pigment remained.

Exhausted, Michaelis slowly, arduously dragged himself from the studio and swooned onto his bed.

"Arouse yourself, dear friend. It's past four o'clock in the afternoon."

Michaelis sat up in his bed and looked about as though he had awakened in a strange place.

"Have a cup of this *caff e latte*. It will help you awaken," William said. He sat in a chair near the bed, holding a cup out to Michaelis. Late afternoon daylight played over the floorboards through the uncurtained window.

"The exhibit has been open since midday," his friend went on. "You must rouse yourself and have some food before we go."

The artist sipped the insipid liquid, coming slowly awake as though from a long dream.

Suddenly he started. "The canvas. It must be brought to the salon."

"Relax, my friend. It is already done."

"Done?"

"Gone to the salon. This morning when I called on you, I found you sound asleep, the canvas finished and ready. I had it carted to the salon. You had wax in your ears, I supposed so as not to be disturbed by noise during your well-earned rest."

"Did you see it?" Michaelis asked.

"Alas, no. The men from the salon came in, covered it over, and brought it out while I was trying to awaken you."

William insisted they eat at a popular *ristorante* nearby the exhibit, much attended by artists and other bohemians of all nationalities, and once Michaelis's own favorite haunt during his palmier days.

Several times during the course of their lunch, the artist was recognized by colleagues and acquaintances, but contented their curiosity by a single curt nod. As their dessert was served, Reigler, the noted art critic and prestigious historian, came to their table and requested a seat with them.

"I have seen your self-portrait on exhibit," he said, taking Michaelis's hand in a warm clasp. "Allow me to be the first to congratulate you and to acclaim it a masterpiece."

Seeing Reigler not repulsed by the formerly



misanthropic artist, others approached. All had either seen the portrait or heard of it. All were filled with congratulations and that unrestrained heartfelt pleasure that all true artists feel in a colleague's triumph over their recalcitrant materials and even more elusive muse. Champagne was ordered. Toasts were proposed to Michaelis and to his work. The dinner became a fête.

Soon the party spilled out into the piazza, and from there moved en masse toward the salon with great festivity. Michaelis had barely stepped over the threshold of the salon when a man who, for the past three years, had mocked him to all who would listen stepped forward to embrace the artist.

"You have been awarded the *Palma d'Oro*, the highest prize given to a work of art."

A cheer arose from the crowd. Others in the salon, hearing of the arrival of Michaelis, came to greet him. The president of the Art Society himself arrived, pinned the gold palm tree medal to Michaelis's jacket-front, and launched into a speech of flowery laudation and great length.

The artist heard and witnessed all this with a scarcely hidden sneer and no satisfaction. What did these fools mean? The painting was an abortion, a mere whisper of a possibility of what he had intended, what he had idealized, what he had achieved—however briefly and perilously. Could these idiots not understand what he had done, what he had been forced to undo? Would they never know the depths of darkness he had plumbed, first in his imagination, then—when the pigment was made—in his art, in his life? If his undoing was the cause of so much honor, what would they have thought to see the painting as he had achieved it?

The president was done speaking. Applause was followed by more congratulations, more toasts and drinking of champagne. Michaelis was asked to speak, too, and demurred, but William—who, among all the others, the artist could believe was truly delighted in his friend's great success—persuaded him. So the artist talked, quietly, sadly, of his travails, of his search for new modes of expression, of his experimentation with new and old forms and themes and techniques, of how the ideal he had envisioned would live on, although the finished work would always be a mere copy, cipher, imitation of that ideal.

"Let us see this marvel of art," the president declared. "We have installed it at one end of the great salon with no other paintings nearby, for all would suffer by comparison."

"The others are mere exercises," Michaelis heard his former enemy declare.

Nor was he the only man to utter such sentiments as the crowd, Michaelis in its center, flowed into the great salon, past one fine painting after another, each one ignored or subjected to abuse and invective from the onlookers.

When they had gathered and opened a space around the painter and his portrait, William read out the inscription:

*"Self-Portrait in Absolute Ebony."*

"Amazing, isn't it?" Reigler demanded.

"Astounding," several answered.

"Utter genius," another man said. "Who would have thought to outline the cape in lampblack?"

"And the cape itself. Remarkable."

"Of course, of course. The cape!" others chorused.

The president was speaking into Michaelis's ear during the sudden hubbub.

"When the canvas was first brought, we feared it had been damaged by the carters. Two tiny spots of white in the lower center of the cape seemed to mar it. Within minutes, they were gone. Almost as we watched."

Michaelis did not appear to listen, riveted as he was to the ground, his eyes completely filled by what he beheld: the portrait was exactly as he had finished it a week and a half before, the cape absolutely black.

"Why, you feel as though you could put your hand right into the pigment there," Reigler said, reaching out.

"Don't touch it!" Michaelis shouted.

"He meant no harm to it," William said.

"Don't touch it," Michaelis repeated more softly, but as filled with anxiety. "Don't go near it."

"As though it were a window cut into another dimension," another man said. "One of utter blackness, naturally."

"Why, even the room appears smaller at this end," yet another viewer observed. "As though it were made smaller by the portrait."

"There's never been a painting like it," several agreed.

Michaelis turned away, grasping William's arm.

"We must go," he whispered.

"Go? Where?"

"To Boston. Tonight. Immediately."

"Why?" he asked. Then, seeing his friend's face: "But the barque doesn't leave until tomorrow afternoon."

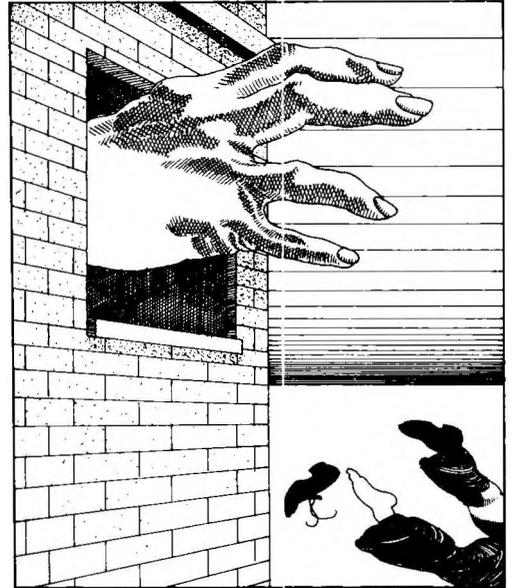
"I must pack my necessities tonight. Now. You will help me," the artist said, pulling William away from the crowd still gathered in wonder around the portrait.

"Why the sudden hurry? We were to celebrate tonight. Surely you don't want to leave Rome quite yet. It is a great success."

William had to repeat his question, then repeat it again.

Although Michaelis stared at him from only inches away, he could not hear his countryman. All he could hear was a soft, viscous lapping sound, then the awful familiarity of a barely audible whimpering that spoke of an unfillable abyss that would reach out slowly and draw him into the maw of absolute ebony. 17

# 3 Cautionary Tales



## THE HELPING HAND

Travis had come to the end of his rope—for at least the twelfth time. He had just been fired from his job; he knew there was nothing to live for, and in his hand he held the means of cutting short an existence which gave him nothing but humiliation. The poison in this bottle—*bellis annabula* it was called—was quick, sure, and absolutely painless. He had stolen it from the laboratory where he had worked up to a week ago; it was used there to fix hydrocarbons. Travis planned to fix himself, once and for all.

His few remaining friends thought he was nothing but an attention-seeker, since he had unsuccessfully attempted this sort of thing a dozen times before. Well, he would show them this time! They'd see if he had the nerve to do it, and then they'd be sorry. Maybe even his wife would be sorry. . . .

It was the thought of his wife that really steeled Travis's resolution. In ten years of marriage, her love had passed through indifference into hate—a sharp, domineering, acidic sort of hate against which he was helpless.

Do it now, he thought! He closed his eyes, raised the bottle. . . .

And a hand knocked the bottle away! He heard his wife's stern voice. "What do you think you're doing?"

"I think it's obvious," Travis said, with a helpless shrug of his shoulders.

She studied his face. She was a large nonsense woman with a rare faculty for never-ending hatred. But now her face softened. "You really meant it this time, didn't you?"

"It doesn't matter," Travis said. "Tomorrow or next week will do."

"I never believed you had it in you," she said. "I suppose I've made life fairly impossible for you. I'm a person who must have things her own way, at any cost."

"I don't see why you stopped me," Travis said. "After all, you hate me."

His wife didn't answer. She *couldn't* be having a change of heart. . . . But this was the first time Travis had seen her like this.

"I've misjudged you," she said at last. "I thought you were all bluff. Remember when you threatened to jump from the window? You leaned out—like this."

His wife leaned out the window, her body poised over the street twenty stories below.

"Don't do that!" Travis said sharply. "It makes me giddy."

She moved back in, smiling. "That's funny, coming from you. Don't tell me you're feeling some love of life again!"

"I could," Travis said, "if only you and I—"

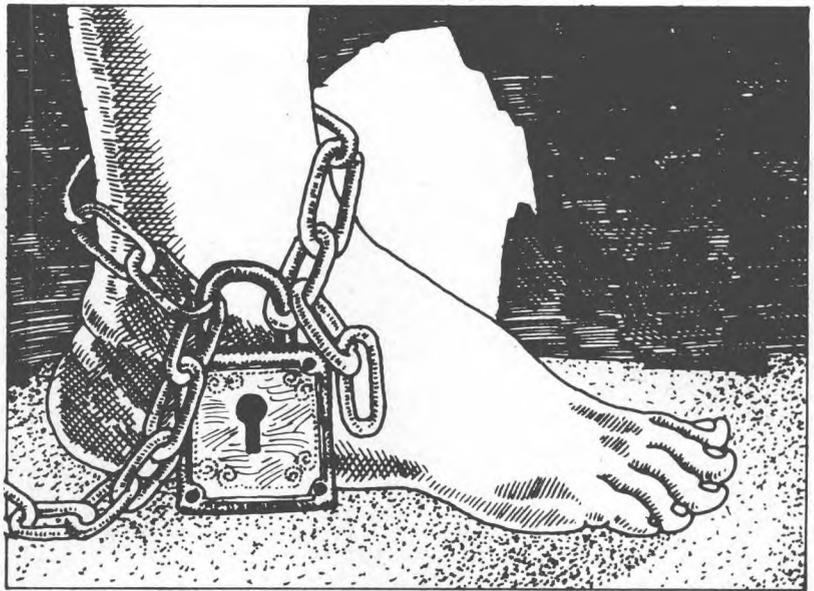
"Perhaps," she said, and Travis felt a sudden flash of hope. Women were so strange! She was smiling. She put her hands on his shoulders and said, "I was wrong, dear. You have no idea of my feelings for you."

Travis found it quite impossible to answer. He was moved. His wife's strong, caring hands on his shoulders had moved him inexpressibly—straight through the open window. . . .

As he fell toward the street, Travis could hear his wife calling, "You see, darling, I wanted to do it *my* way!" 

# by Robert Sheckley

...ON DEALING WITH WIVES, LOVERS, AND OTHER DEMONS.



## THE MAN WHO LOVED

**P**erhaps there was never a man who loved so deeply and so hopelessly as poor Johnny Dix.

He was a strange, moody man, rather clumsy and socially inept, but with a good knack for business. It was his misfortune to fall in love with Jane Davies, a reigning beauty of her day, and as clever as she was beautiful. Some say she was heartless; but Jane herself points out that she discouraged Dix from the start, and that the tragic chain of circumstances arising from his passion could not be blamed on her.

For nearly five years, according to Jane, she had rejected Dix's offers of marriage. For six months she didn't see him; finally she agreed to spend one last afternoon with him and then see him no more. She claims she had grown frightened of him—though no one can imagine Jane frightened.

Dix took her walking on his recently acquired estate. Business had prospered for him, but love had failed. In a mood of heavy gloom and desperation, he proposed a last time—and was rejected as usual.

Then he went berserk. Jane says she can still remember those big clumsy hands closing around her throat—and all her cleverness and beauty were worthless as unconsciousness closed over her.

She recovered some hours later and found herself in a cave. A long, heavy chain was around her left ankle, handcuffed in place by a big old-fashioned lock. By dim candlelight, she could see Dix sitting on a nearby rock.

Jane examined the chain and said, "Unlock this at once."

"Never," Dix said. "I've planned this for a long time. We are in a cavern beneath my estate. No one will

ever find this place. Or you. Or me."

Jane looked around and saw that the cavern was stacked high with cases of canned goods, books, lanterns, and medicines. There was a deep pool of clear water nearby; in fact, there was everything one would need for a very long stay. She also saw that Dix was quite insane.

"There's enough here for thirty years," Dix told her. "I planned it all very carefully. You may hate me now, Jane, but that's all right. I can wait for a year or two. Eventually you'll love me."

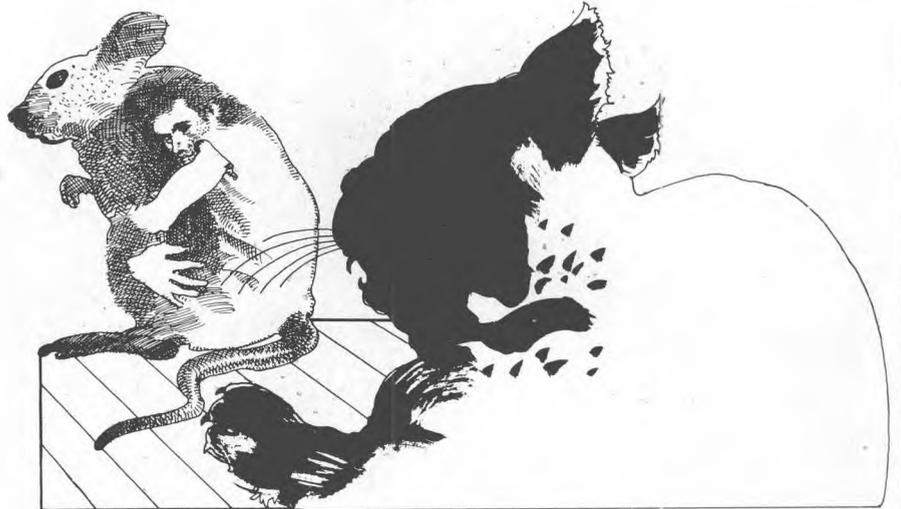
Then, with a grand flourish, Dix pulled out another heavy chain. Like Jane's, it was stapled to the wall of the cave. He locked the iron cuff around his ankle and threw the key into the deep pool of water. Then he sat back, crossed his arms on his chest, and began to wait. . . . And whenever Jane tells the story, she points to this as the moment of ultimate horror.

When asked how she escaped, Jane says it was easy. Dix, his arms crossed on his chest, fell asleep at last; and Jane picked the lock of her handcuff with a hairpin. Then she tiptoed out of the cave.

"But what about Johnny Dix?" someone always asks. And Jane shrugs.

"I have no idea," she says. "I suppose he got out shortly after I did and has been too ashamed to show himself in public. You see, I couldn't leave him alone and helpless in the cave. Mad as he was, I felt he deserved a chance. So before I left, I put down my hairpin beside him. . . ."

"I do hope the clumsy fellow was able to use it," Jane always adds. "It calls for a rather special knack, you know. . . ."



# THE WISH

Frank Morris was a man with an obsession. Others like him collected mountains of newspapers or miles of string; or they spent a lifetime trying to devise a foolproof betting system, or a sure-fire way of beating the stock market. Frank Morris's particular obsession was magic.

He lived all alone in a rented room, and his only company was a cat. His tables and chairs were piled high with ancient books and manuscripts, his walls were covered with sorcerer's tools, and his closets were stuffed with magical herbs and essences. People left him alone, and Frank liked it that way. He knew that someday he would find the proper spell, and a demon would appear and grant him one glorious wish. At night he dreamed of it; and in the morning he went back to work on his formulas. His black cat lay nearby, her yellow eyes half closed, looking the very soul of magic. And Frank labored on, testing the infinite permutations of his formulas.

He had grown so used to failure that success caught him by surprise. A wisp of smoke appeared in the pentagon on the floor. A demon slowly took form; and Frank, who had dreamed so long of this moment, found himself shaking with fear. Somehow, in all those years, he had never decided exactly what he should ask for when a demon *did* appear.

The wisp of smoke grew into a huge gray shape. Frank paced up and down, wrung his hands, stroked his cat, gritted his teeth, bit his nails, and desperately tried to think. One wish, and only one wish, that was the rule. But what should he wish for? Wealth? Or was power more valuable? Should immortality be considered? Or would a more modest wish be safer?

The demon was fully formed now. Its pointed

head brushed the ceiling, and its lips were twisted into a devilish leer. "Your wish!" the demon bellowed, in a voice so loud that both Frank and his cat backed away.

His wish. . . . What was it to be? The moments were ticking away; the demon was growing impatient. If he didn't hurry it might leave, never to return.

But after twenty years of striving, Frank wanted to make the best possible wish. He thought again of the various advantages offered by power, or wealth, or immortality. Then, just as he was about to decide, he saw that the demon was grinning at him.

"It's irregular," the demon said. "But I think it fulfills the conditions."

Frank didn't know what the demon was talking about. Then a wave of dizziness came over him, and the room went black. When his vision returned, Frank saw that the demon was gone.

Wasted, he thought. The demon was gone, and everything was as it had been.

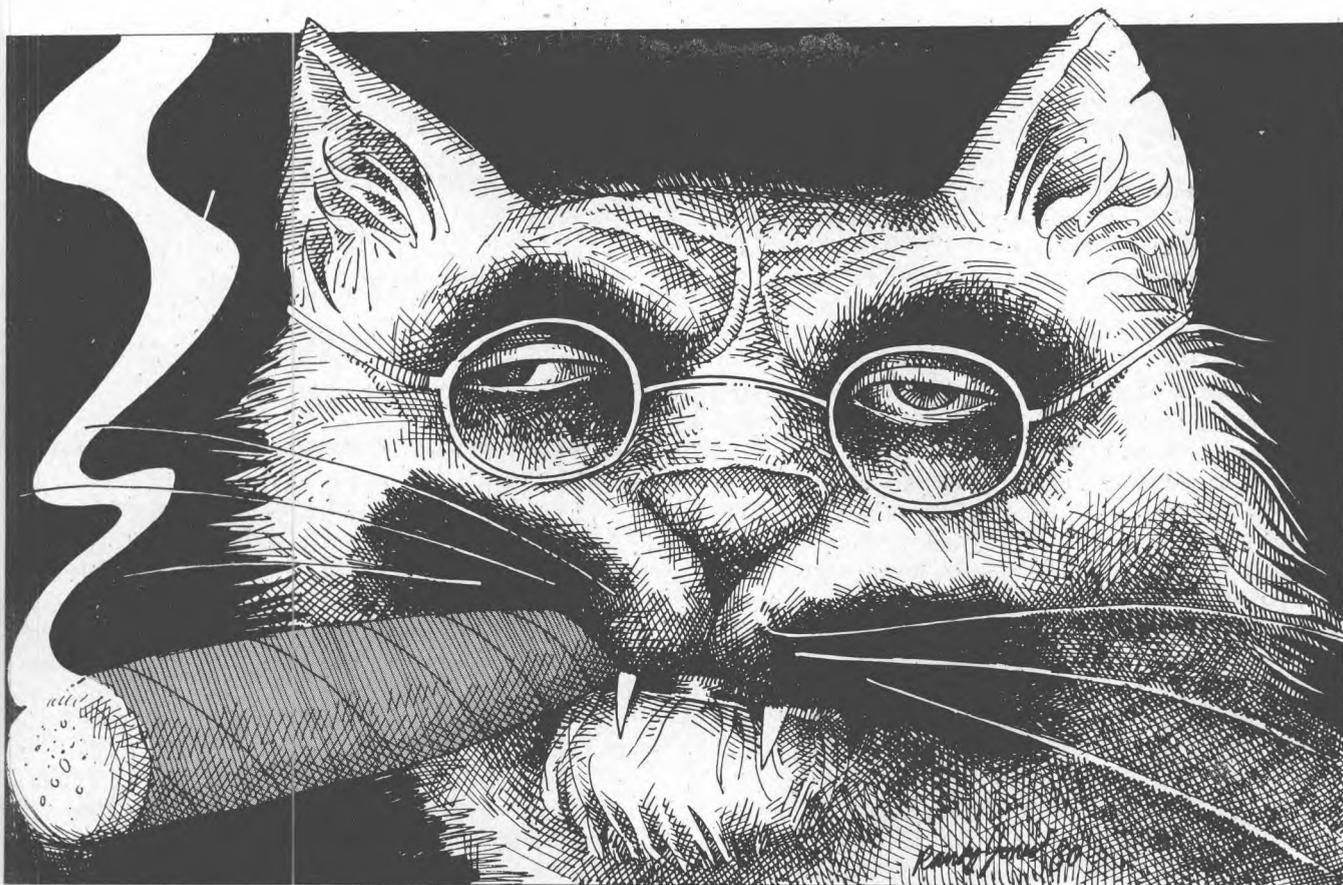
Well, not *quite* as it had been. For Frank noticed that his ears had grown long, and his nose had grown even longer. He had gray fur instead of skin, and he had a tail. That treacherous demon had changed him into a beast!

Then Frank heard a noise behind him. He realized what had happened, and he ran with the speed of desperation, the room looming hugely around him.

A single blow smashed into him, and he saw a whiskered face with gigantic teeth ready to bite. . . .

And Frank knew that his hesitation had caused his doom. It was horribly apparent now that his *cat* had made a wish first—a wish the demon had accepted.

And naturally enough, his cat had wished for a mouse. 17



# GROUCHO

by Ron Goulart

CATS ARE NOTORIOUSLY UNDEPENDABLE—  
AND ABSOLUTE *HELL* TO DO BUSINESS WITH!

**I**t wasn't a wolf that killed him, but it wasn't exactly a dog either. The police, never able to reach a satisfactory conclusion as to what ripped Buzz Stover to pieces, finally wrote his death off as due to an attack by some sort of wild animal that had somehow strayed into his Hollywood Hills neighborhood. They had to fudge a little to do that and ignore items such as a sworn statement by Buzz's nearest neighbor, a respected rock composer, that he had seen a large gray dog leaving Buzz's house on the night of his death. The hound left by way of the front door, whistling an old Broadway show tune. The police, even in Southern California, aren't

especially anxious to follow up leads like that and so the exact cause of Buzz's death remains a mystery to just about everyone. I'm probably the only person, with the possible exception of Panda Cruz, who knows who actually destroyed Buzz and why. But, as I long ago resolved, it's best never to talk about the murder cases you happen to get tangled in. Especially the supernatural ones.

When I had lunch with Buzz on that gray rainy day this past spring I tried to warn him about his own delving into the supernatural.

"Delving? What kind of candy-apple word is

that?" He bounced, a feisty sneer on his plump little face, on the leatherette banquette. "Is that the kind of verbiage you put into the ads you grind out at that advertising sweatshop where—"

"Hush!" suggested a gaunt old gentleman at a nearby table in the dim, exclusive Beverly Hills restaurant.

"Up yours, grandpappy!" Buzz flashed him a finger, returned his attention to me. "I didn't come to this vastly overpriced bistro to—"

"Do you know who you just gave the finger to? That's Jean Alch, the most respected French film director of the 1950s. He won—"

"He's got gravy on his rugby shirt. And the '50s are dead and gone." He picked up his Otranto's menu, put it back down near his water goblet. "I shouldn't even be eating. I'm still in mourning."

"Yes, I was sorry to hear about Warren getting killed in that car accident. You guys had been partners for—"

"Six glorious years." Buzz was a small chunky man of thirty-six, who persisted in wearing silken warm-up suits to lunch. "It's lousy enough losing a writing partner when your shows are doing so-so, but *Goon Squad* is number two on the tube all across this great land of ours right now. Honesty compels me to admit that Warren Gish, rest his soul, was equally responsible for the brilliant *Goon Squad* scripts that pushed the show to its present pinnacle."

"I thought Warren did the plots and all the dialogue and you just did the polish."

"It is truly incredible that someone in the ad game, a Hollywood hanger-on for all these many years, can be so dumb," said Buzz, hunching. "My polishing is what made those scripts work, what made Curly Hudnut and Dip Gomez into our nation's leading macho TV stars."

"How are you going to continue the scripting?"

"Scripting? Where do you get your vocabulary, from back issues of *Writer's Digest* lying around your barber shop?"

"I heard you've been having trouble finding a new associate anywhere near as good as Warren was," I said. "The producers of *Goon Squad* supposedly weren't satisfied with your first solo script."

Buzz winced. "Naw, they loved it . . . but I would feel better with a new assistant," he said. "In fact, I . . . well, call me sentimental, but I wish there were some way I could get Warren back. See, that night when the poor bastard had his fatal crash, we'd had a little squabble at a party out in Malibu just a little while before. I feel bad."

"You punched him in the snoot."

"Only once." Buzz held up a single finger.

"Ah, he does it yet again," muttered Jean Alch.

"This one isn't for you, Uncle Wiggly," said Buzz. He gave a forlorn shake of his head. "I can't believe

**"The cat  
I got stuck in  
was  
already  
named  
Groucho.  
See,  
I even  
have a tag  
under  
my flea collar  
with the  
name on it."**

Warren's been gone a month. God."

"You really did have a fight that night?"

"All great teams fight—Martin and Lewis, Hecht and MacArthur, Rodgers and Hammerstein," Buzz told me. "You don't know what it means to be overflowing with talent. Putting two highly gifted people like Warren and me together, it's going to cause a few sparks."

"I hear he kicked you in the groin," I said, "that night."

"Naw, only the knee." Buzz, wincing again, leaned back to gaze up at the crystal chandelier directly above us. "Did you have any trouble getting shown to this table today?"

"Nope."

He nodded, pensive. "He made me spell my name twice, Otranto himself who's known me since he was salad chef at Udolpho's seven years ago," he said. "I'm getting a little invisible, I fear. It usually starts at posh places like this, they stop seeing you. It spreads to parking lot attendants, then receptionists, producers, the works. In six months you can cease to exist altogether."

"Maybe, considering what's been happening, you ought to take a vacation or—"

"Who told you to suggest that to me?"

"Nobody, Buzz. You seem sort of—"

"Listen, I know you're one of the few guys I can trust in this goofy town." He was leaning toward me, elbows on the table. "That script I did on my own was a complete turkey. Couple more like that and . . . brrr. I fade out completely."

"C'mon, a new collaborator and —"

"Nope, I need Warren's help to save me."

"How can you expect to—"

"Do you ever watch *Strange, Isn't It?*" His voice had dropped to a whisper.

of—” “Once. I don’t go in for that *Real People* sort

of—” “You know Panda Cruz, don’t you, the love of my life?”

“The slim redhead?”

“No, you’re thinking of . . . oh, right. Last time we met, at the screening of *Six Demented Coeds*, Panda was a redhead,” he answered, remembering. “She’s a blonde now, working as a secretary for Gossamer-Stein, the halfwits who produce *Strange, Isn’t It?*” He rubbed his plump little hands together. “There was this old bimbo on the show last week, a Mrs. Brill from Oxnard. She can contact the *dead*.”

“Nobody can do that, Buzz.”

“Mrs. Brill can,” he assured me. “Panda and I drove out to her dump day before yesterday. She’s going to get me through to Warren.”

“You actually believe you can—”

“It works. Really. She had me talking to my dead mother. I swear.”

“Doing anyone’s mother is easy. That can be faked by any fortune-teller.”

“You can’t fake my mom. I tell you this old bimbo is legit. She’s got occult powers.”

“Okay, so she puts you in touch with the spirit of Warren Gish. Then what? You plan to sit around the seance while he dictates a *Goon Squad* story through this woman?”

After glancing carefully around Otranto’s, Buzz replied, “She may, if all the signs are right . . . and certain essential rituals are performed . . . she may get Warren to come back.”

“Come back? How?”

“You know, reincarnate.”

“As who?”

“There’s the tricky part. She doesn’t know exactly where he’ll pop up. But she guarantees he will come back in some form and save my apples.” He straightened up, smiling tentatively. “Going to be terrific, together again, turning out top-notch scripts, winning Emmy awards.”

“You mentioned certain rituals. What exactly do you have to do?”

Buzz studied his stubby fingernails. “Black magic stuff,” he said finally. “We have to take off our clothes and . . . um . . . sacrifice a goat. Things like that.”

“Things like that can get you in considerable trouble.”

“Maybe, but it’s worth it,” Buzz said. “They’re not going to bench me just yet. Nope.”

My advertising agency responsibilities took me out of town the day after that lunch with Buzz. One of our clients, the Arends Labs, were test-marketing a new liquid headache remedy in Phoenix, Arizona. The stuff was called Brainwash and, although it apparently relieved the stubbornest headache in under ninety sec-

onds, it was causing approximately one customer in three to experience violent and fantastic hallucinations. I flew in to help the Arends publicity man come up with a plausible story to soothe everybody. Usually these sorts of troubleshooting jobs take no more than two or three days, but in this instance Junior Arends also came out from the main office in Orlando, Florida. I was in Phoenix nearly two days before I realized Junior had appropriated two cases of the suspect headache cure and was consuming several bottles of Brainwash a night. The resulting hallucinations prompted him, eventually, to join a marimba band that was playing backup at a male strippers club in a sleazy sector of town. By the time I located him, got him detoxified and coauthored some copy that pacified the mayor, the governor and various health officers, a week and half of my life had passed into oblivion.

Buzz never spoke much about the session with Mrs. Brill, the psychic, whereat he and Panda performed certain occult rites and got a message across to his recently deceased partner. “It was degrading, but damn effective,” was all Buzz would say when I asked him about it over the phone on my return. He was more talkative about the reincarnation of Warren Gish.

It had been a rainy evening, about a week after the seance, and Buzz was sitting alone in the spacious living room of his hillside house. The night was chill and misty as well. Panda, who now and then lived with him, was over in Burbank at the taping of the *Strange, Isn’t It?* show.

“Rape, incest, torture, terminal cancer,” Buzz was mumbling, striving to come up with a topic he hadn’t used on *Goon Squad*. “Child molesting, sodomy, bubonic plague . . . Geeze, I ought to be able to switch something. Is there a twist on abortion nobody’s come up with? Could we get by with bestiality again?”

A faint scratching sounded.

Buzz leaped up out of his leather lounge chair, dropping his pencils and his legal tablet. He’d been rather tense since the occult encounter.

The scratching was repeated, louder. The kitchen door rattled as though something were being tossed against it.

“Do I owe anybody money? Is there anyone who wants to break my arms and legs?”

Deciding it was okay to pad through his big shadowy house, he went to investigate, turning on lights as he did.

“What?” he asked from the middle of the kitchen.

More scratching, more rattling of the outer screen door. The yellow back door kept him from seeing what was out there.

“Who is it?”

“Meow, meow.”

After flipping the back area floodlights on, Buzz carefully opened the door.

## GROUCHO

There was a cat out there, a fat furry one the color of butterscotch pudding.

"Hello, pussy."

"Hello yourself, asshole," said the cat.

**B**uzz jumped backward, hitting his hip a good one on his butcher block table. "A joke, right? Some crazed ventriloquist is lurking out there." He walked again toward the open doorway. "We don't audition for *Strange, Isn't It?* here. Take your cat over to Burbank for—"

"Let me in, old boy. I'm getting soaked," called the cat. "Having fur is a crock, but since—"

"Warren? Warren Gish?"

"They call me Groucho now. Open up already, huh?"

Hand shaking some, Buzz flung open the screen door, nearly swatting the talking cat off the damp redwood porch. "Groucho? What kind of halfwit name is that for a—"

"I didn't pick it, obviously, old boy," said Groucho, coming into the kitchen. "The cat I got stuck in was already named Groucho. See, I even have a tag under my flea collar with the name on it."

"This is a . . . a miracle."

Groucho shook himself, began rubbing at an ear with his paw. "Get me a towel or something, schmuck."

Buzz grabbed the whole roll out of the rack over the yellow tile sink. "I was anticipating you'd . . . I figured you were going to come back . . . you know, as a person."

"Lot you know about reincarnation," the cat said. "Rush in and summon me back from the other side, use that old skwack in Oxnard of all places to get a lock on my spirit. Typical Buzz Stover move."

"Isn't this better than being dead?"

"The people who own Groucho fed me nothing but Yowl!"

"What is it?"

"Yowl! is the new meaty-like food for contented cats," explained Groucho. "Use some of those towels, I'm soggy."

"Oh, sure. Sorry." He crouched down beside his reincarnated partner. "What's it like on the other side?"

"Can't tell you."

"Rules?"

"Don't remember. When I came jolting back here, the details got lost. Rub vigorously, can you?"

Buzz struggled to massage the dampness out of the wet cat. "How come you can talk? Most cats don't have the power to—"

"It's all part of the mumbo jumbo you worked on me," explained Groucho. "All I know is that right after you dragged my spirit back for that conference in Oxnard I blacked out. I awakened in Pasadena eating Yowl! out of a recycled TV dinner tray. Everybody was

calling me Groucho."

"You came all the way here from Pasadena on foot?"

"It's a regular *Lassie, Come Home*, huh?"

Crumbling up the tattered, wet paper towels, Buzz stood up and away from the butterscotch cat. "I did miss you, Warren."

"Can't you smack Panda instead? I didn't realize, by the way, she was so skirny. When you two stripped down for that mystical ritual, I saw more ribs than tits on her."

"Listen, Warren, I hope you didn't come back just to bicker and squabble."

"You have to address me as Groucho."

"A dumb name."

"Even so, that's the way reincarnation seems to work."

"Would you like something to drink, Groucho?"

"Milk." The cat strolled in the direction of the blue refrigerator. "Can't handle booze anymore, found that out in Pasadena. Something to do with the feline metabolism I'm stuck with."

"I only have skim, because Panda mostly drinks the milk and she's—"

"On a diet. So she can grow even skinnier."

"Everybody doesn't have to be zoftig, War— Groucho. Even one of your wives, remember, was sort of slender."

The cat shuddered. "We won't talk about Estrelita."

"You know, if I can pay you a compliment, that's a cute voice you have now. Has a trace of your old one, but with a sort of—"

"Looney Tunes quality added?"

"I was being sincere," Buzz told him. "You're a very hard guy to flatter."

"Cat. I'm a very hard *cat* to flatter."

"I didn't order a cat. We just asked, you know, for reincarnation. In fact, I've been eyeing strangers all week, hoping one of them might be you. Nearly got punched by a stunt man in a bar over—"

"Spare me the tacky details, old boy." He went four-footing into the hall, heading for the vast living room.

"I honestly did miss you," said Buzz, following. "Despite our ups and downs, you were the best writing partner I—"

"Okay, short change, what's the problem?" Groucho hopped up into the big leather chair Buzz had vacated.

"I'm having trouble with the *Goon Squad* scripts."

"I imagined you would," said Groucho. "The instant I smacked into that stone wall and realized I'd bought the farm, the last thought that flashed through my brain was, 'That little asshole is going to bomb out without my help.'"

**“Even in  
Hollywood  
you couldn’t  
get by  
with letting  
a cat talk  
all over  
the place.”**

“That’s touching, that you thought of me at the last moment.”

“Okay, old boy, grab a pencil.” Groucho licked at the fur on his side. “I’ve been kicking around a neat switch on the basic incest plot.”

“One more switch on incest?”

“Just listen, old boy, and trust me,” said Groucho.

Buzz laughed. “Boy, it’s great to have you back.”

**A**lthough I didn’t get to meet Groucho in those early weeks of Buzz’s collaboration with him, I had no doubt the cat housed the spirit of Warren Gish. There was simply no other way to account for the fantastic improvement in Buzz’s allegedly solo scripts. He simply couldn’t have written anywhere near that well on his own and unaided. I began to hear talk that his new *Goon Squad* script dealing with rape, incest and leprosy was a solid contender for an Emmy. It certainly looked as though Buzz was going to maintain his position as one of the town’s top television writers.

Right about then I had to leave town again unexpectedly. There was new trouble with Brainwash, this time in the East Moline, Illinois, test market. The Arends Lab chemists had ironed out the hallucination kinks, but now something like seventy-two percent of the people who tried the new headache liquid woke up the next morning to find the palms of their hands covered with hair. The agency sent me to help the client’s people whip up radio spots downplaying the social stigma of hairy palms. Unfortunately Junior Arends showed up in East Moline and, perhaps hoping for more hallucinations, guzzled down eleven bottles of Brainwash. I found him asleep in my room the next afternoon and covered from head to toe with short curly fur. What with one thing and another I didn’t return to LA until nearly three weeks had passed.

When I went into the agency the next day, my lovely secretary grabbed at my sleeve as I was heading for my private office. “He’s in there,” she whispered, uneasy. “With a cage.”

“Who?”

“That bouncy little man.”

“Oh, Buzz Stover.”

She nodded her extremely pretty head. “Yes, with a cage on his lap. He insisted on waiting to see you.”

“He probably brought over Groucho, his new . . .

his new cat.”

“The cage,” she informed me, “is empty.”

Buzz was crouched in one of my imitation leather sofas with a cat carrying case on his knees. “They’ve betrayed me,” he announced as soon as I shut the door.

I bent, staring in through the wire crosshatch of the small cage. It was empty. “You don’t, do you, think you have a cat in there, Buzz?”

“Am I stark raving goofy?” He stood, bouncing on the balls of his feet, waving the cage the way an altar boy waves an incense holder at religious ceremonies. “Did I claw my way to the halfwit pinnacle of Hollywood success by imagining I’m lugging invisible pussycats around?” He sank back on the sofa, making it sigh. “My alleged love and my traitorous partner have knifed me in the back.”

I eased behind my large metal desk, tapped at the immense pile of stuff that had accumulated in my in-box. “How exactly?”

“She wooed him away.”

“This is still Panda we’re talking about?”

“How many loves of my life do you think I have?”

When I fall, it’s for keeps.”

“Panda did something to Groucho?”

“Kidnapped him,” he said. “Except it’s all kosher.”

“Where’s the cat . . . Warren?”

“He’s living with her in her mansion in Bel Air.”

“Since when does a secretary on a TV show like—”

“She bought the damn house, made the halfwit down payment with some of the money they gave her,” he said. “Do you know who used to live there? Orlando Busino, the great silent screen lover. It’s a veritable mansion, a palace of luxury.”

I rocked once in my swivel chair. “I don’t think I understand what Panda’s done,” I told him, “Did she make some kind of scriptwriting deal and go into partnership with your cat?”

“No, no, don’t be a halfwit. She’s Groucho’s agent.” He whapped his fist on the empty cage. “She sold his services to Yowl! They’ve been beating the bushes for months hunting for a perfect cat to star in their TV commercials. I have to admit Groucho does look terrific on camera. Takes direction like a vet, has a sneer on his kisser that is perfect when they mention the rival products.”

“Does he . . . he doesn’t talk on these commercials?”

“Of course not, he only talks to me and Panda,” said Buzz. “Even in Hollywood you couldn’t get by with letting a cat talk all over the place. But because Warren’s spirit is inside that cat, he’s better at commercials than any other cat known to man.”

“How’d Panda manage to—”

“She was insidiously clever.” His fingers

drummed on the top of the carrying case. "Naturally, since she was with me a good part of the time, I confided all in her. Groucho, having known her in his previous incarnation, was cordial, too. At first it was a dream of bliss. The scripts were nifty. I had them about ready to give me a pay hike. Yet all the while I was nursing a viper, in the person of that raven-tressed—"

"I thought she was a redhead."

"No, she was a blonde, but she switched again," he explained. "Listen, the point is, Yowl! is one of the sponsors of that idiotic piece of crap, *Strange, Isn't It?* She heard about their quest for a cat, smuggled Groucho out to an audition while I was on location in Apple Valley with *Goon Squad*."

"He's your cat, isn't he? Legally you—"

"Ah, but there again she was diabolically smart."

He dealt the cage a heavy whack. "Panda went to the people who used to own Groucho and she bought him. She owns that damned Judas."

"How does he feel about this?"

"It's gone to his head. Starring in commercials, being fawned over," said Buzz. "Warren was a great writer, but he originally came out here to try to get into the movies. As an actor. This is one of his boyhood dreams coming true and he's ditched me for it."

"Is the money better?"

"Sure, they're pulling in a bloody fortune from Yowl!" he said forlornly. "When this thing really gets rolling, there'll be a multimedia blitz. Panda and Groucho will net a million bucks easy."

"What do you plan to do?"

"Panda's still allowing him to collaborate with me . . . some."

"How much?"

"Well, Groucho is busy most of the time with the TV spots, the magazine ads and all. I'm darn lucky if I get at him for an hour a week. Barely enough time for a plot session."

"Might be wise to look for a new partner."

"Nope, there is only one Warren Gish."

"You could give writing alone another try."

He stood up, the cat cage swinging in his hand. "Perfect dreams don't come along very often. If I can't work with him, I don't think I can work at all."

"You're romanticizing, Buzz. When Warren was alive and in his original body, you fought all the time."

"We fought, sure, punched each other out, but we wrote some dynamite scripts." He pointed a warning finger at me. "I got him back and we are going to keep on working together."

"That could," I warned, "mean trouble."

"For Panda, not for me." With the empty cat case dangling in his grip, he went stalking out of my office.

Since I never saw him again, alive or dead, most of the rest of this account is based only on what I am fairly certain is what happened.

You probably know what a substantial hit Groucho was. The first cycle of Yowl! commercials doubled sales in less than a month. The cat caught the public fancy, you saw him on the covers of *Time*, *Life*, *Us*, *People*, *Mammon* and even *Vogue*. There were, soon, Groucho posters, Groucho toys, Groucho lunch boxes, Groucho calendars, a Groucho biography turned out by the same man who'd done bios of Lola Turbinado, Dip Gomez and Leroy Blurr. The money was such that within four months Panda, now a platinum blonde, was able to buy the Bel Air mansion outright. Because of Groucho's burgeoning fame, the cat's schedule became increasingly crowded. He appeared on talk shows, never talking of course but letting Panda hold him on her lap and act as spokesperson. He did supermarket openings, hospital tours, movie premieres. It became impossible for Buzz to work with Groucho more than once every three or four weeks.

When Buzz was able to reach his reincarnated partner on the phone, Groucho was aloof and indifferent.

"Listen," Buzz would begin, "about this expanded two-hour *Goon Squad* they want. Do you really think our switch on the rape and brain tumor plot will stretch for two frapping hours?"

"Trust me, old boy."

"They have their doubts at the network."

"That's what they get paid for. Those of us . . . oops, here's the photog from *Movieland* magazine. Bye."

**T**he network didn't accept the two-hour script, even when Buzz changed the brain tumor to lung cancer. They ordered a major rewrite. When Buzz went rushing over to the Bel Air mansion, the rejected script tucked up tight under his arm, they wouldn't even let him on the grounds. Panda had hired a couple of hefty fellows, both weightlifting trophy winners, to guard the wrought iron gates and keep out fans and tourists. There was a small dinner party for the top Yowl! executives that night and Panda didn't want Buzz barging in.

Stubborn, he pretended to drive away. Instead he parked his Mercedes a few blocks off, sat in it muttering to himself. The night grew darker, clouds hid the moon. Finally, at midnight, Buzz went skulking back toward the mansion. He skirted the high stone wall and found a spot where a fallen tree trunk allowed him to boost himself over. Panda hadn't as yet gotten around to having an electric alarm system installed. Buzz's advent went unnoticed.

Hunched low, still hugging the failed script to him, he got to the shrubs near the open garages and hid. By a few minutes after midnight the last of the visitors had driven off.

A pleased smile touched his face when he saw Panda, in an absolutely stunning satin evening gown,

# The cat caught the public fancy; you saw him on the covers of Time, Life, Us, People, Mammon, and even Vogue.

standing at the top of the marble front stairway with Groucho himself cradled in her arms.

She placed the butterscotch cat on the marble, patted his furry backside. "Do your business, Groucho, and hurry back," she told him. "It's late and you need plenty of sleep. We start taping your special tomorrow."

"I may chase a bird or two, but I'll be back soon," the cat promised, padding down the smooth steps.

Buzz waited until Panda closed the door and then whispered, "Hey, Groucho."

The cat halted, tail switching. He glanced toward the pile of shadows where Buzz was ducked. "That you, old boy?"

"Over here, in front of the garages."

"They had orders to give you the old heave-ho tonight." Groucho came, backside swaying, over to him. "How'd you—"

"They shot us down." He held out the script. "We've got to fix this. Quick or we could lose the damn show."

"Why do you keep saying we?"

"Because we're still a team and—"

"You're getting solo credits on the scripts now," the cat reminded. "Warren Gish is dead. Groucho the cat is a national, indeed an international, favorite. Do you know how much we'll take in over the next—"

"Okay, you can make more dough doing commercials and gobbling swill. But you are a *writer* at heart."

"Nope, I'm an actor," corrected the cat. "You know, old boy, I always wanted this. To be a star. Not a walk-on or a bit. But a real damn star."

"You have to drop this, Groucho, and get back to helping me out." He shook the script near the cat's nose. "I need you. If you don't help me, I'll go to Yowl! and—"

"Easy there, old boy," warned the cat. "I'm really enjoying this present incarnation. Woe to him who mucks it up."

"You've got to help me out."

Groucho shook his furry head. "Nope, I'm through saving your bacon."

Buzz let the script drop, made a grab for the cat.

Groucho's fur stood up like thousands of exclamation points. Making a hissing sound, he backed toward one of the open garages, clawing at Buzz. "Watch it."

Buzz, angry, made another grab and got hold of

the cat around the middle. "I'm going to take you away from Panda. You're going to help me save . . . ow!"

The cat had raked him, hard, across the face. Blood came running down Buzz's cheek. "You son of a bitch!" He kept his hold on the struggling animal.

Groucho dug into Buzz's midsection with his back claws. "Jerk," he said.

The front claws ripped into his face again.

Buzz cried out in pain and then, catching the snarling cat by the tail, he sent it whizzing across the shadowy garage.

There was an enormous thud when Groucho's skull connected with the wall.

Charging into the garage, Buzz caught up a tire iron from the concrete flooring. He ran to the place where the dazed cat, wobbling, was trying to stand.

"Why won't you help me? Why?" Buzz chanted that, smashing at Groucho's small skull with the iron.

The cat made a harsh keening noise and died.

"Oh, Jesus." Buzz rose. "I've killed my partner."

"Groucho, are you fighting again?" came Panda's voice from the doorway of the mansion.

Buzz ducked low beside the dead animal, breath held.

"You act so much like a cat sometimes, it's spooky." She went back inside and closed the door.

Buzz crept out and retrieved the script, came back and scooped up the cat on it.

There was a back door and, trying not to look down at the grimacing cat, he made his way out into the night.

Behind a row of thorny shrubs near the back wall of the estate he dug a hole with his hands. In it he buried both Groucho and the script.

**F**ive days later the producers of *Goon Squad* gave Buzz an ultimatum. Come up with an acceptable revise right away or step down off the show. That night he took his spare carbon copy of the two-hour script and spread the pages out on the living room rug.

There was a hot desert wind blowing, brushing at the windows, rattling shutters.

"No reason I can't do this myself." He wandered among the sprawl of pages.

Something scratched at the kitchen door.

The noise persisted, the screen door clattered.

Buzz crossed the kitchen threshold. "Somebody out there?"

There was a clawing on the door.

"Okay, we'll see what the hell is going on." He went striding across the floor and yanked the wooden door open.

Standing half inside the screen door was a large gray police dog. The hair on its back was bristling, its teeth showed.

"I'm back again, old boy," the dog said and came leaping for his throat. 17

# America Enters the Twilight Zone

PART ONE OF MARC SCOTT ZICREE'S  
SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE TO THE  
ENTIRE *TWILIGHT ZONE* TELEVISION SERIES,  
COMPLETE WITH ROD SERLING'S  
OPENING AND CLOSING NARRATIONS

It was 1959—the year that Khrushchev visited the U.S. and was barred from Disneyland, the year that Fidel Castro ousted Batista from Cuba. Ingemar Johansson defeated Floyd Patterson to win the world's heavyweight championship; the Dodgers beat the White Sox four games to two in the World Series. And Rod Serling, three-time Emmy winner, was preparing his first television series, to be aired on CBS. Its name was *The Twilight Zone*.

Several months before the show's debut, Serling began a round of interviews in an effort to prepare the public for the series. He hoped to insure that it would not be rejected out of hand, for *The Twilight Zone* was something entirely new to television; it didn't ride a horse, pack a gun, or go for an easy laugh. It was, as Serling said, "about people—about human beings involved in extraordinary circumstances, in strange problems of their own or fate's making." And such things did not usually fare well on TV.

In an article written exclusively for *TV Guide*, Serling wrote, "Here's what *The Twilight Zone* is: It's an anthology series, half an hour in length, that delves into the odd, the bizarre, the unexpected. It probes into the dimension of imagination, but with a concern for taste and for an adult audience too long considered to have IQs in negative figures. . . . *The Twilight Zone* is what it implies: that shadowy area of the almost-but-not-quite; the unbelievable told in terms that can be believed."

The primary thing *The Twilight*

*Zone* had going for it was Serling himself. During the show's first year, the thirty-four-year-old writer of *Patterns* and *Requiem for a Heavyweight* was to turn out an amazing twenty-eight scripts (over 600 pages of teleplay), scripts which were remarkable for their variety and complexity. He would also serve as executive producer, backed up by a superb production team that included top TV producer Buck Houghton (*China Smith*, *Yancy Derringer*, *Man with a Camera*, *Wire Service*) and director of photography George T. Clemens (a cameraman on the Fredric March version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *High Noon*, and Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*).

Despite all the pressure, there was a tremendous exhilaration felt by all concerned, a feeling that *The Twilight Zone* was something unique and important. Assistant director Edward Denault, now a vice president of Lorimar Productions, recalls, "We used to put in some *very* long hours, and yet there was a lot of excitement. Each script was different, each script was brand new and unusual, something that had never been done before, and you looked forward to it in anticipation of what was coming up next. I'm happy I was a part of it."

For director of photography George Clemens, the enthusiasm came directly from Serling. "He had complete confidence in you, and that's what you needed. You could try anything new. He'd love that you had any ideas that had never been done before, and he'd be with you a hundred percent."

October 2, 1959, was zero hour for *The Twilight Zone*. The pilot episode, "Where Is Everybody?" was unveiled before the American viewing public. It faced tough competition: on ABC, *77 Sunset Strip*; on NBC, Art Linkletter's *People Are Funny* and, on some of its Eastern stations, Friday night prizefights.

By October 3, Serling and company knew that, at least as far as the critics were concerned, they had nothing to worry about. Marie Torre, writing in the *New York Herald Tribune*, named *The Twilight Zone* "the first distinctive series of the new season." Later her comments were echoed by *TV Guide*, which said that "*The Twilight Zone* . . . is the most refreshing new anthology series in some time," and by Cecil Smith of the *Los Angeles Times*, who called it "the finest weekly series of the season, the one clear and original light in a season marked by the muddy carbon copies of dull westerns and mediocre police shows." In the *Hollywood Reporter*, Harvey Karman noted, "Unfortunately, the debut title 'Where Is Everybody?' posed a question that could best be answered by another network, but when word gets around, *Twilight* should give the competition a run for their ratings."

Karman's comments proved prophetic: by November, the Nielsen ratings showed the series well ahead of its competition. Americans had entered the *Twilight Zone* and found it to their liking.

—MARC SCOTT ZICREE



## 1. WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

Written by Rod Serling

Producer: William Self

Director: Robert Stevens

Director of Photography:

Joseph LaShelle

Music: Bernard Herrmann

Cast:

Mike Ferris: Earl Holliman

Air Force General: James Gregory

with John Conwell, Paul Langton,

James McCallion, Jay Overholts,

Carter Mulavey, Jim Johnson, and

Gary Walberg

*"We are looking at a male Caucasian, age approximately thirty-one, height approximately five feet eleven inches. As to his name, where he is, and what he's doing there—this even he doesn't know. . . . For the journey that this man will take is an excursion into the shadows."*

Mike Ferris, an amnesiac in an Air Force jumpsuit, finds himself in a town strangely devoid of people. In spite of this, he has the odd feeling that he's being watched. After inspecting the town's cafe, phone booth, police station, drugstore, and movie theater, he collapses, hysterically pushing the WALK button of a stoplight again and again. But the WALK button is in reality a panic button, for Ferris is an astronaut-trainee strapped into an isolation booth in simulation of a moon flight. After 484 hours in the booth, Ferris has cracked from sheer

loneliness. His wanderings in the vacant town have been nothing more than a hallucination.

*"Up there . . . up there is the vastness of space, in the void that is the sky. Up there is an enemy known as Isolation. It sits there in the stars waiting, waiting with the patience of eons, forever waiting . . . in the Twilight Zone."*



## 2. ONE FOR THE ANGELS

Written by Rod Serling

Producer: Buck Houghton

Director: Robert Parrish

Director of Photography:

George T. Clemens

No music credit

Cast:

Lew Bookman: Ed Wynn

Mr. Death: Murray Hamilton

Maggie: Dana Dillaway

Truck Driver: Merritt Bohn

Doctor: Jay Overholts

Little Boy: Mickey Maga

*"Street scene: Summer. The present. And on the sidewalk, age sixtyish, occupation pitchman, name Lew, a nondescript, commonplace little man whose life is a treadmill-built dream that states that success can be carved, gouged, and grubbed out of log cabins and tenements. Because Lew Bookman has not even a nodding acquaintance with success, and his dreams only extend from the curb to the sidewalk.*

*"But in the Twilight Zone, Lew Bookman will have something to occupy his time which transcends both success and failure. He'll have to concern himself with survival—because as of three o'clock this hot July day Mr. Bookman will be stalked by Mr. Death."*

Death informs the sidewalk salesman that he is to die at midnight, but Bookman convinces Death to let him stay on earth until he has had a chance to make the Big Pitch, "one for the angels." However, Bookman has no intention of ever making that pitch.

Realizing he must take someone in Bookman's place, Death arranges that a truck hit Maggie, a neighborhood child. He explains that he must be in her room at precisely midnight to claim her. Bookman, determined that Death not take Maggie, makes a pitch so enthralling that Death misses his appointment. The child is saved. Content to have been allowed to make his one Big Pitch, Bookman leaves with Death.

*"Lew Bookman, age sixtyish, formerly a fixture of the summer, formerly a rather minor component to a hot July. But throughout his life a man beloved by the children—and therefore, a most important man.*

*"Couldn't happen, you say? Probably not in most places. . . . But it did happen in the Twilight Zone."*



### 3. MR. DENTON ON DOOMSDAY

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Allen Reisner  
 Director of Photography:  
 George T. Clemens  
 No music credit

**Cast:**

Al Denton: Dan Duryea  
 Hotaling: Martin Landau  
 Pete Grant: Doug McClure  
 Henry J. Fate: Malcolm Atterbury  
 Liz: Jeanne Cooper  
 Charlie: Ken Lynch  
 Leader: Arthur Batanides  
 Doctor: Robert Burton  
 Man: Bill Erwin

*"Portrait of a town drunk named Al Denton. This is a man who's begun his dying early—a long agonizing route through a maze of bottles. Al Denton, who would probably give an arm or a leg or a part of his soul to have another chance.*

*[Shot of wagon bearing hand-printed sign: "Henry J. Fate, Dealer in Everything.]" "In the parlance of the time, this is a peddler."*

*[Close-up, pistol.] "And the third principal character of the story. Its name: Colt. Its caliber: forty-five. Its function: perhaps to give Mr. Al Denton his second chance."*

On the same day that Fate rides into town, Al Denton—once a feared gunslinger, now the town drunk—is forced to draw against Hotaling, a sadistic bully. Somehow, Fate's glance gives Denton's hand a life of its own, and Denton gets off two miraculous shots, disarming his tormentor and regaining the respect of the town. His dignity renewed, he swears off liquor. But all too soon he finds himself in the

same trap that drove him to the bottle in the first place: his newly-won reputation causes a young hotshot to challenge him to a duel. Denton discovers, however, that his old ability is completely gone, and in desperation he buys a potion from Fate guaranteed to give him ten seconds of deadly accuracy. The moment his opponent enters the saloon, Denton downs the potion—and sees the other man doing exactly the same thing! The two shoot the guns out of each other's hands, each sustaining an injury that will never allow him to shoot again. Denton, freed of ever having to face down another man, tells his adversary that they've both been blessed.

*"Mr. Henry Fate, dealer in utensils, pots and pans, linaments and potions. A fanciful man in a black frock coat, who also deals in second chances. And while there are some who say he doesn't exist except in the imagination, the dreams of men—he does exist, if only in the Twilight Zone."*



### 4. THE SIXTEEN-MILLIMETER SHRINE

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Mitchell Leisen  
 Director of Photography:  
 George T. Clemens  
 Music: Franz Waxman

**Cast:**

Barbara Jean Trenton: Ida Lupino  
 Danny Weiss: Martin Balsam  
 Marty Sall: Ted de Corsia  
 Sally: Alice Frost  
 Jerry Hearndan: Jerome Cowan  
 Hearndan in Film: John Clarke

*"Picture of a woman looking at a picture. Movie great of another time. Once-brilliant star in a firmament no longer a part of the sky, eclipsed by the movement of earth and time. Barbara Jean Trenton, whose world is a projection room, whose dreams are made of celluloid—struck down by hit-and-run years and lying on the unhappy pavement, trying desperately to get the license number of fleeting fame."*

Ageing actress Barbara Jean Trenton secludes herself in a private screening room, where she watches her old films. Gently but desperately her agent tries to coax her out into the real world by arranging a part for her in a film, and by bringing a former leading man to visit her. But these acts only drive her further into the past. Bringing her a meal, the maid finds the screening room empty—and is horrified by what she sees on the screen. She summons the agent, who turns the projector back on. On the screen he sees the

living room of the house, filled with stars as they appeared in the old films. Barbara Jean is the center of attention. He pleads with her to come back, but she only throws her scarf toward the camera and departs. The film runs out. In the living room, the agent finds Barbara Jean's scarf. "To wishes, Barbie," he says. "To the ones that come true."

*"To the wishes that come true. To the strange mystic strength of the human animal who walks that thin line between reality and the shadows, and can somehow make one merge with another. To Barbara Jean Trenton, movie queen of another era . . . and no longer in this one."*



## 5. WALKING DISTANCE

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Robert Stevens  
 Director of Photography:  
 George T. Clemens  
 Music: Bernard Herrmann  
 Cast:

Martin Sloan: Gig Young  
 Martin's Father: Frank Overton  
 Martin's Mother: Irene Tedrow  
 Martin as a boy: Michael Montgomery  
 Charlie: Byron Foulger  
 Soda Jerk: Joseph Corey  
 Wilcox Boy: Ronnie Howard  
 Mr. Wilson: Pat O'Malley  
 Mr. Wilcox: Bill Erwin  
 Teenager: Buzz Martin

*"The mirror image of Martin Sloan. Age thirty-six. Occupation—vice president, ad agency, in charge of media. This is not just a Sunday drive for Martin Sloan. He perhaps doesn't know it at the time . . . but it's an exodus. Somewhere up the road he's looking for sanity. And somewhere up the road—he'll find something else."*

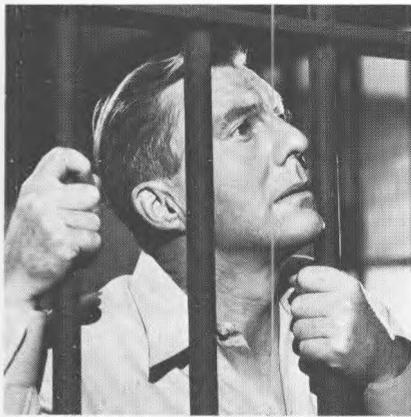
On a drive in the country, world-weary advertising executive Martin Sloan leaves his car at a gas station and sets off on foot to his home town, where he finds things are exactly the same as when he was a child. Soon he realizes that he has somehow gone back in time. He confronts his parents but only succeeds in convincing them he's a lunatic. And when he tries to catch up with himself as a child—merely to tell him to savor his youth—the frightened boy falls off a merry-go-round and breaks his leg. Later, Martin's father, who has gone through Martin's wallet and now realizes Martin is his son, tells him he must leave, that there is "only one

summer to a customer."

Martin returns to the present—with a limp he got from falling off a merry-go-round when he was a child.

*"Martin Sloan, age thirty-six. Vice president in charge of media. Successful in most things—but not in the one effort that all men try at some time in their lives—trying to go home again.*

*"And also like all men perhaps there'll be an occasion . . . maybe a summer night sometime . . . when he'll look up from what he's doing and listen to the distant music of a calliope—and hear the voices and the laughter of the people and the places of his past. And perhaps across his mind there'll flit a little errant wish . . . that a man might not have to become old—never outgrow the parks and the merry-go-rounds of his youth. And he'll smile then too because he'll know it is just an errant wish. Some wisp of memory not too important really. Some laughing ghosts that cross a man's mind . . . that are a part of the Twilight Zone."*



## 6. ESCAPE CLAUSE

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Mitchell Leisen  
 Director of Photography:  
 George T. Clemens  
 No music credit  
 Cast:

Walter Bedeker: David Wayne  
 Mr. Cadwallader: Thomas Gomez  
 Ethel Bedeker: Virginia Christine  
 Adjuster #1: Dick Wilson  
 Adjuster #2: Joe Flynn  
 Doctor: Raymond Bailey  
 Cooper: Wendell Holmes  
 Guard: Nesdon Booth  
 Subway Guard: Allan Lurie  
 Janitor: Paul E. Burns

*"Witness Mr. Walter Bedeker, age forty-four, afraid of the following: death, disease, other people, germs, drafts . . . and everything else. He has one interest in life, and that's Walter Bedeker. One preoccupation: the life and wellbeing of Walter Bedeker. One abiding concern about society: . . . that if Walter Bedeker should die, how will it survive without him?"*

Bedeker, a hypochondriac, makes a deal with Mr. Cadwallader, an impeccably dressed, jovial fat man who also happens to be the Devil. Bedeker will receive immortality and indestructibility in exchange for his soul. An escape clause is provided, however; if at any time he tires of life, all he need do is summon Cadwallader. Soon after the deal is struck, Bedeker realizes he's been taken. Nothing can harm him, true—but nothing thrills him either. He throws himself in front of subway trains and buses, drinks poison; all without the slightest ill effect. Finally he decides to throw himself off the top of his apartment

building. In trying to stop him, his wife accidentally falls off the building to her death. Realizing that this gives him a unique opportunity to experience the electric chair, Bedeker confesses to murdering his wife. He receives a shock of a different kind, however, when the judge sentences him to life imprisonment without chance of parole. Cadwallader appears and grants him a reprieve, in the form of a fatal heart attack.

*"There's a saying: Every man is put on earth condemned to die, time and methods of execution unknown. Perhaps this is as it should be. Case in point: Walter Bedeker, lately deceased—a little man with such a yen to live. Beaten by the Devil, by his own boredom—and by the scheme of things in this, the Twilight Zone."*



## 7. THE LONELY

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Jack Smight  
 Director of Photography:  
 George T. Clemens  
 Music: Bernard Herrmann  
 Cast:

James A. Corry: Jack Warden  
 Alicia: Jean Marsh  
 Capt. Allenby: John Dehner  
 Adams: Ted Knight  
 Carstairs: James Turley

*"For the record let it be known that James Corry is a convicted criminal placed in solitary confinement, and it matters little that confinement in this case stretches as far as the eye can see. This is a prison without people; without their talk and their laughter; without sound save the wind. It is an exile far worse than a dungeon at the far end of the earth. Because Mr. Corry has been banished to a place beyond the earth."*

Allenby, the captain of a supply ship that travels the solar system, takes pity on Corry—who's been sentenced to fifty years' solitary confinement on an asteroid, and leaves him a box containing Alicia, a robot that looks and sounds exactly like a woman. Initially Corry is repelled by the robot, but eventually his heart melts and he falls deeply in love with her. Eleven months pass. Then one day the supply ship lands. Allenby tells Corry that he's received a full pardon, and that

they've come to get him. But there's a hitch: Corry can take only fifteen pounds of gear, and Alicia weighs more than that. Corry refuses to leave her behind, claiming that she's a woman. Reluctantly Allenby draws his gun and shoots Alicia full in the face, revealing a mass of smoldering wires. He tells Corry, "All you're leaving behind is loneliness." Stunned, Corry replies, "I must remember that. I must remember to keep that in mind."

*"On a microscopic piece of sand that floats through space is a fragment of a man's life. Left to rust is the place he lived in and the machines he used. Without use they will disintegrate from the wind and the sand and the years that act upon them. All of Mr. Corry's machines, including the one made in his image, kept alive by love, but now . . . obsolete . . . in the Twilight Zone."*



## 8. TIME ENOUGH AT LAST

Written by Rod Serling  
 Based on the short story "Time Enough at Last" by Lynn Venable  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: John Brahm  
 Director of Photography:  
 George T. Clemens  
 Music: Leith Stevens  
 Cast:

Henry Bemis: Burgess Meredith  
 Mr. Carsville: Vaughn Taylor  
 Helen Bemis: Jacqueline de Wit  
 Woman in Bank: Lela Bliss

*"The time is the day after tomorrow; the place is anywhere, so long as it can accommodate a bank, a main street, and a library—along with a myopic little man named Henry Bemis, who has only one passion in life, and that is to read. Mr. Henry Bemis, conspired against by browbeaters and henpeckers and by clocks whose hands waggle disapprovingly and always disallow the moments he'd love to use to read what he would. In a moment from now, however, Mr. Bemis will have his chance to read in a world much different than the one he knows. A world without clocks, or bank presidents; a world, for that matter, without anyone."*

However, the mild-mannered bank teller's wife and boss allow him little time for his passion.

One day, sneaking into the vault on his lunch hour to read, Bemis is knocked unconscious by a huge concussion. When he comes to, he discovers that the world has been devastated by a nuclear war and that he is the last

man on earth. He decides to commit suicide, but at the final moment his eyes fall on the ruins of a library. Gleefully he piles the books high, organizing his reading for the years to come. But as he settles down to read the first book, his glasses slip off his nose and smash, trapping him forever in a hopelessly blurry world.

*"The best-laid plans of mice and men . . . and Henry Bemis. The small man in the glasses who wanted nothing but time . . . nothing but a moment out of an eon of moments, nothing but an instant out of an eternity, Henry Bemis, now just a part of the smashed landscape. Just a piece of the rubble. Just a fragment of what man has deduced to himself. Mr. Henry Bemis in . . . the Twilight Zone."*



## 9. PERCHANCE TO DREAM

Written by Charles Beaumont  
 Based on the short story "Perchance to Dream" by Charles Beaumont  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Robert Florey  
 Director of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 Music: Van Cleave  
 Cast:  
 Edward Hall: Richard Conte  
 Dr. Rathmann: John Larch  
 Maya/Miss Thomas: Suzanne Lloyd  
 Girlie Barker: Eddie Mars  
 Rifle Range Barker: Russel Trent  
 Stranger: Ted Stanhope

*"Twelve o'clock noon. An ordinary scene in an ordinary city. Lunchtime for thousands of ordinary people. To most of them this hour will be a rest, a pleasant break in the day's routine. To most . . . but not all. To Edward Hall, time is an enemy, and the hour to come is a matter of life and death."*

Suffering from a cardiac condition, Hall has sought the aid of a psychiatrist, Dr. Rathmann, because he's been dreaming in chapters, as if in a movie serial. In his dream a carnival dancer lures him into a funhouse and onto a roller coaster with the express intention of scaring him to death. If he goes to sleep, he knows he'll return to the dream and will have a fatal heart attack. On the second hand, if he stays awake much longer, the strain will be too much for his heart. Realizing that Rathmann can't help him, he starts to go, but stops when he sees that the doctor's receptionist is a dead ringer for the girl in his dreams. He runs back

into Rathmann's office and jumps out the window to his death. The doctor calls his receptionist into his office, where Hall lies on the couch, his eyes closed. Rathmann tells her that Hall came in, lay down, and immediately fell asleep. A few minutes later, he let out a scream and died.

*"They say a dream takes only a second or so. And yet, in that second, a man can live a lifetime. He can suffer and die. And who is to say which is the greater reality: the one we know, or the one in dreams, between heaven, the sky, the earth . . . in the Twilight Zone."*



## 10. JUDGMENT NIGHT

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: John Brahm  
 Director of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 No music credit  
 Cast:  
 Lanser: Nehemiah Persoff  
 Captain Wilbur: Ben Wright  
 First Officer: Patrick MacNee  
 Lt. Mueller: James Franciscus  
 Mr. Potter: Hugh Sanders  
 Maj. Devereaux: Leslie Bradley  
 Barbara: Deirdre Owen  
 Bartender: Kendrick Huxham  
 First Steward: Richard Peel  
 Second Steward: Donald Journeaux

*"Duly recorded in this ship's log is the sailing time, course, destination, weather conditions, temperature, longitude, and latitude. But what is never recorded in a log is the fear that washes over a deck like a fog and ocean spray—fear like the throbbing strokes of engine pistons, each like a heartbeat parceling out every hour into breathless minutes of watching . . . waiting . . . and dreading."*

*"For the year is 1942, and this particular ship has lost its convoy. It travels alone like an aged blind thing groping through the unfriendly dark, stalked by unseen periscopes of steel killers. Yes, the Queen of Glasgow is a frightened ship, and she carries with her a premonition of death."*

On board the *Glasgow* is a German named Carl Lanser, with no memory of how he got there, yet with the feeling that he's met all the passengers somewhere before. Things are made even more mysterious by Lanser's certainty that an enemy sub is stalking the ship, and by his premonition that something is going to happen at 1:15

A.M. His fear proves correct: at 1:15 a U-boat surfaces. Peering through binoculars, Lanser sees that its captain is . . . himself! The U-boat sinks the helpless freighter, then crew members machine-gun the survivors. Lanser sinks beneath the waters. Later, on board the sub, a lieutenant suggests they might all face damnation for their action. Captain Lanser discounts this theory—not realizing that he is, in fact, doomed to relive the sinking of that ship for eternity.

*"The SS Queen of Glasgow, heading for New York . . . and the time is 1942. For one man, it is always 1942—and this man will ride the ghost of that ship every night for eternity. This is what is meant by paying the fiddler. This is the comeuppance awaiting every man when the ledger of his life is opened and examined, the tally made, and then the reward or the penalty paid. And in the case of Carl Lanser, former Kapitän Lieutenant, Navy of the Third Reich, this is the penalty. This is the justice meted out. This is judgment night in the Twilight Zone."*



## 11. AND WHEN THE SKY WAS OPENED

Written by Rod Serling

Based on the story "Disappearing Act" by Richard Matheson

Producer: Buck Houghton

Director: Douglas Heyes

Director of Photography:

George T. Clemens

Music: Leonard Rosenman

Cast:

Col. Clegg Forbes: Rod Taylor

Col. Ed Harrington: Charles Aidman

Maj. William Gart: James Hutton

Amy: Maxine Cooper

Girl in Bar: Gloria Pall

Bartender: Paul Bryar

Nurse: Sue Randall

*"Her name is X-20, her type an experimental interceptor. Recent history: crash landing in the Mojave Desert after a thirty-one hour flight nine hundred miles into space. And this is the story of the men who flew her."*

Three astronauts have returned from this first space flight. Major Gart is hospitalized with a broken leg, but the other two go off for a night of revelry. In a bar, Colonel Ed Harrington suddenly gets a strange feeling. He calls his parents, only to be told that they have no son. Suddenly, mysteriously, Harrington is gone, with no one but Colonel Forbes remembering that he ever existed. When Forbes tells Gart the story at the hospital, Gart says he doesn't know any Ed Harrington either. Suddenly Forbes gets a peculiar feeling of euphoria. He shakes it off, screams "I don't want it to happen!" and runs out of the room. By the time Gart gets to the hallway, Forbes has disappeared,

and nobody else has any memory of him. Then Gart himself disappears, and with him their ship, wiping the last evidence of their existence off the face of the earth.

*"Once upon a time there was a man named Harrington, a man named Forbes, a man named Gart. They used to exist, but don't any longer. Someone—or something—took them somewhere. At least they are no longer a part of the memory of man. And as to the X-20 supposed to be housed here in this hangar, this too does not exist. If any of you have any questions about an aircraft and three men who flew her, speak softly of them . . . and only in the Twilight Zone."*



## 12. WHAT YOU NEED

Written by Rod Serling

Based on the short story "What You Need" by Lewis Padgett (pseudonym of Henry Kuttner and C.L. Moore)

Producer: Buck Houghton

Director: Alvin Ganzer

Director of Photography:

George T. Clemens

Music: Van Cleave

Cast:

Fred Renard: Steve Cochran

Mr. Pedott: Ernest Truex

Girl in Bar: Arline Sax

Lefty: Read Morgan

Bartender: William Edmonson

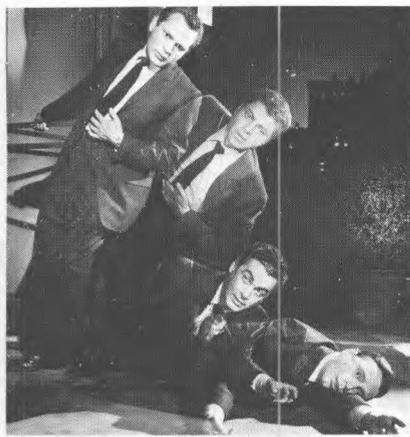
Woman on Street: Judy Ellis

*"You're looking at a Mr. Fred Renard, age thirty-six, who carries on his shoulder a chip the size of the national debt. This is an antagonism directed against the world, those who people it, the taste of his food, the temperature of his coffee, the fact that he has lost eleven jobs in the past year. Beyond that is just a general displeasure that is as much a part of the man as his eyes, nose, and ears. This is a sour man, a friendless man, a lonely man, a grasping, compulsive, nervous man. This is a man who has lived thirty-six undistinguished, meaningless, pointless, failure-laden years and who at this moment looks for an escape. Any escape."*

Mr. Pedott is a sidewalk salesman with the uncanny ability to tell what people will need before they need it. He gives Fred Renard a pair of scissors—scissors that save Renard's life when his tie gets caught in the doors of an elevator. But Renard wants more, much more. Sensing that unless he acts, Renard will eventually kill him,

Pedott gives him a pair of shoes. He slips them on. A truck comes around the corner, heading directly for him. Renard tries to run, but he can't get traction on the wet pavement. He is struck and killed.

*"Street scene: night . . . traffic . . . accident. Victim named Fred Renard, gentleman with a sour face to whom contentment came with difficulty. Fred Renard, who took all that was needed . . . in the Twilight Zone."*



### 13. THE FOUR OF US ARE DYING

Written by Rod Serling  
 Based on an unpublished story  
 by George Clayton Johnson  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: John Brahm  
 Director of Photography:  
 George T. Clemens  
 Music: Jerry Goldsmith  
 Cast:

Arch Hammer: Harry Townes  
 Hammer as Foster: Ross Martin  
 Hammer as Sterig: Phillip Pine  
 Hammer as Marshak: Don Gordon  
 Maggie: Beverly Garland  
 Pop Marshak: Peter Brocco  
 Penell: Bernard Fein  
 Detective: Milton Frome

*"His name is Arch Hammer. He's thirty-six years old. He's been a salesman, a dispatcher, a truck driver, a con man, a bookie, and a part-time bartender. This is a cheap man, a nickel-and-dime man with a cheapness that goes past the suit and the shirt: A cheapness of mind.*

*"But Mr. Hammer has a talent discovered at a very early age. This much he does have. He can make his face change. He can twitch a muscle, move a jaw, concentrate on the cast of his eyes, and he can change his face. He can change it into anything he wants."*

Relying on newspaper photographs, Hammer impersonates a dead trumpet-player in order to get the man's girlfriend, a sultry torch singer, to agree to run away with him. He later impersonates a murdered gangster in order to squeeze some money out of the thug who had him killed. His plan backfires when the thug sees through the deception and sends a couple of strong-arm men after

him. In order to get away, he takes on the face of a boxer he sees on a weathered prizefighter poster; but then he runs into the boxer's father, who mistakes him for the son who broke his mother's heart and did dirt to a sweet little girl. Later, Hammer runs into him again, only this time the old man has a gun. Frantically Hammer tries to convince him that he's making a mistake, that he can prove he's not the boxer if he just has a moment to concentrate. . . . But the old man fires. As Hammer lies dying, his features shift from one face to another, until he dies with his own face.

*"He was Arch Hammer, a cheap little man who just checked in. He was Johnny Foster, who played a trumpet and was loved beyond words. He was Virgil Sterig, with money in his pocket. He was Andy Marshak, who got some of his agony back on the steps of a cheap hotel. Hammer, Foster, Sterig, Marshak—and all four of them are dying."*



### 14. THIRD FROM THE SUN

Written by Rod Serling  
 Based on the short story, "Third from the Sun," by Richard Matheson  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Richard L. Bare  
 Director of Photography: Harry Wild  
 No music credit

Cast:  
 William Sturka: Fritz Weaver  
 Jerry Riden: Joe Maross  
 Carling: Edward Andrews  
 Eve: Lori March  
 Jody: Denise Alexander  
 Ann: Jeanne Evans  
 Guard: Will J. White  
 Loudspeaker Voice: S. John Launer

*"Five-thirty P.M. Quitting time at the plant. Time for supper now. Time for families. Time for a cool drink on the porch. Time for summer birds and crickets and the noises of the warm time of the year. Time for the quiet rustle of leaf-laden trees that screen out the moon and project odd shadows on cooling sidewalks. And underneath it all, behind the eyes of men, hanging invisible over the summer night, is a horror without words. For this is the stillness before the storm. This is the eve of the end."*

Scientist William Sturka, certain that an all-out nuclear war is imminent, plots with test-pilot Jerry Riden to steal an experimental spaceship and escape with their families to a planet eleven million miles away. They are almost stopped by a slimy government stooge named Carling, but they manage to overpower him, board the ship, and take off. In space, they wonder what their new home will be like. They know, from monitoring radio

broadcasts, that it is inhabited by people like themselves.

*"Behind a tiny ship heading into space is a doomed planet on the verge of suicide. Ahead lies a place called Earth, the third planet from the sun. And for William Sturka and the men and women with him, it's the eve of the beginning . . . in the Twilight Zone."*



THE ORIGINAL  
TELEVISION SCRIPT  
FIRST AIRED ON CBS-TV  
OCTOBER 30, 1959

# Walking Distance

by Rod Serling

T Z C L A S S I C T E L E P L A Y

## 1. EXT. SKY NIGHT

Shot of the sky . . . the various nebulae and planet bodies stand out in sharp, sparkling relief. As the CAMERA begins a SLOW PAN across the Heavens —

### NARRATOR'S VOICE (o.s.)

There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space, and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow — between science and superstition. And it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call The Twilight Zone.

The CAMERA has begun to PAN DOWN until it passes the horizon and is flush on the OPENING SHOT (EACH WEEK THE

### OPENING SHOT OF THE PLAY)

## 2. EXT. SMALL TWO PUMP GAS STATION DAY LONG SHOT LOOKING BEYOND IT UP THE ROAD

A small red foreign car approaches toward the CAMERA, slows down, then pulls into the gas station. At the wheel is Martin Sloan, a man in his middle thirties. He shuts off the ignition after stopping the car by one of the pumps, closes his eyes for a moment, then looks at the attendant who's working on an engine part in front of the station. Martin presses down on the horn two or three times, angry, impatient calls for service. The attendant looks up at him, very slowly and deliberately puts the engine part down. Martin honks once more.

### ATTENDANT

Whenever you're finished, mister.

### MARTIN

What about some service?

### ATTENDANT

What about some quiet?

## 3. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN

As he suddenly unbends. His features sag, he bites his lip.

### MARTIN

(softly)

I'm sorry.

(as the attendant approaches him)

Would you fill it up, please?

### ATTENDANT

Sure.

### MARTIN

(still rather softly)

I said I was sorry.

### ATTENDANT

(looks over his shoulder)

I heard you.

## 4. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN

As he looks at himself in the rear view mirror of the car. Over this we hear the Narrator's voice.

### NARRATOR'S VOICE

The mirror image of Martin Sloan. Age thirty-six. Occupation —

vice president, ad agency, in charge of media. This is not just a Sunday drive for Martin Sloan. He perhaps doesn't know it at the time . . . but it's an exodus. Somewhere up the road he's looking for sanity.  
(a pause)  
And somewhere up the road — he'll find something else.

DISSOLVE TO:

OPENING BILLBOARD  
FIRST COMMERCIAL

FADE ON:

**5. EXT. GAS STATION  
DAY FULL SHOT**

Martin gets out of the car and walks over to the pump.

**6. TWO SHOT MARTIN AND  
THE ATTENDANT**

ATTENDANT  
(turns to him)

Oil change and lube job — is that what you want?

Martin nods.

ATTENDANT

It'll take about an hour.

MARTIN

All right.

(he turns to look toward the road)

That's Homewood up ahead, isn't it?

ATTENDANT

Yep. A mile and a quarter.

MARTIN

I used to live there. Grew up there as a matter of fact. I haven't been back in twenty — twenty-five years.

**7. TRACK SHOT MARTIN**

As he takes a few steps away from the pump, half way to the road, his back to the attendant.

MARTIN

Twenty — twenty-five years. And then yesterday afternoon I . . . I just got in the car and drove. Reached a point where I, well . . . I had to get out of New York. One more board meeting, phone call, report, problem — (he laughs but the laugh comes out in a strained, sick kind of way) I'd have probably jumped out of a window.

**8. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN**

He lets his face relax, embarrassed by the intensity of the tone. He turns to look at the attendant again.

MARTIN

Walking distance, is it?

**9. MED. CLOSE  
SHOT ATTENDANT**

ATTENDANT

About a mile and a half.

**10. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN**

MARTIN

(softly)

That's walking distance.

**11. PAN SHOT OVER TO  
MIRROR OVER THE  
CIGARETTE MACHINE**

We see Martin's reflection on the road in the middle of a long walk off into the distance.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

**12. REFLECTION OF MARTIN  
IN DRUGSTORE MIRROR**

As he's just entering.

**13. INT. DRUGSTORE FULL  
SHOT THE ROOM**

A soda jerk named Charlie sits on a stool behind the fountain reading a magazine, occasionally taking a drag of a cigar which he puts back into an ashtray under

the counter. The subtle suggestion of the room is that it's old-fashioned. The equipment is from twenty years ago. The ads are not flamboyantly old, but as a part of a whole — they look different in a subtle way. Martin walks into the store, looks around briefly, smiles at what he sees, goes over to the counter, nods at the soda jerk who puts the cigar down and rises, walks to a point opposite him behind the fountain counter.

CHARLIE

What'll it be?

MARTIN

(pushing down a kind of excitement that comes from being back in this place)

You still make great chocolate sodas? Three scoops?

CHARLIE

(looking at him a little fish-eyed)

How's that?

MARTIN

(laughs softly, and a little apologetically)

I used to spend half my life in this drugstore. I grew up here. The one thing I remember always ordering — that was a chocolate ice cream soda with three scoops and it was ten cents too.

The soda jerk looks at him a little quizzically then shrugs, turns, starts to fix the soda. Every now and then he looks at the reflection of Martin in the mirror. Martin is looking around the room.

MARTIN

You know, you look familiar to me, as if I'd seen you before.

CHARLIE

(shrugs)

I got that kind of a face.

MARTIN

It's been a long time. Twenty years. That's when I left here.

(then he laughs at some collection of secret thoughts)

I wish I had a buck for every hour I sat at this fountain though, from grammar school right through third year high.

(then he turns and looks toward the front door)



The town looks the same, too.

(he turns back to Charlie)

Really amazing, you know? In twenty years to look so exactly the same.

The soda jerk stirs the soda, carries it over to him, puts it down in front of him, takes a paper napkin, lays it alongside.

CHARLIE

That'll be a dime.

Martin starts to fish in his pocket,

CHARLIE

That's the way we make them.

MARTIN

(laughs)

You're gonna lose your shirt. Nobody sells sodas for a dime any more.

CHARLIE

They don't? Where you from?

MARTIN

New York.

(he takes a sip of the soda, spoons down some ice cream.)

You make a great soda.

He takes another swig from the soda.

CHARLIE

Taste okay?

MARTIN

Wonderful.

There's a few slurping sounds from the bottom of the glass as the last of the soda disappears. Martin puts the glass back on the counter, looks around again.

MARTIN

Funny. How many memories you connect with a place. I always thought if I ever came back here — it'd probably be all changed.

(he looks around the store)

But it's just as if I'd left yesterday.

(he rises and goes to the front door, stares out at the street)

Just as if I'd been away over night.

then stops abruptly, then incredulously —

MARTIN

A dime?

(he holds the soda up)

Three scoops?

(he turns back, smiles toward the soda jerk)

I'd almost expect Mr. Wilson to be sitting in the stock room and sleeping just like he always did before he died.

That's one of the images I have. Old Man Wilson sleeping in his big comfortable chair in the other room.

(he points to the far door at the other end of the room, then reaches in his pocket, takes out a dollar bill, takes it over to the counter, puts it down)

Thanks very much.

CHARLIE

(stares at the bill)

That's a buck!

MARTIN

(smiles, taps the glass then makes a motion to include the whole room)

That . . . and this, it's worth it.

He turns, walks back to the door

and goes outside. The soda jerk shakes his head as if just not understanding the complexity of that man, takes the glass, puts it in the sink. In doing so he notices a couple of open syrup containers, checks them, then walks over toward the door at the far end of the room. THE CAMERA BEHIND HIM now, looks toward the room where a white haired man sits dozing in a big old-fashioned chair.

CHARLIE

Mr. Wilson?

The old man opens his eyes, takes a deep breath, smacks his lips, rubs his jaw — part of a ritual of waking up.

WILSON

Yup, Charlie?

CHARLIE

We're gonna need some more chocolate syrup, Mr. Wilson.

WILSON

(nods)

I'll order some this afternoon.

Then he winks, grins, closes his eyes and goes back to sleep as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

#### 14. EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET LONG SHOT LOOKING DOWN THE STREET

Martin comes into the frame, his back to the camera. He stops, then turns profile to camera to look from house to house. There's a smile on his face as if this too were part of a memory that all fitted into place.

#### 15. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM

As he walks down the street studying the houses, nodding occasionally.

#### 16. TRACK SHOT CLOSER ON MARTIN

As he calls off the names of the houses.

MARTIN

Van Buren • Wilcox.  
(then looking across the street)  
Over there Dr. Bradbury.  
Mulroony.

Then he looks back on his side of  
the street again and stops.

**17. MED. LONG SHOT SMALL  
BOY**

Kneeling down in his front yard  
playing marbles by himself.  
Martin comes into the frame.

**18. CLOSE PROFILE SHOT  
MARTIN**

He smiles and then laughs softly.

**19. TWO SHOT MARTIN AND  
THE BOY**

As the boy looks up at him.

BOY

Hi.

MARTIN

(points to the marbles)

You pretty good?

BOY

At aggies? Not bad.

MARTIN

I used to shoot marbles too.

We gave them special  
names.

(he holds up his fingers to form a  
circle)

The steel kind . . . the ball  
bearings we got off  
streetcars — we called them  
steelies. And the ones you  
could see through — they  
were clearies. Still call them  
names like that?

The boy slowly rises, studying  
Martin with great interest but  
with a hint of trepidation. He nods.

BOY

Sure.

MARTIN

(points to telephone pole)

And over there we used to  
play hide and seek.

(he smiles again. It's almost as if

he were dredging up these  
memories for himself and putting  
them out into the air)

Draw a circle around the old  
man's back and who's to  
punch it.

(then he laughs, shakes his head,  
looks down at the boy again)

Right on this street too. Right  
over there. And I used to live  
in that corner house down  
there.

(he points)

The big white one.

BOY

The Sloan house?

MARTIN

(a little wide eyed)

That's right! You still call it  
that?

BOY

Still call it what?

MARTIN

The Sloan house. My name's  
Sloan. I'm Martin Sloan.

What's your name?

He holds out a hand. The boy  
backs away, frightened.

BOY

You're not Marty Sloan. I  
know Marty Sloan and  
you're not him.

MARTIN

I'm not, huh?

(he reaches into his coat pocket,  
takes out a wallet)

Let's see what the driver's  
license says, huh?

**20. CLOSE SHOT HIS HANDS**

Opening the wallet.

**21. MED. CLOSE SHOT  
MARTIN**

As he looks down at it and then  
holds it out.

MARTIN

See?

**22. MED. CLOSE SHOT SPOT  
ON SIDEWALK**

Where the boy was. He's no longer

there. Martin looks off in the  
direction of the boy's exit. His face  
is suddenly thoughtful, then he  
turns and looks down the street  
and he starts to walk.

**23. LONG SHOT MARTIN**

As he approaches the camera.



He's now at the corner and he  
stops and studies the house in  
front of him, a big white two story  
Victorian. A white fence  
surrounds it. He slowly reaches  
down and unlatches the front  
gate, walks up the front walk up  
the steps, stands by the front door.

**24. CLOSE SHOT HIS HAND**

As it very slowly reaches for the  
bell. He pushes the button.  
There's the sound of footsteps  
from inside. The door opens. A  
middle aged man stands there.  
He smiles warmly.

MAN

Yes?

**25. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN**

His eyes wide, his face goes white,  
and he just stands there, stock  
still, silently.

**26. TWO SHOT**

MAN

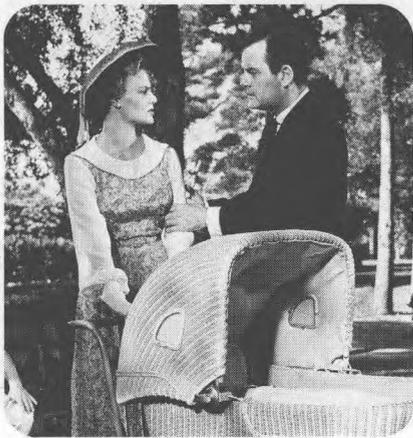
(his smile fading a little)

Yes? Who did you want to  
see?

MARTIN  
(his voice almost a whisper)  
Dad. Dad.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
(from inside the house)  
Who is it, Robert?

MARTIN  
(questioningly)  
Mom? Is that Mom?



ROBERT  
Who are you? What do you want here?

MARTIN  
(shaking his head with disbelief and yet emotionally torn by the sight of loved ones he's not seen in so many years)

Why are you both here? How can you be here?

**27. MED. LONG SHOT  
LOOKING THROUGH THE  
DOOR**

As a woman appears behind Robert. She looks questioningly from Robert to Martin.

WOMAN  
Who is it? What do you want, young man?

Martin takes a step toward them. His nervously shaking hands extend outward as if to embrace them.

MARTIN  
Mom, don't you know me?  
It's Martin.

WOMAN  
Martin?  
(and then wide-eyed, frightened,

to her husband in a stage whisper)

He's a lunatic or something.

Robert is about to close the door and Martin sticks a foot against it.

MARTIN  
Wait a moment. Mom, you mustn't be frightened of me. This is Martin. I grew up here.

(and then unable to understand the enormity of the mystery)

What's the matter with you both? Don't you know your own son?

Robert starts to push the door closed and Martin struggles with him, trying to keep it open.

MARTIN  
Dad, please. Mom, look at me.  
Dad . . .

But the door is closed tight in his face now and he stands there staring at it. He takes a step back away from the door, turns to face the street, his face a mask now, totally unable to comprehend. Then very slowly his eyes go down toward the porch floor and the newspaper.

**28. TRACK SHOT**

As he slowly walks down the steps of the porch to the sidewalk.

**29. LONG SHOT A 1934  
ROADSTER**

Sitting at the curb. A big sign is pasted on it. "THIS BRAND NEW 1934 ROADSTER TO BE GIVEN AWAY FREE AT THE LEGION HALL, THURSDAY NIGHT. BUY YOUR CHANCES NOW AT THE HIGH SCHOOL!"

**30. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN**  
Reacting.

**31. CLOSE SHOT  
LETTERING "1934"**  
On the sign.

**32. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN**

As he slowly turns away to look back toward his house, staring at it with a strange mixture of hunger and disbelief. •

FADE TO BLACK

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE ON:

**33. EXT. PARK DAY A LONG  
SHOT DOWN A  
TREE-LINED PATH**

It's warm and summery and occasionally kids flit by carrying cotton candy, ice cream cones, et al. Turning the bend and becoming visible facing the camera is Martin. He walks slowly, drinking in the sights and sounds as he does so. Off in the distance is the sound of a calliope, its tinny, rag time dissonance so rich in nostalgia that Martin has to pause momentarily and listen.

**34. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM**

As he walks down the path taking in passing sights like an organ grinder, a cotton candy vendor, a Good Humor man and children — always children. The path branches off and at this fork Martin stops and looks across at a clearing.

CUT TO:

**35. REVERSE ANGLE  
LOOKING TOWARD THE  
CLEARING**

In the middle is a large band stand and pavilion set up with chairs in preparation for the night concert. Several boys play around its steps.

**36. TRACK SHOT MARTIN**  
As he walks toward the pavilion.

He stands down at the foot of the steps and looks up at it. A young woman wheeling a baby carriage pauses close by. They exchange a look and the woman smiles.

MARTIN

Wonderful place, isn't it?

WOMAN

The park? It certainly is.

Martin listens for a moment as the calliope music can still be heard. Martin jerks his thumb in the direction of the music.

MARTIN

That's a part of summer, isn't it? The music from the merry-go-round. The calliope.

WOMAN

(laughing)

And the cotton candy. And the ice cream. And the band concert.

MARTIN

(a little disjointed, unable to put into words the nostalgia he's feeling now)

There isn't anything quite as good ever. Nothing quite as good as summer and being a kid.

WOMAN

Are you from around here?

MARTIN

No — what I mean is: — I used to be. I lived just a couple of blocks away. I remember this band stand. I used to sneak away at night, lie over there on the grass staring up at the stars, listening to the music.

(the recollection of this feeds his memory and makes him become voluble and excited)

I played ball in that field over there.

(he points)

And that merry-go-round.

Oh my goodness — I grew up with that merry-go-round.

(then his eyes darting around, he points up to one of the posts of the pavilion)

I carved my name on that

post one summer. I was eleven years old and I carved my name right on that —

### 37. FLASH SHOT A SMALL BOY

About eleven. He has a pen knife out and is in the process of carving something on the post.

### 38. TRACK SHOT MARTIN

As he runs toward the post. The boy looks up frightened. He flings the knife away and backs off. Martin reaches the post, grabs it and stares down at it.

CUT TO:

### 39. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT THE POST

In a boyish scrawl carved in the wood is the name "MARTIN SLOAN."

### 40. MED. SHOT

Martin whirls around to look down at the boy.

MARTIN

Martin Sloan? You're Martin Sloan?

The boy takes another step backwards, frightened by the intensity of Martin's look and voice.

BOY

Yes, sir. But I didn't mean nothin', honest. Lots of kids carve their names here. No kiddin'. I'm not the first —

MARTIN

(interrupts, taking a step toward the boy)

You're Martin Sloan. Sure, that's who you are. That's the way I looked —

The boy is at this moment terribly frightened by the intensity on Martin's face. He backs away down the steps and suddenly breaks into a run. Martin, his face contorted with excitement and discovery, calls after the boy.

MARTIN

Martin! Martin, don't be frightened — Hey, Martin —

He starts to take a few running steps after the boy and then stops just a few feet away from the pavilion.

### 41. LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN

He turns very slowly to see the woman staring at him. There's a curiosity on the woman's face and almost an accusation. Martin's voice is hesitant now. He points in the direction of where the boy has run and disappeared.

MARTIN

I didn't want to hurt him. I just wanted to talk to him . . . ask him some questions. I was going to tell him what would happen to him.

(now he closes his eyes tightly and runs a hand over his forehead)

I don't know. I really don't know.

(now he opens his eyes)

If it's a dream . . . I suppose I'll wake up.

### 42. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT MARTIN'S FACE

As he looks off, listens to the sound of the music.

MARTIN

(softly but with an intensity)

But I don't want it to be a dream.

(he looks at the woman now and there are tears in his eyes)

I don't want time to pass now.

The woman, very, very ill at ease, with an attempt at nonchalance, starts to wheel the carriage away.

MARTIN

You don't understand, do you? Please. Let me tell you what's happened to me . . .

(he takes a step after her)

Please . . .

The woman continues to wheel the carriage away from him.

**43. LONG SHOT THE WOMAN**

She gets to one of the paths leading to the pavilion. She stops, turns and looks at him again. At this point Martin walks hurriedly out of the pavilion area.

DISSOLVE TO:

**44. EXT. STREET NIGHT  
MED LONG SHOT**

Looking toward the front porch of the Sloan house. Robert sits on the porch on a glider. There is the sound of the creak of the swinging back and forth and other night sounds of crickets, a distant bull frog, the soft rustle of a July wind.

THE CAMERA MOVES IN for a closer shot of Robert on the porch. He suddenly inches forward on the glider, listening. There is the sound of footsteps on the sidewalk beyond, then Robert rises and moves to the top of the porch steps. The light from the lamp post shines on his face.

**45. PAN SHOT OVER TO THE  
FRONT OF THE HOUSE  
AND FRONT PATH**

Martin stands there looking up toward the house. His foot touches something. He looks down.

**46. CLOSE SHOT BASEBALL  
MITT**

He bends down and picks it up.

**47. MED. CLOSE SHOT  
MARTIN**

He puts the glove on his hand, pats out a pocket, smiles as he does so. Then he takes a few steps toward the house. A bike is parked close to the steps. Martin walks over to it, touches it, rings the bell on the handlebar. Then he looks up at his father who is staring at him from the porch.

**48. CLOSE SHOT ROBERT**

He's interested now but not frightened.

ROBERT

Back again, huh?

**49. TWO SHOT BOTH MEN**

MARTIN

(nods)

I had to come back. This is my house.

(he looks down at the glove in his hand)

This is mine, too. You bought it for me on my eleventh birthday.

(then he looks up toward his father)

What about the baseball that Lou Gehrig autographed? Where's that?

**50. CLOSE SHOT ROBERT**

As he reacts. He takes the pipe out of his mouth, looks intensely at the younger man.

ROBERT

(softly)

Who are you? What do you want here?

**51. MED. SHOT**

He strikes a match and in the brief flare he studies Martin's face.

MARTIN

I just want to rest. I just want to stop running for a while. I belong here. Don't you understand, Pop? I belong here.

ROBERT

(his voice very gentle)

Look, son, you're probably sick. You've got delusions or something. And I don't want to hurt you and I don't want you to get into any trouble either. But you better get out of here or there will be trouble.

At this moment Mrs. Sloan comes out.

MRS. SLOAN

Who you talking to, Rob—

She stops abruptly, eyes wide, when she sees Martin standing at the foot of the steps. She hurriedly goes over to her husband.

MARTIN

Mom, won't you look at me?

Look into my face. You can tell, can't you?

He takes a step up the porch. The woman shrinks back against her husband. Martin's face is in the light of the street lamp.

MARTIN

Mom, just look at me. Please.

Who am I? Tell me who I am.

MRS. SLOAN

You're a stranger. I've never seen you before. Robert, tell him to go away.

MARTIN

You've got a son named Martin, haven't you? He goes to Emerson Public School. The month of August he spends at his aunt's farm near Buffalo, and a couple of summers you've gone up to Saratoga Lake and rented a cottage there. And once I had a sister and she died when she was a year old.

MRS. SLOAN

(frightened, to her husband)

Where's Martin now?

Martin grabs her. He's beyond logic now, beyond caring. He has one single preoccupation and this is to prove who he is. He grabs his mother.

MARTIN

I'm Martin! I'm your son!

You've got to believe me. I'm your son Martin.

(with one free hand he grabs at his wallet and pulls it out and starts tearing into the cards and identification inside)

See? See? All my cards are in here. All my identification. Read them. Go ahead, read them.

(he tries to force them on her)

Please. They'll show you—

The woman, desperately frightened, struggling to get away, suddenly hauls off and slaps Martin across the face. The wallet slips out of his hand and there's a dead silence. Martin slowly looks up to look from one to the other.

CUT TO:

#### 52. CLOSE SHOT OF EACH

As they stare back at him.

#### 53. MED. GROUP SHOT

He slowly turns away, walks back to the top of the steps, looks down at the baseball glove that he's laid there.

#### 54. TRACK SHOT OF HIM

As he walks down the steps, down the front path to the gate. He pauses, looks back toward the house.

#### 55. LONG SHOT THE HOUSE

His father and mother standing there watching him. He opens the gate, steps out, stands there aimlessly for a moment.

#### 56. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN

As his head jerks up when he hears the sound of the distant calliope. It grows louder and louder until it is way out of proportion, discordant, loud, shrieking, and he starts to run, shouting as he does.

MARTIN

Martin! Martin, I've got to talk to you. Martin.

#### 57. LONG ANGLE SHOT

As he runs toward the park.

DISSOLVE TO:

#### 58. EXT. PARK NIGHT LONG SHOT DOWN THE PATH

It is now lit by street lamps. Off on the right is the light of the calliope

and the music. On the left is the sound of the band in the pavilion and over this are a thousand voices and sounds of laughter, soda pop, pop corn popping—the sounds of summer.

#### 59. MED. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN

As he steps out of the shadows and comes into the periphery of light thrown by one of the lamp posts. He looks tired now and yet compelled. His face is tense, nervous, but gradually softens, as all the sounds and the music penetrate his consciousness and once again he succumbs to the poignance that comes with nostalgia. He walks down the path and pauses near the clearing to the pavilion listening to the music.

#### 60. CLOSE SHOT HIS PROFILE

As he listens and then smiles. He takes a few steps into the clearing, leans on a tree for a moment and slowly lets himself sink to the ground. He lies there with his hands behind his head staring up at the sky, listening to the band music. Pretty soon quite unconsciously he begins to hum the tune that the band is playing and he is suddenly aware of someone else humming the tune in a boyish tone. Startled, he bolts upright to a sitting position, looks to his right and there he sees Martin the boy. The boy jumps up with a hushed, frightened cry and begins to run.

MARTIN  
(shouting)

#### 61. LONG SHOT LOOKING DOWN THE PATH

As the boy races down it and disappears around the bend. There is a beat and then Martin appears behind him running after him.

#### 62. MOVING SHOT THROUGH THE CROWD

Near the calliope as the boy pushes his way through people. A few feet behind him is Martin. The boy reaches the ticket taker



stand and tries to force his way through.

TICKET TAKER

Nope, son. Not without a ticket you don't.

The boy whirls around staring at Martin who has almost reached him now. He ducks under the turnstile and jumps on the merry-go-round. The ticket taker starts to shout and point toward him when suddenly he's pushed aside by Martin.

#### 63. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN ON THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

As the man and boy thread their way past the horses that go up and down.

#### 64–67. CLOSER SHOTS IN BETWEEN THE HORSES

First the boy's face and then Martin's, first covered by the horses as they go up, then revealed as the horses go down. Each time the boy's face looks more and more petrified and frozen with fear and each time they appear and reappear Martin

is closer until suddenly we

CUT TO:

### 68. FLASH SHOT

In this brief moment they are now face to face with nothing between them. Martin holds out his hands



pleadingly — supplicatingly.

MARTIN

Marty, I don't want to hurt Martin! Please. Let me talk to you. Let me tell you something.

you, son. I just want to tell you something —

### 69. CLOSE SHOT THE BOY

As he looks over his shoulder. We see the machinery of the merry-go-round from the moving platform on which the boy stands. Martin takes a step toward him now.

MARTIN

Marty, please son —

At this point the boy, frantic, jumps toward the machinery. We hear his scream as we

CUT TO:

### 70. FLASH SHOT MARTIN

As he too screams in pain and grabs his leg.

### 71. TIGHT CLOSE SHOT THE MERRY-GO-ROUND OPERATOR'S FACE

His eyes dilate with horror. A woman screams.

### 72. CLOSE SHOT OPERATOR'S HAND ON THE LEVER

As he pulls it back with a giant squeaking sound.

### 73. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP TOWARD THE HORSES

As people race toward the center of the merry-go-round. Ad lib voices can be heard over the din.

### 74. LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN TOWARD THE AREA AROUND THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

As the little boy is gently carried out.

### 75. CLOSE SHOT PROFILE OF THE LITTLE BOY'S BODY

As he's carried past. One leg looks misshapen under the torn, oily trouser leg. Across this leg we see Martin who has pushed his way to the front of the crowd and looks horror struck toward the figure of the boy.

CUT TO:

### 76. LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN ON THE AREA

Pretty soon the place becomes deserted and only Martin stands there. The merry-go-round slows down and keeps slowing down until finally it stops. The lights go out leaving the place in shadows. Martin walks through the turnstile over to one of the wooden horses. He sees the boy's cap lying there and he picks it up.

MARTIN

(very softly and gently)

I only wanted to tell you. I only wanted to tell you this is the wonderful time for you. Don't let any of it go by without . . . without enjoying it. There won't be any more merry-go-rounds. No more cotton candy. No more band concerts. I only wanted to tell you that this is the wonder-

ful time — now — here! That's all, Martin. That's all I wanted to tell you. God help me, that's all I wanted to tell you.

SERIES OF DISSOLVES:

### 77-80. DIFFERENT ANGLES

The immobile, silent wooden horses. The calliope, etc.

DISSOLVE TO:

### 81. EXT. MERRY-GO-ROUND NIGHT

It's now very late. The CAMERA PANS over for a shot of Martin sitting on the edge of the merry-go-round. One leg is stretched out stiffly in front of him. He looks up at the sound of footsteps.

### 82. LONG SHOT LOOKING TOWARD THE TURNSTILE

As his father comes into the frame and walks toward him, stopping just a few feet from him.

### 83. TWO SHOT THE TWO MEN

ROBERT

I thought you'd want to know the boy will be all right. He may limp some the doctor says, but he'll be all right.

MARTIN

I thank God for that.

Robert takes Martin's wallet out of his pocket, hands it to him, then he takes a pipe out and lights it. And once again in the glare of the match the two men look at one another.

ROBERT

You dropped this by the house. I looked inside.

MARTIN

And?

ROBERT

It told quite a few things about you. Driver's license, cards, the money in it. It seems that you're Martin

Sloan. You're thirty-six years old. You have an apartment in New York.

(a pause)

And it says your license expires in 1960. That's twenty-five years from now. The dates on the bills. Those dates haven't come yet either.

#### 84. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN

As he stares at his father.

MARTIN

You know now then, don't you?

#### 85. TWO SHOT

ROBERT

(looks at him for a long moment, softly)

Yes, I know. I know who you are and I know you've come from a long ways from here. A long ways and . . . and a long time. I don't know why or how — do you?

Martin shakes his head.

ROBERT

But you know other things, don't you, Martin? Things that will happen.

MARTIN

(nods)

Yes, I do.

ROBERT

You also know when your mother and I . . . when we'll . . .

MARTIN

(in a whisper)

Yes, I know that too.

ROBERT

(takes the pipe out of his mouth, studies it for a moment)

Don't tell me. There's a saying. "Every man is put on earth condemned to die. Time and method of execution unknown." That's

a part of the mystery we live with. It must always be a mystery.

(then he rises)

Martin.

MARTIN

(looks up at him)

Yes, Dad?

ROBERT

(puts his hand on Martin's shoulder)

You have to leave here. There's no room for you . . . and there's no place. Do you understand?

MARTIN

(nods, slowly)

I see that now. But I don't understand. Why not?

ROBERT

(softly)

I guess because we only get one chance.

(a crooked smile)

Maybe there's only one summer to a customer.

(and then with great compassion)

The little boy . . . the one I know. The one who belongs here. This is his summer, Martin. Just as it was yours one time. Don't make him share it.

Martin rises. He walks slowly down the steps, pauses at the foot and stares off into the night.

ROBERT

Is it . . . is it so bad — where you're from?

MARTIN

I thought so. I've been living . . . I've been living at a dead run, Dad. I was so tired. And then . . . one day . . . I knew I had to come back. I had to come back to get on a merry-go-round and listen to a band concert and eat cotton candy. I had to stop and breathe and close my eyes and smell and listen.

ROBERT

(very softly)

I guess we all want that. But,

Martin, when you go back . . . maybe you'll find that there are merry-go-rounds and band concerts where you are. Maybe you haven't looked in the right place. You've been looking behind



you, Martin. Try looking ahead.

MARTIN

Maybe. Goodbye, Dad.

Robert nods and starts to walk away. He stops by the turnstile and turns.

ROBERT

(gently)

Goodbye . . . son.

#### 86. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN

As he stands there. He looks down at the wallet, taps at it thoughtfully with a finger and then slowly puts it inside his coat. Then he turns and looks at the merry-go-round.

#### 87. MED. LONG SHOT HIS P.O.V.

Of the horses. The lights go on suddenly, and there is the creak as the merry-go-round starts to turn. He climbs up on the platform and stands holding one of the posts that go up and down with the horses and starts to go around with it.

#### 88. PAN SHOT WITH HIM AS HE MOVES.

**89. PAN SHOT OF THE CALLIOPE**

Where the music's coming from.  
ABRUPT CUT TO:

**90. MED. CLOSE SHOT A JUKE BOX**

As it blares out rock-n-roll.  
PULL BACK FOR:

**91. INT. DRUGSTORE DAY**

It's the same drugstore we've seen except now it's done in chrome, leather and flash. It's plastered with advertising signs, suggesting the purchase of everything from filtered cigarettes to reducing pills and tranquilizers. The soda jerk is no longer Charlie. Martin comes in through the front door. He walks with a stiff gait and goes over to the soda fountain.

SODA JERK

Hi. Something for you?

The music now stops and the two young couples go to a booth laughing and talking. Martin looks over at them for a moment, then turns back to the soda jerk.

MARTIN

Maybe a chocolate soda, huh? Three dips?

SODA JERK

Three? I can make one with three dips for you. It'll be extra. Thirty-five cents. Okay?

MARTIN

(smiles at him)

Thirty-five cents, huh?  
(his eyes scan the room)

How about old Mr. Wilson?  
Used to own this place.

SODA JERK

Oh, he died. Long time ago.  
Must be fifteen — twenty years. What kind of ice cream you want? Chocolate? Vanilla?

MARTIN

(looks at him for moment)  
I've changed my mind.

Guess I'll pass on the soda.  
(he rises off the stool, doing so with difficulty, his stiff leg getting in the way)

These stools weren't built for bum legs, were they?

SODA JERK

Guess not. Get it in the war?

MARTIN

No. No, as a matter of fact I got it falling off the merry-go-round when I was a kid. Freak thing. Fell into the machinery.

SODA JERK

The merry-go-round? Oh, yeah, I do remember. They tore that down a few years ago. Condemned it.

(then with a smile)

A little late I guess, huh?

MARTIN

How's that?

SODA JERK

A little late for you I mean.

MARTIN

(looks away, very softly)

Very late. Very late for me.

He starts to walk slowly across the room and out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

**92. EXT. ROAD DAY LONG SHOT MARTIN WALKING**

**93. EXT. GAS STATION DAY**

As Martin enters and we can see him talking to the attendant.

DISSOLVE TO:

**94. THE RED CAR**

With Martin in it as it pulls onto the highway from the gas station, pauses there.

**95. MED. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN**

As he looks in both directions and in doing so lets his gaze fall on a roadsign.

**96. CLOSE SHOT ROAD SIGN**

It reads "Homewood — 1½ miles."

**97. CLOSE SHOT MARTIN**

As he reacts. Just the briefest moment of thought, then he puts the car into low gear.

**98. LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN**

As the car slowly starts onto the highway. Over the disappearing car we hear the Narrator's Voice.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

Martin Slean, age thirty-six. Vice president in charge of media. Successful in most things — but not in the one effort that all men try at some time in their lives — trying to go home again.

(a pause)

And also like all men perhaps there'll be an occasion . . . maybe a summer night some time . . . when he'll look up from what he's doing and listen to the distant music of a calliope — and hear the voices and the laughter of the people and the places of his past. And perhaps across his mind there'll flit a little errant wish . . . that a man might not have to become old — never outgrow the parks and the merry-go-rounds of his youth.

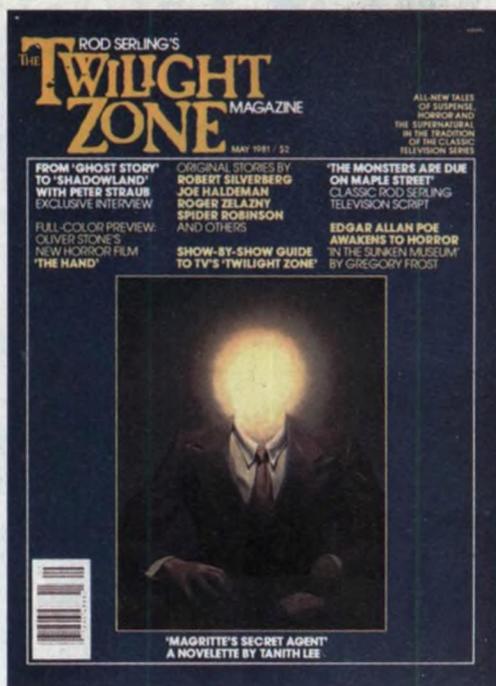
(a pause)

And he'll smile then too because he'll know it is just an errant wish. Some wisp of memory not too important really. Some laughing ghosts that cross a man's mind . . . that are a part of The Twilight Zone.

Now the CAMERA PANS back down the road to the sign that reads "Homewood — 1½ miles."

FADE TO BLACK.





The May issue of TZ offers a garden of unearthly delights, including an eight-foot-tall alien, a killer who travels in time, and a botanist who, in search of specimens, wanders into a Land of Unreason. You'll be treated to a tender love story between a girl and something not quite human, a one-way trip on the *Flying Dutchman*, a glimpse into Edgar Allan Poe's private hell, a new Michael Caine horror movie, and much, much more.

Some highlights:

**Master of horror:** In the present issue Stephen King hails *Ghost Story* as "one of the best gothic horror novels of the past century." Leading off May's TZ is an exclusive in-depth interview with the book's author, **Peter Straub**, who conducts you on a tour through *Shadowland*, his bestselling new novel. It's a most unusual journey, one you won't want to miss.

**Man alone:** Botanist Dan Britton, the only American in a remote little village in Chile, is awakened one evening in his hotel room by the sound of a crowd in the square below. A strange competition is about to take place—with Britton himself as the unwilling challenger. Only then, as the townspeople anxiously scan the horizon, does he learn the incredible secret of *How They Pass the Time in Pelpel*—an original and highly unsettling story by Hugo award-winner **Robert Silverberg**, author of *Lord Valentine's Castle*.

**Woman alone:** Anne Jeffries thinks she has a prowler on her farm—a prowler who's been slaughtering the livestock. But surely nothing human could be responsible for deaths as gruesome as that. . . . Read *Blood Relations* by **Lewis Shiner** and meet the real killer.

**Awakening to nightmare:** What happens when a horror writer is forced to inhabit the mad world of his own creation? In **Gregory Frost's** chilling *In the Sunken Museum*, the world is one of locked vaults, deadly pendulums, and black-cloaked apparitions—for the writer is none other than Edgar Allan Poe.

**Time travel, 1930s-style:** Poe is not the only one who returns to life in the May TZ. Witness, too, the resurrection of Harry the Horse, Damon Runyon's colorful New York mobster, who pays a brief but memorable visit to the present in *Chronic Offender*. In this brilliant—and loving—pastiche, **Spider Robinson** takes over where Runyon left off.

**Bad medicine:** The agent's sure he's found his meal ticket at last. The Indian girl is beautiful, and her dancing's bound to make them both rich. But ancient Indian ritual and modern-day show biz don't mix—as *Logan's Run* co-author **George Clayton Johnson** demonstrates in his deft supernatural tale, *Drum Dancer*.

**Other delights:** The May issue also features original stories by **Joe Haldeman** and **Roger Zelazny**, and an enchanting new novelette by **Tanith Lee**; the script of **Rod Serling's** classic *Twilight Zone* episode, *The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street*, complete with stills from the TV show; and TZ's continuing, show-by-show guide to the series.

**Further ahead:** Look for interviews with celebrated fantasist **Robert Bloch** and *Superman* director **Richard Donner**; an unproduced *Twilight Zone* TV script by **Richard Matheson**; and, as our June cover story, *The Jaunt*—a horrifying excursion into science fantasy by **Stephen King**.