R. A. Lafferty

Through Elegant Eyes


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Stories of Austro and the Men Who Know Everything

by R. A. Lafferty

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THROUGH ELEGANT EYES
STORIES OF AUSTRO AND THE MEN WHO KNOW EVERYTHING

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Through Elegant Eyes

THE ALL-AT-ONCE MAN

> . . . let him know that the word translated 'everlasting' by our writers is what the Greeks term aionion, which is derived from aion, the Greek for Saeculum, an age. But the Latins have not ventured to tranlsate this by secular, lest they should change the meaning into something widely different. For many things are called secular which so happen in this world as to pass away even in a short time; but what is termed aionion either has no end, or it lasts to the very end of this world.
>
> *The City of God* — Saint Augustine

This is an attempt to assemble such facts (hard and soft) as may yet be found about a remarkable man who seemed to be absolutely balanced and integrated, yet who developed a schizo-gash deep as a canyon right down the middle of his person. Doctor George Drakos said that he developed three or four such schizo-gashes.

This is also an attempt to record some of the strange goings-on in the house on Harrow Street—and it is a half-hearted (no, a faint-hearted or downhearted) attempt to record the looser goings-on in

the subsequently forever-house on Harrow Street. The subject is a man who had everything, who took hold of everything beyond that, and who was broken to pieces by it. Or was not. "I want to be the complete man," John Penandrew used to say of himself.

"I want to be the complete man," he would say to all of us who would hear him. Well, he was already the most complete man that any of us had ever seen. He had been a promising young man: as Don Marquis had said of himself, he had been a promising young man for twenty years. But Penandrew didn't show those twenty years at all, except in his depth.

His eyes, his shape, his everything were just as they all had been when he left Monica Hall twenty years before. He had been a gilded youth then—or at least he had been plated over with a very shiny substance. He still was, he was still that youth, but in his depth he was a full man, sure and mature, and with the several appearances together and unconflicting. For he was also the boy he had been thirty years before, in no detail changed. He had been a loud-mouthed kid; but smart all the time, and smooth when he wanted to be. Now there was a boy, a youth, and a man—three non-contradictory stages of him—looking out of his gray eyes. His complexity impressed me strongly. And it also impressed four men who were not as easily impressed as I was.

There were five men who knew everything; and there was myself. We met loosely two or three times a year. The five men who knew everything were this John Penandrew (he was in banks as his father had been); Dr. George Drakos, who was Greek and who used to go to Greek school in the evenings; Harry O'Donovan, who was a politician as his fathers had been forever; Cris Benedetti, an ex-seminarian who taught literature and esoterica at the University; and Barnaby Sheen, who was owner of the Sooner State Seismograph Enterprizes.

These five men were all rich, and they knew everything. I wasn't, and I didn't. I belonged to the loose group by accident: they never noticed that I alone had not become rich or that there were evident gaps in my information.

We had all gone to school together to the Augustinians at Monica Hall, and minds once formed by the Augustinians are Augustinian forever. We had learned to latch onto every sound idea and intuition and hold on. At least we had more scope than those who went to school to the Jesuits or the Dominicans. This information is all pertinent. Without the Augustinian formation John Penandrew would never have shattered—he'd have bent.

"I've decided not to die in the natural course of things," John Penandrew said softly one evening. The other four of those men who knew

everything didn't seem at all surprised by his declaration.

"You've given enough thought to it, have you?" Cris Benedetti asked him. "That's really the way you want it?"

"Yes, that's the way I want it," John Penandrew said. "And I've considered it pretty thoroughly."

"You've decided to live forever then, have you?" Barney Sheen asked with just a hint of boyish malice.

"Naturally not to live forever here," Penandrew attempted to explain. "I've decided to live only as long as the world lasts, unless I am called from my plan by peremptory order. I am resolved, however, to live for very many normal lifetimes. The idea appeals to me strongly."

"Have you decided just how you will bring this about?" Dr. George Drakos asked.

"Not fully decided. I've begun to consider that part only recently. Of first importance is always the decision to do a thing. The means of carrying it out will have to follow that decision and flow from it. There is no real reason why I shouldn't be able to do it though."

"No, I suppose not," Cris Benedetti said thoughtfully. "You're an intelligent man and you're used to tall problems. But there have been other intelligent men and, as far as I know, none of them has done this thing."

"Do you know of any really intelligent man who has decided to to do this and then has failed in the doing?" Penandrew asked.

"No, not if you put it that way," Cris admitted. "Most problems remain unsolved simply because they have never been tried seriously in the proper framework. And there are legends of men (I presume them to be intelligent) who have done this thing and are doing it. Not very reputable legends, though."

"Well, what is it then, an elixir of youth that you'll be seeking?" Harry O'Donovan asked in his high voice.

"No, Harry, that idea is clearly unworkable. It couldn't be taken seriously by anyone except a youth," Penandrew talked it out carefully. "It will not be an elixir of youth: it will be an elixir of all ages—that, I believe, is the crux of the matter. I do not want to be only a youth forever—or for a very long time—I am more than just a youth now. It would not be possible to remain a youth forever."

"Then what?" O'Donovan demanded. "I don't believe you've thought this out very thoroughly, John. Do you want to live for a very long time and you be getting older and older and older all that time?"

"But I have thought it out pretty thoroughly, Harry. I will get old only at one end, only in depth. I will become a complete man, and then still more complete. I believe that there is no record of any com-

plete man ever dying—that's the thing."

"I believe there is no record of any complete man at all," George Drakos said. "That's really the thing."

"There's probably been a large handful of us," Penandrew said. "I know pretty well what I want to do and I know pretty well what it consists of. I will become every aeon of myself simultaneously; then I will have become a complete man—and then I will not die. There is a meaning within a meaning of the old word aeon. Aeon means ages. But the plenoma or plentitude is made up of substantial powers called aeons. I maintain that these two meanings are the same. In Gnosticism, the aeon is one of the group of eternal beings that combine to form the supreme being—all of them are eternal and simultaneous, but no one of them would be eternal out of combination. I believe that there is analogy on the human plane; and I intend to become that analogy, to be all my ages simultaneously and forever, to be every aeon of myself. I will be forever a boy, forever a youth, forever a man, and forever an old man. I'm already something of this multiple appearance, I'm told. I guarantee that I'll be a boy forever. I'll nail down that end."

"And what happens when the old man in you gets older and older and dies?" Drakos asked.

"I don't know what will happen, George, but I'm certainly interested in knowing. Possibly I will assume a still older man, and then a still older. I'm not sure there is a necessary connection between very old age and death. It may be, though, that the extreme aeons of me will pass over the edge and give me a foot in each world. I'd like that. The possibilities are almost endless. But I believe that the boy in me, the youth in me, the man in me will live for innumerable lifetimes."

"Oh brother!" Harry O'Donovan sounded in his high voice. "And how will you be doing it all? Not by talking about it, I'll bet."

"Yes, I will do it by considerable talking about it and by much more thinking about it," Penandrew ventured. "It is not a thing for gadgets or apparatuses, though I may employ them some. It is a thing, I believe, of mental and physical disposition; and I tell you that I'm well disposed towards it."

This John Penandrew who lived in the big house on Harrow Street was married to Zoe Archikos. Barnaby Sheen would like to have been married to her. So would Cris Benedetti and Harry O'Donovan. So would George Drakos except that she was his cousin. Zoe was a creature that has become fairly rare these last twenty-five centuries: a blonde Grecian, a veritable Helen, a genuinely classic model with that brassiness that must go with it. The bronze age understood the

necessity of this high brass, but we have forgotten.

Oh, she had form and life, she was perfection and brindled passion—and she was also the blast of a brass horn. John Penandrew was fortunate in having her; she should have been elixir enough for anyone. But he was fortunate in almost everything.

"The fathers tell us that Adam, in his preternatural state, enjoyed all ages at once," Barnaby Sheen said. "So it is not strictly true that he had no childhood, even though he was created adult. He was created all ages at once. It was a good trick till he broke it. And, by coincidence, I recently ran into the still surviving legend of the one man who, since Adam, is most persistently believed to have been all ages at once and to be still alive."

"Coincidence, which is simultaneity, is valid when it touches a simultaneous man as I am becoming," John Penandrew said with what would have been pomposity in another man. "Ah—where did you run into the latest legend of Prester John, Barney?"

"In Ethiopia. I have several crews doing petroleum exploration work there and I visited there recently. Some of the simple local workmen talk of the everlasting man as if he were a present-day presence."

"Near Magdala, was it?" John Penandrew asked with sudden eagerness.

"About seventy miles northwest of there, in the Guna slopes."

"I was sure it was near. Magdala, of course, is a modern name-form of old Mogadore, the legendary kingdom of Prester John."

"That's impossible," George Drakos cut in. "Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of the Amharic language would know that the one name could not change into the other."

"Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of anything would know that both names are from the Geez and not the Amharic language," Cris Benedetti sneered, "and there is a strong possibility that the two names are the same, George."

(It is sometimes confusing to have these acquaintances who know everything.)

"But you can't do it, John," Cris continued, "in Ethiopia or anywhere. You can't be a simultaneous man. You haven't the integrity for it."

"Why not, Cris? I pay tithes of cummin and that other stuff. I love my wife and many other persons. I have a pleasant way with my money, and I do not grind the faces of the poor. Why haven't I integrity?"

"You have common decency, John, but not integrity," Cris said. "I use the word to mean unified totality and scope—that is integrity in the theological sense. I use the word as Tanquerey uses it."

(They used to study Tanquerey's *Dogmatic Theology* in the seminaries. Now they study rubbish.)

"There are several ways I can go about this," Penandrew said. "I believe that we originally had this simultaneity and everlastingness as a preternatural gift. Then we were deprived of it. But it remains a part of our preternatural nature. This means that we must be deprived of it all over again every day or it will flow back into us. It could be as simple a thing as actinic rays depriving us of this handy gift of everlasting life. I've studied these possibilities a little. I could have a series of silver plates or baffles set into my head to combat the rays. That's one way."

"What're some other ways?" Barnaby Sheen asked.

"Oh, proper disposition of mind and body. Induced mystical states combined with my natural powers and proclivities. I believe that there may be gadgetry employed as a trigger—but only as a trigger—for the alteration. I believe that it will be mostly realizing a state of being that already belongs to us, something that belongs to our preternatural nature."

"Or our unnatural nature," Barnaby said. "You didn't use to play so loose with words. What're some other ways, John?"

"Oh, I may go and find Prester John and learn how he's been doing it these thousands of years," John Penandrew said. "And I will go and do likewise."

"Did you every hear anything like that, Laff?" Barnaby asked me. "Has the subject ever been handled in your—ah, pardon my smile — field?"

"Several stories have handled the subject," I said, "but not in the variation that Penandrew wants to give it."

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Saying: O grandfather,
the little ones have nothing of which to make
a symbol.
He replied, saying:
. . . they shall make of me their symbol.
. . . the four divisions of days (stages of life)
they shall enable themselves to reach and
enter . . .

Legends.
Appendix to a Dictionary of the Osage Language
—Francis la Flesche

John Penandrew was out of town for about a year. When he came back, he had a different look to him. Oh, he had simultaneity now! He really had it. He was the boy he had been thirty years ago; he was the youth he had been twenty years ago; he was the man he should have been now; and he was also an older man. He was all these several persons or ages at once, much more than he had been before—all of them, completely and unconflictingly. He had pulled it off. He was truly the simultaneous man. But that isn't exactly what we mean when we say that he had a different look to him.

In all his simultaneous persons he had something just a little bit lopsided about him. One eye was always just a little bit larger than the other. There was more than a hint of deformity, and there shouldn't have been—not in this complete man.

But he was the complete man now. He had done it. He had pulled the coup. He was wound up all the way and he would live forever unless he flew apart. This was no fakery. You could feel that he had done it.

He lived in the big house on Harrow Street with the brassy, classy Zoe and they lived it to the hilt. There wasn't ever anyone in such a hurry to have so much fun so fast. They were perfervid about it. But why should he be in such a hurry when he had forever?

Well, he had money and he had talent and he had Zoe. The boy was strong in him now (he had been a loud-mouthed kid, but smart all the time and smooth when he wanted to be); the youth was in him very strong (he had been a gilded youth, or at least a very brassy one); and the man and the older man were vital and shouting in him. The Penandrews were cutting a wide swath and they were much in the papers. But what was John's big hurry now?

"Add one dimension, then you might as well add another," he grinned with a grin a little too lopsided for a complete and simultaneous man. "Speed, that's the thing. Speed forever, and lean heavy on that hooting horn."

But it was another year before myself and those five men who knew everything were all together again.

John Penandrew lolled with his lopsided grin as though he were too full of mischief to talk. And Barnaby Sheen wound into one of his cosmic theses, of which he had hundreds:

"Just before the Beginning, there was a perfect sphere and no other thing," Barnaby spoke in his rich voice. "At least it supposed itself to be a perfect sphere—it had no imperfect spheroid with which to compare itself. It suspected that it was revolving at a very high rate of speed, such a rate of speed that it would immediately fly apart if the rotation could be established as fact. But in relation to what

point could it be rotating?

"It was not in space—there was no space beyond it; how could there be? It could not be in motion, of course, there being nothing relative to it. Neither could it be at rest—in relation to what could it be at rest? It was not in time nor in eternity, there being nothing to pose it against in either aspect. It had no size, for there was nothing to which it might be compared. It might be a pinhead in size, or a mega-megalo. It had no temperature, it had no mass, it had no gravity—all these things are relative to other things.

"Then an exterior speck appeared. That was the Beginning, as the sphere's lone existence had not been. The mere speck was less than one billionth to the billionth power the diameter of the sphere and was at much more than a billion billions of diameters from it. Now there was both contrast and relationship.

"Now there was size and mass and temperature, space, time, and motion; for there was something to relate to. The sphere was indeed found to be in furious and powerful rotation, now that it could rotate in relation to something. It was in such rapid rotation that it deformed itself with its own centrifugal force, it ruptured itself, it flowed apart completely and everything thence is from its pieces.

"But if the speck had been ten times the size it was (still too small for any eye ever to see) the universe would have been only one tenth as large, forever, in every aspect.

"What happened to the speck? Was it consumed in the great explosion? Probably not. Likely it never existed at all. It was a mere illusion to get things started. Say, I consider that an excellent 'In the Beginning' bit. Can you use that, Laff? Can you make a piece out of that piece?"

"I will use it some day," I said.

"The important thing about that speck was its duration," John Penandrew licked the words out with a tongue that now seemed a little lopsided. "It lasted for much less than a billionth of a billionth of a second. It was in contrast to the short-duration speck that the then-happening cosmos acquired its delusion of immortality."

"You are sure it is a delusion, Pen?" Cris Benedetti asked anxiously, as though much depended on the answer.

"Yes, all a delusion," Penandrew grinned. "We cosmic types call it the workable delusion, and we will work it for all it is worth."

"Tell us the truth, Penandrew," Barnaby Sheen said gruffly. "Did you really do it? And how did you do it?"

"I really did it, Barney. I'll not die. I'll dance on your graves and on the graves of your great-great-grandchildren. I'll make a point of it. I'll dance naked on the graves as David danced before the Ark."

"Why such frenzied pleasure in our going, Pen?" Cris asked with

some hurt.

"It's the boy in me. He's a bit monstrous now and he's me. I can't change him, or any of us, or it will all collapse. It's mine. I'll hang onto it. I'll bow my back. I won't give an inch ever. I've got a mind-set in me now—that's a big part of it."

"Yes, I believe you did pull it off, Penandrew," Barnaby said slowly. "How did you do it, though? By elixir? By plates against the rays? By Prester John's secret? How?"

"Oh yes, I finally lifted the secret from Prester John himself and now I will not die in the natural course of things. But I'll not tell you about it. You don't need to know about it. Why should you want to know?"

"We also might want to avoid dying in the natural course of things," Doctor George Drakos said softly.

"No, no, that's impossible!" Penandrew shouted. "I won't be done out of it by anyone. I'll hold onto it for dear life—and that is exactly the case of it."

"Is it an exclusive thing?" Harry O'Donovan asked, "and it can't be shared?"

"It cannot be shared," Penandrew said harshly. "It isn't anything like you think it is. It isn't at all as I thought it would be. It became a freak in its general withdrawal. It's a jealous thing. It's a snake in the hand and it must be held tightly. It isn't the preternatural thing I thought it would be. It's an unnatural thing now—and only one person in the world can have it at a time, for all time. I won't let go of it. Hack my hands off—but I won't let go of it!"

"How *is* Prester John?" Barnaby Sheen asked in a strong low tone.

"Oh, leave off the legends," Harry O'Donovan sounded angrily. "If there ever was a Prester John he's been dead these thousand years."

"No. About eighteen months," Penandrew said. "I found him alive. And now he is dead."

"You killed him," Barnaby said simply.

"How would I kill him?" Penandrew protested. 'He died of old age and God knows that that is the truth. He crumbled to dust. Why should he not have died of old age? Do you know how long he had been around? He saw Rome fall. And Jerusalem."

"What did you take from him?" Barnaby Sheen asked.

"I took the jealous thing, the only thing. And now I will not die in the natural course of things. He wanted me to take it. He had been trying to give it to someone for a long time."

"That is the truth?" Sheen asked.

"That is the truth," Penandrew said. And it was the truth, we all knew that, but it was a lopsided truth. Penandrew left us suddenly

then.

"May the sun come up on him crooked in the morning," Harry O'Donovan said bitterly.

But in the big house on Harrow Street, John and Zoe Penandrew lived it up to the haft. It was speed forever and lean heavy on the hooting horn. There was something a little disreputable about the couple now, if that word can be used of rich and positioned people.

John grew older only in the old man of him. The boy in him was still the boy, the youth still the youth, the man still the man. He was living at least four lives at once, all at high speed and all forever. Zoe became more buxom and more classic, more brassy, more lively. If she aged at all she did it entrancingly and disgracefully, but not ungracefully. There was nobody like her. She was full and overflowing, always.

All the fun that could be crammed into every day and night! Speed, and the dangerous teetering that goes with very high speed. They went on forever.

Actually they went on for ten years. Then Zoe left him and he broke up.

No. He broke up first and then she left him.

"I lost it," he said, "and I couldn't have. Nobody could ever have got it out of my grip."

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> For his duration too there is a word—the word Aevum or Aeviternity, the duration of that in which its essence or substance knows no change: though by its accidents it can know change . . .
>
> *Theology and Sanity*—F. J. Sheed

It was then that the doings in the house on Harrow Street took a peculiar turn. Things had been hectic when Zoe was there; they had been noisy and publicized. But, whatever Zoe was, she was always High Brass. She'd had class. Now the house and happenings degenerated.

John Penandrew brought those three nephews of his into the big house to live with him. They were a crass bunch. There was something pretty low about them, and they brought John pretty low. A man should not be ashamed of his poor relations, of course: he should help them if they need help; and perhaps it was the essence

of charity that John should take them into his own house. John had real charity in his heart; there is no taking that away from him. He also had baser things there and they began to pour out of it now. The three nephews were bums, and John Penandrew became a bum along with them. Rich bums are the worst kind.

And there was no doubting the kinship. All three of the fellows had the family look strongly. They were loudmouths, as John had always been a little—but they were not smart and they were not smooth, as John could be when he wished. They all had what I can only call a facial deformity and they had it to a grotesque degree where John had it only to a minor extent. It was that lopsided look. It was that one eye bigger than the other. Coming out of that clan, John Penandrew came by his own slight deformity honestly.

There were low-life doings at the big house on Harrow Street. The four Penandrew males each seemed to bring in seven cronies worse than himself. There were riotous doings there and the black maria was a frequent visitor to those doors. There was the aroma of stale evil in all this and John hadn't used to be a bad sort of man.

John Penandrew talked rationally but sadly whenever we came across him.

"I should never have taken the thing," he said. "I knew before I finally seized it that it was wrong and unnatural. And, having taken it, I should have been willing to let it go easier when I found what a deformity it really was. 'The corruption of the best is the worst—' do you remember when we were taught that? This excellent gift was taken away from us long ago, and for a reason. I had it as a tainted and forbidden remnant, and I held onto it like a snake in the hand. But I will not easily give up any strong idea that I have held. I have an intransigent mind. Do you remember when we were taught to have *that*? I held it too tight, and it shattered me."

And in fact John Penandrew was a shattered man now – or a splattered one. The sap had been all drained out of him, as though the nephews were sapsuckers or bloodsuckers who preyed on him. He weathered badly. Now he looked older than he was and he no longer looked all ages at once. He aged monstrously – he leered and lolled. He seemed to be returning to most unaromatic dust.

He had given up his chairmanships of the boards and his associations with the banks. It was their loss. He had always been very smart in matters of business and policy. He knew that that was finished with him now. He took his money and went home.

And that home was a shipwreck. The middle nephew was as queer as a glass-egg goose. He had a stack of morals charges against him and John Penandrew had thousands of dollars of bond out on him. He was an almost personable fellow, but he was slanted—how he

was slanted!

The youngest nephew was no more than a boy – a cat-killing, window-breaking, arsonous vandal who led a wild pack and always left a trail right up to the Harrow Street house. What things he got away with because he was not yet adult! And him much more intricate than the adults who had to deal with him, and much more deadly! It is pretty certain that he killed larger and higher things than cats and broke more fragile things than windows.

The oldest nephew, a twisted humorist, an almost good fellow, was the instigator of the endless series of sick parties held in the big house, the procurer of the dozen or so florid witches who always came with the dark. He was an experimenter in the vices, an innovator of reputation.

John Penandrew had become an old and dirty caricature of himself. There was something artificial about him now, as though he were no more than a mask and effigy propped up on a display float at some garish carnival. The shape he was in, John Penandrew surely could not go on forever, and he didn't.

"There has got to be an infusion of brains in the neighborhood and the militant world," Barnaby Sheen said once when we were all together, except John Penandrew. "There is a stupidity on everything, and I cannot completely except even the present group. We need greater brains, wisdom, judgement, adequacy of the spirit and of spirit-handling."

"We need it, but where will you get it?" Harry O'Donovan asked.

"Oh, from Aethiopia Cerebralis, I suppose. It's the only one of the Wells of Wisdom that I have the location of. I am thinking of the Guna Slopes whence the late monstrosity came. If a stolen secret of sick application comes from there, then we must bring counteracting wisdom from there also."

"Yes, there is an aura of braininess about that place," George Drakos said, "but has its primary been discovered?"

"Yes, of course. Discovered or guessed by myself at least. I will go there and get light for our darkness. Magi have come from those slopes before to grace the poorer parts of the world. I am going to recruit."

"Oh, but what if it turns out to be another stolen secret of sick application?" Cris Benedetti asked with apprehension.

"I will be very careful about that," Barnaby said. "I will not steal a star from those slopes. I will beg a young star to come."

After about three years of cohabitation with the nephews, John Penandrew died. That should have wrecked the legend that he would

live forever. Maybe not though. Well, it really seemed that he did not die in the natural course of things. There was something most unnatural about the course of his dying, as though he had turned to dust before he died; as though what died was not himself at all; as though the dying were an incident, almost an afterthought.

He wasn't much more than fifty years old. He looked ninety. Zoe didn't come to the funeral.

"He isn't in very good shape right now," she said. "I'll wait a few months, and then go back to him when things are looking a little better with him." She wasn't at all distraught; she was just not making sense. She left the country the night before the funeral.

After the funeral mass, after the Zecharih Canticle when the body was taken out from the church, Barnaby Sheen whispered to the priest in the vestibule:

"I don't believe you've got him all there."

"I don't believe so either," the priest whispered back.

Zoe inherited.

The nephews? No, they didn't get anything.

There was something a little bit loose about those nephews. They weren't—ah—seen again. No trace was found of them, either backward or forward. They simply hadn't been. In the legal and recorded sense, at least, John Penandrew hadn't had any nephews. He had had attributes, we suppose, but not nephews. Well, peace to the pieces of the poor rich man!

It's a moral paradigm, really, of a man who reached for too much and was shattered by it. It's a neat instance of final moral compensation and seemliness. Yes, except that it wasn't neat; that this wasn't the final part of it; and that the compensation was not particularly moral.

It was not neat because there were pieces sticking out of it—a primordial brass horn that surely wasn't Gabriel's; and three, at least, noisy persons in the house on Harrow Street.

It was stated that the nephews were not seen again—but they *were* heard. Oh how they were heard! They were the noisiest unbodied bodies that ever assaulted honest ears. They and their florid witches (unseen also) made the nights—well—interesting, for quite some months in that long block on Harrow Street.

This was the first phase of the Haunted House on Harrow Street. It was featured in Sunday supplements everywhere, likely in your own town paper. It was included in books like *Beyond the Strange*. It became a classic instance.

And that was only the first phase of the Haunted House episode. The next phase was not so loudly trumpeted (don't use that word in this case) to the world. There was a tendency to play it down. It was too hell-fire hot to handle.

Zoe came back to town, bright and big and brassy as ever. A classic personage, Zoe. How the classic has been underestimated and misunderstood! But she came in almost silently, muted brass with only a hint of dazzle and blare.

"I believe that things will be looking a little better with my husband John now," she said. "He should be better composed by this time. I am his wife. I will just move in with him again and be the proper wife to him."

"Move in where?" Harry O'Donovan asked aghast. "Into the grave?"

"Oh no, I'll move back into the house on Harrow Street and live there with my husband."

"Zoe, did you take the, well, thing from John?" Barnaby Sheen asked curiously.

"Yes, I took it, Barney, but only for a short while. I'll give it back to him now. He may be able to cope with it this time. I don't need such things myself. This time I am certain that we will have a long and entertaining life together. All things coalesce for us now."

"Zoe, you're not making sense. John Penandrew is dead!" Cris Benedetti shouted.

"Who isn't?" she asked simply. "I'll bet you though, Cris—" (raucous horn blowing in the distance) "that he's more alive than you are at this minute. Or you or you or you or you. If any of you were as alive as he is, I'd have you."

"You are out of your wits, Zoe," George Drakos said and blinked. There was something the matter with Drakos' eyes, with all of our eyes. Somewhere was a brassy shimmer of the second brightest light that human eyes will ever see. The four men who knew everything did not know Zoe Archikos. Much less did I.

Zoe moved back into the house on Harrow Street. And how was it with her there? Noisy, noisy. Some things at least coalesced for her or into her: among these, the florid witches who used to come with the dark. Their voices had been so jangling because they were broken voices, part voices. Now they were together in that dozen-toned instrument, the red-brass, the flesh-brass. They had never been anything other than wraiths of her. Now she was all one again.

There was some evidence also (shouting, grisly evidence) that the aeons or nephews or attributes had all coalesced into John Penandrew again.

Well, that is the sort of thing that a town must live with, or die

with; but it will not live with it on a normal course.

Listen! No, not with your ears! Listen with your crawling flesh! Did you yourself ever meet a man after you had seen him dead? It does give you a dread, does it not? There was no need of elaboration. John Penandrew was a humorist, but by that time he had become a little edgy of horror humor. There was none of that coming-through-the-walls business. He came in normally by the door and sat down.

"Jesus Christ!" Barnaby Sheen moaned. "Are you a ghost, John?"

"The very opposite," Penandrew said softly. "In fact, I had to give up the ghost." Penandrew was *that* kind of humorist, but even bad jokes are shocking from a man who's supposed to be dead.

"It wasn't all of you in the coffin was it, John?" Barnaby asked in wonder.

"No. Only my older aspect went over the edge. I once thought that this would give me a foot in each world and I was curious about it. It didn't work that way. I have no consciousness of that aspect now; nor, I suppose, has he of me. I shuffled off the mortal coil there. I've won. That's something. Nobody else ever won at it – except those like Zoe who were already preternatural.

"You're a damned zombie, Penandrew!" Harry O'Donovan cried in shrill anger.

"Can a zombie be damned?" Penandrew asked. "I don't know. Tell me, Cris. You were the theology student. For damnation is there not required a nature of a certain moment? But I'm of another moment now. Momentum, I am saying, which means a movement and a power and a weight; and 'moment of time' is only part of its meaning and only part of mine."

"Damn your Latin! You're a deformity," O'Donovan cried.

"Yes. I'm a deformed curve, the one that never closes on itself," Penandrew said with his lopsided smile. "Barnaby Sheen's 'In the Beginning' bit left something out. There was what might have been a perfect sphere, yes. There was, possibly, an exterior speck for contrast. I say that there was something else, one curve that would not close when everything else closed into the rather neat package that called itself the Cosmos, the Beauty. There was one shape left over. I am part of that other shape. Try being a little lopsided sometimes, men. You live longer by it."

That was the last real talk that we ever had with John Penandrew. He never sought our company again and we sure never sought his.

Nobody else lives in that long block on Harrow Street now, but the noises are over-riding in that whole part of town. There is nothing

the law can do. It is always that beautifully brassy woman there when they call and always with her artless answers:

"It is only myself and my husband together here," Zoe says, "and we taking our simple pleasures together. Is that so wrong?" Even coppers get that funny look in their eyes when they have been hexed by the pervading sound of the brass winds.

Old men and young boys often gather near that house at night and howl like wolves from the glandular ghosts that the strange flesh calls up in them. But even the most aroused of them will not attempt the house or the doors.

The Penandrews are a unique couple taking their pleasures together all at once forever, and so violently as to drive the whole town stone-deaf—like those old stone-deaf statues, their only real kindred. For these two will not die in any natural course of things, not with that big loud bright brassy horn blowing in a distance, and at absolutely close range, all at once, everywhere, unclosed, lopsided. It's the ending that hasn't any end. The Stone is found, and it's an older texture than the philosophers believed. The transmutation is accomplished—into brass. Classic and koine: this is the Zoe who dies hardly forever; this is the Penandrew, the man of the wrong shape.

The four men who know everything understand it now.

And I do not.

> Five little Wise Men, sitting on the floor.
> One lived forever, and then there were four.

MUD VIOLET

"Properly to carry out the next assignment for this class, it will be necessary that you die," the instructor said. "Some of you may not want to do this. If you do not, I will have to demerit you as for any other neglected assignment. There are several straight-A students in this class, however, and I am sure that they will want to continue so. To them I say 'Carry out this assignment.' "

This instructor of the young—we didn't like him. We (who were no longer young) were Barnaby Sheen, Dr. George Drakos, Harry O'Donovan, and Cris Benedetti, the four men who knew everything; and myself who did not.

There are nine basic colors: hylicon, violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red, and mystes. There are persons who say that there are more basic colors than these: but they confuse hues with colors, or they list non-basic colors such as the purples and magentas and the variously named non-spectral violets and reds. To such persons we can only say 'You are mistaken.'

There are other persons who say that there are fewer basic colors than these listed here, that the first and last colors of our list are not visible colors at all. To such persons we can only say 'Go get your eyes fixed.'

The three most knowledgeable authorities on this subject (God, a cosmopolitan; Iris, a Grecian lady; and E. I. Watkin, an

Englishman) agreed that there were these nine basic colors in the bow in the clouds and that all other colors are contained in them.

The present account is suffused with the first of these colors, hylicon. This color, lying in the wave band between 400 and 3,900 angstroms, is sometimes called ultra-violet. The color may be seen by many humans and by many other non-simian primates (pay attention, we are making important distinctions here). There are persons of the very finest sensibilities who can see this color clearly and can see all manner of objects suffused by this color; they say that it is like the finest violet color, but incredibly extenuated. There are likewise persons of the very crudest sensibilities who can see this color; they say that it is the color of mud.

Unless you are a person of admirably noble (or of disgustingly coarse) sensibilities, you will not understand this account at all. We're sorry about that.

Loretta Sheen died when she was just sixteen years old. Her father, however, said that she didn't die, that she wasn't dead. He said that she had merely put herself into a spiteful state, out of perversity. This was an act quite out of character for her. She was mostly a good girl.

Six other young persons of Loretta's acquaintance died the same week-end, and most of them died violently. These six were Harvey Clatterbach, Willow Gaylord, Elroy Rain, Violet Lonsdale, Barry Limus, and Priscilla Rommel. The families and friends of these six accepted the fact that they were dead: they hadn't the mental slipperiness of Loretta's father, Barnaby Sheen. The six young people looked dead and acted dead; and they were buried as being dead. Not quite so with Loretta.

The whole idea of it began in a special high school psychology class taught by an instructor named Edmund Weakfish.

"Participation psychology is the only psychology of any value," Weakfish was saying. "We have had good success with this here and have come to some sound understandings. To understand a person we must become that person. To fathom a phenomenon you must be that phenomenon. And as we have been studying abnormal psychology by this method I am pleased to see how abnormal many of you have become."

Edmund Weakfish the instructor was a dull-looking person. He appeared to have been molded, in face and body, out of much-used modelling clay or putty, to have been molded by one with not much talent for molding. Edmund was of a dull putty color and of a shapeless plasticine shape. Yet he was said to be a young man of

unusual bent, and a high school should have several unusual instructors.

"Harvey Clatterbach has come to understand the psychology of a thief by becoming a thief," Weakfish was commenting. "Willow Gaylord has entered into the psychology of a pregnant woman by becoming a pregnant woman, and without the usual procedure. It is true that her doctor has called it a false pregnancy, but that was merely because of loss of nerve and illusion on Willow's part. A serious student of psychology would be able to go all the way with it, to achieve complete parthenogenesis and give birth, simply by putting herself into the state of mind of a pregnant woman and persevering in it."

"Would *I* be able to do it?" Elroy Rain asked Weakfish. Elroy had something of a kidder in him, a type of boy who was often a pit-fall to a psychology instructor.

"No, you would not be able to do it, Elroy," Weakfish told him. "It would be more difficult for a boy in any case, but it would not be impossible. It would be impossible for you only because you are not inclined enough to seriousness. Someday, I will find a male student interested enough to accomplish this. It will be something of a vindication of my teaching."

"You said once that I could make myself invisible," Loretta Sheen blurted out as if she had been puzzling over this till it flooded over.

"You yourself said once, Loretta, that you could make invisible things *visible*," Weakfish reminded her. "Specifically, you are the girl in our class who is able to see poltergeists. And now you have several of the others able to see them. What is the difference? Yes, you could make yourself invisible if you entered fully into the state of mind of an invisible person. I am not sure, in any of these cases, whether it must be a real person whose state of mind one enters. I intend to find out."

"What if we come first, and we set up a state of mind in another person?" Violet Lonsdale had asked. "I believe I have done this. I schizo'd myself by entering into the state of mind of a schizo girl, but I think I beat her to it. She was only a little bit that way at first. Now we are both that way. My other person is named Mary Mondo. The other girl's other person is named Alice McGivern, and her primary person is named Janita Krupp. This other girl is very much torn up by it, but I'm not. I'm stronger than she is, and my other person Mary Mondo is the strongest of us all."

"Actually you are quite weak, Violet," Edmund Weakfish said, "and you are cracked wide open. I believe that Mary Mondo will take you over almost completely and that it will be a good thing. The other double person, whoever and wherever she is, will probably destroy

herself. This all fits in pretty well with my theories."

"There is something that went wrong with my own experiment," Barry Limus said. "I think it had something to do with our trying to study poltergeists. I think that was what made you give me that assignment."

"I'm sorry, Barry," Weakfish said. "I forget what assignment I gave you. It slipped my mind. More than that, it seems that it has been made invisible to my mind by its own nature. Into what state of mind did I assign you to enter?"

"Into the mind, the long dead mind (you said it would add a new element to our experiments) of the person who made those peculiar old Central American figurines that we were looking at in the Gilcrease Institute. Well, it wasn't the state of mind of a dead man that I entered into, so that part of the experiment is voided. That mind, if it is a mind, is still as alive as it ever was. Those three figurines weren't made by a man. They are either fossils of poltergeists or they were molded or carved by poltergeists."

"That wouldn't be possible," Priscilla Rommel interrupted. "A poltergeist couldn't make anything, and you couldn't enter into his mind. He hasn't any mind, not really. He's misnamed. There isn't any geist or spirit in him at all. He's sheer matter."

"Then why can't we see him?" Weakfish asked. "Except Loretta possibly, except several more of you a little less possibly, and probably through her; we can't see them. Why aren't poltergeists generally visible if they are sheer matter?"

"Mere matter is always invisible," Priscilla maintained. "It becomes visible only when touched with spirit. Mere matter may recognize itself in other ways though. I have always suspected that Loretta is mere matter with none, or very little, spirit."

"I have lots of spirit," Loretta Sheen protested. "Oh, we will tangle, girl, we will tangle!"

"How is it that all of us see rocks, for instance?" Weakfish asked. "I suppose that all of us can, and surely rocks are somewhat lacking in spirit."

"I don't know," Priscilla said. "I haven't worked out that part in my mind yet."

"Well, poltergeists, whether they contain spirit or not, are your outside assignment for the week-end," Weakfish told them. "I personally believe that they are no more than dead people. To study them best I believe that you must go and live with them. To do this, it is probably necessary that you die. I recommend this to you but I cannot compel it."

"How would we get back?" Elroy Rain asked.

"A good participation psychologist would think of something, if

he had a reason to come back at all. Probably you would put yourself into the state of mind of one risen from the dead. I believe that the poltergeists are somehow incompletely dead people. When you die you will likely enter the world of such a color that polters and such are visible to you. This is the world of color named ultra-violet or hylicon."

"Sometimes we call Barry 'ultra-violet'," Willow Gaylord said, "because Violet Lonsdale says he is a little beyond her. Ah, that's kind of a private joke."

"But if we die we will have *all* the colors, or none," Loretta Sheen argued. "This is really what it is all about, the succeeding or failing, what used to be called the saving or damning. We'll have all or none. How would we have only this fringe color?"

"Die compromised," Weakfish the instructor said with that facial tic that was sometimes mistaken for a grin. "Die completely compromised and frustrated."

"What if we only pretend to die?" Loretta asked.

"I believe that is what poltergeists have done," Harvey Clatterbach said. "They are people who have died with certain mental reservations about it, and then perhaps they have been stuck with it."

Weakfish left it with them then. Loretta told the others that she was going to do it, to pretend to die. Several of the others said, "We will go with you if you really go." That was Friday evening.

Loretta Sheen died in convulsions on Saturday morning. Her father Barnaby Sheen took it oddly.

"No, she isn't dead, George," he insisted to Dr. George Drakos who was his friend and physician. "She has merely put herself into a spiteful state. I suppose it is partly my fault: I'd lost contact with her. What is a father to do when a child becomes so alienated and casual? But she isn't dead."

"Barnaby, she has been dead for four hours," Drakos said firmly. "We both saw her die in those empurpled convulsions. Naturally I had to report it. Are you really in a daze, man? You wouldn't let the priest in. You said that he was one of those damnable new priests who engineered such satanic alienation, and that you wouldn't let him get a further hold on her. And you wouldn't let the lads from McGee's Funeral Home take her after I had called them. Barnaby, she is cold dead, and the clock stands at noon. What will you do? What will I do?"

"You have already reported her dead, George; that is enough for you to do. I will keep her here till she comes to her senses, in the several meanings of that phrase. There is no law against that. I will declare this room to be a crypt or shrine, and I will keep her here."

"But at least she must be embalmed, Barney."

"No. I am afraid that it would make it more difficult for her. We will not eviscerate her temple. She has already suffered too much transformation."

"Barney, I can't leave you here like this. What shall I do?"

"Pray, George. We need the prayers of even a half-good man."

The young friends came in to see the stark dead Loretta. Barnaby didn't forbid them. He disliked them all slightly, as he would dislike members of any alien species, but he accepted it that they should visit her.

The young friends talked to Loretta. Barnaby didn't find it overly worthy of note (though George Drakos would have been horrified at it, if he were still there, and he was a doctor) that Loretta answered them. She answered them in an unlocated voice that resembled her own very little, and yet it had her signature on it.

"Will we still tangle, girl?" Priscilla Rommel taunted her corpus.

"No. We be tangled," Loretta answered, but not out of her mouth or throat. Possibly it was out of her stomach. Possibly it was from some other point in the room, or outside it.

"Have you really gone, Loretta? Shall we go with you?" Harvey Clatterbach asked her. Harvey had been in love with Loretta, but now he had become a mechanical sort of contraption. He had a noisiness, even a sort of brightness about him; so have many mechanical contraptions.

Loretta answered Harvey and the others. She answered in the same unlocated voice with her own slight signature but little of her old timbre in it. She talked in syllables and words, and her father Barnaby raised his head in cracked pain and loss. He couldn't understand her words. He could get no meaning from them at all. He would never be able to understand her again.

But the tin-eyed young people understood her. They talked with her for some time.

"We will come along too, if you say that's all there is to it," Willow Gaylord pronounced with a new jerkiness. "I think that's what we've all been looking for, something with not much to it." Willow had been quite a nice little girl. Odd.

And Loretta, or the noise that had formerly been Loretta Sheen, continued to answer from some unidentified location. And the others talked to that location.

"If ever come out, what is like, anyhow together with what's it for, won't have to do, take it loose, what else but rap, break it like bananas, stuff it we'll glide, door hole and all, why not not, cream it wheeze, gouch," Elroy Rain was saying in words but no sense. None of them

ever made sense again.

Not even Violet. Not even Barry who was a little beyond Violet. Not Priscilla Rommel. They talked, but now even their words could not be recognized as words in any language. They were a racket and clatter; nothing beyond.

Nevertheless they were making a pact, a brainless and spiritless pact. Then they all tramped out, or at least disappeared, with a noisiness, even a sort of metallic brightness.

"They have made a pact to kill themselves," Barnaby Sheen said by correct guess. He rose with an almost deliberation. "I really ought to stop them," he hazarded.

"Ah, no matter though," he voiced a little later, after Loretta had rattled something to him in her unlocated way. "It will make little difference. They were as good as dead anyhow.

"How have they been so completely robbed of mental sunshine? I will bring some here if I have to import it. It will be several years too late for most of them; maybe not for all."

Harvey Clatterbach took Willow Gaylord behind him on his cycle and they went off a viaduct to their deaths. They flamed down on the concrete and rails below. They may have set themselves afire before their wheeled vault through that space.

Elroy Rain simply ran out into a stream of traffic to be killed. It may have been an accident, a Freudian accident.

Violet Lonsdale cut her throat with a saw. She tried first to do it with a carpenter's saw and found that very awkward.

"This will not do at all," she said, or seemed to say. "Now that I have become completely metallic I should use a hack-saw." She did. It went much better.

Barry Limus who was with her went a little beyond her with the same tool. He performed on himself mortal mutilations that seemed quite imaginative to himself, but were really gross and dull.

Priscilla Rommel drowned. This also may have been a Freudian accident. She went skating alone on a pond. She went onto mushy ice over deep water and went through. But she knew the pond well, and knew ice.

All seven of the students had entered fully into their week-end assignment. The instructor Edmund Weakfish was quite pleased by the response.

To one outside it, the hylicon-colored world seems pretty dull. To one living within it (we have only the word of several undependable persons who lay claim to the experience) the dullness is the redeeming part of it. Dull pain is less searing than sharp pain; dull loss is

not so wrenching as vivid loss. Those who are in that state want it dull, 'tis said, or they wouldn't have chosen it.

This seems an unfair judgement. There had been a certain liveliness in some who had chosen it, and we cannot believe they are all happy in their doubtful state. (Dull unhappiness, though, may be better than cutting unhappiness.)

Here we plead ineptitude and lack of foundation. We can only use secondary evidence for most of what follows.

There were some unpleasant things at several of the funerals. There were rappings from inside some of the caskets. This isn't so unusual a thing as you might believe. Those whose business is with funerals may encounter it a dozen times during life. It is usually tactfully ignored, but it does give one a clammy feeling to hear it.

It was worst in the case of Barry Limus. It began in McGee's Funeral home late at night, the night before the funeral. It was no ordinary knocking. It was a multiplex thing that seemed to have a pattern, almost a disagreeable tune, to it. It became so bad that an exorciser was called, and performed his exorcisms.

This did seem to have a dampening effect on the knockings; it muted the noise a little bit, it gave a certain frustration to it. But then came the garble, the mumble, the words. They were slightly in the voice of Barry Limus, but they were not from his mouth or his throat.

"Leave it off, Father John," the words segregated themselves out of the garble (it was really as if Barry were speaking in several voices at the same time and this one came to the fore), "it isn't devils, it is only myself."

"Where are you, Barry?" the exorcist priest asked the sound.

"Mostly right here," came one of the Barry voices. "Not, not in the body here. Just around here. Was curious about it a little. Not very though."

"Are you in Purgatory, Barry?" the exorcist asked him.

"For about three years now, I think."

"But you are dead only one day. Time must seem different to you."

"Goes slower, not faster. No big thing that. I'd already left off regular living. No big change."

"Why do you knock and clatter?"

"Not knock and clatter. It's a beat, Father, a send-it beat. It's all we want."

The exorcist priest became quite stern.

"Go out from him!" he ordered angrily.

"No one to go out," one of the weary young voices with a touch of Barry said. "No one in me but me. Not much of me."

"What is Limus?" the exorcist suddenly asked.

"I am Limus. My last name."

"What else?"

"I don't know what else," one of the residue voices of Barry Limus said.

"Leave us alone," said several of his other voices.

"Limus means mud or slime," the priest remarked to Barnaby Sheen and to several other observers who were there. "And, as an adjective, it means 'askance' or 'squinting'. His father doesn't know the origin of the surname. I get something of an unclean and continuing family spirit or tutor here, but I don't get much of him. Probably of no importance."

Several of the other remnants had given a few words or sounds even more garbled than those of Barry Limus. The whole business was in bad taste.

All the rappings left the caskets before burial. They were heard in the air, above and away from their boxes for a while. They were heard going off aimlessly into the distance, mostly back towards their own part of town.

But Loretta Sheen still remained unburied.

"It isn't near as bad as I feared," Dr. George Drakos said to Barnaby Sheen several days later, "but she *does* begin to smell a little."

"She always did," Barnaby said. "No, not always, but for the last year or so. It is the way that the young people live and keep themselves in these latter times."

"Barney, are you really going to keep her here like that?"

"Oh yes. George, I am going to make a sincere effort to understand my daughter and her friends. We have found them empty and dull, and it is true that they had become so. But I must find out who cut them off and let them fall into such a state; I must find out why and by what authority it was done. I must discover why they chose it with such open and unseeing eyes. I will uncover the real essence of this thing, if it has any. It is all something monstrous, and I go monster-hunting. I am setting up equipment to study this out thoroughly."

"Equipment, Barney?"

"Aye, man, aye! Am I a pseudo-scientist for nothing?"

Barnaby Sheen assembled an impressive battery of equipment in his daughter's room. It was already plain that the room had become a sort of headquarters or hangout for Loretta and her dimly-colored friends.

Sheen used ultra-violet cameras. He often got the globs that represented the muddy young people. He had some success with

ultra-violet scanners and scramblers. The globs could be recognized: they were outrageous burlesques of the seven young people who had been known to him in the world. The globs changed shape constantly, but they kept slight signatures of their originals.

There were some twists even to this. Mary Mondo had taken over Violet Lonsdale. Mary Mondo had been the secondary person of that split girl: now she was the primary. Violet sometimes hovered near her for a moment, thin and tenuous, but was usually present for only a few seconds.

There were a few there who were strangers to Barnaby Sheen. These were globs or persons other than the seven young persons who had recently died.

"There are two of the extras that I know," Harry O'Donovan said in his high voice, "and they are still alive and listless in the temporal world. I don't know what to make of this at all."

Harry O'Donovan and Dr. George Drakos were with Barnaby Sheen this day as he tried to unravel the phenomena.

"You don't really need the ultra-violet equipment, Barney," Harry O'Donovan said. "One can see the forms about as easily without it. They just take a little getting used to. I suspect we could always have seen them. And now I'll be seeing them everywhere, and I don't particularly want to."

"I know," Barnaby told them, "and I don't particularly want to see them everywhere either, but I have to. I will understand these things. I will bring some sort of understanding to them since they haven't any of it in themselves."

"I recognize the sound pattern now," Doctor George Drakos said, "now that the analyzer has waded through hours of it and made abstractions of it. I should have recognized it before, and I suspect that I will be hearing it everywhere in the future. All of us have been hearing it everywhere, of course, and for a long time. We have tuned it out resolutely. But will we be able to tune it out from now on? It is the brain-wave pattern sometimes found with a type of insanity called *hebeta dementia*. It isn't complex. It isn't rhythmic. It differs from random noise only in its narrowness. It resembles something else in its queer narrowness. I wonder why they like it?"

"It's the sound that the hinges of hell make," Harry O'Donovan put in, "and that is the dullest of all sounds, as coming from the dullest of places."

"No, I don't believe there's anything particularly hellish about it," Barnaby Sheen muttered. "It isn't consequential enough to be hellish. Nothing of that complex is. Yes, I will have to find out why they like it."

Barnaby Sheen got more material, several days later, for his investigation. A group of young people, living young people as well as he could tell, came to him in Loretta's room.

"We want to hear it," one of their spokesmen said. "They're good, and we want to listen to them. We want to gather in this room and listen to them almost all the time."

"How many of you are there?" Barnaby asked from the depths of the depression that these young people always gave him.

"About five hundred of us. Some days there would be more."

"No. It's physically and personally impossible for me to put up with any such number of you."

"There's an alternative," one of those leaders suggested. "We will all kill ourselves, just as they have done. Then we will be able to crowd into this one room and enjoy, and you won't even have to feed us."

"I wasn't figuring on feeding you," Barnaby said. "And I don't think you'd all better kill yourselves at once. It's a more serious thing, even for such as you, than you would imagine. I unwelcome the whole idea."

"There is a second alternative," said another of the youth leaders. "I'll have to tinker with it a little, and then I'll have it. Trust me, all of you, and you too, Mr. Sheen: I'll have it ready by tomorrow and we'll try it. I'm an electronic genius."

"So am I," said Barnaby. "I don't believe we have anything else in common."

The young people left him then, all except the seven in the special state and a few others who were on the fringe of that state.

But the young leader, who said he was an electronics genius and that his name was Roy Mega, was back the next day with his own pieces of equipment.

"We have a sort of barn, a shed, Mr. Sheen," he said. "It will hold the five hundred persons if they are crowded in tightly, and that is always the best way. It will also hold any number of free spirits, and I believe that they will come from almost everywhere. We will present in our barn The Continuing Event, the Experience of the Seven Spooks. This will be our fulfillment."

"I don't really care what five hundred of you, abetted by a number of free spirits, will be doing in a barn or shed, provided that it is a sufficient distance from here," Barnaby Sheen said.

"It's about a mile from here," the young genius told him. "I intend to pick up the Experience in the room here and carry it to our larger meeting place. I have invented certain equipment to do this. Marvel at it if you wish, and then permit me to install it."

"It looks like a couple of amplifiers and telephones," Barnaby said.

"Is that what they are?" Roy Mega cried with sudden flaming interest. "Why, I have independently invented the telephone and the electronic amplifier then. My own genius will never be sufficiently appreciated. I almost hate to merge myself in the experience and lose my special self."

"I'll give you a job, Roy," Barnaby said. "You'll not even have to get a haircut for it. I'll waive that requirement. I have quite a number of electronics geniuses working for me; and I pay well."

"Mr. Sheen, I did not believe you capable of such an obscenity," the young genius said with real shock. "You'd have me debase my genius for money?"

The young Roy Mega installed his equipment and left.

Thereafter, for some weeks, there took place what was either an ecstasy or a public nuisance in a barn or shed about a mile from the Sheen home. It was called, by some, The Symphony of the Seven Spooks and Other Free Spirits. By others, it was called a damnable noise, which was inaccurate. It wasn't a noise, and the young people couldn't be prosecuted for making an objectionable noise.

It wasn't quite in the audible range; and we believe that noise, by some definition, must be within that range. Normal people couldn't hear it, but they sure knew it was there. It was near enough to the audio to give all the neighbors an attack of subliminal insanity. And it was near enough to give the initiates a species of ecstasy.

Five hundred young persons, and numberless free spirits, crowded into the old barn or shed and enjoyed a flesh-crawling silence in glazed-eyed rapport. It was a silence that often shattered glass panes in the neighborhood and brought all the *malaise* of a sonic boom. It was just below the audio range, as the free spirits themselves were just below the visual range. Yet there were certain persons, other than the adolescent pupa forms who gathered for it, who could actually hear this thing, just as there were persons who could actually see the free spirits.

These, again, were persons of either admirably noble or of disgustingly coarse sensibilities. If you were of the land between, it left you angrily blank.

A thing like that couldn't go on.

"Of course it can go on," Harry O'Donovan said surprisingly. "It is outside of time, so who is to say that it cannot go on? With them, and with the thing itself, it is instantaneous. An instant (am I not correct, Cris?) cannot have duration, and neither can it have an end."

We were met together, Barnaby Sheen, Dr. George Drakos, Harry O'Donovan, and Cris Benedetti, the four men who knew everything,

and myself who did not. This was in Barnaby Sheen's home, in Loretta Sheen's old room which Barnaby now used for a study. (Barnaby's last study was crammed full of things now, and there was no room for more: he had three of these rooms in his house that were so full of things that they could no longer be used.)

"An instant meant, originally, a standing upon or a pressing upon, an urgency," Cris Benedetti said. "Then it meant a close pressing in respect to time, an immediacy. But you are wrong about the young people and their things. It isn't an urgency that they have; it's an unsubstantial flimsy, and it will have a flimsy ending."

The room was still the shrine or crypt of Loretta Sheen, but now her body was less regarded. The room didn't seem to center on it anymore; the room centered on nothing. The body still lay on the sofa-bed there. It had become little more than a life-sized doll. It was even more doll-like in that it had a sewn or stitched appearance, and now the clothing seemed a part of the body.

"Well, you should have more regard for it, for her, than that, Barney," George Drakos was saying. "Look, there are even several books piled upon the body. That is thoughtless of you."

"Thoughtless of me, yes," said Barnaby. "I did it without thinking, if I did do it; and I hadn't noticed it at all. I see, though, that they are her books and not mine. Perhaps Loretta piled them there herself. She doesn't—eh—take very good care of her own body lately."

Barnaby Sheen did appear quite thoughtless this evening. He had a great cut down the side of his jaw and neck: he said that he didn't know how he had come by it, that he didn't know that he had it.

"She is becoming more interested in things now, though," Barnaby said. "She is becoming more kind. She does little things for me that she never did before, not even in her regular life. I cannot understand her speech and I am sure that I will never be able to understand it again. But she is often able to answer my questions in another way. And the thing does begin to break up. There are fewer of the globs around now than there were, and fewer of the free spirits as they call themselves. They're drifting off to somewhere else, I believe."

"It may be simply that we're losing our ability to see them," Cris said.

"No. We can still see three or four of them," Barnaby insisted, "the same three or four of them, which is the test. Loretta is still here. Mary Mondo is here, though her secondary person, Violet Lonsdale, has gone. Barry Limus is here. Sometimes there is another one here who is not one of the first seven. And there's another diminution. I am told that the sub-audible in the barn has abated considerably. It breaks up a little."

"It may be so, Barnaby," Harry O'Donovan said. "But have you come any closer to understanding the young persons and their complex?"

Barnaby Sheen had just unwrapped a new cigar and stuck it in his mouth. A lighter near him on the table rose into the air, lighted itself, and lighted the cigar for him when he puffed matter-of-factly at its flame. "Thank you," Barnaby said. It had been the barely-visible hylicon-colored glob of one of the girls, possibly that of Mary Mondo, more likely that of Loretta Sheen, that had performed the thoughtful service.

"No, I can't say that I've come any nearer to understanding them," Barnaby breathed out the words along with a wreath of blue smoke, "since understanding is an essential that is absent from their whole thing. I become a little more mellow to them, though; I like them and theirs more than I did. And I believe that they now understand (though that isn't the correct word for it) me a little better than they did, and they are more solicitous of me."

"I understand them pretty well myself now," Harry O'Donovan said.

"Not you, Harry," Drakos objected. "You would be the last of us to have rapport with them. You would be the last of us to have rapport with anything."

The books had been removed from the 'body' of Loretta Sheen now. I had not moved them, nor had any of the other four men. It had been done either by the free spirit of Mary Mondo or of Loretta Sheen herself: the two young girl remnants looked very alike in their dim outline. They were also stowing up other things about the room as if they did not want to be criticized for its lack of neatness.

"Yes, I understand something of their complex now," O'Donovan insisted, "unlikely as I seem for it. Their syndrome represents such reality as there is in those much abused terms 'The Third World' or 'The Third Realm'. They are apart from our own torn world; they are apart from the heaven and hell that tear our world between them. They are, although in a very minor way, the third thing. Besides them, there isn't any other third thing anywhere. It is all completely amoral, of course, just as fairyland was, is. It may be the same dingy place. I've always believed that that turgid place and state was unnecessarily romanticized. There was always something queer and queasy about fairies, even before the latter meaning.

"But it's all a blind alley, we know that, and that is all the understanding that is possible of it. Worse than that, it is the blind gut of a nameless and inferior worm that they are in. I don't know the reason for the thing at all, and I suspect that even God has forgotten it."

"Yes, you understand it somewhat, Harry," Cris Benedetti sighed, "but you surely do not have rapport with it. Barney, what did you mean when you said that you could not understand the words of your daughter but that she could sometimes answer your questions in another way?"

"I'd better show you," Barnaby said with a sort of heavy listlessness. "I'd be afraid to tell it in words. Likely you won't believe it even when I show you. It isn't important, really, but it's a piece of what I'm trying to investigate."

Barnaby Sheen took one of those little paper-slitting knives that was no more than a razor-blade set into a folding clasp. He cut the 'body' of his daughter Loretta down the side of her jaw and into her bosom. It was much like cutting cloth or paper or parchment. It became apparent, as Barnaby made the cut, that the skin of the girl and the dress of the girl were a continuation of the same material, slightly different in coloring.

There was nothing liquid inside the cut at all, nothing that had ever been liquid. There was nothing there that remembered being either blood or serum or flesh or bone.

"It's sawdust," Barnaby Sheen remarked. "She is now full of nothing but sawdust and mottos."

"There was never wood sawdust so fine as that," Drakos said, "but it is dust."

"It is the primordial dust from which the first of us came," Harry O'Donovan declared (I'll not guarantee this conversation of Harry O'Donovan. I can see correctly in the fringe areas; but I'm not always so certain that I hear correctly in them), "and unto which the first of us returned. Later, we came from and returned to a more modified dust. Most of the dust we now see in the world is not primordial dust at all. It is a recycled or secondary dirt: it has been used before, and several animations have run through it. That secondary dust is now the dust into which most persons fall when they die. Not so in the case of Loretta and her dust which we see. She did not die, she did not traverse her life; and so she did not come to the latter dust.

"She withdrew or was withdrawn from life, she backed out of it, she left it by the same door she had entered it; she did not cross that room at all. So it became the case that she hadn't been, that she had never lived at all, that she is not and was not. She is not recycled into dust. This, here, is dust that has never been animate; dust from which the animation has been withdrawn."

Had Harry O'Donovan really been saying fringe things like that? I do not apperceive accurately in the fringe audio area.

"Secondary bull dirt upon you, Harry!" Barnaby Sheen said in a voice more friendly than his words. "Ask her a question someone.

I mean it. Ask her a question."

"Loretta," Cris Benedetti said either to the dim body or to the dim glob of the girl, "you once used to read a fair amount, and several of your friends did also. How is it with you now? Do you still read? And what? And how?"

"Ah, we'll prod around in her a little and the answer should be found," Barnaby was saying. He had spread a handkerchief and scooped a little of the Loretta dust upon it. He didn't seem to want any of it to be wasted; he wanted it all returned to her. There were other things mingled in that fine dust. It was almost as if the girl had become a scrap heap. "She's full of mottos and such chopped-up things," Barnaby Sheen mumbled as he worked with careful fingers. "Ah, I believe this is the pertinent piece."

Barnaby tried to spread it out, but there was no way. It twisted on him, and twisted again. It was crinkled as a piece of scrapling. And yet, there did seem to be an insane lettering on it, wherever the lettering did not fall clear off of it.

"We read the Putty Dwarf," the writhing crinkle showed the demented letters. "Oh, surely you know the Putty Dwarf! Even some adults read him. He is the Pied Piper of the pied type. Whether we are children or whether we are rats (we ourselves argue about this) we will follow him yet. No, of course we do not find him interesting. Interest is the thing we abhor most."

"It is printed, if such deformity be called print, upon a series of little parings of something," Harry O'Donovan was toying with an idea, or toying with sanity. (Once more, I do not guarantee this conversation of Harry O'Donovan; he is, though he does not seem to be, a fringe person.) "There is an inferior devil named Topashi who prints his little insanities on the dried foreskins of boys who have sinned mortally in the womb before birth. Such, at least, is the old legend, and probably the present case. But how did Loretta come by such a quantity of compromised foreskins?"

"Shut up, Harry," Barnaby Sheen said pleasantly. "It is the latest opinion that a child is unable to commit mortal sin before the age of eighteen months. You're insane."

"And would I be watching such stuff as this if I weren't?" Harry arched his voice.

"Is that Loretta's handwriting, Barnaby?" Cris Benedetti asked.

"No, of course it isn't. It is nobody's handwriting. The devils never did use flowing script, never true handwriting. They are denied such personal signature. Harry was right that it is only devils who print such stuff. I'm not sure he is right as to the name of this particular devil."

Well, it *was* in that deformed poster-style, in that block-printing

with every letter of a different size and shape from every other, with all the lines running all out of line. It was that crookedness for the sake of crookedness, that deformity in love with deformity. (Either Cris Benedetti or Harry O'Donovan was saying all these words, or else they were going through my mind from the thoughts of one of those persons; it isn't firm ground here: the deformities are always printed out over a void and not over firm ground.) "Whether it was used by devils only is not certain, but there seems always to be this 'Devil Between' in such communication. No good person ever employed such a deformity of print or drawing, unless going through a devil-medium out of necessity; and a good person has no business going through a devil-medium.

"And the Putty Dwarf was for sure the Pied Piper of such pied type and thought. He did have a mixed following of rats and children and unspirits, and it is hard to tell them apart. It is likely that Edmund Weakfish had introduced some of the children, and some of the rats, to the writings of the Putty Dwarf."

And Barnaby Sheen was sewing up his daughter's body with needle and thread, though George Drakos (who was a surgeon) insisted that he would be able to do it better. Neither one of them seemed to notice the blood dripping from Barnaby's jaw and neck (from the great cut that he didn't remember getting) into Loretta's dust. It is quite certain that neither of them noticed the pattern and shape of that blood dripping, or they'd have boggled at it. The shape of it was in an even more tenous tint of mud-violet than is the rest of this scene. Both of them, likely, were too intelligent to be able to see it. But it was a broken communication going in the other direction now, going through a medium at least as dirty as the other, going in a form possibly even more grotesque. Deformity has more shapes and hovels than one.

Barnaby sewed Loretta up without appreciating what they were doing to each other; and who is to criticize? Barnaby Sheen and his daughter did communicate, a little bit, very dimly, very late. This is the closest that they ever came. The pattern of Barnaby's own blood-drip was not overly sane. How should the dribblings of the girl's never-lived-in dust be more so?

Some of these things were spoken in riddle-form by Sheen and Drakos and O'Donovan and Benedetti, the four men who knew everything. And some of the things were merely following a crooked trickle through my own mind; an apparent wink from the glob of Mary Mondo for one thing.

I was only accidentally a member of the company of the four men who knew everything (they never seemed to notice that I didn't).

However, I enjoyed certain disadvantages that they lacked. As a person of very crude sensibilities, I could and still can see certain shapes and colors that the others miss or half-miss.

I had seen something happening when Barnaby Sheen was cutting his daughter Loretta down her throat and into her bosom, the cutting that was like cutting cloth or paper or parchment.

I'd seen the counterpoint of it. I'd seen it all going the other way.

Two of the mud-violet globs (really, they aren't so unseemly if you have naturally coarse eyes) were at the same time cutting into Barnaby Sheen down the side of his jaw and neck and into his chest till they came to the primordial gore of him.

These two globs were, I believe, the shapes and persons of Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo. At the same time they were doing this, they were asking questions (not exactly in words) of Barnaby Sheen, and they were then pulling the answers out of his throat-slash.

The answers were written on twisted cartilage (Barnaby was a very cartilaginous man). They were neither in nobly-formed letters nor in that devil-deformity with every letter of a different size and color and shape. The answers were in good but rapid writing, in cursive. Cursive letters are running letters; but why should Barnaby run on so, and he not even know it? The pattern of Barnaby's blood-drip into Loretta's primordial dust and rubble was this running thing. Maybe he was always too much given to running in his thoughts and words.

Barnaby's answers, they were in words? Of course. They were in intelligent words? Certainly. Why should he use words of any other sort? He was an intelligent man. Was he aware of them, that they were being taken out of him? Not at all. Were they understood by Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo and by the others who coalesced less clearly? Hardly at all. Those shapes were mostly beyond words, but still there was an approach to communication.

We still meet about once a month in the study of Barnaby Sheen. The doll that had once been Loretta Sheen is still there, a little smaller than it used to be. The globs are still there, some of them, a little muddier than before and a little less violet. In particular, the forms or globs of Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo remain.

At our meetings we talk of profound and important things. We agree (or rather, the four others of them agree) that certain paranatural happenings that had once infested that room are neither profound nor important.

Barnaby Sheen (though now less and less often) still sometimes opened the throat of his daughter and drew out twisted answers or messages from her rubble and dust. Sometimes they were real

(though wrongly emphasized) answers to real questions. More often they were gibberish.

It was all vaguely in bad taste, of course. But was ever anything in worse taste than the original bodying and inspiriting of man himself? That business of the slime of the earth and of the spittle has offended many.

As a person of very crude sensibilities, I still had my peculiar edge over those four men who knew everything. I could see Barnaby's own erratic bleeding at our nearly every meeting. I could also see the jagged cuts made in the jowls and throats of Doctor George Drakos, of Harry O'Donovan, of Cris Benedetti; these men were totally unaware of them, but the globs had expanded their field of inquiry. I could see the two girl-wraiths pulling cartilaginous and bloody mottos and answers out of all four of the men now. But a man does not see these things in himself. There was something I wanted to ask, though; something that I wanted to ask Mary Mondo.

We went out for a midnight supper one night after one of our informal meetings. While at supper in the night place, I heard a remark.

"Look at those five old bats at that table," it was a young man making the remark. "They all five look like they cut themselves shaving, cut themselves bad."

Five of us. Then the glob-girls had been extracting these things from me also. Can they understand what they draw out of me better than what they draw out of the others? It seemed a balance unredressed here. They've been drawing queer stuff out of five of us, and Barnaby has been drawing only a little bit of unsubstantial matter from the doll that was once Loretta Sheen.

An idea though! I, being of more crude sensibility than the others, might just be able to do it. There is Mary Mondo. She originated as a secondary, so she is crude and ill-defined. But she became a primary, so she is of a certain energy and moment. I myself have always felt that I was a secondary (sloughed off and long forgotten) of a primary man who has left the scene and left me isolated. So there are possibilities.

And Mary has given indications, lately, of having sordid but solid answers, if only one knew how to ask the questions. I, I almost know how to ask her the question, I almost know what the question is.

Half a dozen small knives here on my table. Are any of them crude enough to cut into globuous and unspirited matter? Are there any fingers coarse enough to draw filaments out of such a foggy throat as hers once the cut is made?

One knife in particular there, it seems very coarse, very crude.

Ten fingers on the edge of the table here (apparently they are my own) seem suddenly very coarse. And we are having another of our informal meetings at Barnaby Sheen's tonight.

I almost have it clear now, the question I've been meaning to ask Mary Mondo whom I never knew in life, who never *was* in life except as the secondary of a duller girl.

We will try for that question and answer. We will try it tonight.

BARNABY'S CLOCK

It shall be what o'clock I say it is.
Taming of the Shrew—Shakespeare

"How old is grass?" a little boy asked his uncle who was an industrialist and eccentric.

"About twenty million years old, Robert Dan," said the i and e. "It's only from the Miocene. It's just about the youngest plant that we have and we're not sure that it's here to stay. There's a lot of things wrong with grass."

"How old is that hill?" the boy asked.

"Oh, that hill is a young fellow: not over a million years old. It's from a very recent uplift and an even more recent eroding. We're on the edge of a change here though. Within three miles I can show you a hill that's seventy-five times that old."

"How old is Corn Flakes?"

"About a hundred years old. They were developed by Dr. John H. Kellogg. Post Toasties, invented by Charles W. Post, are about the same age. If you are wondering about Shredded Wheat, it was first made by Henry D. Perkey at about the same time also."

"No, I hardly ever wonder about Shredded Wheat. How old is that cloud?"

"Likely about an hour and seventeen minutes old. You can watch it still growing. When the wind changed here about forty-six minutes

ago, that cloud was already pretty far into its formation. It was about twenty-two miles southwest of here then."

"How old is saxophones?"

"Born in the year 1840. The sire and inventor was Antoine Sax."

"How old is mice?"

"Not old at all. About twenty-five million years old; almost the newest thing in animals. The first mouse, with no antecedents at all, popped out from behind a piece of baseboard quarter-round (in a cave, I suppose) just about that long ago."

"How old is Billy Dukes?"

"I don't know, Robert Dan. About eight years old, I guess: unless he's a midget, in which case he might be older."

"He's seven, the same as me. A lot of good it does to ask you things if you don't know the answers."

Aw, that isn't the way this account begins. We just put that in for fun.

ii

that bald sexton, Time

King John—Shakespeare

"We need a clock that will work!" the great cosmologist cried angrily.

"Sweet man, do we ever!" his wife put in. "You with a Nobel Prize for Functions and you can't even get the clock in the kitchen to function."

"The Uranium/Lead-Ratio clock is only good when there is no lead to start with," the cosmologist complained, "and there is always lead."

"Get the lead out, that's what I keep telling you," the wife said.

"The Rubidium/Strontium-Ratio clock must be set by guesswork. Everything about Strontium is guesswork," the cosmologist continued sadly. "The Potassium/Argon clock is a joke, and a sick joke at that. We need a clock that will work."

"The living-room clock still works part of the time," the wife said, "but it hisses and spits sparks every time I plug it in."

"The Lead/Alpha-Particle-Ratio clock can be trusted only as far as its zircon crystals," the cosmologist went on, "and I sure wouldn't burn my back on a bunch of zircon crystals. None of the Radio-Carbon clocks is any good, and the Carbon-Fourteen clock is the worst of them all. You must always multiply its results by two or five or ten or even fifty to get a scientifically acceptable answer and

I feel guilty every time I do that. And with every such clock I can think of there is always something wrong with the quality of the time. We need a clock that will work right every shot."

"We sure do, Buster," the wife said. "The bedroom clock only runs when the alarm is sounding, and it gets on my nerves with that thing shrilling all day long."

That isn't the way it begins either, but we're getting closer. This time we'll hit it right in the middle.

iii

"Carrock, Carrock,"
Said Barney's clock.

—Anonymous

"Man, have I got me a clock!" Barnaby Sheen was saying, coming into the room and rubbing his hands with glee.

"Man, do you ever need one!" Cris Benedetti gruffed. "You're forty-five minutes late. Luckily you never lock your doors or we'd be waiting in the swelter all this time."

"Why, it's eight o'clock exactly," Barnaby checked it, "and eight was our meeting."

"It's eight forty-five," Cris also checked it, and sourly.

"Have I been angry?" Barnaby asked himself out loud. "Have I been angry for forty-five minutes?"

"Carrock, carrock," came a peculiar cry from the next room. It seemed as if we had been hearing it before.

"What has angry to do with it, Barney?" Harry O'Donovan wanted to know.

"Ah, my personal timepiece, my wristwatch, will not run when I am angry or when I am feeling bad," Barnaby explained. "It will not run on bad time. It's always been like that."

"Why not get another watch?" Doctor George Drakos suggested.

"It's been like that with every watch I've ever had," Barnaby said. "But, man, have I got me a clock!"

Five of us were met together there in Barnaby Sheen's house: Barnaby himself, Cris Benedetti, Harry O'Donovan, and Doctor George Drakos, the four men who knew everything; and myself who did not.

"Carrock, carrock," again came the sound from the next room. Which next room? It seemed to be newly partitioned off from the room where we were gathered, and it was closed.

"What have you got in there, Barney, a dog?" Harry O'Donovan asked in his high voice.

"No, of course I don't have a dog in there," Barnaby answered. "Who every heard of a dog that says 'carrock, carrock'? What's the matter with you anyhow, Harry? Man, have I ever got a clock!"

"Curse your clock. What's the thing in the other room?" Cris asked.

"You wouldn't believe if I told you: you wouldn't believe if I showed you. Therefore I'll do neither one this night. It's a new pet of mine, or a servant, or a companion, or a friend, something such."

"Is it an animal?" Doctor Drakos asked, puzzled.

"A little more animal than you are, George. Not much more, but a little. You've a strong animal streak in yourself, you know. To the clock though: it will give the exact age of any person, creature, thing, contraption, artifact, fossil, formation, pattern, or syndrome. It cannot be fooled. Ah, there is something about really positive science that I love. Three stories chock-full of circuitry are the brains of it."

"You have claimed those three stories full of circuitry to be the brains of many a magic machine, Barnaby," George Drakos chided him, "but the magic has rubbed off of every one of them before it got well started."

"Yes, that's right," Sheen agreed. "Actually, I have had this clock for a number of years and didn't know what I had. Any machine that can solve for eight simultaneous unknowns could be used for such a clock, assuming (there is the catch) an operator as smart as myself."

"It cannot tell how old I am, except roughly," Cris Benedetti said. "It cannot tell what season I was born in."

"Cris, it can," Barnaby insisted. "Nothing is easier than to count the yearly varves of the human person. The reading would begin, of course, with conception. It is only the primitive mentality that considers birth as an important episode. Let's say that the clock could read conception within an hour, birth within a day."

"How about death?" Doctor George Drakos asked.

"Nothing easier," Barnaby said. "The death line is often prominent in the clock readings, though it is not often the most prominent line. Death does represent a real change of some sort in the human person, even if it is not one of the major changes. Humans seem a special case to the clock, though, and there is much that I haven't learned to interpret. With the lesser species of plants and animals, death seems to be somewhat terminal, a completing of the shape."

"Are you saying that the clock will read the hour of my death?" Harry O'Donovan asked.

"Oh, certainly. It would be a grisly business, though, and I'd rather avoid it."

"But if I die by accident?" O'Donovan asked.

"There are such things as accidents from a human viewpoint," Barnaby explained, "but there are not any accidents that will leave no footprints ahead of themselves. If you are to die by accident, it will always have been the case that you were to die by accident. The accident, and the time it is to happen, will be part of your shape from the beginning. Certainly my clock (even in its present rough shape) could predict when you were to die, whether by accident or not; and it could predict it quite accurately. And just as certainly I will not permit it to do so."

"Could we see this clock, Barnaby?" Cris Benedetti asked.

"Look around you," Barney said happily. "You're in the middle of it."

Really we were in the middle of that multi-purpose room which Barnaby called his study. This room seemed to change over the months and years, becoming sometimes smaller and sometimes larger. It really did have moveable walls and it really did change in size.

In this room was still the taboo sofa on which was the life-size sawdust-filled doll which Barnaby always insisted was the body of his daughter Loretta Sheen. None of us remembered Barnaby ever being married or ever having a daughter Loretta, or any daughter at all; and we had all known Barnaby since school days.

(In the room also was a spirit named Mary Mondo. She was seldom apparent, even as a spirit. But she did show up on the spirit-anagnostes, a sophisticated instrument.)

And tonight, there was not in the room the bar that was usually there. "Carrock," came again the voice or sound from the next room, from what seemed a newly partitioned room off from the study. And the bar would have to be in that closed-off place.

"It's that we could soon do with drinks, Barney," Harry O'Donovan said. "Should a fine host like yourself have to be reminded of the fact? Open up the bar, man. Why have you set it off with those trick walls of yours?"

"Ah, it cannot be opened tonight, men," Barnaby said with a touch of apprehension. "It—ah—he isn't sufficiently trained yet, and he does have his pride. Those fellows are deprived in so many ways, you see, and they would almost have to be classed as slow learners. Well, I'll get you something."

What was Barnaby talking about? Who were they who would have to be classified as slow learners, and why did Barnaby speak with such irony as if they were the very opposite of slow learners?

Barnaby slipped into the little partitioned-off room. "Carrock, carrock, carrock," came a voice from within. It was not one word

repeated three times: it was three different and distinct words, if only one should understand them.

"Splendid, splendid!" came the voice of Barnaby in there. "Almost perfect, almost perfect. Tomorrow you should have it all absolutely right."

"Carrock," said the other voice with deep feeling.

Barnaby came out with four glasses with a little ice in each, and with a half-filled bottle of medium bourbon and a less-than-half-filled bottle of medium gin.

"Fix yourself a little something, men," he said. "I'm sorry we're not fully open, but I want it to be right when I show him."

There was the sound of breaking glass in the little room.

"Damn," said Barnaby. "He feels so bad when he breaks something."

"Carrock," sadly said the voice in there.

Well, what was going on? Mary Mondo told me what it was: "The wooly wonder, the sunshine kid has arrived." Because of my coarser sensibilities, I could often hear Mary Mondo when the others could not. A while back, by illicit means, I had tried to get answers out of Mary Mondo; it hadn't worked. But then, after evading my clumsy traps, she had given me part of the information of her own will.

"He is coming with his message," she told me. "The message will be wisdom masquerading as comedy, and drawn and written on stone. And he will be the one the latchet of whose scuff-duffs I am not worthy to—Hey, watch that talk, me! A spoiled demiurge is what we don't want. But he will be the wooly wonder. He will be the sunshine kid. And he will counteract some of the evil tediousness that has imprisoned us." What kind of talk was that? I got along better before I began to receive such communications from Mary Mondo. But now she said that the wooly wonder, the sunshine kid, had indeed arrived.

"Shape is very important in time readings," Barnaby took up his thread again. "My own clock has Carbon-Fourteen readers built into it, of course, and the Potassium-Argon detector. There aren't many tricks that it doesn't contain. But the clock isn't a magic box, not all in one piece, not self-contained, not rigid. It uses data from a dozen other machines. I've had to have tests made by machines all over the country, all over the world, simply to get primary data into useable form.

"But it will work, after the questions have been properly phrased, after the readings have been taken and fitted. My scattered thing really uses all the other machines in the world as menials and it is

a little bit arrogant in its expertise."

"So, we have noticed, are you, Barnaby," Cris Benedetti jibed. "Tell us in simple and illuminating words just how it works."

"It analyzes shape and texture and so arrives at essence, Cris," Barnaby said with the sudden seriousness of a prophet or con-man. "The texture of anything in the world or out of it must depend on the size and shape and total age of that thing. This applies to a physical thing, to a social-group thing, to a tenuous syndrome or behaviorism, to an historical complex, to emotional storm cycles, to persons and kindreds, to culture and ecology combinations, to the lively arts and sciences (but the deadly of either have inferior texture and shape and so are rejected unread by the clock as being 'bad time'), to the mechanosphere, to all natural creatures both bodied and unbodied, to me, to all of you, and to the rather odd beings (electrostatic in their composition, I believe) which represent our intersections."

("Nobody can give a spiel like my papa," said the life-sized, sawdust-filled doll which Barnaby said was the body of his daughter Loretta. How Barnaby brought off this effect, if he did, is unknown: this time, he didn't even appear to hear the doll, and we others made believe not to.)

"But there is one difficulty with the clock," Barnaby continued.

"Unsurmountable, I suppose, Barney," said Doctor George Drakos.

"Not entirely, George," Barnaby told him. "We can't climb the main mountain by the sheer north face that fascinates all climbers. But we can mount pretty high on that mountain by working our way up through the broken scarble hills of its southeast flank. This not quite insurmountable difficulty or mountain in our road is that the clock has trouble recognizing the present time in the shape or context of a thing it reads. If the present time is not an important aspect of a thing, then the clock will not consider it important enough to notice. If the programmer insists, then the clock will comply and pick out some reference and call it the present; but it may or may not be so. We can come to fair terms with our difficulty, though. It isn't really a mountain standing in our road: it's more like the mouse that ran up the clock. And it's an illusion that the mouse gave birth to a mountain."

("The mouse giving birth to a mountain is my bit," said the spirit named Mary Mondo. "I gave that one to old papa Barnaby." Barnaby Sheen didn't seem to hear her, though.)

"But we will solve it, we will solve it," Barnaby was saying. "We will have the hide of that mouse and we will nail it up on the barn door."

"When, Barney?" Harry O'Donovan asked. He didn't mean, "When will we have the hide of that mouse?" – these men who knew

everything understood each other better than that. Harry meant, "When is the big show?"

"Tomorrow night, Harry," Barnaby answered him. "We'll have in some of those eminent scientists to throw questions and samples at the clock. We'll have a few other folks in, and we'll see what we will see."

"Will Willy McGilly be one of those eminent scientists?" Cris asked.

"Am I a fool? No, he won't be," Barnaby said. "I waited till he was out of town before I scheduled this thing."

We fooled around with the talk and the machines for quite a while.

"Your machine can say how old a thing will be in its totality, but it can't say how old a thing is right now?" Harry O'Donovan asked, still bugged by that aspect.

"Mostly it can do both," Barnaby told him. "The present orientation can nearly always be coaxed out of it, though the clock considers the present of little importance. This is no gadgetry, people. It is positive science and it is wonderful."

("My papa always was strong on that positive science stuff," said the sawdust-filled doll on the sofa, but Barnaby didn't hear her.)

We examined everything we could find to examine. Barnaby Sheen had either a great invention or a great hoax going there.

"We've got to be going, droll man," George Drakos said finally, and we began to leave.

"Carrock," came the voice from the next room in friendly good-bye.

"Barney, is that an ape in there?" Drakos asked.

"A little more apish than you are, George, but not much," Barnaby laughed. "You've got more ape in you than any of us, George. You know that."

iv

'You be a fraud," Investigators said.
'Tie lantern to a tail and paint you red!"

"Mistaken!" cried the clock. "The truth's
with us."
"Carrock," confirmed Australopithecus.
—Anonymous

The magic clock of Barnaby Sheen advanced the present time of the world by twenty hours. Thus it became the following evening, and there was another gathering in the study of Barnaby Sheen.

Besides myself and the men who knew everything, there were

three eminent scientists: Velikov Vonk, Ergodic Eimer, and August Angstrom. But the eminence of that group was a little suspect. Willy McGilly was out of town. Arpad Arkarbaranan was dead, drowned in that unfortunate episode at Boomer Flats. Velikov Vonk was the only member of the original group there, the only one of the bunch we mean when we say 'Eminent Scientists' in our town.

There was a newspaper person there, too, and a few nondescript folks of both sexes.

"People, do I have a clock!" Barnaby Sheen cried, and he seemed to be cupping something precious in his two hands. "It's the clock that the world runs by," he said.

"That is a statement that we intend to test," August Angstrom spat in a cranky manner. "We know, Sheen, that you are ninety percent fraud. We also know that occasionally, very occasionally, you come up with something of value; and we know that you are a long ways overdue with it. Don't disappoint us tonight. Where is the clock?"

"It's about you and around you, August," Barnaby said. "Anything that you want to submit to it, drop into that wide slot there. Anything you want to ask it, ask it at the automatic typewriter."

"Ask it *how*, Sheen? By voice?"

"Certainly. Or by Indian Sign Language if you prefer. It understands that too."

"This man Sheen here, how old is he?" August Angstrom asked the mechanical complex. And his words were typed out by it just as he had spoken them: "This man Sheen, how old is he?" appeared in the typescript; then the machine swallowed the question.

"What, what, how was that done?" August asked. Barnaby Sheen was laughing. His hands were steepled together as though he were cupping something precious in them. A nervous gesture, we suppose. And his fingers diddled and skipped about.

Nervous gesture, your father's chronometer! Barnaby was pulling one of the oldest tricks right out in the open. No wonder he waited till Willy McGilly was out of town before he set up the show. He diddled his fingers. Meanwhile, across the room, the typer was typing.

"Barnaby Sheen is in the absolute prime of life. He is thirty-seven years, twenty-eight days, fourteen hours, nine minutes, and rapidly changing seconds old," the clock typed it out.

"All right, Sheen, how is it done?" August growled. "I know it's a trick."

"No trick at all, August," Barnaby laughed. "Many weeks ago I programmed it with the birth moments of the nine most outstanding men in the world. Naturally I couldn't leave myself out."

August pulled something from his wallet, unwrapped it, and

dropped it into the slot. It was a disc, probably a coin. And Barnaby smiled and worked his fingers nervously.

"Well, fat man, what do you want me to tell you about that thing?" the typer typed.

"Ah, clock, it is a coin. Tell me the date on it," Angstrom spoke in a tone of near apology, and the typer typed, "Ah, clock, it is a coin. Tell me . . . " and so on. Barnaby Sheen was wandering around the room examining his own collection of gimcracks. Ah, there was a display case, but the case lifted up. It had a false bottom; it had a conveyor belt under the false bottom; even I could see that much. Barnaby Sheen took the coin from the conveyor belt, examined it a moment, and replaced it. He resumed his nervous striding about the room and his nervous drumming of his fingers. But the attention of all was on the clock and not on Barnaby Sheen.

"The coin bore the date 1848," the typer typed. "It was a middling valuable coin. I dissolved it to get at the data, and I will be unable to give it back."

"Sheen," Angstrom said dangerously, "that coin was quite valuable."

"And the clock is quite a kidder," Barnaby said. "Don't worry. All specimens will be returned at the end of the demonstration. Please, Angstrom, let some of the others have a chance at the magic clock. Ah, we have rock hounds loaded down with rocks. Doctor Eimer, would you like to give the clock a question in one way or another?"

"Carrock," came a happy voice from the next room, and the tinkling of glass.

"What is in that room?" Angstrom asked suspiciously. "Is it man or beast?"

"I don't ask that of your friends, August," Barnaby said kindly. "Proceed, Doctor Eimer." And Doctor Eimer put a small stone into the clock slot.

"Give me the age of sedimentation and also the age of metamorphism of that stone," Doctor Ergodic Eimer asked the clock. " . . . and also the age of metamorphism," the clock was finishing its typing the while Barnaby was finishing his examination of the rock which he had taken from the conveyor belt which was below the false bottom of a display case.

Barnaby Sheen knew rocks; he knew them nearly as well as Doctor Ergodic Eimer did. He put the rock back on the belt and began to finger a precious thing in his hand. He did all these things without seeming to do anything. The attention of everybody was fixed on the question-answering typewriting clock.

"Both very recent," the clock typed. "Age of sedimentation is eighty thousand years. Age of metamorphism is twenty-five to thirty thou-

sand years."

"My own estimate is somewhat longer," Eimer said conversationally to the clock, "a hundred thousand years and fifty thousand years, but there is no way of being sure. It is possible that you are correct, clock."

" . . . possible that you are correct, clock," the clock finished the typing.

Petrified wood and blue shale, varved mud just in the process of turning into slate, a handwritten letter, a photograph, a chipped-stone fist hatchet, crinoid fossils, seashells imbedded in limestone, all these went into the clock slot. And the clock typed out what were possibly good answers to their ages.

Barnaby Sheen seemed sometimes inattentive, sometimes very interested.

"What? What did it say?" he asked once, and pushed in to see. "Oh, that's wrong, impossible. There's a malfunction somewhere."

"Why no, Sheen, that's right, or approximately right," one of the nondescript persons said. "I suspect that it's exactly right."

"Really?" Barnaby said. "I had no idea that Trilobites of that sort were so old."

"The circuitry isn't connected with this stuff at all," Cris Benedetti whispered to Harry O'Donovan.

"Oh, I knew that all the time," said the spirit named Mary Mondo.

"No, of course it isn't connected," Harry said. "But, as Barney once told us, it's easier to sell a big package than a small package. Barnaby may well have something good in a small package there; I'm not sure that he hasn't; and he can merchandise it in as big a box as he wants to."

And then the clock began to slip. It was on the old bones that it began to slip, and it got worse and worse. There was a sliver of haunch bone from Plateosaurus, that largest of the Triassic dinosaurs. It was put into the clock with a request for a reading. And the clock promptly typed out "One million years old."

"Great Osseous Insanity, the thing is wrong!" rang the voice of Professor Ergodic Eimer. "Sheen, it should be nearer to one hundred and eighty million years."

"Carrock," rang the voice in the next room. "Carrock, carrock, carrock."

"The clock is right," Barnaby Sheen insisted. "It's always right."

There was a nostril bone of the Hemicyon. "Three hundred and fifty-five years," the clock typed after it had made an appraisal.

"It's a million years if it's a day," howled one of those nondescript persons from City Museum. "This is an insult to the intelligence."

"Carrock, carrock," came the voice from the next room. It had a

touch of amusement and was accompanied by the rattle of glasses.

"Sheen," Velikov Vonk muttered in a low voice. "To hell with the clock. I just want to see that creature."

"Wait till the others leave then," Barnaby said. "He wants to try his hand at serving only a small bunch of us first."

A prize was coming up. It was quite a small bone but it would be the test. The Investigators were primed for this one. And the small bone smelled (though not to the nose) unmistakably of Almost Man.

"Now we will see," said those scientists and skeptics. And one of them set the thing into the maw of the clock. There was a long pause then, longer than usual.

"Carrock," came the voice from the next room, and it had a touch of recognition in it. Those fellows have always been fantastic in their sensing.

Barnaby Sheen had already examined the thing on the conveyor belt that was under a display case. He walked about the room while everybody waited for the clock. And Barnaby diddled his right-hand fingers in his left palm. So that was the way he did it! He held a miniature wireless remote control in his palm, and he diddled the letters for the clock to type. And it typed.

"Fifty-five years since the inanimation or death of the creature," it typed, "and seventy-seven years since its birth."

And all those great visitors howled like maniacs at that poor machine of a clock. But the "Carrock, carrock" in the next room had turned into a chortle.

"Any fool would know that it has to be over a million years old," August Angstrom swore furiously. "Clock, do you even know what it is?"

"Sure," the clock typed after it had recorded and filed the question. "It is the characteristic short canine tooth of the Australopithecus. I can't in conscience add even a month to the elapsed time since the death of the creature. Fifty-five years, almost exactly. I can even tell you where the tooth came from."

"Where?" Angstrom blurted.

". . . where?" the clock recorded and filed. Then it answered. "Oh, from Ethiopia, about seventy miles northwest of Magdala, on the Guna Slopes. The creatures still thrive there."

"Monkey-faced mallarky!" August swore. "The species has been extinct for over a million years."

Barnaby Sheen was flexing his fingers as though they were cramped. He had been doing a lot of fingering on his small remote-control gadget. And then he fingered some more.

". . . been extinct for over a million years," the clock finished typing the statement. "Carrock," came the friendly voice from the next

room. Then the clock began to rattle with new typing:

"The species still lives and thrives. It is true that, about a million years ago, the species did pull in all its ill-conceived and badly established colonies, and thereafter it lived only in its small and straited homeland. It still lives there."

That broke up the party and the investigation. There were cries of "Fake" and "sick joke." There were remarks about the ancestry of both the clock and Barnaby Sheen. Then half a dozen men and two women stomped furiously out. Indignation lingered after them like fog in the room.

There remained only the four men who knew everything, and myself who did not, and Professor Velikov Vonk; and perhaps two others who were really permanent features of the room. We were all slightly shaken and mightily depressed by the intolerance and violence of the leaving.

From the next room came "Carrock," inquiringly, almost wistfully.

"All right, fellow," Barnaby Sheen called loudly. "We're ready when you're ready."

It, he, came into the room then. He had on a neat white bartender's jacket. He had a pad and pencil in his hands. He was grinning, he was hairy, he was simian in some rakish way, he was manlike or at least boylike in a more subtle way, and he was eager to be of service.

"Name your drinks, folks," Barnaby said. "Myself, I'll have an Old Fashioned." And the creature wrote something down on the pad.

"Salty Doll, please," said the life-sized sawdust-filled doll on the sofa, the doll that was perhaps Loretta Sheen. And the creature wrote.

"Fraidy Lady," said the spirit named Mary Mondo. And then, in her confiding voice she said, "He's done wonders with Loretta in just the two days he's been here. He has her talking in words now, about as well as he does, and she couldn't do it before for a long time."

"Bloody Mary," said Cris Benedetti.

"Green Giannopoulos," said Doctor George Drakos, "and I hope you can make them better than Barney here can. It isn't his specialty." The creature grinned. He was getting it all down.

"Grasshopper," said Harry O'Donovan. The creature wrote, and there was a pause.

"Laff?" Barnaby Sheen asked.

"Oh, Cuba Libra," I said.

"Manhattan," said Velikov Vonk. The creature went back to his little barroom.

"Do you really have a magic clock, Sheen?" Velikov asked.

"Yes I do," Barnaby said. "I have it in my head, almost worked

out. And this little play-act that I put on gave me some good ideas. It doesn't hurt to unveil a thing a year or two before it comes along. It will work. You'll see. I'll build it any year now."

"Well, he *is* an Australopithecus, isn't he?" I asked finally. "The bartender, I mean."

They all looked at me with pity. "Of course he is," several of them finally said.

The Austro brought in the drinks. He had them all right, and they were perfect. And after a while he brought in more.

A living Australopithecus! Well, was he an animal, or was he a man? But I already knew the answer; he was neither yet. He was a boy. And which *would* he be? Oh, it wasn't certain, but the odds were better on him turning out to be a man than were the odds on most *sapiens* boys.

Time went by. How much time?

"The clock on the wall isn't working," Barnaby said. "Does anybody have the right time?"

"The right time? It's sunrise, of course," the spirit girl Mary Mondo said. "The demiurge with the sunshine brains has arrived and that makes it sunrise."

Austro grinned. In him were the prophecies fulfilled. It wasn't sunrise literally though; it was about midnight. But nobody had the right time.

"Your magic clock, Barney?" Drakos asked. "Can't it give us the time?"

"Sure, correct within two or three days."

It didn't matter. It was good time, pleasant time. The drinks were fine, and Austro stood willing and ready to serve.

AND READ THE FLESH BETWEEN THE LINES

A Cave, a Cove, a Hub, *a Club,*
A crowded, jumbled flame:
The Magic Tree, the Future Shrub,
Nostalgia is its name.
— *Old Scribble on the Wall of That Room*
by John Penandrew

There had been a sort of rumbling going on in that old unused room over the garages at Barnaby Sheen's place. Nobody paid much attention to it. After all, there were queerer things than a little rumble at Barnaby's.

There were spooks, there were experiments, there was a houseboy and bartender who should have been dead for a million years. There were jokers and geniuses who came there. Who notices a little rumble in an unused room? There were rumbles of many sorts going on at Barnaby's.

"The rumble in the old room is menacing and dangerous," Barnaby told us one evening. "No, really, fellows, it isn't one of my tricks. I don't know what it is."

"It sounds like a friendly rumble to me," Harry O'Donovan said. "I like it."

"I didn't say that it was malevolent," Barnaby gruffed with that odd affectation which he sometimes put into his voice. "I like it too.

We all like it. It likes us. But it is dangerous, very dangerous, without meaning to be. I have been over everything there: I can't find the source of the rumble or the danger. I ask you four, as a special favor to me, to examine the room carefully. You all know the place since years long gone by."

The four of us, Dr. George Drakos, Harry O'Donovan, Cris Benedetti, who were three smart ones, and me, who wasn't, went down and examined the old room. But just how thoroughly did we examine it?

We examined it, at least, in more ways and times than the present. For that reason it is possible that we neglected it a little bit in its present state. The past times of it were so strong that it may have intended its present state to be neglected, or it may have insisted that its whole duration was compressed in its casual present state.

Let's hear a little bit about this room, then.

In the time of Barnaby Sheen's grandfather, who came out here from Pennsylvania at the first rumor of oil and who bought an anomalous "mansion", this was not a room over the garages, but over the stables and carriagehouse.

It was a hayloft, that's what it was; an oatloft, a fodderloft. And a little corner of it had been a harness room with brads and hammers and knives and needles as big as sailmaker's needles, and cobbler's bench; and spokeshaves (for forming and trimming singletrees) and neat's-foot oil and all such. The room, even in its later decades, had not lost any of its old smells. There would always be the perfume of timothy hay, of sweet clover, of little bluestem grass and of prairie grass, of alfalfa, of sudan grass, of sorghum cane, of hammered oats and of ground oats, of rock salt, of apples. Yes, there was an old barrel there that would remember its apples for a hundred years. Why had it been there? Do not horses love apples for a treat?

There was the smell of shorts and of bran, the smell of old field tobacco (it must have been cured up there in the jungle of the rafters), the smell of seventy-five year old sparks (and the grindstone that had produced them was there, operable yet), the smell of buffalo robes (they used them for lap robes in wagons and buggies). There was a forge there and other farrier's tools (but they had been brought up from downstairs no more than sixty years ago, so their smell was not really ancient there).

Then there were a few tokens of the automobile era; heavily built parts cabinets, tools, old plugs, old oil smell. There were back seats of very old cars to serve as sofas and benches, horns and spotlights and old battery cases, even very old carbide and kerosene headlights. But these were in the minority: there is not so much use for a room

over the garages as for a room over the stables.

There was another and later odor that was yet very evocative: it could only be called the smell of almost-ape.

And then there were our own remnants somewhat before this latter thing. This had been a sort of clubroom for us when we were schoolboys and when we were summer-boys. There were trunks full of old funny papers. They were from the St. Louis Post Dispatch, the St. Louis *Globe*, the Kansas City Star, the Chicago Tribune—those were the big-city papers that were hawked in our town, and our own World and Tribune. There were a few New York and Boston and Philadelphia funny papers also. And the funnies of the different papers were not nearly so uniform then as they later became.

There were the comparatively more recent comic books. We had been older then, almost too old for such things. Yet there were a few thousand of them, mostly the original property of Cris Benedetti and John Penandrew.

There was the taxidermy of George Drakos: stuffed owls, snakes, barn swallows, water puppies, mountain boomers, flying squirrels, even foxes and wildcats. And there were the dissections (also of Drakos) of frogs, of cat brains, of fish, of cow eyes, and many other specimens. The best of these (those still maintaining themselves in good state) were preserved in formaldehyde in Pluto Water bottles. Pluto Water bottles, with their bevel-fitted glass corks and wire-clamp holders, will contain formaldehyde forever: this is a fact too little known. (Is Pluto Water still in proper history, or has it been relegated out?)

There were the lepidoptera (the butterfly and night-moth collections) of Harry O'Donovan, and my own aggregations of rocks and rock fossils. And there were all the homemade radios, gamma-ray machines, electrical gadgets generally, coils, magnet wire, resistors, tubes—of Barnaby Sheen.

There were also—hold it, hold it! If everything in that room were listed, there would not be books enough in the world to contain it all (there were even quite a few books there). There would be no limit to the remnants, not even to the remnants of a single day.

But we had all of us lived several mutually exclusive boyhoods that hinged on that room. Within the framework of history as now constituted, these variants could not all have happened. But they did.

The room had developed a benevolent rumble that might be dangerous. Barnaby Sheen couldn't find what it was; and we could not. It was a soundly built room, oak and hickory and black locust wood; it had been there a long time. It was older than the fine house that had replaced the anomalous old "mansion" there. If it was

dangerous (and Barnaby said that it was), we could not discover that danger.

The world itself had a deeper and more worrisome series of rumbles. We leave the room over the garages now and go to the world. We are sorry to have spent so much time on such a little thing as that room. It is just that it has stuck in our minds somehow.

ii

Young Austro said "carrock, carrock."
O'Donovan said "grumble."
Loretta gave a spirit knock.
The room said "rumble, rumble."
—Rocky McCrocky (in cartoon balloon)

We were together for the first time in eighteen months. Barnaby Sheen was back in the country, Cris Benedetti was back in the country, Harry O'Donovan was back in the state, George Drakos was back out of his seclusion. I was there; I hadn't been anywhere.

Really, Barnaby was back for the second time. He'd been home two weeks before this, and that after more than a year's absence. Then, after he'd unpacked most of his things, he snapped his fingers and said, as though dreaming some lively dream, "I forgot something over there. I'll just go back and see about it. I'll be back again in a couple of weeks."

But "over there" was halfway around the globe, in Ethiopia, about seventy miles northwest of Magdala on the Guna slopes. Barnaby had mineral concessions there. There also he had found a concentration of most interesting fossils, some of them still living and walking. Barnaby used a cover story of doing seismograph petroleum survey work, but he was into many things.

But now he was back for the second time and we were together.

Austro had just brought us our drinks, though listlessly. Austro was houseboy and bartender and was of an old and doubted species. But he worked distractedly now, not with his old sharpness. Since he had learned to read he always had some crude sheet or sheaf of gaudy and juvenile literature under his arm or in his hand.

"Well Barney, you went halfway around the world again," Drakos said. "Did you bring back what you went after?"

"Oh no. It wasn't such a thing as one can bring or carry. At least I don't believe that it was."

"But you said that you had forgotten something over there and that you were going to go back and see about it."

"Yes, I said that, but I wasn't too lucky in seeing about the matter. I couldn't remember what it was; that's the trouble. I still can't quite."

"You went halfway around the world to get something you had left behind? And when you got there you had forgotten what it was? Barney!" This was Harry O'Donovan chiding him.

"Not quite right, Harry," Barnaby said. "I didn't forget it when I went back there. I went back there because I had already forgotten it: because I had always forgotten it, I guess. I went back there to try to remember it. I consulted with some of Austro's elder kinsmen (he's only a boy, you know). I meditated a bit in those mountains. I'm good at that: I should have been a hermit (why, I suppose that I am!) or a prophet. But I remembered only part."

These were really the men who knew everything? Sometimes it didn't quite seem like it.

"How does Austro handle things when you are gone?" George Drakos asked. "Being able to speak only one word might be a disadvantage, and beyond that he isn't very bright. How is he accepted?"

"Austro is quite bright, George," Barnaby told him. "He is accepted within the house, and he doesn't go out much. Here there are several persons who accept and understand him perfectly, in spite of his seeming to speak only one word."

"Which several persons, Barney?"

"Oh, my daughter Loretta. And Mary Mondo."

"Barney, they don't count!" Drakos shouted in near anger.

"They do with me. They do with Austro. They do with all of you a little."

"Barney, George means, or at least I mean; is Austro accepted as human?" Cris asked.

"Oh well, yes, he's accepted as of the kindred. It's hard to put into words. There's a missing kindred word, you know. Besides mother, father, brother, sister, grandfather, grandmother, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, cousin, female cousin, in-laws, there is yet another. Delineate it, name it: then we may know what Austro is."

"Whatever are you talking about, Barney?" Cris asked, puzzled.

"Kinship, apposition, parallelism, the riddle of flesh and of election. Austro was found in Ethiopia, on the Guna slopes, northwest of Magdala. But there is another Magdala, more blessed by its circumstance and location; it is near Tiberias on the shores of the Lake of Galilee. Its first name (the first name of both of them, I suspect) is Migdol, the Watch-Tower. Tell me the kinship between the two cities (there are very many analogs and references to the Two Cities)

and then perhaps I can tell you the kinship between Austro and ourselves."

(Austro, the houseboy and bartender, was one of the species called Austropithecus, which is either ape or ape-man or man: we don't really know. So far, he could speak only one word "carrock", but he could speak it in a hundred different ways. And he had now learned to read and write very hairy English.)

(Loretta Sheen was a life-sized sawdust-filled doll: Barnaby always insisted that this object was the body of his real daughter Loretta. We all knew Barnaby very well from boyhood, but there was a cloud here. We couldn't remember for sure whether he had ever had a real daughter or not.)

(Mary Mondo was a ghost. Actually, she was the schizo-personality of the ghost of a girl named Violet Lonsdale who was long dead.)

Few households have three such unusual persons.

"I believe that Austro is a qualified *col* to us," Harry O'Donovan tried to explain in his rather high voice. "In Irish, *col* means first a prohibition, a sin, a wickedness; and only after that does it mean a cousin. So first cousin (*col ceathar*) really means first impediment or first wickedness, and second cousin (*col seisear*) really means second impediment or second wickedness. But there is (yes, you are right, Barney) another relationship whose very name is forgotten. Perhaps it is the *col carraig* or rock cousin. Whyever did I think of a thing like that? 'Tis flesh which is the opposite of rock. But this outside thing is at the same time a holy and forbidden relationship. It is the Flesh Between."

"Has anyone ever sounded the real meaning of Dutch Uncle?" Cris asked. "Frisia (which is Dutch) was the latest home in Europe of some of the almost-men or early-men."

"In Greek, cousin is *exadelphus*," George Drakos contributed as he studied the thing, "the out-brother or outer-brother. But it isn't an old word. The old word for cousin is unwritten and forgotten. And yet there is, or there was, another kindred name (as Barnaby says) that is not father or mother, not son or daughter, not brother, sister, niece or nephew, not uncle or aunt or maternal grandfather. There is another and expunged relationship name, I agree: and it does represent an expunged flesh. But all expunged things leave traces."

"Austro is such a trace," Barnaby insisted. "He is a Flesh Between.

I am believing that no creatures have ever stopped happening, but some of them have stopped being apparent. This calls into question the whole nature of reality."

"What doesn't?" Harry O'Donovan said.

"Austro is not entirely expunged, though," Barnaby went on. "And let us not forget that we also have angelic and diabolic kindred. We're a big family."

"Ishmael was a more moral and upstanding man than Isaac," Cris Benedetti said suddenly. "Why was Isaac more blessed? Why are we more blessed than Austro?"

These were the four men who knew everything? They may have been. Do you know other men who talk like that?

"Carrock, carrock," said Austro, coming in and filling Barnaby's drink: spilling it too, for he was reading an old funny paper (Elmer Tuggle, it was) at the same time, and he wasn't good at doing two things at once.

"Rumble, rumble," said that old unused room a few yards distant.

iii

The past it is a big balloon,
I blow it all I can.
We all are ghost and all buffoon,
A close, explosive clan.
— *Lines* expressed *by Mary Mondo*
(*medium* unknown)

Several evenings later it was, in the same place, and the talk had turned to ancient libraries. I don't know how it had. I came late.

"The present explosion of knowledge is fact," Barnaby Sheen was saying. "But there is also an occasional (though continuing) explosion of knowledge in another sense. One of the most false of legends is that the two great libraries of Alexandria, with their seven hundred thousand books or rolls, were deliberately destroyed, partly by Aurelian, more completely by Theodosius. That's all false, I tell you. Those two royal gentlemen would no more destroy valuable books and scrolls than you royal gentlemen here would burn up hundred-dollar bills. They knew what things had money value, and those old book-rolls had it.

"The only correct thing about the story is the chronology. Actually the two libraries exploded: the one in the Serapeum in the time

of Aurelian; the one in the Museum in the time of Theodosius."

Give him a while. Barnaby always liked to savor his own startling statements for a few moments after he had made them. Don't ask him (for a while) what he's talking about. He'll clarify it, or muddy it further, in a few minutes.

"Austro really looks more like a big frog than like a big ape," Harry O'Donovan commented as the unusual houseboy ambled (is it more froggish than apish to amble?) into the room. Austro winked at Harry to show that he understood his statement. Austro had recently learned to wink; he had also learned how to draw cartoons.

"There is the leaky past, but it cannot leak out fast enough for safety," Barnaby had taken up his tale again. He always came as directly as possible to a point, but the point was often a tricky one. "The staggering corpus of past events, and of non-central or non-consensus events, is diminished swiftly. More and more things that once happened are now made not *to have* happened. This is absolute necessity, I suppose, even though the flesh between the lines (it is, I guess, the supposedly expunged flesh) should scream from the agony of the compression.

"Velikovsky was derided for writing that six hundred years must be subtracted from Egyptian history and from all ancient history. He shouldn't have been derided, but he did have it backwards. Indeed, six times six hundred years must be added to history again and again to approach the truth of the matter. It'd be dangerous to do it, though. It's crammed as tight as it will go now, and there's tremors all along the fault lines. As a matter of fact, several decades have been left out of quite recent United States history. They should be put back in (for they're interesting, and we ourselves lived through parts of them) if it were safe to do so."

"How about the count of the years and their present total?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "Are they right or are they not? Is this really the year that it says it is on that calendar on the wall? And, if it is, doesn't that make nonsense about leaving out recent decades?"

"The count of the years is true, in that it is one aspect of the truth," Barnaby said a little bit fumblingly. "But there are other aspects. They call into question the whole nature of simultaneity."

"What doesn't?" Harry O'Donovan said.

"There are taboos in mathematics," Barnaby tried to explain. "The idea of the involuted number series is taboo, and yet we live in a time that is counted by such a series. And when time is fleshed, when it puts on History for its clothes, it follows even more the involuted

series in which there are very, very many numbers between one and ten."

"Just what do you have in mind, Barney?" Cris Benedetti asked him.

"I have never discovered any historical event happening for the *first* time," Barnaby said. "Either life imitates anecdote, or very much more has happened than the bursting records are allowed to show as happening. As far back as one can track it, there is history: and I do not mean prehistory. I doubt if there was ever such a time as prehistory. I doubt that there was ever an uncivilized man. I also doubt that there was ever any manlike creature who was not full man, however unconventional the suit of hide that he wore.

"But when you try to compress a hundred thousand years of history into six thousand years, something has to give. When you try to compress a million years, it becomes dangerous. An involuted number series, particularly when applied to the spate of years, becomes a tightly coiled spring of primordial spring-steel. When it recoils, look out! There comes the revenge of things left out.

"Were there eight kings of the name of Henry in England, or were there eighty? Never mind: someday it will be recorded that there was only one, and the attributes of all of them will be combined into his compressed and consensus story.

"There is a deep texture of art and literature (no matter whether it is rock scratching or machine duplication) that goes back over horizon after horizon. There is a deeper texture to life itself that is tremendous in its material and mental and psychic treasures. There are dialects now that were once full vernaculars, towns now that were once great cities, provinces that were nations. The foundations and the lower stories of a culture or a building are commonly broader than its upper stories. A structure does not balance upside-down, standing on a point.

"A torch was once lighted and given to a man, not to a beast. And it has been passed on from hand to hand while the hills melted and rose again. What matter that some of the hands were more hairy than others? It was always a man's hand."

"It may be that you are balancing upside-down on your pointed head, Barney," Harry O'Donovan told him.

"It may be, but I believe that is not the case. Atrox Fabulinus, the Roman Rabelais, reconstructs some of the omissions and compressions in the form of fables. It is a common belief that a fable is less weighty than history and less likely to break down the great scaffold; it was, you know, a fabled straw that broke the camel's back (a real event). We know from Atrox that there were three Roman Kingdoms, three Roman Republics, and three Roman Empires, each

series extending for more than a thousand years. We know that some of the later Roman Emperors (as today presented in history) are each composed of several men who may be a thousand or more years apart. We know that some of the more outré and outrageous of the Emperors (and Kings and Tyrants and Demagogs and Rebels and Tribunes) are no longer to be found in proper history at all. Clio is a skittish muse and very fearful of breakdowns.

"Yet Humerus Maximus and Nothus Nobilis and Anserem Captator and Capripex Ferox were in reality men of such bursting vigor and feats that history has not been able to contain them. But their suppression shouts at us and shocks us.

"And it goes back many times farther; there are the stone pages that have been crowded (for a while) quite out of history. It was clear man from the beginning; even though at its earliest it was sometimes man dressed in an ape suit."

Austro had a bunch of patio blocks (thin concrete blocks) under his arm. He was very strong and he carried two dozen of them easily. He had been drawing cartoons on them; no, he had been drawing primordial pictures: they are almost, but not quite, the same. He drew with a bone stylus and used an ocher and water mixture for his paint. How had he known to do that? He showed his drawings to the sawdusty Loretta Sheen and to the unbalanced and ghostly Mary Mondo. They laughed gaily at the drawings, and then they laughed with a peculiar pathos.

Mary Mondo brought some of the stones to us. We looked and laughed. Then we looked more and laughed less. They were sharp cartoons, striking caricatures. They were something more. Once there was a species to which humor was far more important than seriousness. Once there was a species so vivid and vibrant that it had to be forgotten by history; and Austro was a member of it. But, for a moment there, we almost knew what kindred Austro was to us.

"Francois, the French Rabelais, pulled greater tricks than did Atrox," Barnaby Sheen was saying. "As you have probably suspected, there are a full thousand years lost out of the Lower Middle Ages. History ran up to the year fourteen hundred and fifty-three once, and then reverted to the year four hundred and fifty-three. It was a much different year four hundred and fifty-three than it had been the first time, though. The Millennium really has been and gone, you know. It's forgotten now; it wasn't what had been expected, but it was what had been promised.

"Nobody promised us that it would be a thousand years of peace and prosperity; nobody promised that it would be an era of learning and suavity; and certainly nobody promised that it would be a

time of ease and gentility.

"It was the Millennium itself, and the Devil was bound for a thousand years. But he surely was not quiet about his binding. He clanked and howled; he shook the whole world, and he caused land tides and sea tides. He caused mountains to collapse and people to go fearful and even to die literally petrified. And then the people discovered a cloud-capping and roaring humor in their fearfulness. A giantism appeared, a real awareness, a ridiculousness which has always been the authentic rib-rock of the world.

"Francois Rabelais caught a little of that giantism and jollity. But it is banned from history, that thousand years, though it was more real than most things in history. History is too fragile to contain it. History, and all its annals and decades and centuries, would be shattered forever if these ten centuries were included."

"What happened afterwards, Barney?" Harry O'Donovan asked, "when the Devil was unbound again and we resumed the historical count (wrong by a thousand years, of course, but who minds that?—or involuted by a thousand years) and things became as they are now? How are they now?"

"Oh, the unbound Devil fragmentized (an old trick of his) and spread himself wherever he could. His is a feigned omnipresence, so there is a little of him in every person and every thing. He believes (he isn't really very bright) that he can't be bound again if he keeps himself scattered. But his shriveling effect is on us all: we are no longer giants."

"Oh, I've always believed that I was still a giant," said Drakos who was considerably the largest of the men. And then he asked with the veriest bit of mockery, "Barnaby, would you like your daughter to be carrying on seriously with an ape-man?"

"There has never been an ape-man, George," Barnaby said softly. "There was, and there still is, this not-quite series of cousins for whom we miss the name. But it's a ghostliness, not an apishness, that sets them a little apart from us who are their kindred. And my daughter (whether she lived in flesh or not I am no longer sure) is now no more than a girl-sized doll full of sawdust and a few words or mottos. And yet she is more than that. If not a true ghostliness, she at least has a polter-ghostliness about her. So has Mary Mondo.

"The children, Austro and Loretta and Mary (none of them is more than a child or at most an adolescent), are close kindred, closer to each other, perhaps, than to us. It is common, perhaps universal, that children are of a slightly different race (I mean it literally) than they will later become. But it is all right with them."

"When were the several decades left out of United States history, Barnaby?" Cris Benedetti asked him.

"Early, and recent, and present, for I rather suspect that our own contingent present will not be firmly inscribed in the records."

"You mean that *we* may not be recorded as real?" Drakos asked.

"Possibly not," Barnaby said. "I'll give one example: there is the case of a father, son, and grandson from one family, John Adams, John Braintree Adams, and John Quincy Adams, all being Presidents of the United States. I notice, though, that only two of them are now believed in, or are now written in. The best of the three (wouldn't you believe it? it's always the best) has been left out. But the foreshortening was continuous, and part of it, I believe, took place during our own boyhoods. There was much more happening then—three times more—than we are allowed to remember. Sometimes it seems that it was a million years and not just a couple of decades left out here."

"You don't mean this literally, do you?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "You talk in parables, do you not?"

"Am I Christ that I should talk in parables? No, I talk literally, Harry. Things have happened, and then they have been made to seem not to have happened."

"By what possible process could it have been done? It would have required a simultaneous and multitudinous altering of records and minds."

"By a human process it was done; I cannot say more about that mysterious process. It isn't a natural thing, of course, for man isn't a natural animal. He is supernatural, or he is preternatural, or he is unnatural. I'm not sure which class this repeating amnesia, with its mechanical adjuncts, belongs to."

"What could trigger one of the explosions that you talk about, Barnaby?" Drakos asked.

"I believe that a mind that does not accept the local mathematical taboos might trigger off a blast. And I believe that such a mind has been spending a lot of time in our old clubroom that now has the rumbles. It's a cave there, really. All clubrooms are caves. The caves on the Guna slopes, they are made by explosions, by blasting. Caves are never completely natural configurations, and there are no caves that have not been inhabited. Water and wind have not scooped out caves. People with their explosive and blasting intelligence and curiosity have scooped them out."

"I suspect that I should professionally recommend you to an alienist, Barney," said Dr. George Drakos.

"I suspect that you should professionally study this problem yourself, George," Barnaby said somewhat stubbornly. "Even medical men have good ideas sometimes."

"Did there used to be a funny paper named Rocky McCrocky?" Harry O'Donovan asked the ceiling (he always sat leaning far back in his chair). "It was about, I believe, cave men."

"I don't remember it," Cris said. "If there had been one, John Penandrew would know, but we seldom see John in these latter times. There was Alley Oop, of course, and later there was B.C. And many of the others, Happy Hooligan, Down on the Farm, Her Name was Maud, Boob McNutt, Toonerville Trolley, were troglodyte or caveman funny papers in disguise."

"I wonder if the, ah, troglodytes themselves had funny papers?" George Drakos asked.

"Certainly," said Cris. "Has not Austro just been making such funny papers and passing them around? And he *is* a troglodyte, or a troll, which is the same thing.

"And our older rock uncles (they of the kindred forgotten, of the Flesh Between) have left such funny papers in thousands of places. Mostly they were scratched on slate-rock or on limestone or on old red sandstone; and they had, it seems to me, the intensity and context almost strong enough to move mountains."

"By the way," Barnaby Sheen said dreamily, "there was once an explosion or implosion of certain archives or annals at Migdol which in fact did move a mountain. It was quite a strong blast. And we are inclined to forget just what an explosive pun is the word 'magazine' in its several senses. For it means a periodical publication, which is to say a journal or an annals. But it also means a depot in which explosives and ammunition are stored. Every library, I believe, is a magazine in both of these senses, and I use the word 'library' quite loosely."

"You've nibbled at it from every edge, Barnaby," George Drakos said. "You might as well go ahead and tell us what you mean you when you say that the two great libraries at Alexandria exploded, and when you say that the archives or annals at Migdol (the Magdala of the more blessed location, I presume) exploded so violently as to move a mountain."

"Yes, I'll get with it," Barnaby said. "Where is that Austro? He's never here when we want a refill."

"He's down in that funny room over the garages, the one that rumbles," Mary Mondo expressed. "He lives there now."

"Can you tell him to come here, Mary?" Barnaby asked.

"I just have," Mary expressed. "He says there's no great hurry. He says he'll be along by and by."

"Thank you, Mary," Barnaby said. "Ah, you slipped one over on me that time."

(Barnaby Sheen ordinarily did not recognize the presence or ex-

istence of the schizo-ghost Mary Mondo, but she was handy for communicating at a distance.)

"Gentlemen," said Barnaby then, "there are very many cases of archives and libraries exploding, cases that seem incredible. Some of them were libraries whose books were tablets of hewn stone, some of baked brick, some of glazed tile, some of flaky clay, some of papyrus rolls or other split-reed made into near-paper, some of parchment or thinned sheepskin, some of vellum or scraped calfskin or kidskin, some of velum or the palate membrane of the common dragon ('vellum' and 'velum' are sometimes confused by the ignorant; just remember that the latter is fire-resistant), some of paper of the modern sort."

"Some of the libraries consist of trunks filled with pulp-paper funny papers and comic books," the sawdust-filled doll named Loretta conveyed. "They're the best kind."

"These collections," said Barnaby (not having received the message his daughter had given), "being of such diverse material, would seem to have nothing in common to make them explode. But the annals and decades and centuries that were excised from them did very often force their way back into them with great power. Nothing is forgotten forever. The repositories very often did explode."

"How, Barney, how?" Harry O'Donovan challenged.

"I believe that it always begins with an earth-rumble, with a cavern-rumble," Barnaby said.

"With a room-rumble," contributed the sawdust-filled doll, but Barnaby did not attend her message.

"Decades and centuries refusing to be suppressed!" said Barnaby.

"Poor relations refusing to be suppressed," said Harry O'Donovan with sudden insight.

"A million years refusing to be frozen out," expressed Mary Mondo. "Say, do you know the real process responsible for the ice ages? Oh, never mind. Your minds are too cluttered already with things you barely understand. You have thrice-repeated boyhoods refusing to be suppressed. There is a group ghosthood refusing to give itself up. They all build power."

"Fortunately my own library is quite small and quite technical," Barnaby said. "I carry so much in my head, you see. Were it not so, I could almost feel the rumble of a coming explosion now."

"Oh, brother, cannot we all!" Dr. Drakos cried in sharp-eared comprehension.

iv

"*Kabloom, kabloom!*"
Said *McCrocky's* room.
— *Motto taken from the rubble and dust*
of Loretta Sheen

It was that old room over the garages that now rumbled fearfully as though to illustrate Barnaby's words. This was no ordinary rumble. We were all white-faced with fear, it was coming on so rapidly.

Then it exploded. *Kabloom!!*

It stunned ears, it paralyzed throats, it singed eyes. It buckled the floor of the study where we were and it knocked one wall completely out, even though the exploding room was in a building apart. It shook sawdust out of Loretta Sheen. It gave Harry O'Donovan a nosebleed, and it knocked Barnaby Sheen out cold. It is believed that it moved a small mountain over behind us, a small mountain known as Harrow Street Hill.

But the outdoors, seen and heard and smelled and felt where the wall had been knocked out, was like no outdoors we had ever seen before. There were many thousands of conflagrations and eruptions and avalanches and floods and quakes; and all of it had to be within a very small area, between the old garages and the house.

All the air was filled with reek and smoke and howling animate clouds. These clouds at first seemed like flying masses of biblical grasshoppers and locusts, plague creatures, but they had faces on them, and remembered parts. And they were upbeat and strong and not at all overwhelmed by the destruction.

There were the blown-apart pieces of boys flying through the air, and some of them looked a lot like ourselves. There were flying effigies by the thousands. Why, there was one whole parade or convention with banners flying. "Re-elect President Parkinson" was the message on the banners. He had been the leader of the Cow-Moose Party when he was elected president. How had he been forgotten, when weak echoes of him had been remembered?

There were our own grandfathers flying through the air. They weren't the two regular grandfathers that most of us remembered, but the other grandfathers that we had forgotten. And the air was full of tumbling and howling dogs such as hadn't been around here lately; what breeds they were! Baffinland Giants and Denver Block-Dogs, Hartstone Hunters and Blackfoot Swackers, Dansburry Dandies and Cowcatchers were there, with Brindled Birmingham Dogs


PRESTO PARKA
MEATS FOOT OIL
staton

and Grenadiers and Short-Haired Scratchers. How come we hadn't seen any of those sorts of dogs around for a long time?

There were the other kind of automobiles, that looked like McCormick Reapers with their cylinder-like vanes spinning in the wind and powering them. Oh hokey, there were even chalky comics from the old Magic Lantern theatre circuits. There were the Sullivan Seven-Passenger Family Balloons flying well enough and only a little bit tattered from the explosion. There were the other kind of people and the other kind of animals and the other kind of motor dredges.

Yeah, yeah, but most of it was people, and most of the people were in remembered masquerade costume. Only one whole parade? Why, there were perhaps a thousand parades, writhing and marching in that reek from the explosion; and yet, apparently, it was just one little room that had blown up. There were illustrated rocks floating through the air, thousands of trees worth of paper. But the whole thing had been no more than one clattering jolt, half-comic and half-frightening, and it was over with in an instant.

It left after-images, though, as a fire in a fireplace will shuffle them and show them. We would be seeing them, with our eyes open or with them closed, for a long time. And the thing, though destructive, wasn't depressing; there was a lot of fun associated with it.

A little while later, the dazed Austro came in, singed and smoking, but laughing. He had been in the room when it blew up, but he was a tough one.

"Carrock, carrock, we bust the crock," he said. It was the first complete sentence that he had ever spoken in English. He winked; he winked crookedly, he would never wink straight again. One of his eyes had been blasted askew. But he had salvaged an armload of patio blocks and he began to draw on them with happy abandon. And what he was drawing was the million-year-long saga of Rocky McCrocky.

We remembered now. John Penandrew used to draw Rocky McCrocky when we were boys. But Austro *was* Rocky McCrocky. No wonder he had always looked familiar.

"Cousin, rock-cousin," said Harry O'Donovan, "you have given me back the lost two-thirds of my boyhood. Ah, that was one of me sailing through the air with my head half severed off. What a guy I was when I was him! You have intruded a lost million years into a small room over there. We will never remember it all, but we have remembered parts of it now, parts of it that we thought were lost forever."

"It could not have happened," Barnaby muttered, still out, still over-

powered. "That room was not library; that room was not annals."

It was, though.

Somewhere there is the full story about man and his kindred, but pieces of it were right here. Loretta dribbled sawdust, and a profound written motto fell from her open throat. That was part of it, if only it could be read. Mary Mondo, that schizo-ghost, laughed in that way ghosts have. She remembered a lot about what and who we are. And Austro drew the Rocky McCrocky cartoons on blocks of flat stone and passed them around the neighborhood as a weekly feature. There is a lot of good information to be found in the weekly Rocky McCrocky documents.

ANIMAL FAIR

Mostly the animals understand their roles,
but man, by comparison, seems troubled by
a message that, it is often said, he cannot
quite remember, or has gotten wrong.
— Loren Eisely, *The Unexpected Universe*

An anarchist of shaggy trees,
A great red gleam that flies,
A rearing buck, a rampant breeze,
A girl with really eyes.
— Eco-Log

"That anarchist of yours is ruining my grass," Mrs. Bagby said to Barnaby Sheen as I walked with him one morning. "It looks so shaggy all at once that I give up on it. I trim it and edge it, but it's no use. And my trees! Just look at my trees!"

"I look at your trees," Barnaby said. "They do seem to come on a little stronger than they used to, which I like. But what anarchist are you talking about?"

"That anarchist that you keep in your house and that wanders everywhere. I don't know whether he's an ape or a man."

"Oh, he's a young boy," Barnaby told her. "I believe that he will

be a man when he's grown, though some of his species may grow up to be ape: the theological implications of this baffle me. But why do you call him an anarchist?"

"Because he looks at my grass and makes it sick."

"Never have I seen your grass looking more well, Mrs. Bagby," Barnaby said.

"Well, it's turned wild is what it's done," the lady insisted. "There's so many things in the neighborhood now that look different after—"

" – after he's looked at them? Yes, I know, Mrs. Bagby. Or rather, I don't know; I don't quite understand it myself. I ask Austro about it, and he just grins. He's getting to say a few more words now, but he isn't going to find words for such an ontological subject as this. It seems that I'm not going to find them either."

"Well, get rid of him, Mr. Sheen," Mrs. Bagby said. "This neighborhood isn't a zoological garden."

"It should be, Mrs. Bagby," Barnaby said seriously. "The whole world should be a zoological garden. Once, I believe, it was. It's a mistake to remember the first garden as small. It was worldwide. It *was* the world. Get rid of your own husband and children, Mrs. Bagby. Only then will I get rid of Austro and Loretta and Mary Mondo. They are *my* family. And Austro is not an anarchist. You are."

We went away from her, knowing that she was angry, being sorry for it. And her grass and trees *did* look more shaggy and living than used to be the case.

(Austro, the houseboy and bartender of Barnaby Sheen, was of the genus *australopithecus*, which is either ape, or ape-man, or man, the middle one of these being impossible. The genus was supposed to be extinct long since, but Austro was proof that it wasn't.)

(Loretta Sheen was a life-sized, sawdust-filled doll: Barnaby insisted that this object was the undead body of his real daughter Loretta. We had all known Barnaby well all our lives, yet we couldn't remember for sure whether he had ever had a real daughter or not.)

(Mary Mondo was a ghost, the schizo-personality of a girl named Violet Lonsdale who was long since dead. But Mary Mondo was not dead.)

These three young persons have been explained in other places on other days, but they must be explained all over again now and then. They take a lot of explaining.

Barnaby was gazing at an odd movement in that wooded draw behind his house. We both saw it then, in the middle of those little willow trees and nearly hidden. But if it was what it seemed to be, it was a little too big.

"Austro wants to hold a meeting of some different kinds of people, Mr. Sheen," Chiara Benedetti said suddenly. Chiara had not been the movement in the draw: she had appeared from some other direction, or she had simply materialized there.

"Certainly, Chiara, certainly," Barnaby said. "My home is Austro's home. He can have whomever he wants there. But why did he ask you to ask me?"

"He doesn't know how to ask you some things," she said. "And some of the people coming to the meeting, well, they aren't quite people."

(Chiara was, oh, somewhere between ten and fifteen years old: who can tell how old a girl is? She was somewhat younger than the now permanent stasis age of Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo. She hadn't been old enough to be in that Participation Psychology class taught by Edmond Weakfish, the class that cost Loretta and Mary-Violet and several others their normal lives.)

"Chiara, we just saw a movement down in the draw," Barnaby said. "I believe that there is a buck deer down there. It's strange that he should be inside the city, when the woods and meadows are still lush. Chiara, there's something rampant about the breeze."

Really, that draw was a bit of woods and meadow inside the city. Barnaby Sheen had two and a half acres. Cris Benedetti, the father of Chiara, had an equal area backing onto it, and the woody draw ran on the land of both of them.

"Yes, he's a buck deer," Chiara said. "There's a buffalo in there too, now."

"No, Chiara, you're just saying that," Barnaby admonished her.

"Partly, yes. But saying it helps to make it so. Saying it and seeing it. How do you think the buck deer got there? They are some of the people who have come to Austro's meeting. It will last for three or four days. You'll have to furnish accommodations for all of them, and that won't be easy."

"Why then it will be uneasy, Chiara," Barnaby said pleasantly, "but I will do as well as I can, and you and others will help me. Oh, Mrs. Bagby says that Austro ruins her grass and trees, makes them shaggy looking."

"She used to say that I did the same thing to them, Mr. Sheen. I guess I did, but not as well as Austro does it. She said that I spooked them just by looking at them. She said that I made them look like the grass and trees in paintings by Rosetti, not like real grass and trees. And I do. I have Really Eyes, you know."

"Chiara, Rosetti had a better understanding of reality than has Mrs. Bagby," Barnaby said. "And you, I believe, *can* actually effect with your seeing and feeling. But you couldn't turn a sewer into a clear

stream."

The charge was true about the wooded draw, whether it was true about Mrs. Bagby's property or not. The draw *was* like a Rosetti painting. And this was partly caused by Chiara wandering there and looking at it with her blue-black eyes till it was impossible for anyone to see it differently than she had seen it.

"If growing plants respond to sympathy and seeing, why not a sewer?" I asked.

"Ah, Laff, there is not a lot of sympathy to spare for sewers," Barnaby said, "yet it's true that the, ah, brook is practically a sewer when it enters the draw, and it is a clear Rosetti stream when it leaves. Chiara, see that broken flash skimming through the trees and bushes? He follows the blue shadows, and he breaks behind the trees so deftly that he can hardly be seen. But he's a cardinal bird, and he's as big as a tom turkey."

"Yes, he's the King Cardinal," Chiara said as if she knew all about him. "He's another of the people coming to Austro's meeting. And if you think he's big for a cardinal, then you just haven't had a good look at how big that buck deer is for a buck, or how big that buffalo is for anything."

"Have you any idea, girl, just how many people are coming?"

"Oh, it's only a regional division meeting, so there won't be many. A few dozen or a few hundred."

"What is it a regional division *of*, Chiara?" Barnaby asked, worried a little.

"Sometimes regular people who know about it call it the Lower House. But the delegates say that it should be called the Broader House."

"Do these rather mixed delegates understand what they are doing, Chiara?"

"Yes, mostly they do, Mr. Sheen. Do you?"

ii

Looking at evolution from below we see
emergence—from above, Creation.
—E. I. Watkin, *The Bow in the Clouds*

First came the answers far ahead,
Then tumbling question-hordes.
"I may not stay," the seed-man said,
"Nor take my ease with lords."
—*Eco-Log*

People couldn't help but notice the strong noise of the strange animals in the neighborhood. The bull moose made a lot of trumpeting racket, and the birds set up quite a chatter. But what was that really offensive croaking and clattering? No, it was not the bull frog; the bull frog was heard separately. Was there any truth at all to the legend of the Laughing Catfish?

"Now, *arche* means the beginning, the origin," Dr. George Drakos was saying. "Then it means the principle which is the same as the origin. It means the right, the rule, and as a derivative it means the authority or the office."

"And anarchy?" Barnaby asked too innocently.

"You know its meaning. It is the exact opposite of *arche*. It is not from the beginning; it is never original in anything; it is without principle; it cannot be of real authority; and it cannot ever be official."

"But what if anarchy came first?"

"Then all words are meaningless and everything is backwards. But it isn't so. The beginning, and not its opposite, came in the beginning."

"Not anarchy at world dawn? Not primitive chaos? And principle and order and purpose and authority later appearing and developing?"

"Never, Barney, never. Anarchy cannot pertain to anything old or primordial. Anarchy is always modern, which is to say 'of the mode', that most narrow and fleeting of states."

"I heard a rather primordial person, though young in years, called an anarchist today," Barnaby mused.

"Then someone was mistaken," Drakos insisted. "There is a wide misconception as to what happened in the beginning and as to what unfolding or evolution means. There is nothing new under the sun, and the sun itself was never so new as some have said. Too many persons have looked at the world as if it were indeed the product of natural-selection evolution, as if it were the result of purposeless chaos rather than purposive order. Enough persons have seen it so as to make it to be so for all impractical purposes. But every thesis, if acted upon widely enough, comes to its own in-built conclusion. The only possible conclusion to the natural-selection thesis is total pollution unto suffocation and death: the effluvia of organized and widespread idiocy always brings about this suffocation. And the last choking voice of the chaos-origin believers will croak, 'It is the fault of the others, of those who said that it began in order; they caused the whole breakdown.' "

"But we must see the whole thing with more valid eyes, and enough

of us must see it as it is to reestablish its validity. Seeing it and feeling it as it should be are creative acts; they will restore it as it should be. Too long we have been flawed lords. Now—"

A seedy little professor, known as an eccentric, came into the room where we were met. Someone had to have let him in. He couldn't have found that internal, private bar-study room otherwise. It was Austro, playing the butler but with many bewildering gestures, who had brought the seedy one in. Then Austro vanished, scooted, scatted.

"Austro wants to host a bash for some of his friends and associates," the seedy man said. (I forget his name: everyone always did forget his name.) "Ah, and they aren't all of them human," the little man finished lamely.

"I know a little about it," said Barnaby, "but I seem to know less and less about it as I go on. Ah, Mary Mondo, just what sort of hotel or guest accommodations would you offer a badger or a beaver or a prairie dog or vulture or sexton beetle?"

"Manure. I think we need lots of manure," Mary Mondo conveyed. "You know the riddle about the woman standing on the corner and one man went by walking and one on horseback and one on a bicycle. Which of them knew the lady?"

None of us knew.

"The horseman knew her," Mary Mondo conveyed. "Oh, there are so many things that can be done with manure! The tumble bugs love it, and the beetles. Whole life cycles can be built on it, and it will make all sorts of creatures feel at home. It's the old and unanswerable question, you know: which came first, the horse or the horse manure? But manure is very necessary."

"I agree that it is," Barnaby said. "It's a fact too often forgotten, and the world forgets it to its peril. Thank you, Mary, we'll lay in a store of horse manure, and several horses."

"You already have several horses, Sheen," the seedy professor said. "They are rather large and rough-looking horses. I don't believe that they belong to anyone around here. Say, where is this Mary you're talking to, and why can't I see her?"

"You can't see her because you have incomplete eyes, man," Barnaby said. "And for that reason you are, as I had suspected, an incomplete delegate to whatever that meeting is."

"I can see her a little bit now," the professor said, and he said it honestly.

We were met that night in Barnaby Sheen's bar-study; Harry O'Donovan, Dr. George Drakos, Cris Benedetti, Barnaby himself, those four men who knew everything; and myself, who didn't. And

now the seedy professor had joined us. And there was Austro who came and went; and Loretta and Mary Mondo who were and weren't.

"I'm here in a second capacity tonight, Barney," Drakos said, "as a doctor and observer, as well as a friend. The Board of Health is worried about certain strange and perhaps unsanitary animals which have been appearing around your property today. The board is having a meeting tomorrow morning on you, and I'm to sit in on it. And this evening, I'm to pick up what information I can here."

"You're certainly welcome to try, George," Barnaby said. "Myself, I don't understand it at all. There are animals in that back draw tonight that aren't often found in the city: porcupines, beaver, chipmunks, prairie dogs, badgers, skunks, rabbits, foxes and kit-foxes, wildcats, weasels, fishers, martens."

"And martins," said Harry O'Donovan, who was a bird-fancier. "They aren't a night bird, but they are out back tonight. And catbirds, scissortails, roadrunners, jaybirds. I have seen as many birds in a small area before, but not as many species of birds. Plovers, herons, ducks, mergansers, geese. There is even a swan: it must have flown from Swan Lake."

"It flew from further than that, so my daughter Chiara says," Cris Benedetti whispered softly. He seemed to be in awe of something. And the little interloper professor, he rolled in his hands some of those seed-filled sacks that were made of brown-green leaf that always remained as flexible as leather. Seedy he was called, for he always carried and scattered seeds. Oh, he wasn't seedy in the other way: he was neat enough, in an inconspicuous manner.

"Insects, worms, snakes, snails, frogs, I don't know where they're all coming from," O'Donovan said. "And fish! There couldn't be such big fish in that little creek or sewer ordinarily: it just wasn't deep enough before. Now it is, or it looks as though it is."

"Does anyone know the answer?" Barnaby Sheen asked.

"Certainly," said Drakos. "I was expounding on just that when the little professor came in. 'En *Arch*e en *ho Log*os,' as John writes in scripture: 'In the Beginning was the Word.' I have already told you that *Arch*e means the beginning, the origin or the original, the principle, the order and the balance, the rule, the authority, the office. And *Logos* not only means the word; it also means the account, the discussion, the study, the reason; and it means the answer. So the phrase really says, 'In the Beginning was the Answer.' "

"Ah, a great point has just been made in this Upper House session," said the seed-man.

"But the opposite of *l*ogos, *a*logos, means the unreasonable, the babble, and the absurdity," Drakos finished it.

"Logos also means the logic," Barnaby said. "But come off it, George, talk is cheap."

"No, real talk, discussion, logic, solution, is the *logos*, the pearl beyond price. It is not cheap. And I am correct when I say that *all* the answers were given in the beginning. That beginning is hard to attain, though, especially in a world that says it is impossible to turn back or even to look back."

"You are lords," the seedy professor said. "I'm not at my ease with you. I will go now, to attend the night session of the Broader House, and Austro will go with me. I assume that you lords will also remain in continuous session for the several days and nights of it. You have your own parts to play."

"I doubt if we'll remain in any such continuous session as that," Barnaby said. "Why should we? How have we a part to play in this Animal Fair?"

"Oh, you are the four men who know everything," the seed-man said. "This makes you the natural aristocracy. This scribbling scribe here will keep the log on you, and Austro will do the same thing for the regional division meeting of the Broader House. You four are the lords, the uppers."

"That we know everything is only a literary convention of this same scribbling scribe here," Barnaby said. "But he's right, Laff, you are a little bit like Austro. But we don't know everything, man, we don't."

"Nevertheless, those of the Broader House have heard that you do and they believe it. They need a counterpart. They find no other manageable center to look across to. They look to you lords to be that center, and several of us couriers between the two houses have pointed you out for the role. There might be violence, animal violence, if the delegates of the Broader House should labor and discuss and then discover that the lords will not bother about it."

The seed-man professor went out then, and young Austro went with him.

We were silent for a while.

"Well, are we lords?" Cris Benedetti asked the room.

"Aye, lord, we are," said Harry O'Donovan, "lords of creation."

And we were silent again.

"We're not going to need that manure after all," Mary Mondo conveyed, coming in like smoke from outside as persons in her state often do. "I should have known the answer: the horse came first. The cycle is operating nicely and we already have a fine name for our hospitality."

"Thank you, Mary," said Barnaby Sheen.

iii

If ever I shape the World again,
I'll liven the laughter and liven the pain.
—Song of the Shaper

An Animal Fair that grunted and yelped
Confronted its Upper Brother.
It's part of the doings that can't be helped
That the delegates ate each other.
—Eco-Log

People were more sensitive to the cacophony of the neighborhood now that the papers had published humorous little pieces about the din of the ghost animals. But the noise of them wasn't the only noteworthy thing; there were (there is no easier word for it: this *is* the easier word) stenches also.

The skunk is not the only stenchy animal, although the skunk was prominent there; the badger can also put out a lot of muskiness, as can the beaver, and the porcupine, and the ground hog, and the wolverine. It was a pretty bleak orchestration of smells that they put together there when the wind was wrong. Animals in the wild do not stink, it is often said. Maybe not, but animals in the wild do express themselves.

There were several most interesting days and nights then. Most of the interesting things centered around that wooded draw or ravine that ran behind Barnaby Sheen's place, between his land and the property of Cris Benedetti.

Quite a few people came there. Some of them were official and some of them were quasi-official; others were of no office at all. But they did not always find the same things there; some people saw things in a way different from others. Some of the folks saw the draw full of animals. Others saw nothing unusual there at all, just a cluttered ravine that should be cleaned out or filled up. I could see most of the creatures, but I had had previous practice with Austro and Chiara Benedetti, and with Mary Mondo.

Barnaby had had two hundred bales of hay hauled in there; then a couple of fifty-five pound blocks of rock salt, a great quantity of supplementary mineral pellets, a hundred pounds of bird seed, and a thousand pounds of dog and cat food.

"That should give something for everyone," he said, but he sounded doubtful. "It should give food for the herbivorous and for the carnivorous beasts as well, for the cattle of the earth and for the birds of the air, for the—ulp—I forgot—" He sent for a hundred pounds

of fish food then; and that stuff is expensive, especially when you pour it right into the water that seems sometimes clear and shining and sometimes cloudy and putrid.

There was sniggering, there were guffaws just off the edge of the ear, there was animal laughter; slashing, fanged laughter.

"I try to be a good host, at great personal expense, to guests I do not know and did not invite," Barnaby intoned sadly. "And I'm laughed at for it. Bedamned to you beasts! Growl at me, will you? I'll show you what real growling is like."

But we all knew that the dog and cat food was not acceptable, that it was a mistake. Nothing was likely to eat it except domestic dogs and cats, and the domestic dogs and cats of the neighborhood had been disappearing down the maws of larger and fiercer animals. And the fish food was not acceptable. Did you ever hear a fish snigger?

The draw seemed, at times, much larger than it could possibly have been. That block was only an eighth of a mile long, only half that wide; and the draw or ravine that snaked down the middle of it between the two properties was seldom more than thirty feet wide or eight feet deep. But now it seemed much larger, as though it were superimposed over a greater area: or, more seemly, as though it underlay a large region and was shining through. The draw was occupying space that belonged to something else. There were unaccountably grand vistas of–

> "–*vistas*, and *vastas*, and verdi-gris *lands*,
> *made by my Really Eyes, shaped by my hands.*"

Where did those unspoken, dog-eared words come from? Oh, partly they came from a tawny puma that had just finished off a dog, eating the ears last; partly from a wolverine, that fierce devil-animal; partly from a horned bull of uncommon size; partly from a snake in the grass.

Austro was into the business of seeing and constructing, hand and muzzle; and the seed-man, and a stranger. But mostly it was given its verbal form by Chiara Benedetti. She was alive and vibrant in the darkish glade there, singing silently within, with fox-fire coming from her in waves, and sparks from the tips of her toes and the tips of her ears. Oh, she was alive, and she was spirit-animal! And the cycle of creatures maintained each other in being by their attention and their sensing.

The most valid of scenes may be created, or maintained in being, by the forming eyes of no more than seven persons, so one of the old Greek philosophs told it. And Charles Harness has implied nearly the same thing.


Staton

But real scenes cannot be so maintained! Can they not now? The most real scenes are those maintained by the most real eyes and minds. It must be confessed, though, that quantity does often preempt quality in this field of the various realities.

Oh well, the dullest eyes could now see that there were a few stray and strange animals lying around and standing around in the draw. There was, for instance, a glare-eyed ox chewing his cud, and what was it doing there anyhow? There were a couple of skittish horses; there was a buck deer. There were other shapes that might have been animals, or that might have been stumps, or boles of trees.

A belching buffalo—it must have escaped from the Blue Hills Ranch: they have the only buffaloes around here; they try to cross them with cattle to fix certain traits, but mostly they only get sterile hybrids from the crosses.

Then a fish lept in a great arc, ten feet long and thirty-six inches high. How can a fish leap thirty-six inches high from water that is not ten inches deep?

"You have not got rid of that anarchist yet, Mr. Sheen," Mrs. Bagby was complaining. And Austro was shambling about, grinning, and drawing cartoons in a large drawing tablet. "I really believe that he brings about these strange scenes and effects by looking at things and drawing them," said Mrs. Bagby.

"That is the mark of a great artist, Mrs. Bagby," Barnaby commented.

"But he is rude, and he has made a rude picture of me," she complained.

"Let me see it," Barnaby ordered. And Austro brought the tablet and showed the cartoon with a half-sly, half-shamefaced manner. We looked at it. It was a picture of a witch riding on an incredibly worn-out broomstick, and she was just going into a tailspin from broom failure. The witch was saying something, in a cartoon balloon there, but it was printed in Austro notation which was impossible to read.

"How do you know that it's intended to be you, Mrs. Bagby?" Barnaby asked.

"Oh, I know it is, I know it is! Just look at that anarchist grin."

"If only I could read the words that you've written in the balloon, Austro," Barnaby wished out loud. "What are the words that the witch is saying when her broom finally gives out and she's left with a bare broomstick?"

"Oh, the witch says, 'That's the last straw!' when her broom finally dies," Chiara Benedetti said when she came to look. So Chiara could interpret Austro's scribbles.

"Austro writes or otherwise expresses himself in an intuitive

language," I said. "A few persons can comprehend it, but most cannot. And no one could be instructed to comprehend it."

"Oh shut up, Laff!" Barnaby growled. He was too intelligent to believe that, even though it was true.

"Actually, Austro's cartoon drawings, and the things shown spoken, are the minutes of the Broader House sessions," the seed-man commented as he came by.

"Ah, is the belching of the buffalo, as shown in the balloon over the animal-drawing there, a part of the speaking at the session?" Barnaby wanted to know.

"Oh yes, of course it is," the seed-man said. "The buffalo is one of the most respected spokesmen here and one of the finest orators."

Barnaby gave the big drawing tablet back to Austro: and that person began to draw furiously and well the minutes of the session, the snortings, gruntings, roarings. All was not amity with the people of the Broader House, but the rabbit did lie down with the wildcat for a while, and there was certainly an attempt at meaningful discussion. The wildcat made a statement, and Austro could be seen recording it. Then the rabbit made a statement; it was the antithesis to the statement made by the wildcat. Then the wildcat ate the rabbit: that was the synthesis.

Well, what sort of procedures do you have in your own Congress? And Austro was recording it all faithfully.

"Reality," said Harry O'Donovan with an unreal look in his eyes, "must remain a subjective thing to each individual person, though we have it on Faith and also from the Schoolmen that there *is* an objective reality. Cris, your daughter Chiara was playing Animal Crackers this afternoon, and for a while I shared a subjective reality that she had created. We used to play Animal Crackers when I was a little boy."

"I don't remember playing any such game as Animal Crackers, Harry," George Drakos said, "and I was a little boy with you."

"I was a sissy," Harry O'Donovan said. "Sometimes I played it with my sisters. When we played Animal Crackers we did literally create animals, by mind over animality. But they were a fast-fading bunch of beasts that we evoked or shaped-up; except one dog, Crackerjack, that I made and had for years."

This was probably the second evening after a certain Congress of Creatures had assembled; or after the game of Animal Crackers had begun to be played seriously, should one see it from that viewpoint. We were met in Barnaby Sheen's study again for a pleasant evening's libations and talk, or perhaps we were met for a session of the Upper House, should one see it from *that* viewpoint.

"Animal Crackers is a very sophisticated game for children to play," Harry O'Donovan was saying. "But it is, paradoxically, almost impossible for adults to play, and absolutely impossible for sophisticated adults. It is based on self-hypnotism and group-hypnotism. One sees a shape of rock or tree or bush; no matter what shape it really is, it will somewhat resemble the shape of some animal or group of animals. It will resemble the shape of some*thing* anyhow; there is no shape so poor that it does not own two or more viewpoints. Your boy Austro, Barney, can draw these things on paper or on stones so that you look at them, and then look at them again and see the animated or animal pictures in them. It's enough to make the hair raise up on your head to see wild, fierce, ravening beasts not five feet from you, to feel their body-heat wafted to you on the rampant breeze, to smell—"

"—their manure," Barnaby interrupted. "There's so many things that can be done with manure and it is so very necessary, as Mary Mondo pointed out. And, as I myself pointed out, it is too often forgotten or swept into the sewer, so much so as to imperil the world. It isn't the waste that causes pollution. It's the attempt to take the waste out of the cycle that pollutes. Go on, Harry."

"—to smell their hair-smell and their fur-smell, and the green breath of the foliage-eaters and the red breath of the meat-eaters. Who said anything about smelling manure, Barney? It really hasn't much smell when the animals are unpenned and uncrowded. To hear the gurgling in the gullets of the beasts and the growling in their stomachs! Austro can evoke all this with his interpretive and creative drawings. And your girl Chiara, Cris, abets this game with her wonderful imagination. She made one mistake this afternoon though—"

"I don't think so, Harry," Cris Benedetti said. "What was it?"

"The lynx, she got it a little wrong when she created the impression of it. She forgot the enormous paws that go with the comparatively small body. She forgot the tufted ears, and she gave it a tail too long and too bushy."

"There are no native lynx around here," Drakos said. "You may have observed the lynx out at Mohawk Zoo, but hers was a simple bobcat or wildcat of our own region. There's many of them around if you've the sharp eyes to see them. You haven't, Harry. And she got it right. So did Austro."

"You also were caught up in the Animal Cracker game, George?" Harry asked.

"No. I don't know the game. But Austro showed me a drawing he had made of a wildcat, not of a lynx. And once today, when I watched Chiara, she had wildcat eyes and not lynx eyes."

"Imaginary animals or group-hypnosis animals must eat a lot of

hay," Barnaby Sheen said. "I received a couple of delivery-slip copies in the mail today. I don't understand them at all, but they are from several different firms and it is clearly my signature on each bill. What am I doing making purchases from a grain and feed company, from a wholesale grocery firm, from Uncle Dan's Country Store and Farm Supply, and from a pet shop? What am I doing buying fish-food in quantity? I'm not in the habit of that. There is something particularly fishy about the fish-food."

Loretta Sheen sat up, winked (and a little sawdust trickled out of her eye when she did this), and lay back down again. Animal Crackers indeed! People Crackers rather. One was always in danger of self-hypnotism when in the same room with that life-sized doll.

"I have the feeling of invisible empires these last several days," Cris Benedetti said. "And they seem to interlock as if they had common roots in a common ground. I'm reminded of a parable somewhere in Chesterton. It's about a sad-looking weed in a desert, but it happens to connect with the roots of the world. A boy tries to pull this weed up, but it is very strong for a small weed. He cannot pull it out of the ground, but he pulls many other things down into the ground in the attempt. Distant orchards are pulled down into the earth by his attempts, for they all connect to his weed. Vineyards are drawn down into the soil, and olive groves. Meadows and vegetable gardens go down, and wheat fields, all leaving bare desolation where they have grown. Then sections of dams are pulled down, and levees; leaving swamps that are neither sweet nor saline, but rotten. Canals and rivers are unbottomed and fall into chasms, and their places are taken by noisome sewers. Buildings totter and topple and crash. The earth quakes, the mountains melt, and scorching fires break out everywhere.

"Then the boy notices that what he is pulling on is not a weed at all. It's a noble plant, and the name of it is truth-from-the-beginning plant. After the boy stops pulling on the plant, the world begins to mend itself. But from time to time someone else tries to pull up the plant, believing (on account of perverse vision) that it's a weed. So the world becomes clogged and poisoned and awry again. I believe that someone is trying to pull up the little plant at the present time, and with the same sad consequences all over again."

"I believe that I read something in Chesterton that might serve as the germ of that parable," Drakos said. "But he did not write it as you give it."

"Actually, I didn't read it at all. My daughter Chiara read it, and she told it to me; she was quite excited about it. She doesn't falsify things when she changes them while filtering them through her mind. She makes them more true: I would say that she verifies them,

if verify hadn't taken on a different meaning. Barnaby, why don't we do something about that damnable sewer that runs between our properties?"

"Yes, why don't you?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "Pollution begins at home: at your home here, Barney, and at Benedetti's, not at mine. The water is foul and rotten, and the banks are trashy. I can smell it strongly right now."

"I am doing something about it," Barnaby said. "I'm thinking about it."

"And thinking about it will make it less of a sewer?" O'Donovan asked with irony in his high voice.

"I don't know," Barnaby confessed dismally. "I believe that thinking about it is the first step in making it less of a sewer, yes. It's possibly something else to other eyes. And a beaver I talked to today said that he had some good ideas about righting it. He showed me, or someone showed me, what it could be made into: quite a pleasant little brook flowing into a clear-water grassy pond, and going out again in a small waterfall over a dam that had a beaver warren inside it. The banks were lush, and the trees and bushes were clean and rich. The beaver also told me (which I had somehow forgotten) that every brook, pond, dam, waterfall, tree, and bush has its own spirit and that these in the personification age were called nymphs.

"What am I talking about?" Barnaby raised his head suddenly in alarm. "Am I mad? I never talked to a beaver in my life. My mind must have blown. Say, does anyone know why I signed a delivery ticket for two hundred bales of hay? Whatever would I do with hay? What in the world did I *think* I was signing when I signed that? And where would the hay be now, if there ever was any hay involved?"

Barnaby took another sip from his drink. Mary Mondo, that kook spook, had just poured something into that drink and Barnaby hadn't noticed. Now Barnaby yawned and then he nodded. He was getting sleepy.

The seed-man came into the room. Then Austro came in. Austro had come in by the door, but the seed-man hadn't.

iv

Three objects, bright as burning brand,
Are fixed beyond recall:
The starting word; the Shaper's hands;
The writing on the wall.

—Orthcutt

The weighing vane swings very far,
And how the time does go!
Oh sharply, sharply! for you are
Replaceable, you know.

—*Eco-Log*

It had become a pantheronium of noise, an all-animal clamor, and the lonesome wildcat contributed a lot of caterwauling to it. But mostly it was the trumpeting of the bull-moose and the bugling of the bull-elk; that, and the neighing of the stallion of the other kind of horse. And the complaints of the cow, and the belching of the buffalo. The sessions of the Broader House continued noisy.

"The children of the world (and it is written that in their generation they are wiser than the children of light) say that a surplus of people is the cause of the suffocation and pollution. They are wrong, and yet they sound as if they were right," Harry O'Donovan said, and then Mary Mondo poured something into his drink. He didn't seem to notice it at all.

This was probably the following evening. Something had largely wiped out one evening and night and the next day, and Mary Mondo had been pouring something into the drinks for several evenings. The seed-man and Austro had just entered again.

"The children of the world are wrong," Drakos said. "Augustine used the phrase 'the number of saints fit to complete this most blessed city'; and that number has not been reached yet. When the peopling of the world reaches a certain stage, then the world will transcend itself. It hasn't yet." And Mary Mondo poured something into Drakos' drink.

Loretta Sheen sat up. She put a finger to her lips and made a hushing sound. A bit of sawdust dribbled from the corner of her mouth. Then she lay back down again.

"I always have a lot of prodigies about me," Barnaby said sleepily. "My 'family' consists entirely of such. But these last several days there have been prodigies out of the ordinary. I seem to see animals where there cannot be any such animals. I get the impression of a Congress of Creatures or of an Animal Fair. I see and talk with a seed-man. Then I watch him come through a wall, so I know that he's no ordinary seed-man. But I feel that all these things are trying to tell me something."

"These things are like the ouija board or the Olduvai Gorge, Barney," Cris Benedetti said (and Mary Mondo poured something into his drink). "They tell you what you want to believe. They tailor their evidence to your wishes. They give you back your own thoughts

and beliefs. But there wasn't any Animal Fair. There was only O'Donovan's game of Animal Crackers that got out of hand because of the forming imagination of several children, my daughter Chiara, and your stepson Austro, perhaps others. And the seed-man is pure wraith: I don't know who it was who made *him* up."

"You know more about me than I do about myself?" the seed-man asked, but Benedetti hardly heard him. The seed-man had various sorts of seeds in those leatherly leaf pouches. He even had fish roe.

Mary Mondo poured something into my own drink. I tasted. It was a strong and not quite bitter additive. It tasted a little licorice. It comes in very small black-label bottles, and many bars do not have it at all. It's named Lethe. I didn't drink much more of my drink.

"The creatures of the Broader House are putting you on notice," the seed-man said. "You must do much, much better with your sessions." But we didn't pay much attention to him.

"Stevenson said it right," Barnaby mumbled. " 'There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy.' " And on that profound note, Barnaby fell into deep sleep. Mary Mondo had been needling his drink again tonight.

"You lords do not seem to understand all the alternatives," the seed-man said, "though you are on friendly and not too patronizing terms with a member of one of the races involved. You see, one or more early human races, as human as ourselves, may have been set aside and held in reserve. Perhaps they'll be called into the game soon now, as a second team is called in when the first team is unable to move the ball."

Austro grinned and pointed at himself. Then he clasped his hands high over his head like a victorious prizefighter. But the funny thing about it was that none of my four friends seemed to see or hear the seed-man for the rest of the evening; and none of them noticed Austro's antics.

"I've just had the most droll notion," Harry O'Donovan said sleepily. "What if there were one or more early races of humans, as human as ourselves, who had been set aside or held in reserve? What if they'll be called in to take our place if we don't do a little better at our problem-solving? How does that strike you for a speculation?" And O'Donovan suddenly fell into unsound and twitchy sleep.

What was this? Was the seed-man sometimes inaudible and invisible to these lords, the while he conveyed his message to their minds? That certainly seemed to be the case.

"One of the things that has gone wrong is that you no longer recognize the spirit in things," the seed-man said. "The spirit of the Shaper, of course, is in everything, whether living or unliving, in every person, animal, plant, tree, pond, rock, house, factory. But

your minds are not able to comprehend this. Once you saw a nymph in everything, every tree, every stream, every stone. At another time you saw an angel in each thing. Now you the lords do not see the spirit in any thing at all. You are not holy enough to see the Shaper, not holy enough to see the angel, not even holy enough to see the nymph. Ah, most of you are not holy enough to see the stone."

But neither of my two waking friends seemed to hear or see the seed-man at all.

"I've just had an idea," Cris Benedetti said with creeping sleepiness in his voice. "My daughter says that seeing a thing in a certain way will sometimes make it so. These are the metaphysics, the things beyond and behind the physics. I believe that we should see a nymph in every tree and stream once more, in every field, ah, in every factory. If only we could realize that every object contains the whole of the spirit! But, since we cannot, then why can we not see a personification of the spirit in every object? What we need is more nymphs. Even the sewers should have nymphs: then they would realize that there is no shame in being a sewer, not in being a good and transforming sewer. Ah—"

Ah, he was asleep.

"So you've put another one of them on the doze," I told the seed-man. "But there aren't any nymphs, you know."

"Chiara is one," he said. "Mary Mondo is one of a different sort. Loretta is one of still another sort: she is the nymph and the spirit of this cluttered house. And the sawdust that trickles out of her does not even tell her father that this holy house is being turned into sawdust by termites.

"But why, lords, do you not mine the richest mines of all? Your rotten waters are real treasure-rivers of chemicals and minerals. Your junk heaps are the most concentrated metallic ores to be found on Earth. Your neglected and unkempt and polluted brains contain such masses of sheer intellect as would insure that you be lords of the world almost forever. Ah, use them, plant them, grow them, harvest them again and again."

George Drakos did not hear or see the seed-man, and he had the hearingest ears and the seeingest eyes of any of them.

"The answer," Drakos said in a drowse, "is in recycling and recycling again until we restore each thing to its proper life. We will recycle animal waste and plant waste, factory waste and mining waste. We will recycle (restore is the proper word) provinces and towns and personalities and persons. Let the chips fall where they may! We're only dead once. We'll bring things back to their beginnings. We will remember the meaning of the words 'I am the resurrection and the life.' " Then Drakos was asleep.

George Drakos had known by insight that the answer was given in the beginning: but he had started the book backwards, like an Arab or a Jew, on the last page, and he had not got to the beginning yet.

"No, no more, Mary," I told Mary Mondo. "That stuff makes me sleepy and it makes me forget."

"Oh shoot!" she conveyed. "I like to slip them to the fellows, and it's my job for a while, while Austro is busy on the Fair. Besides, you *have to* forget. This has to be buried down inside you, like one of the seed-man's seeds, before it will grow."

"What is your name?" I asked the seed-man.

"I am Seminator the sower, one of the sons of Tellus," he said.

"Then you are not a professor?"

"Yes, I am a professor. I profess."

There were noises downstairs as though creatures were coming in. There was the hair-smell and the fur-smell climbing up from the lower floors; there was the green breath of the foliage-eaters and the red breath of the meat-eaters; there was the feather and foot-smell of the birds. It was a complex of creeping, crawling, scuttering, hopping, fluttering, flying things down there. There was the rattling of antlers and the squeaking of nonretractable claws on wooden floors. There was turkey gobble and badger hiss.

"Go down to them, Austro, and record their decision, inasmuch as they have made what can be called a decision," the seed-man said. And Austro went.

"Each of these local chapter meetings is a small thing," the seed-man explained to me then. "A couple hundred of significant animals, a half dozen or so of lords. But multiply one of these local meetings by ten thousand times the world over and it isn't so small a thing. You are scribe for the sleeping lords here, but I doubt if you'll be able to follow this. Well, all that anyone can do is his best. Now then, sleeping lords—"

The seed-man talked to them, to Barnaby Sheen and George Drakos, to Harry O'Donovan and Cris Benedetti. He talked to them at great length, and they sound asleep all the while. But, asleep as they were, they were plainly understanding him on a profound level, and I wasn't. It isn't given to everyone. *They* were the men who knew everything. I was only a scribe, like Austro.

Austro came up to the room after an hour or so. Downstairs there was the shuffling and scraping and scratching and stomping of animals and birds going out. The seed-man looked questioningly at Austro, and Austro drew a drawing for him.

"Ah, those of the Upper House are put on notice," the seed-man interpreted. "The Animal Fairs here and all over the world have put you on very short-term notice. Your unwritten contract will not even be on a yearly basis now. It will be on a weekly, even a daily basis. The creatures have been doing all the work, they say: they have furnished the forming eyes, and you the deforming. You must see with more valid eyes, with more interlocking eyes. You can be replaced, you know."

"Just what should we do?" I asked the seed-man.

"I have told the sleeping lords," the seed-man said. "I have told them some certain things; and for the rest, they must tell themselves and this world. It isn't pleasant for me, you know, to have to come back every several centuries from my well-won rest. It isn't pleasant for my ten thousand brothers either. I leave now. I'm not allowed to take my ease here."

Then the seed-man was gone, and not by the door.

Really, had he ever been there at all?

"What is really the situation, Austro?" I asked. He drew a hand in his drawing tablet. Somehow he had the perspective all wrong, for the hand was a million times bigger than the drawing tablet it was drawn in. It was the Shaper's hand, and it looked as if it might come down on us at any moment.

"Serious, is it?" I asked.

He nodded that it was. Then he grinned. He pointed at his head and made a circular motion with his finger. He looked at the dozing men who knew everything and he shook his head. Then he winked.

"They'll not remember that it happened," he said in his seldom-used English. "They'll have to work it out without remembering."

"How serious, Austro?" I asked.

He made big graphs on the wall with a luminescent red pencil. He could write a few English words when he wanted to, but the sentence on the wall was in that intuitive picture language of his. There were a couple of discs or scales in almost-balance. There were some lumps on one scale (and I knew that I was part of one of the lumps): there were what appeared to be tongues of fire on the other scale. And there was a line of writing.

Even as I looked, I saw the balance beam in the drawing was moving slightly on the wall.

"Ye are weighed in the scales?" I asked fearfully, and he nodded that I had read it correctly. Then he wrote the second line and I was still more uneasy.

"And are we found wanting?" I asked.

"Carrock! Don't rush it," he said. Then he rewrote this last line in English, making glowing red words below it all:

"Sure is going to be close," the words said. I thought I saw the balance rod in the drawing on the wall move just a bit more.

Austro fixed himself a drink and sat back in an easy chair. Why, I wondered, could I come near to understanding Austro; and the four men couldn't, for all the deeper things they knew. They couldn't intuit his intuitive language, and they could never recognize his occasional English for what it was.

Austro motioned to Mary Mondo, and she came and added to his drink. *He* drank. "Neither will we," he said in that slurry voice of his. *He* meant that neither would we remember that the happenings had happened.

"The animals in the draw, will they also forget it?" I asked.

"Yeah. They forget it right now. It has to be worked out without remembering. The additive has been put into that little brook also."

I decided that it was because I look and act a little more like Austro than those others do that I could understand him better. So we drank together, the two of us, the youngish man of the species *Homo australopithecus* and the oldish man of the species humorously called *Homo sapiens*.

"I'll also have a little of that now, Mary," I said: and the kook spook poured a bit of the additive into my glass.

"Cheers," I said, and I drank.

"Fchoinoeachlyuntrqu," Austro toasted in turn, and drank deeply.

Folks in the scribbling trade often drink unto the state and stuff of Lethe when they're together. There's a touch of necessity to it.

THE UNGODLY MICE OF DOCTOR DRAKOS

There was a crooked man
And he made some crooked mice:
And crooked fire and plasma ran
By thunderous device.

—Eco-Log

Doctor George Drakos made some mice. There was nothing unusual about that: Drakos had been trying to create life for a long time, and if towering mentality and a very wide knowledge might do it; then he was the one to do it. He had a fine laboratory and he concocted, brewed, invented, and evoked a great many things there. "Drakos' last is always a first," they said in the para-biological trade. But his mice didn't make much of a stir at first, not around the neighborhood at least.

"There is a shortage of mice, George?" Harry O'Donovan asked him with unveiled irony. "Ah, that one I don't like," (this was about a mouse sticking its head out of Drakos' shirt pocket). "He reminds me, in an unclean way, of someone I know."

"He should, Harry," Drakos mocked. "I made him to look a bit like you and to sound like you."

"Aye," the mouse said in a high-pitched voice very like that of Harry O'Donovan.

"Watch you do not go over the line, George!" Harry cried in rising

anger. "Are you a mountain, George, that you should birth mice?"

"They weren't any ordinary mountains that labored to bring forth these mice," Drakos said seriously. "Believe me, they were the Acroceraunian Mountains themselves."

"The Thunder Mountains, George? I always wondered where they were located; where did you find them?"

"In my own head," Drakos quipped.

"Come along, Laff," O'Donovan said, "let us leave this disgraceful fellow. Imagine a man turning to the manufacture of mice at his age. I always thought that God had made too many of them, but you rather out-God God in some things, George."

So we left the Doctor there, with his pockets full of lively mice. But I really couldn't see why Harry O'Donovan was so disturbed by a mouse that looked and sounded a bit like himself.

Oliver Benedetti paid no attention to the mice at all. Oliver was a dog belonging to the Benedetti family, to Cris and his daughter Chiara. Drakos would put several of the mice right under Oliver's nose, and the dog didn't seem to see them or smell them.

"Have you made the small things without a smell, George?" Cris Benedetti asked. "No, you haven't: I can smell them myself, an ozone sort of smell. Then why does Oliver pay no attention to them?"

"Oliver simply doesn't like the ozone sort of smell," Drakos said, "so he turns away from them. Though they're pretty well made, Oliver doesn't recognize them as mice. He doesn't even recognize them as alive."

"Well, are they alive, George?" Cris asked.

"Oh yes. Of course they are. Why would I make dead mice?"

"Mr. Drakos," Chiara Benedetti said, "the feet of one of your mice don't reach all the way to the ground."

"I must have made them too short then, Chiara," the good doctor smiled.

"Come along, Laff," Cris said to me. "We do have some odd friends, but one who goes around with his pockets full of home-made mice is a little too much."

"Especially when their feet don't always reach the ground," young Chiara sniffed.

But Doctor Drakos, for a biological doctor, was no mean inventor. He had pulled many a good trick, with living things and with unliving; indeed, he sometimes said that he was erasing the mark between them. He had hypnotized ferrous metals and implanted post-hypnotic anti-rust suggestions in them; and they would not rust, those in which he had implanted that resolve. He had put a cheap

sheet-iron cover over his patio, and it did not dare to rust with the fear he had put into it.

It's an anthropomorphic explanation of how he inhibited metals from rusting; nevertheless, they did not rust. It's an anthropomorphic explanation of the way he made mice also.

Austro had, from the first, paid a great deal of attention to the mice. He had raised unholy hell about them. He had, in his cartoon drawings, made the charge that Doctor George Drakos had raised unholy hell in creating them. Austro was the houseboy of Barnaby Sheen, a special sort of houseboy—special, meaning of a species, the species being Australopithecus. There were some folks who thought it outrageous that Barnaby should keep a boy of apish and putatively extinct species.

"Who else would give him a job?" Barnaby asked. "Would any of these bleeding mouths hire him for anything at all? Name me one of them who'd do it."

Austro drew some very stark and spooky cartoons about the newly created mice and their possible consequences. There was hellfire and heaven-fire in those eschatological drawings, crooked lightning, and angry obliteration. But Austro hadn't had a really normal boyhood, and he was often upset by things not normally upsetting.

"Carrock, come along, Laff," he said now. "Let's leave the evil doctor to his own devices. There's things about those mice just not right."

Barnaby Sheen wasn't much impressed by the mice that Drakos had made.

"How do snakes like them?" he asked. "How do foxes and coyotes; how do hawks and owls?"

"I don't know," Doctor Drakos said, as if he had never considered the matter before.

"You don't know, George?" Barnaby asked in cresting incredulity. "But that's what mice are for, to serve as a standard food for a variety of predators. That, and to scavenge a bit, and to relieve humans of uncomfortable surpluses of wheat and other foodstuffs. Will they do any of those tasks?"

"I don't know, Barney, I haven't tried them on it."

"How did you make them, George? How does one create life? Did you have any trouble coding the DNA molecules?"

"No. They don't have intricate DNA molecules. Those are only needed for reproducing, and my mice will not reproduce. I will make them new every time. No, this is not a disadvantage. It is a distinct advantage. I have variety in my mice that natural-born mice cannot have. I can make my mice widely different, but mice can make

themselves only a little bit different. No, they don't eat food; so I do not give them any elaborate equipment or a tract. Oh, they eat wind and electricity, and that's the truth of it."

"What can they do, George?"

"My mice can talk and count; what other mice can do that? My worry is not that they're not good enough but that they're too good. They do things that I didn't create them to do or teach them to do. Who else has been brain-lighting my mice?"

"I believe you will find it has been yourself, from a hidden aspect, George. Had you trouble with the nerves, or building the brains?"

"As to that, Barney, I used short-cuts and short-cuts and still more short-cuts; and then it all started to fall together. There were so many techniques that I intended to use, and then the mice had already come to life before I got to use them. There are things about them that I don't consciously understand at all. But I have created animal life; no other physician or biologist has ever done that."

"But what for, George? How are the mice you made any better than those that God made?"

"I don't maintain that they're any better, Barnaby. But they are a little different."

"Come along, Laff," Barnaby said. "Let's leave the learned oaf to swash in his own bilge. A man who'd make anything without clear purpose is as confused as a democrat or Darwinian."

Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo weren't enraptured by the idea of the new mice either, and they were two of the most tolerant persons anywhere. They had to be tolerant: they had so much else working against them.

"There are house mice here who gnaw my members and let sawdust out," Loretta conveyed. "I don't love them for that, and yet I love them. But these new mice that I sense, I don't love them at all. Austro gives some pretty direful predictions about them, and he's an expert on dire. And Chiara Benedetti says that their feet don't always reach the ground."

"Neither do mine, neither do yours," Mary Mondo expressed. "We forgive it in ourselves, but not in mice. There is something about these mice that is too spooky for me."

In the evening I was walking with Austro when we saw George Drakos coming up the road. The weather had already become a little bit agitated, and now Austro became decidedly so. There were bristling green clouds, tumbling and growing; they were moving too fast and they were glowering too darkly. Yes, and they were spitting a bit of fire.

Austro also was sparking a trifle, or so it seemed. His hair bristled and crackled. He wished to turn aside. "Austro, nobody turns aside to avoid meeting a friend," I told him. And besides, Drakos had already come up to us with that long saunter that seemed so slow and easy while it brought him always to a place quicker than one might believe. One was always tempted to say to Drakos, "You cheated; you skipped part of the way in the middle. You didn't really walk all that way that fast."

"Hi, Austro, hi, Laff," Drakos said, but he had a bristling sort of worry about him.

"Carrock," Austro said warily. A mouse stuck its head out of Drakos' coat pocket.

"Carrock," the mouse said in exact mimicry of Austro, who fell to trembling.

"Ah, there is no sense in being afraid of a mouse, Austro," Drakos jibed, and he sat the small rodent down on the paving there. "You aren't a young girl to be afraid of a mouse. You are a boy, almost a man."

Austro would have nothing to do with the mouse that mocked him there and looked at both of us with the eyes of someone we already knew. Well, the mouse looked at us with eyes ever so much like those of Austro, and that was the truth of it.

But Austro, with his sunshine brains, had an idea. There was an old carpet there that kids had been using for a tent before they had abandoned it. Austro shuffled his feet on the deep-piled fabric of it. He shuffled his great, splayed shoes on it (Austro had slightly opposable big toes so his shoes were very wide and specially made); his hair stood on end and he sparked.

"Carrock. Bad wind. Spark wind," Austro said. He bent down and touched the mouse with a trembling, crackling finger. There was a sizzling and then—

Ka-loom!!

There was an explosion, a violent one for all that it was small. There was a clap of thunder at the same time, but none except the credulous would connect them.

"Oh, God, don't!" George Drakos cried out, and he staggered back, whey-faced and with hands over his heart.

"Are you all right, George?" I asked. "You look almost like a dead man."

"Carrock, good Drakos?" Austro asked, with deep worry.

"Yes, I'm all right again," the doctor said, and he attempted a smile. "I looked like a dead man, did I? Oh, I died a little then, but we all do that every day. Yes, something did go out of me, but the only harm is that one of the mice is destroyed. I can easily make another, but

I won't. I have several left."

Well, the mouse had exploded, or it had disappeared anyhow.

"Barnaby wanted us to drop over after supper," Drakos said then, "and it is that time now. Say, dark does come early, what with those weird clouds! Have a couple of the best, fellows—they're because I'm a father. The mice, you know."

Drakos gave each of us a cigar, and Austro and I lit up.

"I *am* still welcome at Barnaby's, am I not, Austro?" Drakos asked.

"You, always, carrock, always," Austro said. "Not sure about the mice, though."

"I know what they are now," Harry O'Donovan said. "They're little globs of gas plasma, that's what they are."

We were in Barnaby Sheen's cluttered study, Harry O'Donovan, Doctor George Drakos, Cris Benedetti, Barnaby Sheen, those four men who knew everything; and myself who didn't. And Austro who didn't, Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo who didn't, and seven peculiar mice who perhaps didn't either.

"They're plasma," O'Donovan repeated, "but how is it possible to grow hair on gas globs?"

"I do some pretty tricky things in my laboratory," George Drakos said.

"But I'm right, am I not?" O'Donovan still demanded.

"A little bit right, Harry," Drakos said. "Yes, they're part plasma."

"One meaning, the mineral meaning of plasma," said Barnaby Sheen, "is a variety of quartz, green and faintly translucent."

"That is one definition of life," said Cris Benedetti, "the mineral definition: green and faintly translucent. Ah, your own complexion is a bit green these days, Drakos, like a boy who's swallowed his first cut of chewing tobacco. What's the matter, George? Have you swallowed more than you bit off? And where did the extra come from?"

"You do look bad tonight, George," Cris Benedetti said. "Are you?"

"No. I feel fine now, though I did have a twinge an hour or so ago."

"I said you looked bad; I didn't say that you looked as if you felt bad," Benedetti said rudely. "I wasn't referring to your state of health." There was an embarassed silence.

The mice ran about the floor. They stopped and sat up. They mimicked, and they mimicked cruelly. There was something unnatural here.

Austro was in a state of almost electric excitement and protest. He drew furiously in his drawing tablet. He drew thunderbolts and blasts and ball-lightning, and charged plasma globs like glowing and clinging swamp ghosts. He drew projections, and the aura of evil;

he drew the electrical phenomenon known as hysteresis. He was partly unlettered, and not even accounted as human by all; but he did have those sunshine brains.

"Austro is predicting a terrible thunderstorm almost immediately," Barnaby interpreted.

"So is the weather bureau," said Drakos. "Austro probably heard the six o'clock report. So are our own ears predicting it. Austro is not so special, not one to be taken for an oracle. Tell me, when a man accomplishes something extraordinary (and I *have* accomplished something extraordinary in creating these living mice), why is everyone immediately jealous?"

"I'm surely not jealous of you," Cris said. "Harry isn't, Barney isn't, Laff isn't, Austro isn't (though he's afraid of your things): the two girls aren't jealous of you; they move in and out of realms that you can't touch."

"Well, someone is jealous," Drakos insisted, and now he was looking as if he *felt* bad. Austro was drawing furiously in garish and frightening lines. Drakos came to look. We all came to look.

"What does it say, Austro?" Drakos asked, but Austro only shivered.

"It says that God is jealous," Mary Mondo interpreted.

One of the mice mimicked Loretta Sheen. It made sawdust dribble out of the corner of its mouth in her manner. It gave with spirit knocks, as she sometimes gave them. Loretta groaned in great agony. There was simultaneous blinding lightning and deafening thunder to the point of shaking and scorching the whole house.

"Oh, God, don't!" George Drakos cried, exactly as he had cried earlier when one of his mice had exploded and he had suffered a slight heart twinge. I realized now, and I think that Austro realized it too, that Drakos was using "God" as a direct address and not as an exclamation.

"There's an old folklore connection between rodents and thunderstorms," Barnaby Sheen said informatively. "There are echoes of it in the Rat King: more in the orchestration than in the story-line, really. I believe the closer connection, though, is between mice and thunder. Were you aware of the connection, George, when you made the mice?"

"Certainly, certainly. Oh, why is there this attempt to intimidate me and divert me from my work! I have put so much of myself into them! Why am I thwarted?"

"One account, a Balkan or Thracian one, was that the mice in their millions nibbled on the toes of the mountains," Barnaby continued. "The mountains, in certain seasons, were driven wild by this irrita-

tion, and they answered it by violent thunder."

"I am investigating and creating things by my legitimate lights," Drakos was insisting. "I have created life: I am learning how it was done in the past and how it might be done better."

Oh, that thunder, that thunder!

"You've not created life, man," Barnaby said sharply but compassionately. "You have deceived yourself. You have indeed put yourself into it; you have projected life, your own, a little."

"My mice are alive, my mice are alive," Drakos insisted. "There's no man else in the world who could have made such mice."

"I agree," Barnaby said. "Ah, that one mimicks me devilishly. Someone else used to mimick me just like that; it was you, George. You were always a scatterbrain, will you have any wits left when this is finished with?"

"Yes, I hope so, I think so. And the weather can't affect the plasma part of my constructions. Brookhaven has assured me of that."

"What does Brookhaven know about weather?" Barnaby asked. "They've never had any of it; not *weather*!"

Barnaby was the only one not bothered by the mouse that mimicked him. Myself, I went into a great tremble when it happened to me. I shook, and I felt a mockery that was shot through with contempt. George, it can never be the same between us again.

Cris Benedetti crossed himself and mumbled a smiling prayer: "Lady of Salette, Light on the Mountain, protect us from unholy mice and pray for the mind of the mouse-maker!"

Harry O'Donovan swore and rose to his feet. He stamped into burning embers the live mouse that mocked him, and he stamped the embers into nothingness. And Doctor Drakos groaned with apparent sharp pectoral pain.

"No man else could have made such mice," Barnaby said easily. "But, George, you put too much of yourself into them. It was dangerous. Ah well, they'll soon be gone. Then we'll see."

Austro howled in that way of his that made some persons doubt that he was really human. Mary Mondo rollicked like a rampant and embattled witch. The mice and their maker should have had more sense than to tackle Austro and Mary Mondo at the same time.

For then it all broke loose.

Ball lightning came down the chimney (Barnaby kept a real fireplace in that room, though it was not the season to have a fire laid in it.) Ball lightning came in the window cracks and in by the furnace registers. All the lights in the house went out, but they certainly weren't needed. Ball lightning appeared from nowhere, right in the middle of the room, and there was an incredible minute-long peal of thunder.

"Ball lightning often plays in this room," Barnaby remarked dryly. "It's a friend of the two girls."

Those lightning balls sought out the glowing, gas-plasma mice and devoured them every one. And, as each one was extinguished, George Drakos gave a hideous death scream.

Then the lights of the house came on again. The thunder and lightning were finished with and were succeeded by a torrential downpour outside. Barnaby Sheen was checking the breathing and pulse of Drakos.

"Should we get a doctor?" I asked inanely.

"He is a doctor," Barnaby said. "Why double the trouble? Besides, he'll be all right, though a little shaken."

"I was right, wasn't I?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "The mice were mere globs of gas-plasma, weren't they?"

"Of course," Barnaby said. "But he thought they were something more."

"The mice had life in them," Drakos insisted in his delirious sleep.

("What is life?" Mary Mondo asked like Pilate.)

"They had true life in them," Drakos mumbled.

"Yes, they did, George," Barnaby said. "They had your life in them. Nobody else could have made them," Barnaby was explaining to us then. "Nobody but this learned and superstitious man would have been able to project himself so strongly as to fool even himself. He'll be better now for having gotten the mice out of his brains."

"The thunder has nothing to do with it then?" Cris asked.

"Oh, the thunder has everything to do with it," Barnaby instructed. "The mice would have disintegrated in almost any storm; but we hadn't had a thunder storm for a week, and George made the mice less than a week ago. It was a really good show. Thank you, girls, and thank your lightning familiars. It was almost better than George deserved. And God wasn't jealous, Austro. You were mistaken there. He was amused."

Austro nodded that he understood that now. But once more he was drawing furiously in his drawing tablet. And the ball lightning had all disappeared from the room. No, not quite all. A pleasant little snake of that lightning was licking the ghost hands of Mary Mondo. They were in accord, and perhaps the lightning was her servitor. And, after all, she had asked the real Pilate question, and now she must wash her hands—with lightning.

And then it was all over with?

"What are you drawing, Austro?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "Are you having a go at the high adventure we have just witnessed?"

Austro shook his head dubiously and continued to draw.

"He's doing next week's 'Adventures of Rocky McCrocky,' "

Mary Mondo conveyed. "But he got an idea for it from this."

The last bit of ball lightning left Mary Mondo and went up the fireplace chimney. Now all the spooky part was finished. There was only the torrential downpour outside, and it would go on and on all night. You have to expect such violent storms when you live in Oklahoma.

THE TWO-HEADED LION OF CRIS BENEDETTI

Save me from the lion's mouth,
And my lowness from the horns of the
unicorns.

—Psalms

A battle grown disguised and dim,
In heraldry foretold:
The Lion had two heads on him;
The Unicorn was polled.

—Cantos Llantos, Clement Goldbeater

Professor Cristoforo Benedetti made a lion. He made it a little better than he had intended. He hadn't meant to make a literal lion; only a literary lion. And he surely hadn't meant to make a two-headed lion.

The lion was named Clement Goldbeater. He was born in the year 1890 which would make him a very old man now, and an impossibly old lion. He was born in Ireland, midway between the Dublin suburbs of Clontarf and Howth, on the north shore of the Liffey estuary. But this was all more than a quarter of a century before Cris Benedetti was born. How then had Cris made him?

In tangled situations like this it is sometimes best to start, not at the beginning, but just before the end.

"Clement Goldbeater has accepted our invitation to visit our city," Cris Benedetti said. "He has also agreed to accept the sum we have proffered him to cover the expenses of the trip."

Yes, this was just before the end of it, as it concerned Cris.

"Good," said Barnaby Sheen. "Good. That's just what you wanted, isn't it, Cris? And it's just what the kids wanted. I think it's wonderful that you could interest so many of them in this. It keeps them comfortably in trouble and out of the way."

"You don't seem so pleased with it yourself, Cris," Doctor George Drakos said (following a certain episode, Drakos himself had been a little bit sour for several months). "You haven't made away with the fund, have you?"

"No, no, of course not," Cris said. "The students' committee in charge of the fund has already cabled it to Goldbeater this morning, after receiving his wire of acceptance. Yes, I'm afraid they've already sent it."

"You're *afraid* they've sent it?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "And do you know when the famous Clement Goldbeater will arrive?"

"Ah, tomorrow at noon by Braniff International, or else at one o'clock tomorrow by American."

"Don't you know which?" Barnaby Sheen asked. "What does his wire say?"

"Ah, there were two wires. One was sent from Clontarf and the other one from Howth, towns four miles apart. And each gave a different airline and time of arrival." Cris was quite upset about something.

"Well, Goldbeater is an old man by now," Drakos said. "Maybe a little muddled, and he probably changed his mind. You can meet both arrivals, if necessary, since they're only an hour apart."

"Yes," Cris said, and he was looking at something a thousand or a million miles away. "Yes," he said, but things weren't all right with him. He rose to his feet in a sort of daze, then he suddenly burst out in white fury:

"All right! Who's the wise guy? It *has* to be one of you four. Dammit, the joke has gone too far! The committee really sent the invitation, before I knew about it, and I couldn't prevent it. As a matter of fact, I thought it was kind of funny—*but then there was the answer*, the two answers, really. And then that committee of kids actually sent the money."

"But that's what it was for," Barnaby said blandly. "The kids worked hard at collecting it. I contributed to it myself. Wasn't that what it was for?"

"Hanging Judas, no!" Cris shouted. "All right, for the last time, who is the joker? I know none of the kids had tumbled. Who pulled this?

George? Harry? Barney? Laff?"

We all looked at him blankly. We had never seen Cris so stirred up. He swore violently, and he did that seldom. He stomped as though he'd go clear through the floor. He barged out of the room and slammed the door behind him hard enough to shake the whole building.

Barnaby whistled a couple of low notes.

"Now, what was *that* all about?" Harry O'Donovan asked, mighty puzzled.

None of us knew. It was all very unlike Cris.

Well, how *had* Cris Benedetti become involved with the great Clement Goldbeater? Cris taught literature and esoterica at the university, and he had a finger in a quarterly magazine there, the *Unicorn*. It was a student magazine, but Benedetti was a sort of faculty sponsor for it. And it was Benedetti who, more and more, turned the *Unicorn* toward commentary on the works and life of that wonderful Irishman Clement Goldbeater, the literary lion par excellence.

Naturally you have heard of Goldbeater; and you have some idea of his work, whether you have actually read any of it or not. He is quite an in author with young people who wouldn't touch a *straight* with a canal pole. And yet he is not a deviant or a crookie either. There was no reason why he shouldn't have caught on in college circles in this country.

There are maybe two dozen of the little magazines devoted, in whole or in part, to the life and the work and the legends of old Clement Goldbeater; and the little magazines are in fruitful communication with one another. It was better, anyhow, for the young people to be interested in Goldbeater than in his shorter-lived contemporary Joyce, who had turned his back on Church and Country in spite of his fine education by the Jesuits at Clongowes College and Belvedere, and University College in Dublin. And Goldbeater had a clarity that Joyce lacked. Besides, there had to be someone for the intelligent students to get interested it. "Even a nothing would be better than Joyce," Cris Benedetti had once said.

Goldbeater had never become an exile, never turned his back on Church or Country. He lived all his life right where he was planted, and he flourished like the Green Bay Tree. More than that, he wrote in the grand tradition. He was in the noble line of Lodowick Barry (ah, Lodowick's great play *Ram Alley!*), of Dion Boucicault, of Standish O'Grady.

"He is a finer romanticist than Carleton, than Le Fanu, than Banim, than Gerald Griffin," Cris Benedetti had once lectured a class about Goldbeater. "For sheer narration he is the superior of Samuel Lover

and Charles Lever."

("Carrock, love her and leave her," Austro had said then. Austro sometimes sat in on Cris Benedetti's classes.)

"I tell you that he was and is a better ballad-maker than Gavin Duffy or D'Arcy McGee!" Benedetti had concluded that lecture in a ringing voice: and he, or Goldbeater, had received a ringing ovation for it.

Benedetti had half a dozen slim volumes of the prose and verse of Clement Goldbeater and these he donated to the Goldbeater Guild at the university. He also had one of the rare copies of the extraordinary *Enniscorthy Chronicle*, the finest novel of the first quarter of the twentieth century. This Cris kept for himself: but the more apt members of the Goldbeater Guild were sometimes allowed to brouse through it for a few moments.

"Never mind, some year soon it will be reissued," Cris would say. "It is a crime that it has not been as yet."

Goldbeater had lived a fantastic life without traveling a dozen miles from his home. In his old age he had become a little crotchety. He disdained photographers and interviewers, which is why there were few late pictures and almost no late information on him. He walked the green lanes of his own county, swinging his blackthorn stick. He was white of whisker and hair, 'tis said, and reedy of voice. But he was still the literary lion pre-eminent of the century. And now he was coming to our own city, the Athens of mid-America.

The *Unicorn* had been publishing, from an unknown source, a few new drawings of Clement Goldbeater in every issue for the last three or four years. And for the last year, the pictures had flowed from the talented pencil of Austro: the oddity here was that it was impossible that Austro should ever have seen or known Goldbeater. Austro was the Australopithecine houseboy of Barnaby Sheen.

"I suppose that I had better put the eccentric old Irishman up at my place," the same Barnaby Sheen said the next day. "All the rest of you live in various species of sordid shambles."

"And your place is not a shambles?" Harry O'Donovan asked in his high voice.

"Mine is a shambles with class," Barnaby said. "It is a spacious and comfortable shambles, and not sordid. It is the sort of place an eccentric old Irishman would enjoy." That was true.

"Austro, go with Cris and the Guild kids to meet the old man, and be sure to bring him here," Barnaby instructed.

"Carrock," said Austro. "I bring the old crock."

There was Austro, there was Cris Benedetti (after all, it was his car that they went in), there were three members of the Goldbeater Guild who went to the airport to pick up the great Clement

Goldbeater.

One of the Guild members was Roy Mega, the young electronics genius who had known Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo (Violet Lonsdale) in their normal lives. Roy had been a reader of the plastic stuff of the Putty Dwarf before he became interested in Goldbeater. But Roy was an independent thinker.

"I believe that what we will find here is a literary lion without literary content," he said, "without any content at all. The Putty Dwarf showed us how easily a non-person can operate. I believe that the great Clement is another non-person."

"How can you say that?" the other two Guild members gasped. But they were there now: and there he was!

Clement Goldbeater (there was no mistaking him; there was no doubt whatsoever as to his identity) was on the first flight, the Braniff International that arrived at noon. He came out with a grumble and a growl, a magnificent white-maned lion carrying a little *mealbhog*, or satchel, and swinging his blackthorn stick. Then he saw Austro and he broke into a beautiful twinkling grin.

"Ah, it's an Irish lad they've sent to meet me!" he near lilted the words. "A boy, a *garsun*, a *bioranach!* Welcome me, lad!"

"Carrock!" Austro cried happily. "*Cead mile failte*." How did Austro, who stumbled and staggered through the simplest English sentence, have intuitive knowledge of Irish? Oh, it's the primordial language of the world: all primitives know it.

They hit it off wonderfully then, all going to Barnaby Sheen's for tay (as Clement called it). Once there, Clement Goldbeater twinkled the finest hazel eyes ever seen out from under the shaggiest brows, and he growled pleasantly and talked with flowing gusto. Only once, and that was near the start of it, was there a slight misunderstanding.

"The tay, Austro lad, the tay," the old man complained, "you've forgotten to lace it." And Austro, understanding intuitively, though he had not heard the phrase before, sloshed whisky into Clement's cup to correct the oversight.

"Why, I had hardly noticed the two young ladies present," Clement said then, "the two who were not at the airport. Loretta and Mary, are ye not? And I see that it's *taibhsiuil* girls that you are." (That meant ghostly girls, but how could Clement have known about them?)

"What do you consider your greatest poem, Mr. Goldbeater?" asked a young female member of the Goldbeater Guild.

"Ah, there are so many of them that would have to be called wonderful," the old man said. "But my real favorite is the limerick that goes:

"There was a young lady from Kleetus
Who showered ball-players with geetus.
The consorted with these,
And presently she's
Afflicted with athletes' fetus."

The old man Clement gave it in a fine voice.

"Stop this nonsense," Cris Benedetti suddenly howled. "There is no such man as this here present. I made him up and he doesn't exist otherwise."

This wild outburst shocked not only Austro and Loretta and Mary Mondo and the kids of the Goldbeater Guild. It also shocked Harry O'Donovan and George Drakos and Barnaby Sheen and myself who were also present at the tay. Cris had popped his stopper; there wasn't much doubt of that.

"God made me up," Clement Goldbeater said with a sort of roguish dignity. "You're in His image, but weakly so. You did not make me up, man."

"There is nothing here," Cris sputtered and pointed at Clement.

"A non-person," Roy Mega helped him out. Roy was one of the kids who had tumbled to it. Cris had been wrong in saying that none of them had.

"He's a non-person, a nothing, a sick joke of my own making," Cris insisted with passion. "There was never any such person as Clement Goldbeater. I made him up to illustrate that few persons ever read the works they talk about. And a half dozen other teachers around the country who also sponsor little magazines joined me in the hoax. Then the kids got up a fund to finance Goldbeater's visit to us. There was no harm in that, I thought. It was funny, and the money could later be used for some worthy cause. But they really sent the money. *And he answered and he came.* But it's impossible, he can't be here! There isn't any Clement Goldbeater, and there aren't any Goldbeater writings."

"But you do have Goldbeater writings on your own shelf, Cris," I broke into the thing. "I've seen them, and I've looked through them a little."

"No, no! Bookbinding and printing are hobbies of mine," Cris said. "It was no trick to rip off the covers and title pages of a few turn-of-the-century books, and to make Clement Goldbeater covers and title-pages to go with them. But this man can't be here. And if he is, he never wrote anything."

"You deny that I am Clement S. Goldbeater of the suburb of Clontarf in holy Ireland?" Clement demanded angrily. "Never wrote anything! You deny that I write a monthly half-column in the *Clon-*

tarf Monthly Miscellany?"

Clement S. Goldbeater was the angriest man I had ever seen until then.

But he held the title for only short seconds.

Then an even angrier man burst through the door. And he looked mightily like Clement.

"Why were the funds not sent to me by cable?" the newcomer demanded. "Why did I have to dig up the jug in my own pear orchard for my own money to come, and I almost miss my plane on account of it? Why was I not met at the airport? Why did I have to learn by devious means in which house the Goldbeater Guild was met?"

Then the face of the new old man softened, and he grinned widely.

"Ah, there's an honest Irish boy here at least!" he cried, and he clapped Austro on both shoulders with his great hands. "Ah, you be a lad, a *buachaill*, a *macaomh*. The pug and the mug on you! I'd know you for Irish anywhere by them. Welcome me, lad!"

"Carrock," said Austro happily. "*Ta failte romhat.*"

"You're not real," Cris Benedetti protested, in panic at the doubling of his anomalies. "You have not a name; you've breathed not a breath; you've written not a line."

"You deny that I am Clement T. Goldbeater of the suburb of Howth in holy Ireland?" the new old man demanded angrily. "Written not a line! You deny that I write a monthly half-column in the *Howth Monthly Herald*? Ah, but I see that my ne'er-do-well cousin Clement S. is here before me. That explains much," Clement T. said. "He has stolen my money and my honors and preceeded me here. He has received the blessing before me, and the mess of pottage as well."

"That's better than a pot of message," Mary Mondo conveyed.

"Why, there are two young *deamhan* ladies here present," Clement T. said in soft wonder. (He meant two young ghostly ladies, but how could Clement T. have known what they were?)

"These two old men are nothings," Cris Benedetti was raving. "One is nothing, and the other one is a reflection of the nothing. I tell you that I made the thing up, and then it twinned or cousined on me. But they are not alive. They have no life in them."

"What is life?" Mary Mondo asked like jesting Pilate.

"Quiet, witch!" Cris gave her an angry order. The two cousins, Clement S. Goldbeater and Clement T. Goldbeater, had now begun to beat each other with their blackthorn sticks.

"I'll show you that there's no substance to them. I'll show you that they're nothing but hot air," Cris shouted to everybody, and he waded into the middle of the blackthorn-swinging fight.

He was cracked and whacked solidly by both of the Clements. He staggered out of the dispute with bloody head and hunched


Staton

shoulders.

"Whatever is it that has put such ruddy knobs on your noggin, Cris?" Barnaby Sheen asked pleasantly. "Was it hot air?"

"Yes, hot air. My own originally," Cris snuffled humbly. He was bleeding blood, and perhaps he was crying tears. And the blackthorns were lashing and slashing.

Austro was drawing furiously in his drawing tablet, getting it all down. The two old men were battling as only old Irishmen can battle.

"Give me a couple of pages from your tablet, Austro," Roy Mega begged. "I can hardly wait to get started on the lead story for the next *Unicorn*. It's going to be some issue!"

The whole room seemed full of swinging blackthorn canes.

Austro gave Roy Mega some pages.

"Carrock," Austro said. "Going to be one crocky issue."

THE HELLACEOUS ROCKET OF HARRY O'DONOVAN

Four pieces needed in this plan
To make the flaming rocket man:
A mask, a pitch, a brain to whiz it;
The fourth—well, what the Devil is it?
—*Eco-Log*

Harry O'Donovan had made an apparatus. Being political, he had made a political apparatus: and the essential of this was that it should look and walk and talk like a man. Harry had made such conglomerates before, and with some success. Now he had in his hands the pieces that looked like total success.

"There are only three pieces needed," he said with his usual floridity. "The mask or front-man, the pitch or phrase-maker and image-maker, and the brain. These should not be combined in one person: each has its own narrow role, and they must be kept separate. Each must have its fundamental simplicity, but the combination will be complex. Three things only, and I believe that I have them all at hand."

"You are wrong," Barnaby Sheen told him. "A successful political apparatus, a successful political animal, is always a quaternity, a four-way thing. The fourth element will be there, or the thing will not succeed."

"Oh sure, four-square and all that, stability's quite necessary," Har-

ry agreed. "The fourth element, which must remain hidden, is the brain behind the brain; in this case myself."

"The fourth element does not bring stability," Barnaby contradicted. "Stability is already there, there is nothing more stable than a three-legged stool. The fourth element turns the stable apparatus into a wobbly skyrocket. It soars in a fiery arc, and then it falls as a cinder. I don't see why the fourth element is necessary; I don't say that it is necessary: I say that it will be there, sooner or later, every time."

Cris Benedetti who was present growled in a hoarse voice, and he was usually a soft-spoken man. He growled something that sounded very like "The devil with the fourth element!"

"But if it works," Harry said, "it will not be an ordinary thing. It will be like a flaming rocket that people will remember forever."

"Austro tells me that they made rockets when he was a boy back home living in a cave," Barnaby said. "They would capture marsh gas in tightly-woven palm-leaf sacks. They would attach a sack to a spear with fletching and head. They would set the spear afire, and then they would set the gas afire. And it would soar brilliantly. Many things are very old.

"Austro used to say that he was born in a cave that he helped his father excavate," Barnaby told it. "And, for a long time, all American politicians were born in log cabins which they had helped their fathers build. This gave the image of humble beginnings, combined with initiative and extreme youth."

"I like the cave variation of it," Harry said. "I may be able to work it in one of these times."

Because he had selected, for political advantage, a self-effacing role for himself; we were always inclined to set Harry O'Donovan a little below his real worth. But Harry with his high-pitched voice had never been out of place as one of the men who knew everything. In the field of electronics, he went far beyond that self-proclaimed electronics genius Barnaby Sheen. In medicine and biology, he was at least the peer of Doctor George Drakos. In literature and esoterica, he owned at least as many vineyards as did Cris Benedetti. He was a political genius—that was acknowledged by everyone; and he was a psychological genius, which is almost the same thing. But it is sometimes forgotten that he was also a mechanical genius almost without equal in our generation. And at para-mathematics, para-mechanics, para-biology, para-psychology, para-electronics, para-politics—who could stand on his level?

Building a political animal took a lot of talents, and Harry O'Donovan had them. He was beginning to build a new political animal now.

He was talking to a young fellow of powerful and striking appearance:

"You were born in a sod house along Coyote Trail, David," Harry was saying. "I would like very much to make it a cave, but we haven't come quite that far yet. Maybe it will be a cave the next time. You were born in that sod house, do you understand that, David?"

"No. I was born on Twelfth Street right here in Tulsa," the young man said. "Coyote Trail is out west of Sand Springs. It's twelve miles from where I was born. And there isn't enough sod out there to build a sod house. It's all rock and up and down hills. Now, here's a beauty that no man in his right mind could turn down."

"I am not here to buy a car, David," Harry O'Donovan said patiently.

The young man, the contemplated mask or front-man, of a political animal, was a used-car salesman on used-car row. Nevertheless, he had the appearance and the voice. He could be used, but he needed whatever instruction could be poured into him.

"Never talk in your own words, David," Harry told him. "Somebody else will fix up the words for you to say. Ah, you'll be perfect for the part, perfect."

This used-car salesman who was being selected for front-man was named David Concourse.

"Your name won't have to be changed," Harry O'Donovan said. "It's good enough."

"Why should my name be changed, friend?" Big David asked. "Now this car, friend, purrs like a workhorse. It cruises like a hummingbird. It had a reciprocal motor and astatic shocks. At $590.00 we should be investigated by the federal government for undermining prices. I always say there's nothing like a Dodge to take you there and bring you back."

"It's a Ford, David," Harry said, "but I'm not shopping for a car today. I'm shopping for something else and I think I've found it. I'll likely be back."

"Better hurry, friend," said the personable salesman. "These red-hot bargains go awful fast."

"The bargain I've found should still be here tomorrow," Harry said. "I'll be back."

"Wonderful, wonderful, friend," the big young man said, "and which one is it?"

"You," Harry said. He believed that he had found his front-man or mask: huge, handsome, still plastic and formable, earthy, outgoing, personable, with a likeable boom in his voice; and not a brain in his head. He would serve.

And Harry had already about decided on his pitch and now he went to see him. The pitch was named Ennis Hardhandle. He wrote sports and other things for the *North Town Star*. He wrote patter for the supper-club entertainers. He wrote material for a variety of politicians. He was good with words, and he was smart and young. But he was black, he was scrawny, and he had a tendency to break up in the middle of his own most solemn phrases. He didn't take his own talents seriously enough, he was unorganized; he threw away stuff that could be marketed, and he did not concentrate his energies. But he was better than anyone else around, and he knew what Harry O'Donovan was after when Harry first looked him up.

"I was wondering whether you'd be smart enough to pick me," Ennis said. "I was wondering whether you were smart enough even to know about me. I was sure you'd have to find a pitch, as soon as I learned that you'd picked Dave Concourse as a mask."

"Are you sure that you can handle this?" O'Donovan asked this Hardhandle.

"Oh sure, Harry, sure. I'm smart enough not to let my smartness get in the way. I'm smart enough to be a brain in a group, but I'm also smart enough not to poach on the brain when I'm the pitch. You remember what Borges wrote: 'the grossest temptation of art—that of being a genius'. But there is no great harm in being a genius if it can be kept under tight enough cover. Yet the most effective of all political speeches was composed by an open-minded idiot who must here be nameless out of common decency: and it was delivered by that near-perfect mask, Kennedy. I mean the Inaugural Address. I was too young to appreciate it at the time, but I have studied it often. Hundreds of phrases like 'Let us never negotiate from fear' (muted buzzing) 'but let us never fear to negotiate!' (wild applause). Juxtaposition of words, that's the whole thing."

"We understand each other," Harry O'Donovan said.

"Sure, I'll take the job," Ennis Hardhandle told him. "And now you will be shopping for a brain. Let me write his name down. Don't read it, though, till you've made your selection." Ennis wrote on a paper, folded and refolded it, and gave it to Harry O'Donovan. And Harry put it in his wallet and went out to find a brain.

The first brain he called on was named Baxter Hungerman. Baxter was of that thing that must be called ethnic or multi-ethnic. He was an ugly and pleasant man. Sometimes he had a direct way about him, and sometimes a devious.

"It's the O'Donovan, is it?" Hungerman more stated than asked. "He's here to pick a brain or to pick up a brain. But can you afford me?"

"One way or another, yes," Harry said. "And can you produce?"

"You can afford, O'Donovan, but you came to me because I'm reputed to be cheap. That's a pleasant fiction that I started myself, but I'm priced higher than the more costly brains, when all the bills are in. And I haven't such presence or name or fame as the others. But I have overtaken and passed all the others, quite recently; and the community knew it when it happened. The only advantage you'll have in engaging me is the point at hand: I'm more of a brain than the other brains.

"As to producing, that's always the gamble. In every campaign, even the most hopeless seeming one, there is a point where something happens, or it does not happen. It cannot be guaranteed, but probability can be built up for it. No, I'm not being cryptic. Somewhere in my unconscious I know what the happening is. It's of nightmare quality and I won't drag it out into the light. If it happens, the campaign succeeds. I'm a hook that very often catches the happening. I've been near the black lightning several times when it struck. I suppose that's why I have more nightmares than the other brains do. You want this David Concourse, this nobody man with the golden rumble in his voice, to be elected to the senate post. I believe it can be done. I go to work on it now. You will place funds at my disposal weekly. Then you stay out of the way, O'Donovan. Be invisible. The touch of respectability that you represent surely isn't needed now. I'll probably require your visible opposition to your man when we're a little further down the road. We understand each other?"

"We understand each other," Harry O'Donovan said. Harry went out from there. Then he took from his billfold the folded piece of paper that Ennis Hardhandle had given him. "The brain you hire will be Baxter Hungerman," it said.

There were quite a few groups that believed they needed a senator that year. David Concourse was but one of seven men running in the primary, and he was probably the least known one. The brain brained and planned for him. The pitchman wrote the pitches and the words. And David did have a golden rumble in his voice. Harry O'Donovan made available the money which he shook out of various trees. But the campaign was going badly.

"It needs a shot in the arm, Harry, doesn't it?" George Drakos commented.

"No cliches, please," Harry O'Donovan said miserably.

"You are a political manipulator and you say 'no cliches, please'? Harry, that's what the whole thing runs on. You're out of your mind." Drakos was having fun with O'Donovan.

"It doesn't seem to be jelling, does it?" Cris Benedetti asked maliciously. "It *isn't* taking off like a skyrocket, is it?"

"The fourth element isn't there yet," Barnaby Sheen said simply. "For decency's sake I hope it doesn't appear, but of course no campaign can succeed without it."

Austro growled deeply in his throat. When Austro growled like that he almost seemed a little bit other than human.

Baxter Hungerman the brain came into the room (it was Barnaby Sheen's private study-bar) without knocking. "Carrock," Austro greeted him. Baxter wasn't the coming something that Austro didn't like.

"All of you out!" Baxter said pleasantly. "For secret reasons we need a secret room. He says he won't meet us anywhere else. Everybody out."

Ennis Hardhandle came in. "Carrock," Austro said. Ennis wasn't what he disliked.

David Concourse came in. "Carrock," Austro said. It wasn't David that Austro disliked either.

"Out, men, out," Baxter said. We went out, Harry O'Donovan, George Drakos, Cris Benedetti, Barnaby Sheen, those four men who knew everything, and Austro and myself who didn't. Baxter Hungerman closed the door behind us. Those three men, the mask, the pitch, the brain, waited in there for the fourth to join them.

We sat outside in that hallway that leads to the study. The hallway, as a fact, was much larger and more richly appointed than the study that it led to. It was a cross between a hotel lobby and a special museum room. There was fine statuary in the hall niches. There were even finer paintings standing up in their great frames on the walls. The door to the private study-bar was disguised by one such painting, which was exactly the size of the door.

"And we are waiting for—what?" Doctor George Drakos asked.

"For the fourth element, of course," Barnaby Sheen said. "The necessary part for the Faustine transaction."

"Will it be a man?" Cris Benedetti asked.

"No, I don't think so," Barnaby said, "but it will look like a man. It will be the Mysterious Stranger. Why are you all so naive about this? It happens every time."

"Aye, but he looks different every time," Harry O'Donovan said. "I wish he would play it straight once."

We hadn't long to wait. Austro gave another of his throaty growls. What was coming up the stairs now was something that Austro *didn't* like.

But it looked like a man, a tall and angular man, dressed all in black, and with a tall black hat from another century on his head. He looked like an old-time itinerant hangman. No, you wouldn't remember

them.

"I'm expected. I'll go right in," this somber person said. He went into the study through the door that looked like a picture.

"Ah, he did play it straight for once," Harry O'Donovan said. "It would be so much easier and cleaner if he always came in that appearance."

We sat and waited. Mary Mondo came out. "It's too spooky in there for me," she wailed. "But poor Loretta is in there and can't come out."

"If any harm comes to her, I swear I'll hang that devil up by tongue and tonkis," Barnaby Sheen barked.

"No harm can come to her," Cris Benedetti mumbled. "She's beyond harm."

We waited. Then it happened. It shook us all and it shook the house.

"That didn't take long," Barnaby said. "Hardly give a man time enough to sign his name in blood." It had been like a flash of darkness.

"What was it?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "I never know what to call it."

"Only the black lightning," said Barnaby. "It struck. Whatever was going to happen has happened. Let's go in."

Inside, David Concourse was standing in the middle of the study, grinning grandly and rumbling triumphant things in his golden voice. He was victory invincible.

Ennis Hardhandle was scribbling notes in a big drawing tablet that Austro had left there. And the notes crackled by their very brilliance, and sparked as he made them.

Baxter Hungerman was talking on the phone, no, on three phones at once, and we all knew that he was talking to the three TV stations.

"Yes, at once," Hungerman was shouting, "in fifteen minutes. Clear the air! It's a skyrocket, I tell you. A prairie fire is nothing like this. Fifteen minutes, at our headquarters. All three of you rush your equipment there. Old golden voice will already be talking when he gets there, and this time he'll have something to say when he talks. Like a skyrocket, I tell you."

And the somber person in black who had gone in wasn't there at all; and there was only one door to the study.

The three of them, Concourse, Hardhandle, Hungerman, went out jubilantly together. They were shouting in triumph and they had their arms about each other. They had really become one creature.

"It's always a little bit exciting, and little bit dirty, to see a new and great political career launched, and to see a political campaign come alive," George Drakos said. "And it has never happened any

other way? Curious."

"One apparatus, highly functioning," said Barnaby Sheen. "They are merged into one thing that ignites and soars. It's almost as if it were alive."

"What is life?" Mary Mondo asked.

"Hush, Mary," Harry O'Donovan begged. "How have I done wrong? I merely wanted to get it off the ground."

They got it off the ground. In fifteen minutes, David Concourse was on the air with the triumphant boom of his golden voice. Yes, he was a skyrocket.

And he rocketed for the following ten days. There had never been anything like this. (They always say that of a campaign that takes fire in the classic way.) How that David Concourse could talk! What slick stuff that Hardhandle could give him, and how that Hungerman could arrange events! David Concourse burned with a cool, slight metallic, slightly sulphurous fire. There was a new light in the sky. There was moment and momentum.

In ten days, David Concourse came from dead last to win the primary vote. So he had the nomination of his party. It was then that Baxter Hungerman told Harry O'Donovan that he must come out strongly against Concourse, as did several of the other old manipulators. It was all timed and colored just right: and, of course, it rebounded triply to the credit of Concourse. Anyone who could shovel off the Old Guard was a man of virtue. Concourse seemed unbeatable now. He had the magic on him, and the opposition trembled in its boots.

"I don't like it very much," Cris Benedetti said. "It isn't quite clean. I believe that I could put my finger on what is wrong if I tried hard, but I have the feeling that I'd have that finger torn off by a bunch of those savage tropical fish."

"I don't like it at all," George Drakos said. "It's the most noisome fraud ever in this state, which means the most noisome ever, anywhere."

"Should we jerk the rug out from under it?" Barnaby asked. "We all know it's wrong."

"What is wrong with my owning a senator?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "I almost always do. Myself and several of my group feel that we need a senator this year. And he is so much on the upsurge, a veritable skyrocket, as everyone says."

"The thing wrong with your owning this senator is that you won't own him," Barnaby said. "He's already owned."

"I don't believe you *can* jerk the rug from under him," Harry frothed. "I'll stick to my man (though opposing him in public, of

course), and we'll sweep the election. You can't jerk the rug from under him. You don't even know what rug it is."

"I do, you don't," Barnaby said. But Harry O'Donovan slammed out of the room in anger.

"Can we jerk it from under?" Barnaby asked as Harry's departure still echoed.

"I think we can," Cris Benedetti said. "I know an old rite."

"Carrock, I know we can," Austro said. "I know an older one."

But there would apparently be no pulling the rug from under David Concourse. On the eve of the general election he was in, in, in. He had it won. Everyone conceded before the vote. He'd be the brightest new ornament in the U.S. Senate.

Barnaby Sheen went like a beggar to Harry O'Donovan, and we all trailed along.

"Could we have your man come by the place for a very little while tonight, Harry?" Barnaby begged. "Yes, I know he will be very busy with a dozen election-eve victory parties. But could we have him for, say, five minutes?"

"Is it some trick you are up to?" Harry asked. "Can I trust a pack of jackals?"

"We all come to you humbly, hat in hand," Barnaby wheedled.

"Yes, I see that," Harry crowed. "But there's a tricky shine on several of your pates, for all that you stand hat in hand."

"Harry, for old friendship, may we not even touch your triumph, even at second hand for a moment?" Barnaby begged with a pathos that sounded genuine.

"I'll see what I can do, but don't count on it," Harry O'Donovan told us.

It was close, but Harry did manage to bring David Concourse by for a very brief minute in the round of his election-eve victory parties. It was late for such; it almost wasn't election eve anymore when they came. It was just short of midnight. Then they came in, and it was like a great light.

"For only a moment," said David Concourse in his golden voice, and he was wrapped in victory like a mantle.

"Time enough," Cris Benedetti snapped in the strangest voice we had ever heard him use. "Ego *praecipio tibi, exi ab eo: et amplius ne introeas in eum.*"

And David Concourse stood as though paralyzed.

"E*xi ab eo*," Cris repeated. "Go out from him."

David groaned mightily and staggered.

"C*arrock, kalos exitexto kabosh ghim, carrock*," Austro commanded

in an even older rite. David Concourse fell to the floor like a huge tree falling, and he cried out weirdly. Then something went out from him.

(In other places, similar things were happening to Ennis Hardhandle and Baxter Hungerman; but the tearing out wasn't so severe with them. After all, Concourse was the primary. This is not fiction. I later checked on these two men and found that they were stricken at that hour, and each had the impression of a small and unnatural creature going out from him.)

Well, what went out from David Concourse was about eight inches high and it looked like a little man, an angular little man dressed all in black and with a tall black hat from another century on his head. It was the miniature of the somber person who had entered this room many days before and who had apparently entered David Concourse and the other two also. The thing scuttered away and out the door.

Oh, yes, and it's coat-tails were on fire; and it was in a hurry.

"Well, what was it?" I asked.

"The Devil, of course," Barnaby said. "The Mysterious Stranger. He's not really very big when he's challenged: and he has to go out when he's told to in the proper ritual. It's the old Faustine deal that was made. All the sudden flaming men have made this deal. All! It's what sets them aflame and guarantees their success. But the deal can be broken, and we broke it for poor David."

David Concourse was sitting on the floor now, but he was dazed.

"This little car," he was saying, "will sing like a bronco and run like an ostrich. For only $285.00 it's a steal. We should be investigated, our prices are so low."

David Concourse was no longer a skyrocket. He was a cinder. But how does word of a thing like that get around? Election day had already arrived and the polls would be open at seven. How would all the conned people know that the rocket was no longer a rocket?

Never mind, they knew. The feeling was everywhere immediately. Concourse was soundly trounced in the election he was supposed to have in the bag. He went back to selling cars, at a slight cut in pay.

"How can you tell whether something like that is alive or whether there's just a little man inside working the pedals?" Mary Mondo asked.

"It is sometimes hard to tell," Barnaby admitted to the ghost-girl.

A few months later, there was scheduled a little local special election to fill a dead man's shoes in the state senate.

"I believe that I could use one more state senator," said Harry O'Do-

novan who had not been doing much political manipulating lately.

"Stuff it, Harry!" Cris said.

"Some people never learn," Drakos commented.

"Hard-head Harry, don't try it again," Barnaby Sheen warned. "Don't try it on the one you're thinking of."

"Carrock! Get that look out of your eye," Austro said.

"What I need for a starter," Harry said (and he did have that look in his eye), "is a mask, a front man. I don't care how homely he is if he has a face that people will trust. I don't care how witless he is if he has real integrity shining out of him. And who, fellows, has the most honest face of anyone we know?"

"Carrock, no, no!" Austro cried in alarm.

"I don't care how rough-hewn he seems," Harry was saying, and he was inching towards Austro in words and action. "Everything can be smoothed out with a good pitch-man and a good brain-man. But when you start with a really likeable—"

"Carrock, no, no, not me," Austro begged.

"—with a really likeable person, you have a pearl beyond price in this political business. Born in a rock cave on the Guna slopes beats being born in a sod hut on Coyote Trail, even beats being born in a log cabin. We will sweep it all clean with the sunshine broom. We will bill you as the boy with the sunshine brains. For the clown with integrity shining out of him, the one person with an absolutely homely face, the one really likeable—"

"Carrock, no, no, leggo, Harry!" Austro cried and broke away from O'Donovan and out of the room.

"Fame and fortune, Austro!" Harry was calling as he panted after Austro down the street outside. "I'll turn you into the sunshine man, the golden man, the golden skyrocket."

"Carrock, no, no, not me!" Austro hollered. But Austro was already a skyrocket of sorts. That kid could run, and Harry O'Donovan was too old and short of wind to catch him ever. Austro disappeared over the hill, with Harry falling farther and farther behind.

THE WOOLY WORLD OF BARNABY SHEEN

I have a lot of Fiat in my *soul* and *can myself create my little world.*
Beddoes, *Death's Jest Book*

Barnaby Sheen made a world. It was a miniature, of course, and was not a sphere. It was only a model section of the earth's mantle, half covered with ocean, half by a surrounding continent. It was in volume about a cubic meter (though it wasn't cubic), and it weighed about 4,500 pounds.

Barnaby could have made it heavier except that he would have had to reinforce the floor of his study to do so. So his selection of rock was not as exact as it might have been; it was rather on the light side. The make-up of Barnaby's world was dictated by certain restrictions.

"Oh, well, so was the make-up of God's world," Barnaby said. This wasn't any random job though; keep in mind that Barnaby Sheen was one of the great geologists and cosmologists of the century.

There was a clear dome over Barnaby's world, perhaps to contain atmosphere if atmosphere should develop. There was already a slight amount of room atmosphere in it, for Barnaby did not strive for absolute vacuum. There were several rods of various function coming up through the dome, but it was all sealed.

"Is there any life in it?" Mary Mondo wanted to know. She always

wanted to know what life was and whether there was life in this or that, doubt having been cast on whether there was life in herself.

"Probably is," Barnaby said. "I sterilized most of the stuff, but not to perfection. For my purpose it won't matter whether there is life in it or not. I made it as a model to use in certain tectonic observations. I want to see when weather appears in it, and when the hills begin to weather down. I will see when the rivers appear and when the runneled erosion starts. I'll watch sediment washed out of the rocks to become soil or ocean-bottom deposit. I'll see the downgrading of the land, and then possibly I'll see the beginning of the uplift, or the mountain-building."

"When do you think some change might be noticed in your model?" Harry O'Donovan asked.

"Oh, maybe in fifty thousand years," Barnaby said.

"And you're going to sit and watch it for fifty thousand years?" Harry inquired.

"Might as well," Barnaby said. "I'm not doing anything else right now."

"But your model hasn't its own gravity, it hasn't its own sunlight, it hasn't its own motion," Doctor George Drakos protested.

"I know it. It isn't a very good model," Barnaby said. "But I believe that I can use it to short-cut a few problems."

"Fifty thousand years doesn't seem like a short-cut," Cris Benedetti commented.

"Oh, I can be running tests all the time," Barnaby told us. Barnaby was an excellent geologist, but not a proper one. He was a seismograph man, and all seismograph men are unorthodox geologists. They have only one advantage over proper geologists: they can locate oil when the proper geologists can't.

Barnaby set off a miniature blast deep in his rocky model. He read the result on some of his meters.

"What does it say?" Harry O'Donovan asked him.

"It says that it's about a meter from the continental surface to the bottom of the tank."

"But you already knew that. That's the way you built it."

"Sure, but this is confirmation."

Austro, Barnaby's Australopithecine houseboy, had a jeweler's glass screwed into his eye and was carving something very small; Austro had developed a lot of hobbies. Mary Mondo was hovering over Barnaby's world, very interested. George Drakos, Cris Benedetti, Harry O'Donovan, and myself were playing pitch and watching Barnaby Sheen watch his world. Quite a while went by. It was late at night when we broke it up.

"Close up those things when you're through and put out the lights, Austro," Barnaby said as he ushered us out.

"Carrock. Okay," Austro answered with the jeweler's glass still in his eye.

And there was another voice which only those with coarse ears can hear. It was from that ghost-girl Mary Mondo.

"Let's fake it, kid," she said to Austro, and I didn't know what she meant.

The next evening we were all in Barnaby's study again, though ordinarily we met there only about once a week.

"Hum, candle wax, yellow-gold candle wax," Barnaby said as he looked at his world. "What an odd effect that candle wax should form on the outside of the dome."

Two of the rods that came up through dome had binocular attachments on them. They were periscopic rods and attached to lighted microscopes, one on the surface of the continent, and one buried deep in the continental mass. Direct observation could be made, up to a thousand power. Should there be change in the rock structure, it could be detected by comparing photographs on a scanning machine.

"There are quite a few fossils in the rocks," Cris said as he observed through the rod to the buried microscope.

"Oh sure, that part is mostly Dawson Limestone," Barnaby said. "Always full of fossils."

"Some of them are pretty small, considering the magnification," Cris said.

"Certainly, some of the creatures of the period were pretty small," Barnaby said.

"Are they alive?" Mary Mondo asked.

"No, of course fossils aren't alive, Mary," Barnaby said, "but once they were."

"*Fiat anima*," Mary Mondo said distantly, but I may have been the only one with ears coarse enough to hear her.

"Why is the dome a little fogged on the inside, Barnaby?" Harry O'Donovan asked.

"The dome is the sky," Barnaby said. "I don't know why it's fogged. Maybe because of the unbalance of normal pressure outside and near vacuum inside."

"But wouldn't that make it fog on the outside?"

"I don't know. I'm not a physicist," Barnaby said.

"What's on the continental plain near the river?" George Drakos asked. "It looks like a city."

"What river?" Barnaby asked. "There can't be a river yet. Oh yes,

that crack does look a little bit like a river. And the roughness of that rock does resemble a very small city a little. I'll move the surface microscope a little closer to it tomorrow and study it. But limestone is like clouds; one can see all sorts of configurations in it, can imagine almost any shape or thing in it."

We played Michigan, George Drakos, Cris Benedetti, Barnaby Sheen, and myself. Harry O'Donovan had taken over the world-watching job tonight. "There's something very small moving around and hopping around in there," he said after a while.

"Nonsense, Harry, you've got specks on your spectacles," Barnaby said.

"*Fiat imber*," the poltergeistic Mary Mondo mumbled, but none of them seemed to hear her. Often poltergeist folks are inaudible except to us gamey-eared ones. "*Fiat nubes*," she mumbled.

"Barnaby," Harry said, "there's mist and clouds forming inside that, ah, sky. Real clouds."

"What luck," Barnaby said. "I hadn't expected them for thousands of years." But he didn't seem much interested, and he didn't stop playing cards. Austro was still carving little things and he still had that jeweler's glass in his eye. Loretta had begun to breathe in a heavy and troubled way, and it's always startling when a sawdust-filled doll does that. Mary Mondo blinked off and on, appearing and disappearing in that way of hers; she was particularly larkish tonight.

"*Fiat fulmen, fiat tonitrus, fiat pluvia*," Mary said almost inaudibly.

There was a little flicker of light.

"What's that?" Barnaby asked. "One of the bulbs about to blow?"

There was a little rumble.

"What's that?" Barnaby asked. "Your stomach, Cris?"

"No. Don't be vulgar."

There was a whispering sound that was hard to place.

"What's that?" Barnaby asked.

"Rain," said Harry O'Donovan. "It's raining in your world."

Well, why shouldn't it lightning and thunder and rain? Mary Mondo had told it to. We all went to look. It was raining real rain out of real clouds under that sky-dome that wasn't more than a meter in diameter. It was lightning and thundering and raining out of black thunderheads, and the river was already flowing down that crack in the continental plain, the crack that Drakos had already called a river.

"There's a contradiction there," Barnaby said. "The rain is real rain, so the drops are real drop-sized. They have to be; they're ruled by the laws of surface tension and such. But any of the drops would be a hundred times bigger than the biggest building in that 'city' on the river. Rain would be a disaster for such a city and its civilization.


Staton

It would be like water masses of a mile diameter falling on the town again and again. No, that can't be a city or it can't last."

"Don't worry about it," Drakos said. "The smaller an object or creature is, the less vulnerable it is. Surface against mass, you know, and all that."

"Kids," Mary Mondo whispered (but only those of uncircumsized ears could hear her), "we got to fix that. We got to make littler rain."

"Just what do you know about this, Mary?" Barnaby asked. He had heard something out of her, but he hadn't distinguished the words.

"About what, Mr. Sheen?" she asked with the assurance that only a ghost-girl can have.

"About, ah, about the city on the plain of the continent of the little world."

"The name of it is Phantasmopolis," Mary said. "It was founded by the great Mondinus in the Year Four A.M.M."

"Phantasmopolis would be ghost city or poltergeist-ghost city," Barnaby mused. "But what is A.M.M.?"

"*Anno Mary Mondo*," she said. "The city is in my own era. I've been dead for four years, you know, and that city was founded last night by the great Mondinus."

"Founded by candlelight, Mary?"

"That wasn't a candle. It was a sun."

"You're making all this up, Mary."

"Yes. I'm making it all up. Wait till you see what I make up tonight."

"Austro, do you have a finger in this?" Barnaby demanded.

"Carrock, me a finger? I'm all thumbs."

We returned to our card-playing. The storm died down in Barnaby's model world. And when it was late we all went home.

But we were back again the next evening. Whether Barnaby was tired of our company or not, we had become interested in the goings-on of his model world.

"Hum, two kinds of wax on the outside of the dome today," Barnaby said. "Besides the yellow-gold wax, there is silver-white wax. What an odd effect! I wonder if our real sky gets different kinds of wax on top of it."

Barnaby, Cris, Harry, and myself sat down to play high five. George Drakos had taken over the job of world-watcher tonight.

"Barnaby, there really are little live things moving around on your world," George said. "They are mostly around the city, and the city has grown considerably."

"Bosh," said Barnaby.

"No bosh to it," George insisted. "The microscope reveals pretty fine detail on some of the buildings."

"Double bosh," Barnaby said.

"What scale did you build this on, Barnaby?" George asked.

"Why, no particular scale. The rocks are on their own scale. Who can change the scale of atoms or molecules or cells? It's a mechanical model, that's all."

"Barnaby, down inside the continental mass there's an almost perfect mammoth skeleton," George Drakos said, "except that it's a million times too small."

"As I said the other evening, one can see almost any form one wishes in limestone, just as in clouds," Barnaby said.

"Bosh to you," George told him. "Barney, I tell you that there really are small living creatures in your world, quite lively living creatures."

"Mighty uninteresting," Barnaby said. "I didn't build the world to study living creatures. And just what species are they, good doctor?"

"Pulex, I believe," Doctor Drakos said.

Mary Mondo was flitting around. Austro was scratching himself. Loretta was stirring a bit and breathing: it was as if she were laughing silently.

"Barney, there's miniature waves in your ocean," Drakos said, "and there is some evidence of tidal action."

"Any whales in the ocean, George?"

"Don't see any, Barney. Only one species of life on the world. But some of them hop on and off the water just as easy as they do the land."

"Why aren't you carving little things, Austro?" Barnaby asked his houseboy.

"Carrock. Finished them," Austro said.

"Just how little are the things you can carve?"

"Carrock, real little, boss. You wouldn't believe it."

"Like little mammoth bones? And little city buildings?"

"Carrock. Like little everything, boss."

"How did you get them inside the world?"

"Carrock, I didn't. I'm not the one with the ghost hands."

"*Fiat terrae motus!*" Mary Mondo ordered.

"What, Mary?" Barnaby demanded. "How can a man play cards with all that conversation going on? What's that little rumble? Not more toy thunder?"

"Barney, I believe that you have an earthquake going on in your world," Drakos said. "Quite a severe one for the size of the world."

"Good. Has it destroyed the city?"

"No. The city seems to be solid enough, Barney. But its inhabitants are hopping around in a pretty nervous fashion."

"Get ready for it, kids. Don't miss it!" Mary Mondo chirped so clearly as to be heard by every ear in the room. "This is going to be good."

"Be quiet, Mary," Barnaby ordered. "Oh, did you use a silver-colored candle last night?"

"That wasn't actually a candle, it was the moon. We improvise a lot. *Fiat* eruptio!" Mary cried disobediently. "*Fiat* – dammit, what's the word for volcano? Oh yes, it's *volcano. Fiat volcano.*"

"Mary, I said to be quiet with that stuff," Barnaby ordered again. But who can give orders to a ghost-girl?

"Barney, I believe that there is indeed volcanic activity on your world," Drakos said. "There's lava flow, there's smoke and belching flame, there's explosion."

"I'll blow my top!" Barnaby howled and threw down his cards. "Is there no peace in this house?"

But it was rather Barnaby's world that blew its top. The volcano went out of control. Pebbles came out of it at escape velocity and shattered the dome, the sky. There was exploding fire that threatened the whole room. And there was something else, something hopping with excitement and fear and biting for blood, that came out of the model world at the same time.

"Water, water, get buckets of water, Austro," Barnaby ordered.

"Carrock, water, water," Austro said, and he began to bring it. But it was dangerous to get too close to that world. There was explosion after explosion. There were bits of firecracker—and that's a thing hard to explain—with the firecracker paper still sticking on them. And some of the hot lava overflowed the world and started fires on the rug.

"We may have to let it burn itself out," Barnaby said as he scratched himself in general bad humor. "I wonder how long it will take."

"A volcano seldom exhibits violent activity for more than a thousand years," George Drakos said, grinning crookedly. "But you're not doing anything else for a while, are you, Barney?"

"Great concatenated catastrophes!" Barnaby cried out. "My house is on fire, and something is biting me to death. What's biting me?"

"Fleas," said George Drakos.

"They don't mean to. They're scared," Mary Mondo said.

"Fleas!" Barnaby screamed. "Where did the fleas come from?"

"From your world," Drakos said. "I told you it was inhabited."

"They came from Austro originally," Mary Mondo tattled. "I gathered some of them off him and put them in there so the world would be inhabited." Austro hung his head and blushed. I wouldn't have believed that the leather-colored kid was capable of a blush.

Explosion, eruption, fire and brimstone, crash, bang, and burning cinders!

"My house is on fire, my shirt is on fire, and my houseboy has fleas!" Barnaby groaned. "What worse can happen?"

The volcano really went into action then to show him what worse could happen. Sulpher and brimstone, flame and ash and hot lava!

"I bet this is the last world I ever build," Barnaby sounded. "Oh, and my houseboy has fleas." We could hear Barnaby but we couldn't see him. We couldn't see anything. Then it really got hot and dense and noisy. You don't run into a volcano like that every day.

RIVERS OF DAMASCUS

The caravan clowns came to the town about four times a year, usually in the service of a caravan, sometimes not. They came now to the town, the oldest town in the world, out of service and with no clear purpose. They were strictly on a bold-bashful skylark. There were a few less than a hundred of them. They were slight, smiling, shy desert Arabs. The guards of the city, though they usually treated the clowns with a lowering sort of theatrical harshness, really liked them—but especially they liked to devil them.

The desert gamins, first leaving long and rickety constructs of some sort at a little distance on the sand, came into the city by the east gate, whence the street named Straight (the Latins called it Via Recta and the Arabs Souk-el-Taouil) runs west to the heart of the city. They came in one by one, sideways, as though it were a narrow way, though the gate was high, wide, and completely open. This was in the month of March of the Year of Restored Salvation 635.

"Thieves, coney-eaters, camel-suckers, trench-straddlers, good-for-nothings—what do you want in our town?" several of the tall town guards demanded, and they clapped the slight desert youths roughly on the shoulders. The shortest of the guards was a head and a hand taller than the tallest of the Arabs.

"Bread, we want bread," one of the Arabs, less bashful than the others, announced. The desert Arabs did not have bread of their own. They ate camel cheese and small animals that they killed in the sand

and rocks. They ate wild figs or cultivated apricots and pomegranates and almonds when they could steal them. But bread they ate only when kind persons gave it to them. And now several of the kind (though thunderously threatening) guards bought hot bread from the bread booths and gave it to the Arabs. They ate it rapidly, almost furtively, but with real pleasure. All of them except one.

"I will not eat your bread," said Khalid ibn-al-Walid. "It isn't right that I should eat your bread and then come back and cut the throats of all of you who do not kneel and beg for mercy."

"Ah, squalid Khalid Walid, will you cut our throats?" one of the big town guards asked.

"Aye," Khalid said nervously and looked around to be sure that his own jinni or angel did not hear him say such a thing. "I must cut the throats of all of you who will not submit. I will not like it any more than you will, but it is one of the things I must do."

"With that little sword you will cut our throats?" the guard asked. "Let me see that wonderful little throat-cutter you have there."

Khalid handed his sword up to the high hand of the tall guard. The guard snapped it in two with his fingers and gave the pieces back to the slight Arab. Khalid's face broke and he began to cry.

The other Arabs ate the wonderful bread that was given to them. They ate apricots and roasted meat. They talked with the town people and the town guards, for the chattering Arabs (after they had passed the moments of their shyness) were always full of news. The Arabs were called desert scrolls. They drank the bright wine that the people gave them. All the Arabs did these things except Khalid, who refused to eat or drink, though he had always loved the wine of this place. Then it was time for the Arabs to go, and they knotted about the east gate. Khalid still snuffled over the loss of his sword.

Several of the guards held quiet conference. Then one of the guards, the one who had broken the sword in his fingers, went and brought back a real Damascus sword out of his generosity: for this was in Damascus, the oldest town in the world, and the Arabs called it Dimisk es-Sham. The man gave the wonderful sword to Khalid (it was not ornate, but it was of good steel and manufacturing) and that Arab brightened up like the sun coming out from behind the mountain clouds of the Anti-Lebanon. Then all the Arabs went out by the east gate.

"That can not really be Khalid ibn-al-Walid the Great?" was the unbelieving protest of John Dragon who was dean of soft sciences at Southwestern Polytech. "It just isn't possible."

"It does strain credulity," Joseph Waterwitch told him, "but that's the way it comes through and that's the way it's projected. I must

suppose it's all valid. It couldn't be otherwise."

John Dragon, Joseph Waterwitch, Cris Benedetti, and Abel Landgood were on expedition to observe certain events by para-archeological probe.

The Arabs shuffled along outside, beneath the basket wall. Khalid was grinning into his scanty beard. He usually pulled this little sword act and trick several times a year and he now had quite a collection of good Damascus swords. The Arab party, a little fewer than a hundred young men, shuffled carelessly back toward their desert.

For about a furlong.

Then they gave a great whoop. A dozen small horses seemed to spring out of the sand and were quickly mounted by the dozen or so of the Arabs so fortunate as to own riding animals. These dozen had also drawn bows from somewhere. And the others had swords suddenly. None of them except Khalid had had a sword earlier. Some of them picked up two rough ladders they had left on the sand before their first entrance to the city. They ran with these ladders toward the basket wall of Damascus.

"See if you can get better detail on the swords," John Dragon asked Joe Waterwitch. "Hitti, who is never wrong, has written that the Arabs carried long, straight swords in scabbards flung over the right shoulder. And Belloc, who is also never wrong, has written that they carried short scimitars on their thighs."

Joe Waterwitch emphasized the swords, and the observers all watched as the steel showed a little more clearly.

"There is every sort of sword and knife," Waterwitch said then, and they all saw that it was so, "and they are carried every which way. There is no standardizing them and there is no seeing them any more clearly than this."

The Arabs placed their two ladders against the basket wall (this section of the wall was so called because it was there that St. Paul had been let down out of the city in a basket). The ladders reached only about a third of the way to the top of the wall. Nevertheless, the Arabs crowded the ladders from top to bottom, resolutely climbing up and up, and those on the top waved their arms as if to try to fly upward.

"What are you trying to do, little sandmice?" the guards asked from the top of the walls. "You'll hurt yourselves. Those little ladders are about to break."

"We are going to scale the walls," Khalid the leader of the Arab sandmice called up boldly. "We are going to storm the town and

slaughter the inhabitants and establish ourselves in this stronghold. And from here, we will conquer the whole world."

"If you want to come in by the gates, they are always open," the guards called down. "We think you are the same bunch that was in just a little while ago. Then you went out again. Those little ladders will not reach. Shall we put down longer ladders for you? Shall we let down ropes? Are you under some vow to scale walls?"

"Yes, we are under vow to scale walls or to batter them down," Khalid cried. "We will not come in by the gate until we have received your total surrender. Defend yourselves! It is not to our glory if we conquer only cowards who fear to fight."

Khalid and some of the others began to shoot arrows up at the guards. They hadn't true arrows, only crooked and badly fletched shafts. They hadn't strong bows, the arrows did not even shoot to the top of the walls in their flight. The only damage done by the arrows was to one of the Arabs. This man had shot his bolt straight up into the air. He stood and gazed at his arrow as it spent itself, then tumbled over and fell back toward him. The arrow pierced his eye. Some of the guards gasped with shock, but several of them laughed.

"If you laugh at him, if you laugh at us, then you laugh at God," Khalid called up angrily.

"We do not mean to laugh at God," others of the guards spoke down. "We are honestly grieved that the man injured himself."

Both of the ladders broke with weak cracking noises and tumbled the Arabs onto the sand and rocks below. One man was killed and several were lamed. The Arabs shuffled off toward the desert, and those few who had horses turned them toward the barren and sunburnt hills.

"We do not retreat," Khalid called from the back of his own horse. "It only seems that we retreat. We have breached your walls, and several of us, including myself, have entered. This night I will sit on the highest seat in your council room and will hold command of the city."

"You may come to the council room if you want to," one of the guards called, "and you may talk to the commandant of the city. He may be able to understand what it is you want. He is a man of great understanding. But you may not sit on the highest seat."

"Yes, I will sit on the highest seat tonight," Khalid insisted. "I am already inside the town and the room, though you know it not. I will command. I will order. I will rule. And I will slaughter. And after I have slaughtered sufficiently I also will become a man of great understanding."

Khalid followed his men back into the hilly desert. They left a

plume of dust behind them and when the plume dispersed, they were gone. There had been somewhat less than a hundred of these slight Arabs. And there were something more than ten thousand of the burly empire soldiers and guards garrisoned in the city.

"That cannot be the Moslem conquest of Damascus of the year 635," John Dragon, the dean of soft sciences, was protesting in near panic.

"Yes, that was it," Joe Waterwitch insisted sadly. "We have tuned it in pretty clearly – we have watched it to its end. That is what happened and that is all that happened."

"There was supposed to be a six-month siege," Abel Landgood commented. "And when that six months was over, Damascus was under Moslem control."

"We will look for the siege, but we will not find it," Waterwitch said. "There wasn't any siege of that sort. What we have just seen is all that happened. And as for Damascus turning from Christian to Moslem; well, I don't understand it either. A plum will be green and then it will be red (if it's a Damask plum it will be). There are no reasons at all for many of the changes in history. Let's leave it at that. I do not know why history, feeling guilty perhaps, is sometimes impelled to supply false reasons. Better no reasons than false, and there are no reasons for the results from Damascus."

"I believe that there *is* one more event, Joseph," Cris Benedetti said softly. "Our focus seemed to be on three hours before sunset. Let's allow two more hours for ablutions and the supper meal. So, let's see what we can pick up in the council room five hours after our last focus."

Cris Benedetti was the revered professor of humanities and histories and literatures and esoterica at Southwestern Polytech. He possibly had more prestige even than John Dragon had. He certainly had more than Joe Waterwitch; Joe had a peculiar lack of prestige. But Joe believed in himself and his methods and he didn't like to be told that he might have missed something. He looked at Benedetti for a long minute.

"All right, we'll do it," Joe Waterwitch said then.

The find-and-focus itself took nearly five hours, but the times were not connected and the delay in search did not matter. Then those of the expedition were able to see what was going on at the evening's session in the council room. And what was going on was a developing ruckus.

There were seven great men sitting in the high seats in the council room: pompous men, somewhat amused now and a little bit fearful.

They were amused by an audacious and slight man who was leaping about in the rafters over their heads. He mocked them. He harangued them. And they smiled.

But they were really alarmed by the monkey-like climbing of this man, actually fearful of his stark animality and his go-devil grinning and of the jinni-like secrets that were tumbling out of him in unbottled speech that sounded as if it would never be exhausted. They were disturbed by the gamin-like thievery of that rafter rooster who'd as soon steal the world as a sack of walnuts.

"I will command. I will rule. I will slaughter," the monkey-like man in the rafters was heckling, "and when I have slaughtered enough, then I will become a man of even greater understanding than yourselves." This heckling climber over their heads was Khalid.

"I wonder when the Byzantine look made its first appearance?" John Dragon asked his fellow observers.

"Surely not in Byzantium," Cris Benedetti said, "but here in Damascus, in this place, on this night. Look at those seven in their high seats! It has just dawned in their minds that they have lost everything (that is the underlay of the Byzantine look), and that if they continue as they have been nobody but themselves will guess that they have really lost it (that is the brocade surface of the Byzantine look). I don't know how they have lost it, and they don't either. But such towering irony comes only after having lost everything, and having disregarded that loss."

There were seven men there with that look on them. In the highest seat was the commandant of the city. At his right was the bishop. At his left was the treasurer. The commandant himself was pomposity justified. He was wealth and line and power and intelligence. He was the deep texture of past pleasures and the aromatic glow of pleasure still to come. He laughed at his own defeat and forbade it to speak.

The bishop on his right had exceptional ability, a highly refined and rarified sensibility, a canniness that had obtained an unusually good bargain from God Himself, a stormy sort of sublimation (channeled and diverted thunder), compassion, wit, well-being: and there was a foxy slyness that went with it all. This bishop had fished in stranger waters than his father Peter ever knew: in the Third Ocean of whose very existence both God and the devil are ignorant.

And the treasurer on the left had the endless geniality that comes from never exhausted stores. He had the money bags that pour out specie forever, to smooth the paths and to make friends. The bags remain full no matter how much is taken from them. He had the

sack of inexhaustible pleasure, and the barrelful of those sweet serpents named Intrigue whose joy outlasts that of every other game. And into the eyes of this extraordinary treasurer had come a new glow now: happy treason, the last pleasure of the almost jaded.

Two other men sat on the right, two other men sat on the left; they were high and intricate men, of the sort who maintained the heavenly Byzantine Empire on earth.

"I sit in the highest seat in the council room," jibed Khalid, who had made a seat up in the rafters. This man Khalid was an un-giant jinni who had escaped from some bottle. "And I will hold command of this city."

One of the great men on the left of the commandant laughed: Khalid had nearly fallen from his high seat when he gestured too violently.

"It seems a very precarious command," the great man said.

"I want it to be precarious," Khalid howled. "I am already inside you, though you cannot suspect it yet. I will command. I will order. I will slaughter. I will breach your walls. I lay siege to you now."

"How long is the siege that you lay for us?" asked one of the great men on the right, and he grinned in his beard.

"A half-year siege," Khalid called down, and he danced on the smoke-blackened rafter. Guards were climbing after Khalid, but they could not scamper about with his quickness or his wittiness; they couldn't catch him. Khalid bounded to other rafters and cross-members.

"Your eyes are put into your heads wrong and you look out wrong," Khalid taunted. "Your eyes look for me where I am no longer to be found. You'd double your defences to keep me out, would you, city fathers? But I am not outside. I am the mind-worm working inside and I besiege you from inside. I came in under the walls and under your minds by the other river, the one that is not to be found in your country or in the maps of it. You great men cannot understand this."

"I understand it," said the great treasurer, and his eyes were a-dance with happy treason.

"I almost understand it," said the great bishop, and his fingers were avid to be dealing with strange fish.

"And I almost understand it," said Cris Benedetti, one of the men working on the para-archeological probe.

ii

There is an absolute mystery covering all ear-

ly Islamic expansion and military conquest. There is no possible way these things could have happened. Circumstances sometimes put forward to explain these happenings are in fact later circumstances created by these same happenings. The clear truth is that the desert Arabs were absolutely inferior to all their neighbors in wealth, numbers, technology, health, ability, intellect, location, ambition, sophistication, weaponry, organization, transportation, and experience in warfare. Their victories could not have been won in reality. It had to be a subjective religious rapture to make it seem to the Arabs that they were conquering. But how was the exterior world and its peoples conned into authenticating these subjective experiences of the miserable Arabs? Moreover, Islam was not then a rapture religion: it did not become so until nearly two centuries later. Nor was Islam then a militant religion. It became so only after the completion of those astonishing, early, world-shaking conquests.

At Damascus, the attacking Arabs had only one-hundredth the numbers of the defenders. They had nothing but short, curved knives and inferior bows with which to assault the walls. They had no battering rams or siege engines at all—they did not even have entrenching tools. How did they breach the walls after a six-month siege? How did they take the strong town that had one hundred defenders against every one attacker?

Here was an incredibly small and disorganized band of half-starved, half-demented desert men looking out of puscaked eyes (Paul was not the first nor the millionth man to go blind on the dazzling road to Damascus), small men, sick men, nearly blind men, men with no ambition and no hope, beggars wrapped in euphoric dreams more ragged than their clothing, men sleeping away most of the hours to forget that they had nothing to eat. How did these men,

at the very first step, conquer Damascus? How did they, at the incredibly swift second step, conquer the world?

Could one travel in a time wagon pulled by time oxen to Damascus in the year 635 and look at the events with informed, modern eyes, it is possible that a missing piece to this puzzle might be found. But I doubt even this.

There is no way that those events could have happened.

—Arpad Arutinov,
The Back Door of History

"Gentlemen, *we have missed it completely! We are stumblebums. That is what the respected scientists have been saying about us all along, and this seems to be the fact of the matter. There cannot be anything wrong with our methods. There cannot be much wrong with ourselves. There has to be something wrong with history. History was not there when we went back to examine her.*"

—John Dragon

"So much *of this has depended on me, and I do not feel that I have failed in any way. I have been the instrument and the receiver, and I believe that I have received correctly what was there. The fact that what was there is impossible is beside the point— overwhelmingly beside the point, I'm afraid. I've been the dowser and the medium, but I certainly am not a happy medium over this. Where have we failed? Or rather, what is it that has failed us?*"

—Joseph Waterwitch

"*This brings into question the whole subject of reality. Reality has been an assumption, a postulate, an evident basis and beginning. It now seems to have been a false assumption. Reality has disappeared on us when, in this test case, we had the temerity to examine*

it too closely. What we now need to find and use is an alternate to reality."

—Abel Landgood

"Gentlemen, I believe that our difficulty is that we have been using highly polarized information."

— Cris Benedetti
From the *Landwitch Papers*
(the minutes of the first para-archeological probe)

The Rivers of Damascus as mentioned in Scripture *are two: the Abana River and the Pharpar River. But where are they now? The Abana River is now named the Barada. This is the only River of Damascus to be found in the physical world. There is no other river in that part of the country. There is no dry bed where any other river could ever have run. The Pharpar River is not to be found anywhere in that scorched land at all. There is no trace or remnent or body print of it to be discovered anywhere on Earth.*

Well then, have you looked under *the Earth? Have you looked* inside *the Earth? Have you looked inside the creatures of the Earth? When a river is lost, we must leave no land or mind unturned until we have found it, for a lost river may be anywhere. I believe that the Pharpar River has always been of the internal sort. It is the secret river that not only greens the soul but also runs under walls and gains entrance to all fortified and walled places of the world and of the mind.*

Regard your own estate and case. Is your own town not built on two rivers which are separated by a firmament between? One of them is the impossible river by which all things may enter anywhere. We'd be robbed of our celestial birthright without it.

—Ignace Wolff, *The River Inside*

The heterodyning of a brain wave produces a *difference frequency* or beat in conjunction with the normal brain wave—and this difference frequency can be both a sending and an echoing beat. It may also become a receptor beat and, in some cases, a reverberatory beat of very long duration. Of how long a duration? Oh, two thousand years or so before it becomes too greatly diminished to pick up.

But, scientifically, a beat may reverberate for only microseconds after the inaction of its source: this scientific objection may not be assailed in its own field or context. But may the scientific objection be heterodyned out of its own field? May it be superheterodyned to a place where it accepts what it had seemed to deny?

The ever-changing modified or heterodyned wave pattern is a searching or tuning pattern. It seeks whatever is in resonance with its voice. It changes its voice till it finds that resonance. But hardly one person in a thousand can consciously heterodyne his own brain wave patterns to obtain the variations and the beats. The rare ones who can are sometimes called dowsers. True dowsers can get echoes from almost all physical substances—and also from many electrical coronas that are not really physical. Very good dowsers can get resonance and echoes from an even more rare sort of corona, which is called patina. The patina, that aged and weathered surface, is generally thought to be a physical effect and substance; but it hasn't a physical origin.

Adept dowsers may also get resonances from ancient reverberations (some of them associated with patinas or other coronas, some apparently associated with nothing but themselves) that may have become endemic to a location, to have lodged there securely and enduringly. And dowsers are peculiarly able to get echoes from underground streams, which may be heterodynings of surface streams which are not necessarily in the immediate location.

A good dowser can hear the signaling of rocks and sands and loams. He can hear water talk. He can hear air talk. He can hear a valley or a fortress speak. Joseph Waterwitch was a good dowser. He came by his talent honestly. He was a Shawnee Indian, and the Shawnees can out dowse any other Indians in the world. Waterwitch had been given to Joe's folks as a family name because of their expertness in witching anything from water to fresh meat trails.

But dowsers are scientifically unacceptable. Joseph Waterwitch had been kicked out of the usually free and easy Geologists' Club when he refused to deny that he had dowsing talents. He had been kicked out quite literally—out of the private bar, out through the dining room and the meeting room, out through the library and exhibit rooms. Then he was kicked violently down that short flight of five steps to the street, to the injury of both his pride and his coccyx.

But are all scientists absolutely closed to such things? May not some entry be made into some minds? At times it has been thought that an entrace could be made by certain underchannels, by streams that flow unsuspected below the medulla walls or that permeate the pons *variolii* to break through. Even at the Geologists' Club, there had been one man drenched by the under-river, a man who might open the gates at the proper time—when he heard the off-key whistle of sweet treason. This man knew a lot about odd frequencies, and he could split stubborn rocks with his own double-tuned whistling.

A patina is a reverberating surface that is composed entirely of its own history and that possibly does not exist in the present time. But this definition beggars John Dragon's statement that there is no room for the present in present time, that the present must always be slightly in the future and cannot be perceived except by this very slight shift into future time. Present time is an anomaly: it is less than a quantum wide, and its very narrowness posits its nonexistence. It is too narrow a crack to exist; and yet, there may be a two-way traffic through that narrow crack. Unacceptable things do come through the narrow crack that is mistakenly called the present—things such as ghosts, cranks, and treasures.

A patina may be very deep and still retain all the characteristics of a surface phenomenon. It is made up of old vibrations and waves, and of nothing else; yet it has mass and physical substance, and waves supposedly do not. And a patina, though seldom containing metal, shows magnetic properties.

It is not only stones and rocks that acquire a patina. The patina is often spoken of as an aging and a weathering, but young and growing things sometimes show striking patinas. An adolescent plum just coming to full color may have a patina; a smoky surface ghost of that full color. It is a patina, whatever other name it bears. A human being may have a patina which contains all that being's experience. And a newborn child may have a surface patina that reflects the complete history of its ancestors as well as its own makeup and shorter history. In countries where the niceties prevail, this valuable patina is often washed off the newborn child. Such removal makes for trauma and dislocation. The child is permanently deprived. He will grow other patina, but it will never be the same. He will forever lack roots and history and surety. He will seldom become a truly reverberating person.

But is there any proof at all that patina may record and remember, and later transmit or recreate, persons and objects and events? Surely there is proof. Ghosts are the proof—the tens of thousands of reports of ghost persons and ghost events. Ghosts are the transmitting and

recreating of old things and old doings.

You do not accept ghosts? You have not been touched even once by the ghost river named Pharpar? It is not good to remain untouched by it. It is the river of resurrection. If you will not accept ghosts, neither will you accept one risen from the dead.

The dowser turned inside out is the eidolon man. Joseph Waterwitch was a supreme dowser. His associate Abel Landgood was a dowser-inside-out, an image man or an eidolon man. As a projector of valid eidolons, images, and recreations, he was as expert as a formally untrained person can be.

The great breakthrough arrived with the acquaintance and association of Waterwitch and Landgood. Together they drew up the Landwitch Covenant. They had the whole procedure completed between them before they went to have it instrumented.

Abel Landgood had had a most normal childhood, even excessively normal. He had walked and talked with ghosts from the day he was able to walk and talk. All children do this, but not all are as good at fixing ghosts as was Abel. He was an imaginative and creative boy. He was weirdly happy in his relations with the world, and that is always important. And he did not like empty spaces at all. Whenever he found a stubbornly empty space, he filled it with his imagination. There had been an empty space between the alley fence and the alley behind his house. Abel filled it with three apple trees and some blackberry bushes, and he would eat apples and blackberries until he got sick.

There was also a little vacant half-lot across the alley. A house had once stood there. It had burned down. Abel put another house there, a funny-looking house. He put a very fat woman and a very thin man to live in the house, and he fixed their names to be Mrs. and Mr. Ostergoster. He put a boy to live in the house and fixed his name to be Mikey Ostergoster. Mikey fixed a cat. Abel fixed a dog that chased the cat away. Mikey fixed a crazy man to chase the dog with a stick. Abel fixed a soldier to chase off the crazy man. Mrs. and Mr. Ostergoster came out and quarreled with the soldier. Everybody began to fight then. Abel's father came out and unhinged all those folks and the funny-looking house also. And those things were gone in a blinking.

"You shouldn't have brought back the Ostergosters," Abel's father told him when they were alone and the echoes of the disturbance were retreating into the secondary patina. "There are people in the neighborhood who still remember them, and remember how they burned in the little house there, ah, in the little house that is not there. And you shouldn't have brought back the Confederate soldier to

chase off the crazy man. With our reputation, you can't afford to seem too old-line Southern. And you shouldn't have brought back that particular dog. I remember that dog before they had to kill it. It was one mean dog—it's a wonder you weren't bitten. Cool it a little bit, Abel, or people will think you're an odd kid."

But Abel Landgood wasn't an odd kid at all. He was absolutely normal. It's the kids who lack or lose the basic talents who are odd.

The Landgoods had to move twice during the childhood and adolescence of Abel. The family seemed to attract ghosts, and the neighbors objected. (Ghosts are normal, but people often react abnormally to ghosts.) It was not all Abel's doings about the ghosts. Like Joseph Waterwitch, Abel Landgood did not acquire all his talent in his own generation. Both his father and his mother had talent.

And, like his parents, Abel retained his talents after he had become an adult. An average child will lose such abilities, but a normal child will retain them.

Joseph Waterwitch (the man with the locating or homing beats, who could bring any interesting location or time or patina into focus and enjoy it) met Abel Landgood (the man with the strong imagination, the image-projecting or eidolon-making talent by which interesting old things could be enjoyed by everybody). They realized that between them they could recreate anything that had ever been—or anything that had ever existed strongly enough to leave its impress on time in patina-form, for patina is the living precipitate of time. On the basis of their meeting and acquaintance they drew up the Landwitch Covenant.

Needing guidance, the two men joined forces with John Dragon, the dean of soft sciences at Southwestern Polytech and with Cris Benedetti who was professor of miscellaneous subjects. Dragon got an appropriation, mostly travel money, to test the Covenant in a puzzling historical situation; one far enough distant to be beyond intervening personal passions and prejudices. Cris Benedetti took the two talented gentlemen down to Barnaby Sheen's electronics shop where two young electronics geniuses, a smooth-faced young man named Roy Mega and a hairy-faced young man named Austro, built imposing and sophisticated instruments that would reinforce the talents of the two men and would also give a scientific appearance to the enterprise.

"I believe that the patina-deposit complex is so complete," Joe Waterwitch had said on the eve of their first monumental testing, "that it would not greatly matter if all life should disappear from Earth. Secondary life would immediately spring from these deposits. The many millions of micro-books written on skins (on the skins

of the rocks, on the skins of everything) would bring forth recreated life—whatever life was most ready and most avid to be resurrected. I believe that I have already experienced glimpses and manifestations of the reactivating mechanism. It would be a curious life and a curious world then. Everything in it would be the ghost of something that had gone before, but the combinations would be new, the motifs and forums would be completely fresh. It would not be a sequential world or a rational one. Anomaly would be characteristic. It would be like—"

"It would be like the world we live in now," Cris Benedetti said. "You have described our own world perfectly and I suspect that your thesis is correct. We live in a recreated secondary. The evidence shows that absolutely. All life did suddenly disappear from Earth—I'm not sure when this happened. Secondary life, made up entirely of anomalous ghosts, did spring up from old residues written small on various skins. We are the anomalous ghosts and that world is our world."

"I believe that there are a few slight objections to your theory," John Dragon said with that deadly seriousness that is found only in citizens of secondary worlds. "There are so many things about us that have to be happening for the first time. There are things too flimsy ever to be reproduced. However, we may be living in an abortive secondary."

iii

The constituted body known as the Landwitch Covenant, that para-archeological investigating team, failed its first major test. Its little movie, *The Fall of Damascus*, filmed on a working site, may well have been the worst movie ever made. However its failures came about, it was a sick parody, ridiculously false history, and it simply could not have been a resurrection of the past. It received bitter assessment from the scientific community, for the para-archeological probe had been represented as somehow scientific.

The whole group had been completely discredited; and one Khalid had been voted the ironic award of "Worst Actor of the Year, of Any Year".

"They gave us no credit at all," Abel Landgood complained. "This is the first movie ever made to consist entirely of complete ghosts and of complete ghost sites. Who else was ever able to evoke an integrated past so entirely? And of course it is scientific! What else could it be? Admittedly there was something the matter with the past we evoked, but we'll solve that too."

" 'The Worst Actor of the Year, of any Year'!" Khalid fumed. "I'll show them—"

"Can you get another appropriation, Dragon?" Joseph Waterwitch asked.

"No. I'm out completely," John Dragon said sorrowfully. "I am ragged, bagged, tagged, and fired from Southwestern Polytech. 'You're making a mistake,' I told them. 'You're destroying the balance of things. You need a dean of soft sciences.' 'Not that soft,' they said. Did you ever watch a ceremonial academic putdown? They cut the brass buttons off my dean's coat, broke my plate and turned my picture to the wall."

"Worst actor of the year!" Khalid still smouldered. "I'll make them eat that! I don't know why I came through so badly, though. That just wasn't the real me."

"It isn't fair," Waterwitch groused. "We're put clear down, but everyone who touched us comes up smelling like lilacs. That kid Austro who works for Sheen, he has a writeup and an article in the latest *Geology This Month*. The article is *Instrumental Reception of Igneous Rock Mantle Data by Means of Pulsating Heterodyning Grids*, and it is subtitled *Search and Focus*, or *Do Rocks Remember?* And talk about a gadget! That kid must be a freak. It says that the 'manuscript' for his article was chiseled on thin stone tablets."

"Who does he think that he is—Moses?" Abel Landgood exploded. "He's a friend of yours, isn't he, Benedetti? What kind of friends do you have anyhow?"

"Right now, all of us need all the friends we can get," Cris Benedetti said.

"Worst actor of the year!" Khalid still moaned. "I'll rub their noses in that before I'm through. But why wasn't it the real me?"

"Maybe Austro can devise a filter for excessively polarized data," Cris Benedetti said hopefully.

"What hurts is that Austro was working for us and got his ideas from us," Waterwitch insisted. "And *Geology This Month* described him as 'highly professional and impeccably scientific; if he were not so, his theories would be grotesque'. If that fuzz-faced clown is scientific, what are we?"

"Some have it, some don't," Cris said.

"But he used us."

"Then we'll use him," Khalid said reasonably. "There's no doubting it; that kid has drunk from the older river. That means that he can enter and infiltrate and topple, and that's what he *is* doing. There have to be such manipulators working behind the scenes whenever you go into the business of tumbling walls down, and there have to be these awkward stalking-horses out in front. Though I never

before thought of myself as a stalking-horse."

"Well, just what are you, Khalid?" Landgood asked him. "And what are you doing here?"

"Yes, we've all been wondering about that," Cris Benedetti said.

"You're a residue among residues, you Arab sand-flea," Joe Waterwitch said. "I focused on you, and Abel Landgood catalyzed you into apparent being. You're a ghost, a recreation from the past. You aren't real."

"What man is sure of his own reality?" Khalid asked. "Are any of you? We desert people have gone into this much more deeply than you Franks have. Thinking isn't your line. But you clods precipitated a Khalid as seen through Damascene-Byzantine eyes. No wonder I was selected worst actor of the year! Why didn't you catalyze the real me, the shrewd, brilliant, spacious, nonpareil political and military genius, the leader of the canniest and trickiest and most sophisticated bunch of men ever assembled?"

"Ah, because our data was polarized," Cris Benedetti said. "We tuned in on residues and patinas as seen by Damascene eyes because those were the eyes that predominated in Damascus. That's the way you looked to those city people, so that's the way you looked to our instruments and film. I believe that it could have been corrected if we had had a little more experience in these things. But it's all water over the dam now."

"No, no, water under the dam," shrewd, spacious, nonpareil Khalid said evenly. "Oh, that water is our salvation! Let's go see those kids. Somehow they're at home in the other river."

"How come you speak English, Khalid?" asked John Dragon, the ex-dean.

"More polarized data," Khalid explained. "I don't really. But you know me by your own polarized English-speaking minds. So, to you, it seems as if I speak as you do."

"Are you still in good graces at Polytech, Benedetti?" Landgood asked as the men (and a contingent man, Khalid, a barefoot ghost in odd robes) walked the half-mile down Six-Shooter Road to Sheen's electronic works.

"Oh, they've given me a sabbatical," Cris said. "They said that I needed a rest. It's fine, I suppose, but it's without pay."

"Won't it be a little hard on you to go a year without pay, Benedetti?"

"It's seven years. They convinced me that a sabbatical is for seven years. They also said that the sabbatical was renewable. They've always been nice people to work for, and they're scientifically orthodox. Some of them will appear on tonight's TV news spectacular,

Science Supreme, *The End Of The Crackpots.*"

"Which are the crackpots?" Khalid asked.

"Such as ourselves," John Dragon said. "Para-archeologists and such."

"No, no, they're wrong," Khalid protested. "Because a thing is done badly, as your thing surely was, is no reason to throw it away. Keep with it."

"That other genius kid, Roy Mega, is just as ambivalent as Austro is," Abel Landgood sighed. "In the latest *Para-Electronics Today* he is quoted a bit. I'll read it: 'The Scientific Community may be a little too prone to suspect vivid depictments of time-residue data. Why should such representation not be vivid; as long as it is valid? The translation of residue data falls as easily into anthropomorphic forms as into modified sine wave or any other graphic form. It is no real indictment that a translation of residual men and sites should look like men and sites. However, we cannot condone the excesses of certain adventurers in their recent extravaganza. As the boys say, *Do not task us with Damascus.* That was a sad and discrediting thing. We wash our hands of such excesses'."

"With which water does he wash his hands?" Khalid asked. "From which side of the she-wolf does this cub suck? Ambivalence may often be its own best tactic, but not always. We will see."

"There's more," Landgood said. "He writes, 'We must begin to accept the fleshing of time-residue ghosts, just as we have arrived at accepting the solid fleshing of TV images. Yet we do well to be suspicious if they are of too funny a flesh. Malodorous and deformed ghosts disprove themselves'."

"I'm one of those he means," Khalid grumbled. "Worst actor of the year! Malodorous and deformed ghost! I'll come back on them. I'll rub their noses in it."

"He goes on," said Landgood, " 'We, along with all responsible scientists, must reject these current debasements of—' "

Landgood, reading, collided with Roy Mega, who was strolling in front of Sheen's electronics building.

"It's good to hear oneself quoted with such total preoccupation," Roy Mega said. "Gentlemen, ah, I see that you have one of the funny fleshies with you."

"A care, young colt," Khalid said with barefoot dignity. "I have dined on infidels' tongues before, and I'll have yours out by the roots. There's a special flavor to the waggle-well, young-fool tongue."

"A care, old nag," Roy Mega said with gathering hubris. "You aren't real and you aren't here. You are no more than the experimental after-image of a bad motion picture ghost. As an after-image, you are my experiment, and I can terminate you easily. Your apparent

continuation after the show and its recordings were finished owes itself to a trick I intruded into the equipment. Your appearance depends on one holding-coil, one small electro-magnet, that I set in the circuits. And it is a time-release holding-coil, so your continuation is quite precarious. In fact, it should —"

"The coil should have released itself some hours or days ago, should it not, young colt?" Khalid smiled. "It should have released itself when my days of grace were finished. These were days during which I tracked down these men who had had something to do with my awakening. I wanted to find out why I came through so badly, why it wasn't the real me. But now there is more than one holding coil in the equipment you built—and more than one in equipment that you know not of. Oh, I've insured and reinsured the circuitry on which I depend. I am even on the verge of making myself independent of all circuitry, of making myself of less funny flesh, of becoming again more than an electric man. Why should my continuance depend on fleshless circuitry? There is One on whom all depends."

"Carrock," said Austro, the young, hair-faced electronics genius, as he came out of the electronics building.

"An even stranger colt, you!" said Khalid, turning pleasantly to Austro. "You, if not the other, have drunk from the hidden and intuitive river. You at least can circumvent and enter the walled city. Possibly of funny flesh yourself, but yours is a greening genius from that hidden water."

"Mud on my mouth! I have drunk from it!" Austro declared. "And so also has Roy here. He is as conniving and cantankerous a person as yourself, good Khalid. Carrock, why don't we all come inside?"

They all went inside.

"This Roy boy, this dolt colt here, he is *not* as conniving as myself," Khalid preached when they had settled indoors. "He does not make sure. He does not check back. Had I placed a time coil in an equipment, I would know it when the time had run out and the coil had forgotten to release. Could so careless a young man have taken Damascus? Could he have taken Ctesiphon or Baghdad?"

"Like Grant took Richmond," Roy Mega crowed. "Like Sungai took Dashbashpul!"

"Carrock, kids. To peace and to work," Austro poured aromatic oil on the hidden and intuitive waters. "By the sour'd ears of science, we have more to do than set a-blowing the sand of old battles. Carrock."

"Are you ever a fancy-talking hair-face!" Khalid jeered. "But I believe that I have heard that you are only a device manufactured by the jinni named Sheen."

"Oh, Austro's real enough, Khalid," Cris Benedetti assured the out-of-time Arab when they were all at ease in the lounge of the electronics building. "And Austro is right. We have to set a-blowing the sand of new battles. Now. But how will we do it? The great walls of science are guarded by so many that not even a mouse can get in. They even have a battalion of a thousand and one furious mouse-hunters. And the bright pennant Science Supreme, *The End Of The Crackpots* will fly over those high battlements tonight. Khalid, we do need an old desert warrior here."

"I am the greatest ever," Khalid answered. "But several times all of you have spoken of science without total respect, and this I do not understand. We are talking about the same thing, high science, *Ilm* itself? I thought that science was all to the good. The Byzantines believed that they had come to the end of it: we knew that we had just come to the beginning of it; but we came to that beginning with joy. We ciphered more intricate mathematics in the sand than they in their scrolls. We studied more complex star-ways from our sandy hills than they from their towers. We brewed more chemistries from the bark of one incense tree than they from all their archive dust. At desert smitheries and forges we built instruments and machines beyond anything imagined. And we made a rhetoric and eloquence to carry on and announce these things. After Him whom all adore, we most adored science, the holy *Ilm*. And now you hold science in bad repute? Has the Byzantine contempt and satisfaction come back? Has the wheel turned full circle? It's almost as if we hadn't whipped them completely."

"Yes, the contempt and satisfaction with past knowledge have come back," John Dragon said sadly. "And they have encrusted the thing itself. The noble old ship is sluggish and bottom-heavy with barnacles. The Free Brother of Man, your holy *Ilm*, has imprisoned himself behind walls and is longer free."

"We know how to enter and to throw down walls," Khalid said. "You, the two young genuises, get yourselves busy instrumenting it. There will be an event, will there? Then we will capture and ride that event. We begin the assault tonight. We will assail the encrustation from inside."

"This isn't Damascus, this isn't Baghdad," Abel Landgood said.

"Yes it is," Khalid insisted. "The encrustations, the wallings, the enclosures—they are Damascus, they are Ctesiphon, they are Baghdad. Young geniuses, are you at work on it?"

"Ah, I'm not quite sure what—" Roy Mega hesitated. "We've been using doubletalk, and we've been washing our hands a lot. I don't know what else —"

"Carrock, I know, I'm sure," Austro said. "Here, Roy, come work.

We make *them* use doubletalk in their own mouths."

"If I only knew what we're supposed to be doing—" Roy Mega complained.

"If you have to ask, you've missed it," Khalid told him. "Surely a smart young man like you wouldn't miss it. We need your fine hubris. We need your sharp distinctions. The noble thing itself will be bruised a bit when we tear through its encrustations, but noble things are always tough. Come, come, Frankish men, we need the fine edge of your minds for our polarity. What we really need is irony, a little unconscious irony."

"That's the hardest kind," Cris Benedetti said.

"It's almost time for that damnable TV spectacular Science Supreme, *The* End *Of The* Crackpots," Joe Waterwitch growled through clenched teeth. "I will hate the smugness of it, the exclusions, the cursed close-mindedness. And yet I'll be fascinated by that whole barrel of snakes, and I don't know why."

"Carrock, so will I, and I do know why," said the young genius Austro. "Is it two receivers we will set up, Khalid, sir? That way we can have one that shows what everybody sees and the other one to show it the way they're really doing it. That one will be tricky, but very instructive. We will need to follow along as we go so we can modify our patterns. We have to know what it is that we're heterodyning."

"I can do it," Roy Mega said. "I was slow to pick it up, and that isn't my way at all; but I know I can handle it now. Exquisite shielding for the check-set, and unscrambling the scramble! It will be the only set in the world to show our process in unmodified form, a real curiosity. And the modified one will show the full flowering, the tilt, the scramble. There's no limit to it — or to just how good we really are."

"Is there power enough for such amplification?" Cris Benedetti asked. He wasn't an electronics man.

"Electrically, yes," Roy Mega said. "Mentally—that's up to all of us. And do not be quite your usual kind self, Mr. Benedetti. We need a little urbane arrogance, and we need it from you. We need a little elegance from someone. Is there anyone here elegant besides me? Contribute, men, it is almost time."

"Carrock, we hope, we hope!" Austro howled. And he was modifying equipment faster than you could blink.

"It shouldn't take much electricity," Khalid guessed. "We took Damascus with only crude sparking coils and primitive Greek fire to amplify and reinforce our own mind-worm bit. Of course it took us six months before we blew down their minds. And our new assault may take us six months or six years or sixty, but we will finish


staton

the beginning of it tonight. As to the power, it couldn't have been more than a nudge the wrong way during your reactivation of us that turned me from the consummate genius and masterful person that I am into the worst actor of any year. This is the subtle touch that seems to change nothing and changes everything. One will hardly be able to point to a single element that is changed at all, yet the totality will be changed absolutely."

"What is going on here anyhow?" John Dragon demanded.

"The damnable TV news special *Science Supreme, The End Of The Crackpots* is going on in thirty seconds," Cris Benedetti said. "It's to the first audience of one billion persons ever. Be angry or be easy, Dragon, but be yourself. The world is going to see this show through our eyes and attitudes. We must give the world a really fine and new experience. Polarized data! The field has hardly been touched. One can do so many things with it."

"Mind-worms. We will be mind-worms," Khalid said. "We are inside them all. We begin the conquest now, and they'll never know what hit them. We ride the current of that intuitive river named Pharpar. We make the whole world see it through our own elegant eyes. I like that 'elegant eyes' part."

"But we can't alter a TV program that is already going on," Joe Waterwitch protested. "We would have to do—"

"We are doing," Roy Mega said.

"Joe, you're the dowser and you don't know where it's at," Benedetti chortled. "Certainly we can alter it if we bring our equipment and minds and eyes to bear."

It was quite a good TV spectacular. *Science Supreme, The End Of The Crackpots* was a program that people would remember. It would affect them for the rest of their lives.

It wasn't quite what had been expected. The crackpots; they came through as the entrenched inner sanctum boys. It took a lot of courage for the scientific community to confess to such weaknesses in itself.

And some of the things that you had always thought of as a little bit fringe, ah, they got an open-door welcome here. A few of them set you and the whole world thinking on new lines. There has to be something to them: there has to be a lot to several of them. Take that new para-archeology, that especially. By a combination of electronics and human minds, great hunks of the past are really recreated. Old ghosts walk, and they do not look ghostly at all.

And often, in the electronics building there, a glance at the checkset to see from what rough rocks these men present were fashioning such elegant gems! The original had been rough and intolerant. It

had been smothering and shriveling. But the check-set was not seen by the billion persons, only by the seven.

Oh, but the great and gracious modification which now became the prime original! Yes, the noble thing itself was bruised a bit when the modification tore through the old encrustations, but noble things are always tough enough to survive: and now, for a while, it was no longer smothered and shriveled.

But the final, elegant, polarized presentation was like an old promise fulfilled, like a hidden river rediscovered. It was an unfolding, a full-flowing. It was finally to see all dimensions of time and space with elegant eyes.

OLD HALLOWEENS ON THE GUNA SLOPES

"Yah, yah!" Mary Mondo chanted. "You old men say 'They don't make them like they used to'. I think they don't even make old men like they used to. What they make now are nothing but old duffers."

"Be quiet, young girl!" Harry O'Donovan spoke. "Oh, damnation! There I go again, answering spooks and things that aren't even there; answering evening room-noises and windy talk. Talk about nothing people! Mary, you are a real nothing person."

Mary Mondo was a spook, which was to say that she wasn't anything at all. But it was easy to get into the habit of noticing her and even answering her. One had to watch it, or pretty soon one would be treating her like a person again.

"The fact is that they don't have Halloweens like they used to," Harry went on. "There used to be an old kraut-head named Kalbfleish who lived betwixt this place and Cris Benedetti's house. We plagued that man, and he plagued us. He was built like a barrel, and to us he seemed old. But he was fast. Whenever we made an evening disturbance on his front porch, started a little leaf fire there or broke a few bottles, set off a couple of stink bombs (you could get those little gas stink bombs two for a nickel at Selby's store then), whenever we did such things he would come tearing out of his front door, leap the side railing of the porch, and hit running. He knew which way we would go (there was only one way for us to go to find a hiding place), and he would collar a couple of us before we could get gone.

And he would beat us till our tails howled like basset hounds."

"Carrock, get on with the story, Harry," Austro said. Austro was a pleasant and hairy young man of the species Australopithecus.

"Mrs. Kalbfleish would abet him," Harry said. "She'd sound off like a preacher bird, and they'd come with a high-footed run, wary of our tripping ropes. So naturally both sides of the antagonism waited anxiously for Halloween every year. The Kalbfleishes were always ready for war, and I myself had assembled a good gang of young boys."

What was the matter with Harry? We had been his gang, or he had been in our gang—and he hadn't been the leader. The gang had been made up of Barnaby Sheen, John Penandrew, George Drakos, Cris Benedetti, and Harry O'Donovan, those kids who knew everything, and myself who didn't. Well, why should Harry tell us one of our own adventures? Or maybe we had it remembered wrong and he would set us right.

"Halloween was a very rainy afternoon and night that year," Harry said, "and we were the only gang out. It had already rained for a week, and the mud was bottomless. You couldn't do much in that mud; but you could dig, if you didn't mind the mud. It was dark by five in the afternoon and the rain and the thunder were so loud that we couldn't be heard. We dug a pit eight feet square and eight feet deep along the side of the Kalbfleish's front porch. We jimmied several down-spouts, we dammed up a couple of runnels, and that pit was filling nicely.

"One of us had a big can full of kerosene. Another of us had a pumpkin-head with a candle burning in it. That one was John Penandrew with his funny-shaped face and head. We always said that he still had a pumpkin-head after he threw his lighted pumpkin-head into the pit that night. We were going to start a fire on the Kalbfleish's front porch to devil them out. But the kid with the kerosene stumbled and fell into our own pit. He spilled three gallons of kerosene into it, less what he swallowed, and he nearly choked to death himself.

"So John Penandrew went up to the Kalbfleish's ornate front door and began to break little panes of glass out of it with a hammer. That always brought them out, and it brought them out now like two thunderbolts, man and wife in that high-footed run and the wife sounding like a preacher bird. Penandrew, with those two big people after him, leapt the porch railing and almost leapt the pit. But he didn't quite make it. He was sliding on the edge of the pit and flailing about with that lighted pumpkin-head. The two Kalbfleishes leapt the railing right behind him and went in over their heads in the water and kerosene-filled pit. Penandrew, trying to get his balance, dropped the pumpkin-head; and the explosion blew him clear out of there.

Man, that was an explosion of water and fire and mud! They don't have Halloweens like that anymore."

"What happened then?" I asked. I had been there, but I didn't remember it at all the way that Harry was telling it.

"Oh, Kalbfleish was out of the hospital in three months," Harry said, "though of course he would be scarred forever from the burns. His wife died from the combination of drowning and burning to death. We felt bad about it for a while. But by the time the next Halloween rolled around, we were ready for another go. Kalbfleish had another wife by then, and they were primed for another go too."

The door chimes were ringing downstairs. "I'll go," said Mary Mondo. She took candy from the candy bowl and floated down. There was the sound of the front door opening and of little voices like birds twittering 'Trick or treat'. Then someone cried 'Awk!' in a more mature voice, and then there was a sound 'Klunk'. After a while the front door was heard to close again, and Mary Mondo came back upstairs.

"That lady fainted and klunked her head on the door-stone," Mary said. "Seeing me didn't bother the kids, but it sent the lady into a faint. Why do ladies faint when they see ghosts? I don't faint when I see people."

"Is she all right, Mary?" Barnaby Sheen asked. All this was at Barnaby's house.

"No, of course she isn't all right," Mary said. "The way she klunked her head on that door-stone, I bet she never does get all right."

"I remember one Halloween," said George Drakos, "when Bittle McLittle, the smallest man in the world, was playing in the vaudeville at the old Orpheum Theatre. We had made friends with Bittle and he went around with us that night. They weren't having the vaudeville that evening: they were having a triple bill of silent movie ghost pictures.

"My cousin Zoe Archikos (she was very blonde and very precosious for nine years old) was with us that night, and she carried Bittle McLittle wrapped up in a blanket like a baby. She went up to the Paldeen house and banged on the door. And Mr. Paldeen opened the door. He was a funny man with a harelip, and a voice that went with it.

" 'Oh go away, kids,' he said in that harelippy way. 'I don't want any trouble with you.'

" 'This is your chile that I have in my arms,' Zoe said in her brassy way, 'and these are my six lawyers. Now pay off or we will have you on a patality suit.'

" 'Paternity suit,' Bittle McLittle the child in her arms corrected her.

" 'What is it Peter?' Mrs. Paldeen called from inside.

" 'Oh, it's just that brassy little Archikos girl with some nonsense about a paternity suit,' Mr. Paldeen hairlipped to his wife inside. But the wife came to the door all in a turmoil.

" 'Oh, Peter Paldeen, whatever have you done?' she wanted to know. 'Zoe, are you sure that Peter is the father of your child? Can you prove it?'

" 'Oh sure, I think so,' Zoe said.

" 'Certainly we can prove it,' said Bittle McLittle the child in Zoe's arms, and he said it in a harelippy voice. (Bittle was a mimic: all those people in vaudeville learned to mimic all kind of voices and to play the different instruments in the orchestra too, if necessary.) 'Would I sound just like him if he weren't my father?'

" 'Oh, what a terrible thing!' Mrs. Paldeen wrung her voice. 'Peter, that little baby talks just like you. That proves he's your son. Oh, what do you what us to do, Zoe?'

" 'Pay, pay, pay!' Zoe cried righteously. 'Money, money. Eight dollars. There are eight of us here.'

" 'Eight dollars!' Peter Paldeen moaned. 'I work all week for eight dollars. Oh, oh, what have I done to deserve this?'

" '*You* know what you've done, Peter,' Mrs. Paldeen said angrily. 'There's no other way. Think of the disgrace. Pay, Peter, pay!'

"Mr. Paldeen went into the house and came back with the money. He gave a dollar to each of us, to Zoe, to Bittle McLittle in her arms, to Harry O'Donovan, to Barnaby Sheen, to John Penandrew, to Cris Benedetti, to Laff, and to me. It had worked.

" 'Hey, wait a minute,' Peter Paldeen harelipped a little bit too late. 'Wait a broomcorn-cutting min—'

" 'Scramble!' Bittle McLittle howled, and not in a hairlippy voice. Zoe threw him and he hit running, and we were all running off in eight different directions.

" 'How come a little baby like that could talk at all?' Mrs. Paldeen was keening. 'Why were you so stupid as to pay the money? Peter, how come a little baby like that was smoking a cigar?'

" 'How come a little baby like that can run like that?' Peter Paldeen panted somewhere behind us. But he couldn't run in eight directions, and he couldn't catch any of us at all. Ah, they just don't make Halloweens like that any more."

The door chimes rang downstairs. "I'll go," said Mary Mondo. She took bubble gum from the bubble gum bowl and floated down. There was the sound of the front door opening and of little voices like crickets twittering 'Trick or treat'. Then someone cried 'Awk!' in a more

womanly voice. After that there was a 'Klunk' sound. A little later the front door was heard to close again, and Mary Mondo came back upstairs.

"That lady fainted and klunked her head on the door-stone just like the first one did," Mary Mondo said. "How come I scare the ladies when I don't scare the little kids?"

"Is she all right, Mary?" Barnaby Sheen asked.

"No, of course she isn't all right. How is anybody going to be all right after a klunk like that? I hope nobody slips on the blood she got on the door-stone."

"No, they don't make them like they used to," Barnaby said. "I remember one Halloween when the old Orcutt streetcar still ran down St. Louis Street. It ended at Orcutt Park on the lake, and there was a turn-around there. One of the car-men lived in a shanty in the park. He would drive the last run at night and the first run in the morning, and he would leave the streetcar all night on the turn-around."

Austro was doing his weekly Rocky McCrocky comic strip episode with hammer and chisel on light grey slatestone. He filled the incisions with black pigment or graphite, and clear and striking pictures were the result. He would split the light grey slatestone very thin as he finished each panel, and it made almost perfect episode pictures. It was in such form that Austro gave the continuing Rocky McCrocky drama to the young people of the neighborhood and of the world.

"On this side of the park, before you got to the turn-around, there were some stately mansions on the lake shore," Barnaby continued with his story. "One of the most stately belonged to the Dumbarton family. Mr. Dumbarton was from France. He was a millionaire. He owned one of the refineries out by Sand Springs. But he was a swishy dude: my own father used to say that about him. So we'd fix that swishy dude!

"We had a couple of frogs, those iron rail-clamps made to switch cars from one track to another where there isn't a regular switching place. We picked a high place about a hundred feet from the turn-around, and we fastened the frogs to the track there. Then we went to the streetcar, put the trolley up to the trolley-wire, got in the car, and started it up. We got up all the speed we could going up the rise. We hit the frogs and we derailed, and we went downhill on that new pavement that they had there. We had it all figured perfectly. We even had measured that concrete ramp going up to the Dumbarton front porch, the one they made for Mr. Dumbarton's grandmother to go up in her wheelchair on. It was wider than it needed to be for a wheelchair to go on. It was just exactly wide enough for

a streetcar to go on if we hit it just right."

Below and outside, a monkey howled and sobbed in withering agony and resounded its degradation in the hellish jungle. (There was not, in actual fact, any hellish jungle down there, though the yard between Sheen's where we were and Benedetti's was pretty shaggy.) The monkey gave its wrenching howling and sobbing in the terrifying outdoors, and also in the terrifying personal interiors. It may have been a ghost monkey.

"Monkeys had Halloween before people did," Austro said. "Really, that's true. If they didn't kill so many of each other on every Halloween the world would be over-run with them now."

"We rolled down that hill faster and faster," Barnaby recounted, "and we stomped on that trolley-bell 'Clang! Clang! Clang!' Oh, I wish they still made trolley-bells like that! There wasn't any way to steer that streetcar when it wasn't on tracks, but it steered itself. The street turned sharply there, but the driveway of the Dumbartons was in a straight line. We went up that driveway with the sparks flying from the iron wheels on the concrete, up the ramp onto the front porch or veranda, down the whole length of the porch (Clang! Clang! Clang!) and clear through a wall at the end.

"And through the wall was the Master Chamber of the Dumbartons' house. That Master Chamber was probably the biggest bedroom in town, but it was a little bit crowded with a full-sized streetcar right in the middle of it. And we kept clanging that trolley-bell. A trolley-bell sounds quite a bit louder when the streetcar is inside a bedroom.

" 'Sancta Agatha!' Mrs. Dumbarton cried out in her fine voice as she sat up in bed.

" 'Ora pro nobis!' Mr. Dumbarton cried out in an even finer voice, and he sat up in bed too. And 'Clang! Clang! Clang!' went that trolley-bell. John Penandrew was the boy stomping on the bell. The Dumbartons, waking up like that, thought that the trolley-bell was a church bell back in France.

"They begin to ring the church bells at midnight there, when Halloween is over with and All Saints' Day begins. And they begin to chant that Litany of the Saints. You know, though, that swishy dude Dumbarton caught on real fast. I never saw a man comprehend a streetcar in the middle of his bedroom so fast. And I never saw a two-handed creature collar six kids as quick as he did. And he seemed to have hands left over to—"

"Ah, they don't make Halloweens like that any more!" we all breathed together.

The door chimes rang downstairs. "I'll go," said Mary Mondo. She

took balloons from the balloon bowl. Then she said, "I'd better take a pillow and put it on that door-stone so the ladies won't klunk their heads so hard. May a sonder-effect ghost-trap get me if I don't put a pillow there."

She floated downstairs, carrying a little pillow and quite a few balloons, blowing some of them up as she went. It was easy to see how Mary would startle people who weren't used to her. She hadn't any body at all. When she did things with her hands, such as handing out candy or balloons, then her hands did make an appearance, but it was a false appearance. When she spoke, there was mouth and throat and movement to be seen, but they were illusion. When she grinned, there was an appearance of everted lips and of red tract tissue all through her. Mary Mondo had a very visceral grin. It was hard to understand how she could be so carnal a person when she hadn't any body to be carnal with.

Below there was the sound of the front door opening and of little voices like pert mice squeaking 'Trick or treat'. Then someone cried 'Awk!' in a young-wifey voice. After that there was a curious modified sound, like a 'Klunk' wrapped in feathers. Mary Mondo had got the pillow onto the door-stone in time.

There was the sound of the front door closing again. Mary Mondo came back upstairs. "That's likely all the little kids there will be tonight," she said. "By the sonder-effect ghost-trap itself, I hope there won't be a certain two or three big kids."

"I hope Paracelsus doesn't come," said that big, not-so-very-lifelike, sawdust-filled doll on the sofa, the doll that was really the undead body of Loretta Sheen.

The pet monkey that belonged to the O'Briens was howling and gibbering and squalling outside. It was infested with a cloud of ghost-monkeys that always came on this night.

"Austro, did you have Halloweens on the Guna slopes when you were a boy?" Doctor George Drakos asked. The Guna slopes were in Ethiopia, in Africa. That was where Austro came from.

"Certainly we had Halloweens," Austro said, banging loudly with hammer and chisel as he constructed the Rocky McCrocky comic strip. "Carrock! We invented them. We first, after the monkeys, that is. Where do you think are to be found the great originals of your weak imitations you have been telling about? We made grotesque *sapiens* heads out of big gourds and burned bee-wax or aphid-wax candles in them. We would climb around and ring the door-bells at the porticos of the different caves, and we—"

"Wait, wait, wait!" Harry O'Donovan objected. "Don't tell us that the Australopithecines had door-bells!"

"Sure we did, Harry," Austro maintained. "Sure they were real ones, Cris. Sure they were electric ones, George. Did you think we had kerosene door-bells? Well hell, Barnaby, we used lead-sulphuric-acid batteries: that's a lot easier than winding those little transformers. Why, Laff, we got the sulphur for the acid from our own Guna slopes. The best deposits in Africa are still there."

"Let's not interrupt Austro, guys," Barnaby interrupted him. "It makes him loquacious. Believe me, he always has answers. If you read his weekly Rocky McCrocky comic strip as the neighborhood kids do you would know those answers."

"But sometimes we failed to ring the door-bells," Austro said. "Certain wise-guy caveholders would remove the push-buttons that night and paint the holes to look just like push-buttons. When we pressed our finger there, it would go all the way into the hole. Then a pair of sharp rock-scissors on the inside would make short work of the finger, short work by a joint or two. See!"

Austro held up his index finger that was minus a joint. He had told quite a few stories about that missing finger-joint, though. I myself doubted that he had lost it by poking it through a hole that was painted to look like a push-button.

"If the caveholder opened the front door, we jumped aside onto a higher ledge," Austro said, "for we had it fixed that the rock-sill would fall off and the caveholder would fall off too when he stepped out. Some of those caves were very high and the cave owners would be killed. Some of them were only medium high and the cave owners would only be maimed. Carrock, I hope those two or three big kids don't come around tonight!" Austro gave a shiver.

"You're surely not afraid of all the big kids in the world, are you?" Barnaby asked.

"There's two or three big kids I might be afraid of," Austro said. "I might be afraid of them just this one night of the year. But sometimes the caveholder wouldn't open the door itself. The rich ones had peep-holes built into their doors. Watch out then if a peep-hole opened. Don't put your eye too close to it to see inside. You will look a mamba snake right in the eye if you do, and he will savage the face clear off you. I hate mambas. Oh, I hope the door chimes don't ring again tonight. It might be *them*. Or I hope it rings soon, then, to have it over with."

"I hope it isn't Paracelsus," said the sawdusty Loretta Sheen.

"Yes, the *sapiens* people call him Paracelsus," Austro said with a shiver. "He is the most feared of the double-people who appear on this year-night to exact payment. He's the magician with the white beard. He might come as a young boy, a boy you know well. But he will be wearing a long white beard with thongs that pretend to

tie it onto his face. But it *will* not *be* a false beard: the boy will have grown a real white beard especially for this night. It is the thongs that are false in pretending to tie the beard onto the face. Then this magician with the white beard will pour a bowl of clotted blood of the *kiboko* over the head of the victim. And then the victim will be changed into a—ah, ah, ah—" But Austro was shaking badly.

"Into a *what*, Austro?" Harry O'Donovan asked.

"Don't make me say it," Austro begged. "It's too terrible. Ah, let me tell you about the Halloween night we put the rhinocerous up on top of chimney rock. It was a ten ton rhinocerous and was up two hundred feet high. It was nervous and complaining, and its feet kept slipping and showering rocks down. All the notable people had their houses right around the foot of chimney rock, and there was no telling which house the rhinocerous would smash or which people it would kill when it fell. By next morning daylight the situation was even more fearsome than by night. Ah, I'm afraid they *will* come tonight and I will be the victim. And the others of them are at least as fearful as the magician with the white beard. They will turn the victim into a—ah, ah, ah—" Austro was scared.

"Well, why don't the menaces ring the chimes then!" Barnaby demanded. "Nothing is more wearisome than waiting for doom to crack, than waiting for lightning to strike, than waiting for the trumpet to sound, than waiting for the last knock on the last door, than waiting for the final bell to ring."

"Sometimes the bearded magician will have an evil consort," Austro said, full of fright. "Sometimes there will even be a third of these demons. Then the victim is done and doesn't have a chance."

"I'm afraid of Paracelsus the Magician," Mary Mondo said, "but I'm even more afraid of Morgana. If she comes, it's just all over with."

"Just what is it that these spooks can do to you, kids?" Cris Benedetti asked.

"They can give one the monkey wrench," Austro said skittishly. "There is nothing worse than that."

We whooped and jeered at this, and Austro looked startled.

"Oh, I don't mean the tool that you call the monkey wrench," he said then. "What I mean is made out of air and not of iron. It follows you and it enters you. It finds that little monkey that is in you, and it wrenches it sidewise. There's no other way to say it. You don't get more monkey or less monkey in you when this happens. You get your monkey wrenched, twisted, and that will change you into something else. The worst is when it changes one into a *sapi* — Oh, no, no, I mustn't refer to that. Let's talk about something else. There was the Halloween night when we had cut almost through the grapevine that the mayor of our community used to swing into his cave

on. He had to swing into his cave over a chasm a thousand feet deep. Our mayor was a fat man, and when he took the end of the grapevine from its moorings he couldn't see the cut in it which was high above his head. He started to swing across the chasm. Then, just as he got to the middle, it broke and—"

"What is the *sapi*, Austro?" Harry O'Donovan asked.

"I wish they'd ring if there are any late visitors," Barnaby said.

The chimes downstairs rang.

"No, no, not me," Mary Mondo cried. "I won't go down. It might be *them*."

Nobody had to go down. The dread visitors burst the front door open and came up the stairs with a clatter. They burst the door of our room open and came in.

"All is lost," the sawdusty Loretta Sheen moaned. "It's Paracelsus."

"Destruction and damnation!" Mary Mondo howled. "It's Morgana."

"Fate worse than death," Austro cringed. "It's the Unnameable One."

Well, the three visitors did look a little bit gaudy. One of them, the one Austro called the Unnameable, poured a bowl of clotted *Kiboko* blood over Austro's head. It was like pouring a bowl of death over him. And Austro fainted dead away, and fell over on the floor. He turned blue. He quivered a little bit, and then he stopped quivering. He stopped breathing too. Doctor George Drakos gave him a poke in the solar plexus and he started to breathe again.

"Happy birthday, Austro!" the three fearsome visitors called. And Austro regained himself and sat up on the floor.

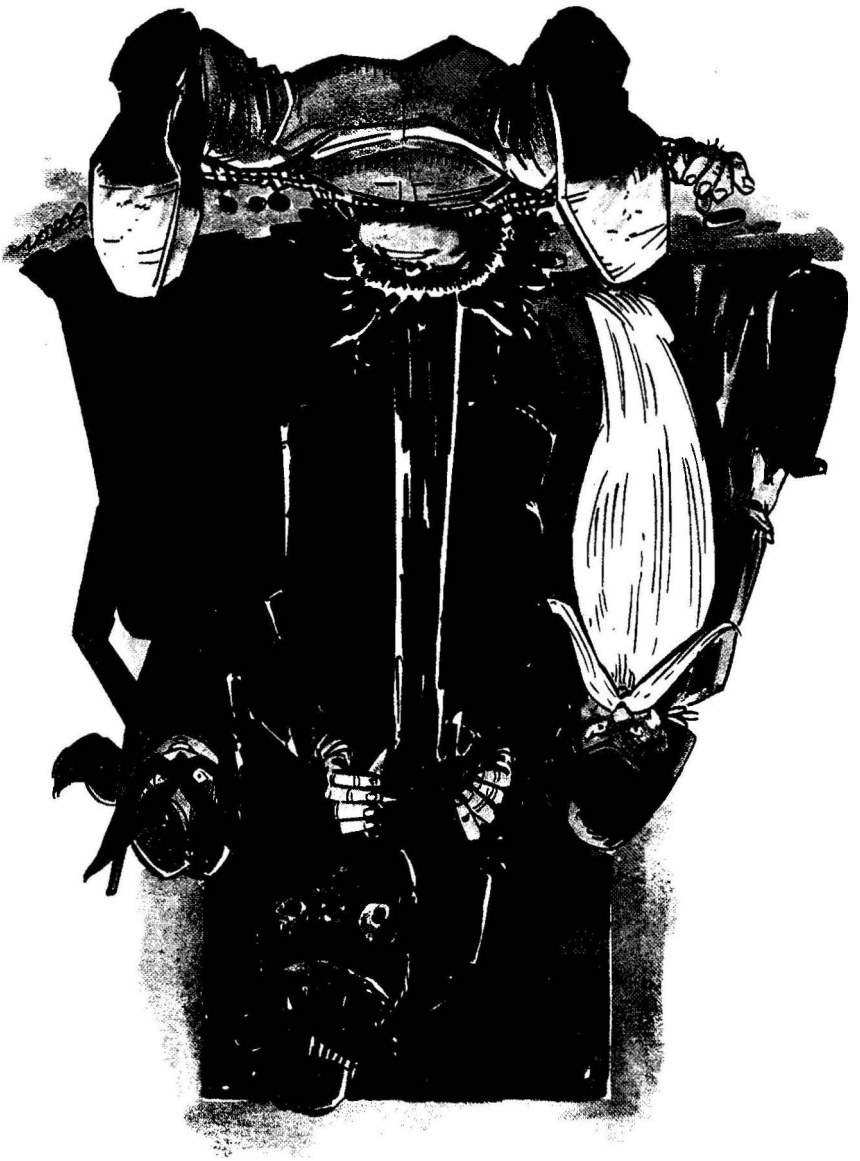
"I knew you all the time," he said. "I wasn't fooled." But he had been.

The magician with the white beard was Roy Mega. Yes, the white beard was real. He hadn't had it that morning but he had it now. What is the use of being a genius if you can't grow a beard to order?

Morgana, the evil consort of the magician, was Chiara Benedetti. And the Unnameable One was a wino who was a friend of Austro and all of us, Heavenly Days McGee. What he had poured over Austro's head was not clotted *Kiboko* blood at all. It was chili. It was Ike's Chili Parlour chili, the best kind. And Chiara had brought what she said was snail cake, with candles on it. So they had a party.

"How is this your birthday, Austro?" George Drakos asked. "And how old are you?"

"Carrock, I'm twelve years old," Austro said. "It's my golden anniversary." He was eating snail cake and opening presents and chisel-



ing out next week's heroic episode of the Rocky McCrocky comic strip all at the same time.

"How did you calculate it?" Cris Benedetti said. "And twelve isn't the golden anniversary."

"Twelve is the golden anniversary where I come from," Austro said, "and it is also the year of my majority. I'm a man now. Oh, I calculated it from the helical rising of the Dog Star, and by the sothic period."

"The sothic period still has twenty-eight years to go," Cris Benedetti said.

"So? Then I subtracted twenty-eight years from it, and that made me twelve years old."

Say, that was a happy time. That cake was good. Chiara had lied; it wasn't snail cake at all. And the future was rolling out like a sunshine carpet before Austro, the kid with the sunshine brains. The cloud was gone, but what had it been?

"What *is* the fate worse than death?" George Drakos asked.

"Carrock, it missed me," Austro said. "Let's not talk about it."

"But what is it that you would be turned into when your monkey is wrenched sideways?" Harry O'Donovan wanted to know. "What is this *sapi* that you would be turned into?"

"Homo *sapi*ens, that's what," Austro said. "You get turned into one of them—fate worse than death."

Hammer and chisel ringing out the great epic of Rocky McCrocky on the comic-strip stone blocks. Chili still on his head, and his mouth full of snail cake. Sunshine shining there at midnight, and the rock dust flying!

They weren't about to turn Austro into a *sapi*ens.

BRAIN FEVER SEASON

"Here's a puzzler," said Barnaby Sheen. "One of the hottest new items in the porno stores, not only in this country but worldwide also, is *A Grammar of the Tibetan Language* by A. Csoma de Koeroes. Odd name that! Does anybody know what he is? There are hasty translations of the grammar into a dozen languages within the last thirty-six hours (things go very fast in the porno field). Does anybody know why the heavy-breathing, rheumy-eyed passion boys and girls should have this sudden interest in a Tibetan grammar?"

"It is funny," said Doctor George Drakos, "and I sure cannot see any reason for it. There's some sort of symbolism or transference, I suppose."

"As I recall it, Koeroes' book was printed in Calcutta in 1834," Cris Benedetti said. "If there is a veneral element in it, it should have surfaced long ago. Several generations of British civil servants studied it. But I don't believe that it ranks among the great grammars, even for Tibetan."

"Austro!" Barnaby Sheen called loudly. And then there was a carrying whisper from the inner or 'omygosh' room: "Carrock, oh, oh, what now?" Austro had learned to whisper most imperfectly (his people were unacquainted with the thing), and his whispers weren't quiet ones.

We always said that if anything should go wrong anywhere in the world, Barnaby Sheen would immediately suspect young Austro of

having a hairy thumb in it. "Yes, and I'd be right to suspect him," Barnaby would always maintain. "He *would* have a hairy thumb in it no matter what it was."

Then Barnaby called still more loudly, "Austro!!!"

"Carrock! I just got to go down to the laboratory, Mr. Sheen," Austro jabbered as he came from the inner room and made for the stairs down to the front door. "Whatever you want, it has to wait. I got to get down there right now."

"Don't tell me I have to wait, boy," Barnaby said. "It's eleven at night. The lab has been closed for hours. Whatever it is that you want will wait till tomorrow, Austro. Come here and talk."

"No, no, I got a hot smart idea," Austro protested. "I got to go to the lab and get it down on stone right now. We can't take chances on me forgetting it."

"You have the stone tablets here, Austro," Barnaby said. "You've been hammering and chiseling on them in the omygosh room all evening. You can cut a hot idea into any of the stones so you'll remember it. You never forget anything anyhow. Roy Mega says that you never learned the trick of forgetting, and he hasn't been able to teach you. That's why you have such a cluttered mind. Austro, what do you know about the Tibetan language."

"Carrock, it's tone-talk, a little bit like we talk at home. It's singsong stuff, but I never learned it very well. Oh, Mr. Sheen, I've got to go right now!"

"Austro, do you know why an obscure Tibetan grammar should suddenly become a hot item in the porno stores?"

"Mr. Sheen, you know I'm not old enough to go into the porno stores."

"No, but you're old enough to avoid a direct answer to a straight question. Austro, if this little puzzler were handed to you, what first step would you take toward finding an answer?"

"Carrock, I'd triangulate in on it. I'd find where the puzzler originated and where it spread from. Oh, oh, oh, why don't I learn to swallow my tongue? Why do you ask me questions? I'm just a twelve-year-old kid. Got to go right now!" And Austro ran down the stairs and out of the house.

Barnaby Sheen phoned Roy Mega at his mysterious number at his mysterious room. Nobody was sure where Roy Mega lived, but Barnaby Sheen believed that the young man had a room in that very house. Barnaby's was a big and junky house (most persons know how many rooms there are in their houses and where they are, but not Barnaby), and Roy had a cavalier way with space, and with telephones. Barnaby was sure that he was paying the phone bill on Roy's mysterious phone at least.


MILK MAIDS IN CHAINS!
8mm
LESBIAN GOAT ORGY
Just In!
A GRAMMAR OF THE TIBETAN LANGUAGE by A. Goma de Koeroes
Verb Constructions
Staton

"Roy!" Barnaby barked into the phone. "Do you know why an obscure Tibetan grammar should suddenly become a hot item in the porno stores?"

"Do you believe me the sort of young man who goes to the porno stores?" Roy's voice asked out of the phone. "I'm hurt. Besides, it isn't obscure any longer. Got to hang up now. Got to go down to the lab and work on a hot idea."

"Hold it, Roy, hold it!" Barnaby ordered. "Tell me just exactly what you and Austro have been working on at the lab for the last three days. I do pay the bills there. You do work for me. I have the right to know what you're doing."

"Oh, we've been working on the relationship of shape to smell to season, Mr. Sheen. And especially on the relation of subliminal shape to subliminal smell to forgotten season. Sorry, got to go now."

"Hold it, Roy!" Barnaby pressured. "Can there be a subliminal shape? Or a subliminal smell?"

"Oh sure. We make them all the time. You think the things down underneath don't have any shape? Or that they don't have any smell? Keep reading the journals and you'll find out about our stuff. We really can't take time to inform every jasper of all the smart things we're doing."

"Roy, if you were asked to solve the problem of Tibetan grammars suddenly becoming hot items in porno stores all over the world, where would you start?"

"I'd start the same place as with any other problem. I'd find out where *it* starts. Then it's easier to find out what it means. I'd triangulate in on it and find out who created the situation and started the problem to rolling around the world. Oh, oh, oh, I've got to invent an automatic guardian for myself! We hadn't decided what we wanted to do with it yet. Why do I say things? Got to go now! Got to go down to the lab for one of those brilliant sessions."

"Hold it, Roy! You're out of order," Barnaby crackled. "Now I—"

"The person is out of order. This is a recording," came over the phone. And already there were rapid Roy Mega footfalls going down the back stairway of the house. Wherever Roy's mysterious room was, it was toward the back of the house somewhere.

"I will bet that triangulation shows the origin of the puzzler to be right here in our own city, Barnaby," Doctor George Drakos said cheerfully.

"I'll bet it will show that the origin is in your own lab building," Harry O'Donovan said.

"I will bet it shows the origin to be in the noggins of Austro and Roy Mega," Cris Benedetti said, "in those two orbs that beat as one."

"Why should such things be done in my own tents, and I have not

done them?" Barnaby demanded in his scriptural boom. "That would be near treachery."

Roy Mega was a young man of the species Genius who worked for Barnaby Sheen at his lab. He was from a downtown family. Austro was a still younger man of the species Australopithecus who also worked for Barnaby in his house and at his lab. He was from the Guna Slopes in Africa.

And this was really an interesting puzzle. Well, why do *you* think that the Tibetan grammars had become just about the hottest items worldwide in the porno stores? And why do you think that other items almost as strange had become almost as hot?

For, by the next morning (the third morning that the new tendencies had been noticed), there were very many of the sudden and learned items going hot guns in the porno stores. They were mostly writings and clips and tapes and presentations of apparently non-porno sort. Many of them clearly fell into the hot-brain classification. And there was a double puzzle connected with all these things.

First: not one of the porno owners or operators around town knew how he had happened to order, for instance, Masterman's *Tectonic Geology and the Coming Fifth Ice Age*, nor even how he had known that there was such a book to order. And second: nobody knew why the habitual customers of the porno stores should buy and devour such a book so eagerly, so hotly, and with such absolute mental and personal comprehension of it. For the porno folks did comprehend the new material: and some of it would be thought difficult.

Yeah, and then there was the second part of the first puzzle: none of the publishers or manufacturers knew how he had arranged to have so many copies of the items available at that time. They had published a hundredfold above the expected, and the items were being snapped up a hundredfold above the expected.

Why, just consider some of the items. There were old and erudite works by Tobias Dantzig and Erwin Panofsky and Basil Wiley and Samuel Noah Kramer and J. Huizinga and Bertrand Flornoy and Karl Mannheim and Albert Einstein and Hans Vaihinger. Until the last two days or so one didn't find such things in the porno stores at all. They simply hadn't been sold *anywhere* by the tens of thousands every day, and they hadn't been available in such volume until some strange anticipatory impulse had moved the publishers and manufacturers to unusual production of them.

There were young and pulsating works by Hildebrand Muldoon, Peter Zielinski, Robin Popper, Martin Gander, Virgil Whitecrow, Titus Hornwhanger, Albert Cotton. It was a boom in snappingly live information, but why was it flowering in sleazy soil instead of in

its proper pots?

By noon of the third day, there was a flood of second-generation or feedback works, most of them from the new Porno Ancilla Press, which had four thousand titles (of incomparable brilliance) stocked and selling before it was forty-eight hours old. Yes, things had always moved very fast in the porno field, but now they were moving in new directions.

The wonder was not in the ability of the porno people to meet and master such works of cosmology and extratemporal history and non-organic psychology and shape-and-perspective chemistry and chthonic electricity. All peoples have about the same mental and personal ability and about the same quantity of power and apperception. The wonder was that the porno people, having for a long time devoted themselves to a different complex of things, should now come with such hot interest to the fields of dynamic information and implementation, to the kinetically constructed scientific-scholastic, innovative fields.

And then there were the newly oriented porno people themselves, the hot-brained generation, the nation in a hurry, the scorchy harvest. They were in such rapid movement that even their oddities were a high-speed color blur. One of them came a-touring into Barnaby Sheen's house that third noon.

"Who turned me on, odd fish?" this visitor asked as he came in on nervous but exuberant fox feet, with two dozen books in his arms and one opened in his left hand. "I was in Singapore, our mother city, the porno capital of the world, and it hit me there. 'Why don't you have Emanuel Visconti's *Costive Cosmologies Freed* ?' I howled at the storekeeper. 'How will I ever live another moment without it? I'm hot for it, man! I have to have it right now,' I said. And never in my life had I heard of Visconti before. 'I hope we'll have it in a very few hours,' the porno man said, 'I'm mighty hot for it myself, and getting hotter. Oh, there must be some way to speed it up!' 'A few hours!' I exploded at him, 'I can't wait a few hours. Don't you know when the time of a thing has arrived? What are you doing to get copies?' 'I've just been talking to Visconti,' the man said. 'He is in Istanbul, and he had begun the work half an hour before I called. It'll take him fifteen to eighteen hours to write it, he says, and it will take several hours for printing and worldwide distribution. It will be twenty hours yet. It's hard to have an item in stock before it's in existence. Here's two dozen red-hot items that might tide you over.' Something is happening fast, Sheeny. It's happening in half of the world."

The man was speed-reading books as he talked. He threw one book over his shoulder as he finished it and opened another.

"I see," said Barnaby Sheen, but he didn't see it at all clearly.

"But where did the happening begin?" asked the little foxy man. "I always like to be in the middle of a happening. I check the origin to be very near this place, to be very near to you. I even get the cryptic message 'It's the Sons of Sheeny'. I got that while I was riding Polynesian Airlines here. Who are the Sons of Sheeny, Sheeny?"

"I don't know, but I suspect," Barnaby said.

"I check it to near you, but I sure do not check it to you," the nervous and ardent man said. "Man, you're not on fire from it at all! You're not even alive to the new fever, and everything shows that you're in the middle of it. I'm Gippo Sharpface, by the way. And you, Sheeny, are Mr. Nobody himself."

"Did you locate this place by triangulating in on an influence?" Barnaby asked.

"Almost that. I'd realized since about midnight last night that the process would have to be distorted triangulation, since the phenomenon wasn't truly worldwide. But it's about the same thing. I located the center of the influence, and I found that the center was empty. The center is yourself. Can you tell me what is wrong, Sheeny?"

Gippo Sharpface was all this time speed-reading books and tossing them over his shoulder behind him like banana skins.

"I guess nothing is wrong," Barnaby said, "but I thought that the phenomenon *was* worldwide. It's of almost simultaneous appearance and development in Shanghai and Moscow and Istanbul and Stockholm and London and Cairo and New York and Toronto and Mexico City and Honolulu and Ponca City, Oklahoma. Just look at the charts that I have. Say, Gippo, how did the porno operator know where to phone Emanuel Visconti? He was completely unknown till yesterday, wasn't he?"

"Sheeny Sheen, those places you name don't make the world. Where is Capetown? Where is Sydney? Where are Buenos Aires and Rio? Why were things so unclear in Singapore the porno capital of the world? No, there wasn't any rational way for the porno proprietor or myself or a million other people ever to have heard of Visconti. He had hardly heard of himself. There isn't any rational explanation for any of the hot instincts. But Emanuel Visconti *was* one of the hot instincts for a while: not nearly as much now as he was a few hours ago, of course."

"The tendencies are only in the northern half of the world, are they, Gippo?" Barnaby asked. "That's interesting. And the emanating center is around here? Your triangulation shows that this is the center of it all?"

"Old Sheeny Nothing-Man, Not-With-It-Man, this can't be the center of anything. What's that concrete block building about fifty yards

over there?"

"That's my laboratory. And the only persons working there lately are two lucky-brained young men. Sometimes I say that they comprise the left lobe of my own brain."

"Are they sometimes called the 'Sons of Sheeny'?" Gippo demanded excitedly.

"Only by yourself," Barnaby said, "but nobody else could be called that at all. They're the two heads that beat as one. They're the hairy thumb and the smooth thumb in every bowl of stew. I suspected that they were involved."

"Yes, that's the emanating center, Sheen," Gippo said as he tossed another finished book over his shoulder. "That's the turned-on place. Could you have a cashier's check for a million dollars drawn up within twenty minutes or so? It will take at least that much for first ante if we're going to get in on this boom."

"Do you want to be turned off again, Gippo?" Barnaby asked. "Oh, I suppose I could have the money in one form or another within fifteen or twenty minutes."

"No, I don't want to be turned off again, Sheen, not while this season is running. I want a bucket. It's raining the queerest and hottest fish ever seen, and I have an overpowering lust for them. I want my passions fulfilled, and at the same time I want them to continue burning, and I want to make a good thing out of the hot rain while it's going on. Then I will have to find out where the next hot brain-rain or whatever will fall."

At a jittery fox trot, Gippo Sharpface went down to the laboratory building, tossing books over his shoulder as he finished them.

Barnaby Sheen called several of us on the hot line that Roy Mega had rigged for him. We all agreed that a pleasantly hot sort of spring fever was going through everybody. We thought that it was an information-and-invention sort of fever and we didn't understand how it fit into the porno context, except for the sheer lust there might be in the new racking and sacking of knowledge. While we were on the hot line, Barnaby said that Austro had just come in with a personal check of Barnaby's to be signed, a check for a million dollars. And Barnaby said that he was signing it with chisel and graver.

A Barnaby Sheen check would have been hard to forge, since Austro made them for him out of thin slate-stone. Nobody could imitate Austro's rock-engraving work. And nobody could imitate Barnaby's signature when he cut it into slate-stone with square-blade tapered graver.

"That's more than I usually put into a thing on a hunch," Barnaby said. "Now I have crossed the Rubicon on this, or at least I have

crossed Joe Creek."

But Barnaby needn't have worried. Within another thirty-six hours, he had put so much money into the hot-information project as to make that first ante of no great importance, whether he lost it or got it back.

Say, it was a bonfire of rampant mentality and discovery that took over the northern half of the world in the days that followed. Two weeks of that splendid and frightening spring fever brought more achievement than had the hundred-year-long fever that had once run through Athens, than had the hundred-year-long fever that had once run through Florence. Besides, those older fevers had run off in all directions; but the present new-old burning was focused on knowledge and on sharp and swinging science. The focus of it was the main thing. There were few side runnels of it that were not concerned with knowledge. It was an ordered flooding of that Hot Brain River. Every day brought new and generating lightning, like the flash that had opened up the new world, like the flash that had opened up the Copernican cosmos, like the flash that opened up the atom. And the glorious explosion of knowledge was accepted and effected at once. What did it matter that the cargo had first been freighted in by grubby hands and grubby minds? The beneficent explosion was real now. The thing had gone on for nearly three weeks, and the world would never be the same as it had been before. The technology hadn't had a chance to follow up on all the breakthroughs, but that chance would come as soon as things had cooled off enough so that they might be touched. That or "I think it will catch up in a little bit different sort of season a little bit later in the year," Roy Mega said. What sort of talk was that?

Did anybody really understand what was happening? No, not completely, for it was happening exponentially. Well, was anybody finding a way to take advantage of what was happening? Oh, there were a few hundred of the sharpfaces who were. They found new sorts of buckets and bushels and bags to take portions of that post-material harvest. Here was treasure that would burn the fingers off you, and yet it could be handled by the handlers.

There were some who gathered the aromatic smoke and the tilt-spectrumed sunlight into coffers. (The stuff that had once been called knowledge had been raised by several powers, so it was not quite the same stuff it had been before.) There were some who raked and compressed the bright brainstorms into bales. There were the manipulating few who had the touch to garner intangibles and to label them "Special Commodity". There were several score of persons who could price and predict the tendencies of this commodity-market conflagration of ideas.

Gippo Sharpface did a little bit of the garnering and the prediction-calculating. Barnaby Sheen did a little of it, and he also seemed to own the results of others who were doing it. He said that, for quite a while there, he was making a million dollars an hour out of the fever. Some of the old-time porno operators were able to hang in there for a while, and some of the soft-stuff industrialists and foundation people did it. And new people who had been in the hot-brain business for only two or three weeks were now running ellipses around the world.

"Do you know for certain what day the season will end, Sheeny?" Gippo asked one day.

"Why should it ever end?"

"Oh, don't you understand the times and seasons, Sheen? How do you get along as well as you do? Austro says that it will end the day after the Hot-Brain full moon."

ii

Austro could probably have explained the theory of it a little bit. He couldn't do it very well in words, but he could do it in symbols cut in his rock tablets. He explained it pretty well even in words, but everybody was always too busy to listen.

"We used to set the seasons of the world from two locations," Austro said once. "One of these regions was the Guna Slopes, and the other was the Malawi Shores, the one about ten degrees north and the other about ten degrees south of the equator. And also, we were the ones who set up the equator, but that's a different account. There were certain tricks with shape stuff and smell stuff that we used to get the seasons started, but all of it was remember-and-reminder jog. It still is. People really feel when it's time for one season or another, but now-a-aeons they get busy and they don't feel it strongly enough."

"Quit the quacking and get busy, Austro," Barnaby Sheen ordered. "Start divining what's going to be hot property tomorrow. You're good at that, but you're no good at quacking and clacking."

"There's a lot to be said for the etiological aspect of the epochon," Austro said a minute later when Barnaby had gone elsewhere, "and their plastinx category apozemiosis, not to mention the helical reinforcement of the phengaric base, considering the former duration of the etios itself. Now, if we keep fifteen points firmly in mind—"

"Why all the Sunday words, Austro?" I asked him.

"Carrock, I'm trying to shake my ape-boy image," he said. "People think that all I can say is 'carrock'. Well, the hot-brain season is one of the seasons that the people have been too busy to remember. Of

course we always remembered it back home, and we always had the hottest brains of anyone in the world. But we felt the other people dragging their feet, or dragging their lobes on it, and this slowed us down, since all people are one corporation. Ah, George, the hottest property tomorrow will be Simon McCoy of Olathe, Kansas, in this very nation. This young man has just this minute broken his pool cue in total frustration, and if he can get hold of a paper and pencil he will jot down a mass of the most astonishing mathematical tables ever. These will be revolutionary, in the manner of revolving or rotating vectors, but far beyond. They'll have a sort of tilt-spin to them. The number of the pool hall is 1-913-PH-99199."

"Got it, Austro," said Doctor George Drakos, who was a sort of correlator of talent. "Table-tilting and mathematics belong together in hot-brain season. Now quit the jabber and stay with the divining stuff."

(Barnaby Sheen had drafted all of us to work at his lab and in his sprawling house, running around with buckets to catch the hot-brain rain.)

"Back home we couldn't send the hints strong enough to overcome the indifference of the world-scattered people," Austro was saying. "We were not able to recall them to the duties and pleasures of the ordained seasons. The only electricity we had was the difference in potential between flint-stone and chert-stone. Here we can broadcast the hints with a real zing. And the people the zing hit first were the jaded-brained pornos who were always howling for faster and newer zings. But it's hit everybody now. If they all find that they like it, I bet they come easier to it next year."

"Get out of the way, Austro," Cris Benedetti shouted. "Why don't you come up with something new for the family-plan centers?"

Barnaby Sheen, in just two days' time, had set up nine thousand Family-Plan Hot-Brain Parlors to handle the brainster boom. The boom had long since outgrown the porno stores and now it was a communal thing all the way. Brains called to brains and they made scorchy music together. In the country, the people gathered in dingles and dells for their communal-knowledge oestrus or rut; but in the towns the Hot-Brain Parlors of Barnaby Sheen filled a need.

"Can't you move faster, Austro?" Harry O'Donovan was hollering. We all tried to get as much out of Austro as we could. He had talents, but they were lazy talents.

"How can I move faster, Harry? I'm only a twelve-year-old kid," Austro protested.

"The hot-brain season is really a kid thing," Austro continued when Harry O'Donovan was off hollering somewhere else, "but I don't think that anyone gets too old to enjoy it. It's real fun to be smart

in the smart season. One time down in the Gunas we went in for shooting stars in the hot-brain season. We really shot them out. I mean it. That was only a few thousand years ago. Guys are still puzzled about all those old novas that seemed to happen at the same time. That was about as high going as anybody ever got, even in hot-brain season. Who's got hot enough brains to do it now?"

"Get out of the way, Austro," Gippo Sharpface barked. "You can chatter when hot-hammock season gets here. That's what it's for."

Roy Mega could have explained the theory of it a little bit, if anyone had had the time to listen to him.

"Conveying subliminal shapes electronically was easy enough," Roy was saying, "and of course shape is a big part of the stimulus. But our biggest difficulty was conveying subliminal smells at electronic speeds to electronic distances. Smells are essential to it. We had to hype ourselves up and then wait for the hot-brain season to hit the two of us. That's the reason that the season in general was really almost nine hours late. We weren't smart enough to do it on time. It took us nine hours to get smart enough, and then to make and transmit the jog-keys to remind the peoples of the world that a new hot season was here. But after we were hit by the smarts we could work out anything."

"But just what is it, Roy?" I asked him. I had the idea now that everybody except myself knew what was going on.

"Why, it is only the seasons of the world and of the world's people," Roy Mega said. "It's the old oestrus and the rutting. People are supposed to have their hot and bright seasons, first for one thing, then for another. But when people started to live under roofs they lost part of their feelings for the seasons. Then they said that they would stay hot on everything all the year round, and they lost another part of it. They really lost the edge of it then. They barely managed to stay lukewarm on everything. And then they lost even that. Every day is a holiday when the hot seasons are observed, and things really get generated then."

"Why is the brain-bust going on in only the northern hemisphere, Roy?" I asked.

"Because the brain-bust is a natural season, and the natural seasons are reversed down there. They're having their own rut down south right now, but you'd hardly believe me if I told you what it was. It's one of the forgotten things that sure hadn't ought to be forgotten."

"How long will the hot-brain season last here?" I asked him.

"Oh, until the Hot-Brain full moon. You'll feel it when the season leaves you. And you'll feel a little bit empty. Yeah, for about a minute. Then the next rut season will hit you and you'll be overtaken by some-

thing just as strong as hot brains, and entirely different."

"Get out of the way, Mega and Laff!" Barnaby Sheen was bellowing. "Why do I pay starvation wages around here? Just to hear you guys jabber?"

"Is anybody taking care of it down south?" I asked Austro when next the straw bosses were busy elsewhere.

"Sure, a cousin of mine is doing it down there," he said. "This cousin was raised on the Malawi Shores, and then he was shanghaied to Rio as a kid. Now he's teamed up with a cross-eyed carioca youngster who's kind of like Roy Mega. They're pretty good at it down there, almost as good as Roy and I are."

"How many hot seasons are there in the year, Austro?" I asked him.

"Get out of the way, Austro and Laff!" Cris Benedetti was howling. "There's work to do."

Well, it was fun. Every day, though we worked long hours, was really a holiday. It's fun to be smart. And the smarter you are, the more fun it is. Those who deny this are those who've never had any really smart days in their lives. It's top fun when the whole world is smart, or the top half of it anyhow. There's real excitement in learning everything, everything, and then exploding it into bigger and bigger versions of itself. It's like doubling your life's knowledge every day, and then doubling it again the next day. It's like—

(—time is compressed here, and the brain days are all run together. There is too much of it for analysis, though analysis of everything else is part of the brain days. The pleasure is still too near to be put into words, and they say that the hot-brain jag will be even better next year.)

"There's a new corporation trying to buy me out," Barnaby Sheen said one evening. "The corporation is made up of the second, third, and fourth biggest people in the hot-brain cash-in complex. But I'm still number one. Why should I sell?"

"Sell before the sun goes down, Sheeny," Gippo Sharpface told him. "And then pull a few millions off that roll of yours for us your faithful and seasonable minions."

"But things are getting bigger and bigger," Barnaby puffed.

"And tonight is Hot-Brain full moon night," Austro said. "Oh sure, it'll be back again next year. Well, sell now and you will have the means to handle it next year any way you want to. Sell it, carrock!"

"At a certain hour we will send out a new shape and a new smell and a new sound," said Roy Mega. "And these things will trigger the next hot season."

"Ah, yeah, I hear the new sound now," Barnaby agreed. "It's the sound that the merry-go-round makes just before it breaks down."

Barnaby Sheen had to hurry, but he did manage to sell his hot-brain empire before the sun went down.

iii

Barnaby Sheen was stamping out a multitude of burning cigar butts. Or else he was dancing some very funny dance in the early morning hours. I had never seen him dance before, but he wasn't bad.

"Loppity, Goppity, Gippity, Gopes. I'm a little kid from the Guna Slopes!" Austro was singing with the ringing upper half of his voice, and he was filling the air with rock dust as he cut the same immortal words into a rock slab. At that moment, Austro was the hottest poet in the world.

Gippo Sharpface, wearing outsized dark glasses, was facing directly into the bright morning sun, and he was painting it: a brilliant burning orb, which was wearing outsized dark glasses. Gippo was doing absolutely new things with color, burning things, foxfire things. Gippo, at that moment, was the finest artist that the world had seen for at least twenty thousand years.

Doctor George Drakos was sitting on a little stool in the morning sunlight. He was holding a surgeon's bone-saw. He had put a double bend into it, and he was striking it with a bone-chiseler's hammer. And you wouldn't believe the music he was making. George Drakos, at that moment, was the finest musical-saw player that the world had ever seen.

Cris Benedetti was wearing a toga, and he had pieces of laurel looped around his ears. He was declaiming drama. It wasn't old Shakespearian drama or any such thing. It was old-new Cris Benedetti drama. It was ringing and riming and eloquent like real hot-art season drama. It moved one to passion and pleasure. Evoked forms crowded the golden morning, and the fine voice of Cris called out real response. At that moment, Cris Benedetti was the finest dramatic declaimer in the world.

Harry O'Donovan was sculpting something in lucite and chrome. It was primordial form made out of the primordial elements of fire and ice. It was almost the secret of life itself, it was almost the shape of destiny. It was probably good.

And the voice of Mary Mondo the ghost girl was doing cantatas and those other flutey songs. And she *was* good. She had probably always been in accord with the hot seasons.

Roy Mega was producing some sort of delta-secondary music by manipulation of split-frequency circuits. Ah, well, nobody had ever done quite that thing before, and the first of everything is always

good, by definition.

"The hot-art season, huh!" Barnaby Sheen commented, still doing his cigar-butt stomp-out dance. "Did you guys know that it would be the next season? There ought to be a way to make a good thing out of it. Austro, do you know who will be the hottest art property in the world by midmorning?"

"Carrock, I know, I won't tell," Austro caroled. "Moppity, Loppity, Lippity, Moan. Let it alone, man, let it alone!" Austro sure made the rock dust fly when he was graving his verses on stone and singing his own accompaniment to chisel and graver.

"For the sanctification of your soul, don't squeeze every season, Sheeny," great artist Gippo Sharpface said. "Ah, what nobility and blaze of color! I frighten myself with my own genius. Let this one go by, Sheen."

"What? You the Fox say that? But I've the feeling that you're right. I think I'll go write a thundering epic drama. It will begin with the Chorus of May Dancers doing a stunning dance sort of like the one I've been doing. Say, are the seasons inexorable under the revised system? Their returning is a freedom-of-expression thing, of course, but must we follow just one sequence in them? We should have a choice in this matter too."

"There's another world down under," Roy Mega said.

"What follows the hot-art season here?" Gippo Sharpface asked. And the sun in his painting was brighter than the sun in the sky.

"The hot-rock season will come next," Austro told us. "That's when the people have the fever for building huge structures out of every material, but rock is the prince of materials. Did you know that the Great Pyramid was built in a single hot-rock season?"

"Does anybody know what is playing down under now?" Harry O'Donovan asked.

"It's the hot-love season just starting there," Roy Mega said. "Some people believe it was the original oestrus, the first hot wave."

Gippo Sharpface made a sudden noise. Then he effected one more burning splotch on his splendid painting. "Gad, what genius!" he cried in humble admiration. "But the very greatest things, by their nature, must be left unfinished." He signed the unfinished painting "Fire Fox."

"I'm off, fellows," he said then. "Hot love was always my first love. I can pick up the hot-art season again once or even twice a year. And I'll catch the hot-brain season again, either down there or back here again next spring. But something is calling me down there right now. Anyone for Rio? Austro?"

"No, no, I'm scared of that stuff," the greatest rock-graving poet in the world refused it. "Maybe next year. I'm at the bashful stage

now. Carrock! I'm only a twelve-year-old kid."

"I'm with you, Gippo," Harry O'Donovan said, and he left his sculptured lucite and chrome that was almost the secret of life itself.

"In just three more moons it'll be hot-love season here, fellows," Roy Mega said reasonably. But Gippo and Harry had already gone.

"Gippity, Goppity, Goopity, Gowth! Gippo and Harry are firetailing South!" Austro sang and chiseled his great folk poem.

It's wonderful to hear the greatest poet of an age in action.

WHAT BIG TEARS THE DINOSAUR'S

"There's a dinosaur hunt going on over in Arkansas," said Doctor George Drakos. "Let's go over and get in on the fun. Maybe we can take in the races at Hot Springs while we're there."

"Oh, Arkansas, mother of monsters and myths!" Cris Benedetti intoned piously.

"Austro!" Barnaby Sheen called loudly. "Austro! Where is that blamed kid anyhow?"

"Sure, I'd rather go on a dinosaur hunt in Arkansas than on another rattlesnake hunt to O'Keene," Cris said. "I'm certain that the dinosaur hunt will be safer. They really do have rattlesnakes at O'Keene."

"Austro!" Barnaby called again. "Aw dinosaur droppings, that kid can hear a pin drop five miles away, so I know he can hear me. And if there's anything funny happening anywhere he's got something to do with it. Austro!"

"Two hundred people have seen it," Harry O'Donovan was saying, "so something is there. They've got its footprints everywhere, and they've got a number of clear photographs of it. It's moving fifty miles a day, and it's moving this way. They're going to kill it. It's the tyrant saurus, and it's carnivorous, it could take a cow in a single bite. I'd hate to miss the biggest game hunt of all, but I'm afraid of it. I don't believe an elephant gun would have any effect on it. They'd better figure 90 mm guns at close range. It's a job for the army or the state national guard, not for sportsmen's guns. Ah, but sportsmen

wouldn't be sportsmen if they dodged the big ones."

Barnaby Sheen, Doctor George Drakos, Cris Benedetti, and Harry O'Donovan were my four friends who knew everything.

"Austro! Austro!" Barnaby was still bellowing. "I hate to disturb that boy at his daydreaming, but if there's a hundred foot dinosaur in Arkansas, then Austro's got something to do with it being there."

"If my dog gets here on time we sure would like to go on that hunt," Austro said. "We've been communicating about it while the dog's on his way, and he's just about as wild to go on the hunt as I am. That dog of mine isn't afraid of anything no matter how big it is. Carrock, he doesn't like monsters. I bet he'd bite the tail right off of that big whatever-it-is."

"Austro, how long have you been sitting there?" Barnaby asked crossly, for Austro was in one of the reclining chairs right in that room.

"I've been sitting here an hour, I guess. Carrock."

"Then why didn't you answer me?"

"Oh, you were bellowing at somebody away off there. It was a directional bellow, and it wasn't sent in my direction. I thought that it was some other Austro that you were calling."

Austro was an Australopithecus boy from the Guna Slopes of Africa. He worked for Barnaby Sheen.

"Austro, what do you know about the dinosaur over in Arkansas?" Barnaby demanded.

"Just what people say the last two days, and what you say here. Carrock! You say you might go and hunt it. My dog and I, we want to go hunt it too. I hope my dog gets here in time for it."

"You're sure you don't know anything else about the dinosaur in Arkansas, Austro?"

"I'm sure, Mr. Sheen. I never heard of a dinosaur till the last two days. I just barely heard of Arkansas before that."

We didn't go on the dinosaur hunt that day. We didn't quite know where to go; the animal was moving almost too fast for the reports to keep up with him. At the ever increasing rate he was moving he'd be on us in a day or two, and our marked map of his movements showed that he was coming straight for us. And the reports that came in weren't at all crackpot reports. They had been straight and sharp reports from the beginning. It was as if all the sightings had been made by persons of sound intelligence and acute observation. There were three sketches and two photographs of it in the morning *World*.

"This one is better than most textbook drawings," George Drakos said. "In one respect only, the *atrichos* representation, is it suspiciously like the popular idea of a dino. None of these pictures gives

us the live appearance, which we don't know. All of them give us the museum appearance, which we do know. This puzzles me extremely. But there isn't any doubt that he is the tyrannosaurus rex himself. He is almost the biggest of the dinosaurs. He is by a long ways the biggest of the flesh-eating dinos. Look at the teeth on him! He could crunch a big car or a small house with those teeth. He will go a hundred feet, counting the tail; and when he rears up on those big hind legs he can reach most of that hundred feet high."

"Well, *why* can he, George?" Barnaby asked reasonably. "Why is he constructed to reach so high? Was there anything that he preyed on anywhere near a hundred feet high?"

"No, I suppose not, Barnaby," Drakos said. (We had all become instant experts on dinos in the last several days, but Drakos had been an expert since boyhood.) "Maybe it's to pluck living meat out of the tops of trees, but most things that climb a hundred feet high would be too small for him to bother with. And he could shake anything out of any tree without reaching that high. He would have to eat plenty of large, ground-dwelling animals to get enough to fuel himself. No, I just don't know why he was built to reach so high."

"When I was a boy I used to have a fantasy about the biggest possible animal," Barnaby said, "and I still have that fancy or yearning. I want something so big that the next biggest animal in the world would have to hunt it in packs like wolves hunted buffalo, a dozen of them leaping on it to pull it down. I want one so big that tyrannosaurus rex would have to hunt it that way; I want an animal so big that he makes all the others look like pygmies. And I'd give everything I own to be on a hunt for the biggest. Rex will do, and I'm avid to be after him. But really I want an even bigger one. That wouldn't be possible though, would it?"

"No, Barnaby, rex was about the limit," Drakos said. "Look at the grotesque thickness of his haunches. Even so, if he were half again his weight he wouldn't be able to walk."

"If my dog gets here tomorrow, can we go on the hunt?" Austro said. "You just don't know how avid my dog and I both are to hunt the big one."

"We *will* hunt him, today or tomorrow or the next day, whenever we can locate him certainly," Barnaby said. "Roy Mega is already finishing the gun that should bring him down. He's the biggest killer ever, and we have to hunt *him*; if it's him hunting us, then we're dead. Ah, if only we had something to harry him and make him stand to bay!"

"My dog will do that," Austro said stoutly. "My dog isn't afraid of anything."

"Austro, do you realize just how big the tyrant rex is?"

"It doesn't matter whether I realize it or not, Mr. Sheen. My dog is too dumb to realize it, and I won't tell him. He'll fight *anything*; and it's because he doesn't realize how big anything is."

"Why are you so sure that your dog is coming, Austro?" Barnaby demanded. "I said a few months ago that we'd locate your dog and have him flown over here. You said no. You said the dog could find his own way here just as soon as you let him know you wanted him to come. But he can't find his own way here, Austro—it's half way around the world."

"That won't bother a good dog. He's on his way. He's almost here now. We communicate with each other; we can always feel where each other is."

"How would he cross the ocean, Austro?"

"Swim it. But he's already crossed it, he can swim anything. You should see him swim in our big river back home."

Ah, the simplicity of that twelve-year-old boy of the Australopithecus species!

We didn't go on the dinosaur hunt the next day either, though we all had our gear at Barnaby's house and were ready to start. There was silence from the dinosaur all that day, but in the evening he was heard from.

He broke up the bridge across the Arkansas River at Fort Smith, and ate selected sections of it. If this dino was a myth he had the biggest teeth of any myth ever seen; myths hardly ever bite out whole sections of bridges like that. And, after the snack at the bridge, he covered the twenty-five miles of very rough country from Fort Smith to Sallisaw, Oklahoma in one hour. Then he seemed to fade away into the deep brush or brush-swamp as he did every night. He didn't like to travel in the dark, apparently.

Nor was he really an early riser. But he was always on the move again long before mid-morning. Now he was close enough that we could go out in the morning and be almost certain of running into him, or the rumor of him. We had our gear at Barnaby's. Hunting gear, that is: but what is really the proper gear for a dinosaur hunt?

"We'll go down in that direction early in the morning," Barnaby said. "A thing that big can't stay hidden, and I don't believe he wants to hide. Roy Mega has the gun mounted on a ten ton truck. It isn't really a very big gun, it's just a very powerful gun that fires explosive contact shells. But if only we had some way to flush out the big dino and make him turn to bay, then—"

"My dog can do it," Austro said confidently. "And he will be here just about dawn. Then we'll start the hunt with him."

"You're sure that he'll be here, Austro?" Drakos joshed the boy.

"I'm sure of it. Carrock, George, we understand each other. We're in contact all the time."

"I have a shaky feeling about this, Austro," Barnaby said. "You drew a picture of that dog once, when you asked if you could have him come here. There was something funny about that dog, but I forget what it was. Could you draw another picture of it, and of yourself?"

"Oh sure. I'll do that right now." And Austro began to draw with his famous skill. He drew himself very well as a short and powerful and action-balanced boy. And he drew the dog at two-thirds his own height, funny-shaped, the hairiest animal ever seen, and grinning a toothy grin out of a triangular head. Ah, it was the same dog that Austro always drew for his Rocky McCrocky comic strip, which he passed out to the kids of the neighborhood every week.

"Well, the shaky feeling must be coming from something else," Barnaby said, "and not from that dog there. I've still got a feeling about something, though. But, Austro, your dog there, I just don't believe that he could bring the tyrannosaurus rex to bay, or even make the big animal aware of him. I don't believe that your dog can really fight, Austro."

"I bet he can," Drakos said. "That funny triangular shaped head would give real reinforcement to a crushing bite. He has one muscular wedge of a head. That dog of Austro's could take the leg off a fellow if he were so minded."

"No, he's a good dog," Austro said. "He hardly ever takes legs off guys."

We had decided to have a midnight supper at Barnaby's and then sleep over there. In the early morning we would start out on our hunt with or without Austro's famous dog. The dinosaur had been making a pretty straight path in our direction for near five hundred miles.

"We have a destiny with him," Cris Benedetti said. We all felt that way.

"Well, what is it that we really have a destiny with?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "Is it Illusion, or Time Anomaly, or Hoax, or False Identification, or Dream, or Mechanism, or Special Creation, or Incredible Survival?"

"Fry up a dozen eggs, Austro, and a few rashers of bacon; and make some of your hot biscuits," Barnaby said. "Only illusions can be discussed on empty stomachs, but both facts and illusions can be discussed on full stomachs; and we don't know which we deal with here."

"Oh yes, I fry them now," Austro said. "But if we only had here

some dog's eggs such as we have at home, then I'd make you all a *real* egg feast."

"Does your own dog lay eggs, Austro?" Barnaby asked.

"No. Not yet anyhow."

"Is your dog a female?"

"Don't know. It's too hairy to tell."

"What if we had an egg of tyrannosaurus rex himself, herself?" Harry O'Donovan asked. "How big would it be, George?"

"Oh, not in proportion, but still big. Maybe a hundred times the size of an ostrich egg, which is twenty times as big as a hen's egg. But if we had one we could feast on it for a long time."

"Is there any way such an egg could be preserved for a very long time?" Harry asked.

"You mean preserved for a period in excess of sixty million years, Harry?" George asked him. "No, there isn't. It would be easier for a population to be preserved intact in some obscure part of the world than for an egg to be preserved. That also is impossible, of course; but there are degrees of impossibility. It's less impossible than that a solitary egg should be preserved. We'd consult experts on this, but there aren't any."

"But what most likely sort of place *could* have preserved dinos?" Harry insisted.

"Subtropic or tropic," George Drakos said. "Plenty of water, lake, river, or swamp. All dinos were wading animals. It's almost certain that they rested or slept with most of their weight supported by water. Tyrant rex has been found with stones in his craw, and they may have aided him in eating some vegetation. But mostly he was a meat-eater. For rex to have survived would require a great amount of meat, which would require a much greater amount of vegetation. It would be a region of lush greenery, possibly a savanna sloping from mountains to river-linked lakes. I don't believe it could have been a heavily forested country. Forests are a delusion: one just hasn't enough bulk of edible plants to support a chain of giant feeders. But it could well be on the edge of mountains, and on the edge of forests, and on the edge of swamps; sharing the resources of all of them in a central valley or slope. The trouble is that such a place couldn't have remained undiscovered on earth. It's the essence of fertile places that they're open places. There couldn't be a hidden Valley of the Dinosaurs for the reason that all rich valleys are open valleys, and dinosaurs are hard to hide."

"I know a rich hidden valley," Austro said, but who pays attention to a twelve-year-old kid?

"There *has* to be a Valley of the Dinosaurs," Cris Benedetti said, "since the least impossible of the explanations requires it."

We had eaten eggs and bacon and hot biscuits. And cold musk melons and tomatoes. We had drunk Arkansas wine in honor of Arkansas the Mother of Monsters, and of our coming dinosaur. We had talked talk that isn't recorded here.

"And it's dawn in four hours, men," Barnaby said. So we spread sleeping sacks on the floor of one of the big rooms there, and we entered into the soft cocoons.

"Drakos, is there more than one species of Tyrannosaurus Rex?" Harry O'Donovan asked.

"There're slightly different species or races of them. The one photographed and sketched in Arkansas seems to be Tyrannosaurus Rex Gunaslopesienus. Good night all."

We slept.

And we woke gently four hours later. We woke to a pleasant sound and to a pleasant motion.

The pleasant sound was that of a happy dog barking and a happy kid whooping and laughing. The happy kid was Austro.

The pleasant motion was that of the house swaying like a boat. It was a well-built house, and it was holding together for quite a bit of swaying.

Part of the wall of the room we were in fell away, and part of the ceiling fell; so we could see by the early light Austro in the story above us, laughing at a huge head. It was the head of a tyrannosaurus rex, the most vicious of the dinosaurs; and its great neck was wedged into our own room.

"Look at him! Look at him!" Austro whooped. "He lost all his hair when he swam the ocean, and it's just starting to grow back. Carrock, he is one peeled-looking dog."

"Carrock," whooped the happy rex dog.

"Austro, is that your dog?" Barnaby asked as he came from the lower bowels of the house. Barnaby seemed to be rubbing something away from the corner of his eye, and he looked sad.

"Sure it's my dog!" Austro hollered. "I told you he'd be here. Hey, let's start on the hunt! I'll show you that my dog can bring anything to bay."

"I was right to have a shaky feeling over this," Barnaby said, and there was something the matter with his eyes. "Austro, you drew your dog as—"

"I drew him hairy all over, yes. But the ocean water made his hair all fall out, he says. Too salty. It'll grow back, but he sure is a funny-looking dog now."

"And there was never a good reason to suppose that the dinos

weren't hairy," George Drakos said. "I mentioned that the *atrichos* or hairless aspect of the paintings and photographs was suspicious and unscientific. Now I understand the reason."

"I know that." Barnaby shook the words out. He was taken by some emotion. "But when you drew your dog, Austro, you drew him as about two-thirds your own height. He's—well, he's much larger than that."

"Ah, here people draw things by physical size," Austro explained. "But on the Guna slopes we draw them of a size according to their importance. Me, I'm a boy, so I'm half again as important as a dog. So I drew me half again as big. Come on, let's get the hunt started! These last days I've been communicating to my dog how much fun it will be, and he's crazy to get started. He's not scared of that thing no matter how big it is."

"Austro, there isn't going to be any hunt," Barnaby said in a choked voice.

"Aw-aw!" said Austro.

"Aw-aw!" said his hundred-foot-long dog.

"It's all a case of mistaken identity," Barnaby said as he wiped something from his face.

"Ow-wow-wow!" Austro moaned.

"Ow-wow-wow!" the big dog moaned more powerfully.

"We can't go hunt the dinosaur because your dog *is* the dinosaur," Barnaby said sadly.

"Ow-wow-wow!" Austro moaned. "No big one to hunt? Carrock!"

"Ow-wow-wow!" the dino dog moaned. "Carrock!"

"No, Austro," Barnaby said. "Your dog's a hundred feet long, and there isn't any bigger animal on earth."

"Ow-wow-wow!" Austro began to cry. "We had our hearts set to hunt."

"Ow-wow-wow!" The big dog was crying tub-sized dinosaur tears and almost shaking the sturdy house down.

"Kids, I wish there was a big one," Barnaby was begging. "I wish there was a really big animal to hunt. Oh, how I've wished it all my life! I thought this would be it, and this is busted. Oh, it's so desolate to grow up and look around and see that there aren't any big ones. It's to be cheated. Dog could have been it to others; but dog is only dog to himself, and to you, and to me."

I had never realized how much boy there was left in Barnaby, for real tears were running down his face.

"Ow-wow-wow!" those three kids wept together.

AND ALL THE SKIES ARE FULL OF FISH

Beware aesthetics throwing stones
(We state it here prologgy).
Oh by our fathers' busted bones
We'll fight with dint *and doggy!*
— *Rocky McCrocky comic strip*

Austro was still only twelve years old, and Chiara Benedetti had just had her thirteenth birthday and so had to resign from the club. She nominated Austro to take her place.

Ivan Kalisky had also turned thirteen and would have to get out of it. He nominated his little, fat, freckled, glasses-wearing sister Susie Kalisky to take his place. Susie Kalisky looked a lot like the Susie Kalusy in the Rocky McCrocky comic strip.

There was another vacancy in the gang. One small boy who shall be nameless had been expelled when it was discovered that he was as yellow as a daffodil. Austro, as soon as he was confirmed as a member, nominated his dog for this other vacant place.

"People will laugh at us if we have a dog for a member," Dennis Oldstone said.

"People won't laugh a whole lot at a dog that can swallow them in one swallow," Austro argued.

"And there is a certain prestige in having the biggest dog in the world as a member," Lowell Ragswell supported Austro. So they

accepted the dog into their club. And they had gotten their membership in shape just in time.

There was another group of young people around; these were pure-hearted and aesthetic, and they had psychokinetic powers that reflected their pure-heartedness. They danced willow dances and they wore sweet-gum leaves in their hair. And it had been announced that they would give a public demonstration of their powers. There was quite a bit of scientific interest in the demonstration.

But the gang that Susie and Austro and the dog had just joined was more known for its fish fries than for its pure-heartedness. And it was known for its harassing of those aesthetic kids. In its reorganized form, it now took the name of "The Local Anaesthetics" to show that it was at war with the aesthetic kids. It had never had a name before this.

Along about this time, Barnaby Sheen was opinionating to some of us.

"We deal in facts at our place," he said. "We are open-minded, but we do not let just every wind blow through. We respect the new as well as the old, but we do know that some things must be rejected instantly. There are people around here who still haven't rejected the pretensions of those willow-dancing, rainmaking kids. Austro, you have assured me twice that you don't belong to that whey-witted bunch of squid kids, but I keep hearing tales about you. Assure me one more time that you're not a member of them."

"By the busted bones of my fathers, I am not a member of the willow dancers," Austro swore the oath truly. And that was the start of that.

The willow-dance children were to give a "Sunshine and Showers" presentation right in the Civic Center area to show their powers and to promote science and inquiry. They had the full support of the city magistrates in this. Our magistrates were all proud of those talented and scientific children, and we were all proud of our magist–

"We sure do have good-looking magistrates in our town," Barnaby Sheen would say with that forked tongue of his. "They're not as competent as we'd like. They're not as dedicated as we'd like. They haven't much integrity. They bumble and they stumble, and they're just not very smart. But they are good-looking."

"And it will be a good-looking show that they put on," George Drakos said. "We are all for pure-hearted and aesthetic children with a scientific bent, and we are all for willow dancing (what is it anyhow?); we are certainly for 'Sunshine and Showers' in proper proportion. I, at least, do not reject the weather making powers of these

children instantly. If they do it, then it can be done. Let us see the presentation."

"The weather influences me a lot, and maybe I influence the weather a little bit," Harry O'Donovan stated. "If I had my life to do all over again, I believe that I could influence the weather and many other things much more than I did. Well, these children do have lives to do all over again. They start where we left off. Children always did have special powers. We tend to forget about it, but even we had a smattering of powers once."

"Ah, peacock pug, we did not!" Barnaby Sheen argued. "There are no special powers."

"I myself haven't any doubt that humans do influence the weather," Cris Benedetti said. "The ideal system is to let the the towns go dry-sod in their sunshine, and let the farmers enjoy their needed rain. As a general thing, that has always been the real as well as the ideal case. There are records to confirm this. Cities do have (from the viewpoint of cities) more pleasant weather than do the countrysides: milder in summer, milder in winter also, dryer most times, and more sunny and more smiling than country places. This is because, in the cities, there are greater numbers of minds working for fine weather. The people of a town, by their desires and sympathies, can literally hold an umbrella over a town and protect it from inclement weather. But in the country there is need for great falls of rain and for, ah, sometimes showers of proteid matter also."

"Into each rain some albuminoid must fall," Austro said. "That's a proverb."

"Prayers for rain have been part of the furniture of the Church from the beginning," George Drakos commented. "They have always been effective, but perhaps they were more effective when the majority of the people were rural. Dozens of great historical droughts have been broken by the fervent prayers of the peoples."

"I don't doubt the efficacy of prayer," Barnaby said. "But I will doubt the efficacy of this weather-making pseudo-science that has been shoveled into tender children's minds by certain mentors. And I doubt the efficacy of the little fetish magic that the children themselves contribute to it."

"The fetish magic of children *is* a form of prayer," Cris said. "And both prayer and fetish magic have scientific backing (read Manolo Grogly and others). Prayers are legitimate scientific requests, and they do often receive scientific answers in the form of rain from heaven; and even in the form of bread and fish from heaven."

"Aw, porcupine pellets!" Barnaby barked.

"Consider our two weathermen on the evening broadcasts," said Harry O'Donovan. "What they really present is ritual, scientific

prayer. And, as is always the case, one of them is of good influence and the other one is evil. Dean is a good-weather man. Keen is a bad-weather man. And they defer to each other. One of them will give a listless presentation on the evening that the other one gives a passionate show: and the sense of the situation goes out to the people. With a good-weather feel in the air, seventy percent of the clients will tune in on Dean, and the good weather for the morrow will be even better. With a bad-weather feel in the air, seventy percent of the clients will tune in on Keen, and the bad weather for the morrow will be even worse."

"Aw, turtle dirt!" snapped Barnaby Sheen.

"The four men who know everything," jeered the twelve-year-old Austro, "and they don't know weather from wolfmagite!"

Amelia Corngrinder, one of the aesthetic children, was making it rain a very local shower into the Donners' front-yard birdbath. She did this by mental and spiritual powers alone. Several persons were watching her and admiring. One lady (well, it was Amelia's own mother, Ellen Corngrinder) was admiring Amelia out loud.

"This is angelic power!" Ellen was crying out. "This is a miracle that my girl performs by sheer mentality and grace and goodness. This is controlled and pure rain from the sky. It's wonderful."

"What's wonderful about it?" asked Austro, who was watching. "It only has to come a mile, and it's downhill all the way."

"Buzz off, fuzz-face," the angelic-powered, willow-dancing Amelia told Austro out of the corner of her mouth. It was a controlled and directed remark that was heard only by Austro and by that fat little freckled girl, Susie Kalisky, who also happened to be there.

"It just seems that something is lacking," Susie said. "There is something wrong with empty water, and there is something lonesome about uninhabited rain. Nobody lives in your rain, Amelia."

"Broom off, crack-eyes," the pure-hearted and aesthetic Amelia hissed a controlled hiss at Susie. And then she willow danced some more and drew down still more rain. It was absolutely pure rain.

"I like there to be some body to the rain," Susie said. Then she cupped her mouth and her voice skyward and bawled out, "Does anybody live in that house?" And there was either a slight clap of thunder or a hoarse murmuration of cold-blooded voices above.

"I do believe you two are envious," said the mother, Ellen Corngrinder, to Austro and Susie. "Why must you be like that? You two could hardly be called 'beautiful children' in any sense of the term."

"Your glasses are cracked, lady," Susie said. And Ellen Corngrinder's glasses were indeed cracked. Austro and Susie walked on up the street.

How long does it take a sarcodic mass to fall a mile? From the time that there was either a slight clap of thunder or else a hoarse murmuration of sky-voices, it took—just that long! A very large and lively body smashed out of the sky into the Donners' birdbath and shattered the thing into shards of Granite Mountain Simulated Pressed Stone of which it was made. And, with this distraction, Amelia Corngrinder lost control of the little shower, and it unfocused and dispersed into a thin sprinkle over several blocks.

"Your glasses are cracked, sir," Susie said to a gentleman in the next block, and sure enough they were. Susie always noticed cracked glasses before the owners did. The Susie Kalusy of the Rocky McCrocky comic strip would shatter the flint-glass lenses out of folks' spectacles for pure malevolence and leave the rock frames hanging empty on the mortified faces. But Susie Kalisky was a slightly different person, and how could she smash eyeglasses by thought alone?

It rained foreign matter that night all over the south part of town. It was very strong sarcodic substance and it offended everyone within nose shot.

"There's something a little bit funny about this!" Barnaby Sheen bellowed when he saw it the next morning. "Austro, did you make it rain? Oh, what's gone wrong with my wits? How could the kid make it—well, I already have the words in my mouth and I'm not going to swallow them again. Austro, did you make it rain that, ugh, stuff?"

"What a strange question, Mr. Sheen! All I will say is that I did not do anything to prevent it raining that stuff. Is that a good enough answer?"

"No it isn't. Say, that's about the strongest I ever smelled! You could hardly praise it for its downwind flavor, could you?"

"It wouldn't be so bad, Mr. Sheen, if it were seasoned with just a few bushels of wielandiella fronds."

"Is that the stuff your dog eats?"

"That's some of the stuff that he eats."

Austro's dog came then. It had slipped in from the country for an early-morning visit. It was, as you know, a very large creature. It had been clearing blackjack oak trees and thickets off of a few sections of land forty miles to the west. Flamethrowers and eight-way power saws and the strongest bulldozers in the world wouldn't clear those blackjacks very well, but that dog could get rid of them; and he got his needed roughage doing it. Now he wanted a little bit of more satisfying fare. And that more satisfying fare fell down for him with a muted but heavy jolt. It was 180 foot long crinoid stems,

and it was huge fronds of macrotaenopteris ferns.

Austro told the dog that he had been accepted for membership in the smoothest club in town, and the dog croaked pleasure. Barnaby patted that biggest-dog-in-the-world of Austro's, and then he went about his daily business.

ii

The world's a blast (Ka-whoosh! Ka-whish!)
With healthy soul and belly,
And all the skies are full of fish,
And all the fish are smelly.
— Rocky McCrocky comic strip

The weather happening was scheduled for one o'clock that afternoon in the Civic Center Open-air People's Area. Press people and university people and scientific people would be there. And all the city magistrates would be present: Arthur ("It's pretty but is it Art?" Barnaby Sheen used to say about him) Topmann, the mayor. Topmann really was a good-looking man, and he liked to serve the people, and he liked almost all children. Almost all of them.

"Your glasses are cracked, Mr. Mayor," said that little, fat Susie Kalisky, who just happened to be there. And the mayor's glasses were cracked as soon as she said it.

There was Gaberdine McPhillips, the lady commissioner of playgrounds and sewers. Gaberdine was offering, from her own funds, a money prize to the young person who could make it rain the purest rain. Gaberdine had a thing about pure water.

"Your glasses are cracked, madam," Susie told her, and they were. But had they been cracked just a moment before?

There was George H. Corngrinder, who was commissioner of streets and who was also the father of Amelia Corngrinder, who was one of the willow-dance youngsters who had now seized the scientific community by the ears.

There was Peter Kalisky, the police commissioner, who was a gruff man.

"Austro, get that sign out of here or I'll pitch you into the pokey," he called now.

"You can't," Austro said. "I'm a juvenile, and besides I belong to an alien species. Your anti-poster ordinances don't apply to me."

Austro belonged to the species Australopithecus. The sign or poster that he was putting up there in the area read:

COSMIC, FREE FISH FRY!
WE REALLY KNOW HOW TO FIX THEM!
COME TO SHEEN'S RAVINE AT ONE-THIRTY TODAY
(IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DEBACLE).
EVERYBODY COME.

"Get it out of there, Austro, or I'll put the police dogs on you," Commissioner Peter Kalisky thundered.

"The dogs are all afraid of me," Austro said. "They know I own the biggest dog in the world."

"Your glasses are cracked, Mr. Commissioner," that fat, freckled little Susie Kalisky said. And Peter Kalisky's glasses were cracked. They were cracked so recently that glass slivers were still tinkling to the pavement.

"Dammit, Susie, I'm your father!" Commissioner Kalisky roared, and with shocking cruelty he swatted that girl where she was biggest.

"Oh, wah, wah, wah," Susie blubbered. "I keep forgetting. How'm I supposed to remember everyone?"

The willow dancers were gathered and they were ready for it. They were effective from the very start. Little clouds began to form and to dance in the sky with the same shape and motion the willow dancers showed. It was winding into the most graceful rain that anybody had ever seen.

"It's a fraud all the way," Barnaby Sheen gruffed. "There is no way that such an empty-eyed aggregation of kids could make it rain. I wouldn't believe it if I drowned in it."

"Your glasses are cracked, mister," Susie Kalisky said.

"Susie McGoozy, you know I don't wear glasses."

"Then get some, and we can enter into a whole new relationship."

Barnaby Sheen and Susie Kalisky liked each other.

"There is no way that they can make it rain," Barnaby said again.

"There's a dozen ways they can do it," said that young Roy Mega who worked as an electronic genius for Barnaby. "There's half a dozen ways that I could do it myself, and I've almost left off being a kid. I could set up a simple astasis voltage grid, and I could add a bleeder circuit with one reflecting nexus located just above the predominant cloud layer at five thousand feet. Then I'd build up a hysteresis shield to a point just short of coronal discharge. Then, by the addition of almost any Keefe-Minsky equation, I could—"

"No, no, Roy," Barnaby protested. "I mean that there's no way that a person could make it rain by use of the mind."

"This would be by use of the mind. I'd arrange all those things by

use of my mind."

"By your mind alone, Roy; not by tools of the mind."

"Oh, that's like saying that one may use his hands but not the fingers of his hands," Roy Mega complained.

Those aesthetic children—Amelia Corngrinder with her controlled grace and goodness; Aldous McKeever with his exquisite pallor and his high psychic threshold; Horace Wickiup, who was an Indian (and you know how full of rain they are); Margaret Grainger; Adrien Chastel; Alice Whitetoken (who was very spiritual, as her mother had been also); Rolland Clatchby—they were all doing the rain-willow dance. They were rolling their eyes; they were breathing hard (but always in good taste): and their seven clouds in the sky had turned into seven sparkling showers that began to spill down, under absolute control, into the Civic Center fountains.

"I'll not believe it," Barnaby Sheen said sourly. "It isn't scientific."

"Let's say that it is prescientific," Roy Mega suggested. "It works, but we don't yet know how it works."

"I bet that's the biggest dog in the world over there," a woman among the spectators said to her husband.

"Yes, I heard that some monkey boy in town had the biggest dog in the world," the husband said.

"Oh, but now it's gone. I can't see it anywhere. Instead of it I see a big hairy hill over there. I bet it's thirty feet high. What would a big hairy hill be doing in the middle of the Civic Center Plaza?"

"I imagine that the city fathers had it put there for the children to play on," the husband said. But when you are as big as that dog, and you live in a world as small as this one, you learn the art of camouflage.

"Let's say that it's pseudo-science." Barnaby still balked (and there were now seven pretty good showers of rain coming down all asparkle into the fountains). "It works, yes, apparently, and for the moment at least. But I bet it can be unworked. Austro, can you unwork it?"

"What do you think all our huffing and puffing's been about? We're on your side, Mr. Sheen. Parascience will beat pure pseudo-science every time. Local Anaesthetics, come get with it! Susie! Dog! Dennis! Lowell! They're leading us on points!"

"Your glasses are cracked, sir," Susie remarked to a gentleman as she hurried to the assembly of the Locals. And the gentleman's glasses *were* cracked.

"Oh, look, Reggie," that woman among the spectators said to her husband. "Now that big hairy hill is getting up and walking off."

"They're probably not going to use it today, what with the rainmakers and all."

But those pure-hearted and aesthetic children with their rainmaking willow dances were far ahead of the Local Anaesthetics on points. The Locals would have to play catch-up ball. Those were plumes and sheens of the purest rain that anybody ever saw.

It was now or never. The Locals put their heads and their hearts together to generate what power they might. A fish crashed to the pavement there amid the throng.

That was a crash? You couldn't have heard the sound of it a block. That was a fish? Why, that thing wasn't more than three feet long.

"We might as well let the empty-water people have it if we can't do any better than that," Dennis said.

An anomalous frond of macrotaenopteris fell down there with a muted but heavy jolt. That was a heavy jolt? Why, that frond wasn't twenty feet wide, and it wasn't twenty million years old. That was the biggest dog in the world with his snout in this business? A little Great Dane could do that well. The Local Anaesthetics would have to muster more power than this.

"How are you going to get the fish out to Sheen's Ravine, Austro?" Roy Mega asked.

"I never thought of that," Austro admitted. Austro was panting already, and the battle looked bad for the Locals. "Maybe Dog would carry them out there in his mouth," Austro said.

"Fish?" Barnaby asked. "What fish? Will there be many fish?"

"Quite a few, I believe," Mega said, "though I'm not sure quite what the kids have in mind."

"Better go get the twelve ton truck, then, Roy," Barnaby said. "Some people might be fussy about the dog carrying the fish in his mouth." So Roy went to get the heavy truck.

A few of the larger fish fell, but most of them weren't much longer than a man. Quite a few of the long crinoid stems swacked down to earth, and many really big wielandiella and macrotaenopteris ferns from the ancient days. The dog was getting with it now. He was drawing bigger stuff down from the Tertiary skies. He was doing a better job than the kids in the gang were.

(Several persons, George Drakos and Roy Mega among others, have said that Austro's big dog was really a hairy dinosaur. You can believe this if you want to, but you should notice that there are points of poor correspondence between them. Go look at the anklebones of a dinosaur, for instance. Then look at the anklebones of Austro's

big dog. How about it?)

There were bigger and more weird sky falls now, but the Local Anaesthetics just weren't stealing the initiative from the willow-dancing, pure-water kids. The limpid showers of the dancers were just doing too many sparkling things. And yet there was real talent to be found among the L.A.'s. There was Austro. There was Dog. There was Susie.

"Almost every time the world is turned around it's a little trick that does it," Susie said. "I'll just try a little trick." And she went boldly into the area of the enemy, into the lair of the pure-pseudo-science, rain-dancing young people.

"Your glasses are cracked, kids," Susie told them. And the glasses of all seven of them were cracked (all aesthetic, willow-dancing children wear glasses). And something else about them cracked at the same time. It was their protective psychic carapaces. It was their science itself.

The tide of battle swung to the Local Anaesthetics. Something else was falling to the pavements of the area now. It was the scales from the eyes of the people. Now the folks were able to see the monstrous crashing ichthyoids that had been, or would be, or maybe already were fish. Ancient sorceries will whip modern fetishes every time, and it was a case of that.

Man, that's when they pulled the stopper out of the drain and let it all come down!

People loaded up the twelve ton truck that Roy Mega arrived with then. And then they brought in a number of really big trucks and loaded them with the gloriously smelling old fish and the earlier-age crinoids and giant fern fronds. And a great number of loaded trucks as well as several thousand people went out to Sheen's Ravine for the enjoyment.

"My magic can whip your magic, and my dog can whip your dog!" Austro called to the aesthetic remnant.

Out at the ravine, it was fun to cut up crinoid stems with axes and crosscut saws. It was fun to bruise the fronds of large and early ferns and palms (Ah, that was a palmy hour!) with pneumatic hammers. And then to use that royal vegetation to garnish the big and powerful fish, to bring out the nobility of their strong smell and taste, that was to know what an enjoyment and a banquet were all about.

"Where those rain dancers and the big people who sustained them made their mistake," Dennis Oldstone was lecturing like an even younger Roy Mega, "was that they didn't understand the vastness

of the universe. They—"

"Duck, everybody! There's no way he won't think of it!" Susie wailed the warning.

"—they only understood the half-vastness of the universe. Luckily, enough of us with enough scope to handle the situation happened to be around."

"I suppose that I'll have to accept it," Barnaby Sheen was saying. "It's a fractured plane of reality that is introduced here. I can brush up on my fractured-plane equations, or I can have Roy Mega review me on them. Ah, I find that little shower rather refreshing. And the fish really isn't bad, Austro."

Susie Kalisky (or Susie Kalusy; it depends on which part of the fractured plane you are on) was focusing a shower of inhabited rain right on the head of Barnaby Sheen. The shower was inhabited by frogs and fish and eels and claw-feet that bedecked the wet head and shoulders of Barnaby as he ate (along with five thousand other people) the fried and garnished fish.

"It's not really bad fish the way it's fixed," Barnaby admitted. "The garnish is so strong that one can't taste the fish, and the fish is so strong that one can't taste the garnish. But where did it really come from, Austro?"

"There's a pool about a mile from here, Mr. Sheen. It's plain loaded with those big old fish. And the banks and bottom of it are loaded with those big old plants. It was Dog who first discovered it."

"Your glasses are cracked, mister," Susie Kalusy said to a fish-eating man there.

"That's all right, little girl. They never did fit me. I don't look through them. I look over them." He was a nice man.

"The pool's only a mile from here, Austro?" Barnaby Sheen asked. "Which way?"

"Up."

ST. POLEANDER'S EVE

Lasciate ogni donna, *voi ch'entrate!*
Leave every dame behind who enter here!
– Cristofero Dante Benedetti

Daisy Flavus had been working for Barnaby Sheen for a year or more; at least she had been on the payroll. He supposed, he said, that she had some duties down at his office or laboratory, but he wasn't sure. He didn't quite remember hiring her.

Barnaby hadn't much control over the people who worked for him. He really shouldn't have been in business, except that now he was so wealthy from his ventures that he couldn't afford not to be in business. "And in this particular business," he said (he had a seismograph company for the manufacture and use of instruments for the discovery or location of petroleum deposits), "I can wax wealthy without robbing widows and orphans."

"That blows half the fun of it," Austro said.

Now, however, Daisy had appointed herself to work in Barnaby's own house; aye, to work in the most mysterious room of that house, Barnaby's third-floor study-bar. This could mean trouble. There was, for one thing, the undisguised motto over the disguised doorway to that study: "Leave every dame behind who enter here." The study was a male club room: it was not woman country.

It's true that Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo lived (if that was the

word for them) in the study, but they were special instances—oh how they were special! It's true that three of the four men who knew everything, Doctor George Drakos, Cris Benedetti, and Harry O'Donovan, had wives, and that these wives had all been in the study. But they had been there only on brief guided tours. The study was off limits to women.

"Get on downtown where you belong," Barnaby had told Daisy the first time he caught her fluffing around in the study. "Your job is down there." Daisy had yellow hair and yellow eyes, but she barely missed being grubby.

"No, my job is here in this room now," she said. "I am custodian of this room and all that pertains to it. I am now, by formal title, your artistic secretary."

"And just how did this come about?" Barnaby asked.

"Oh, it's all quite regular, Mr. Sheen," she said. "The director of job classification has reclassified me to work here as artistic secretary."

"I disremember. Who has been the director of job classification of my firm?"

"I have," Daisy Flavus told him. "I still am."

Now whatever was an artistic secretary, and what would Barnaby want with one? Who was arty around here anyhow? Oh, we all were, privately, personally, and in an amateurish way.

Doctor George Drakos had fine surgeon's hands, but they were also artist's hands, etcher's hands, and sculptor's hands. Sometimes he did a little of this pleasure work in Barnaby's study. He sculpted there a bit; he painted there a bit. He was a colorful painter, and he used lots of yellow and orange and sienna and red, much more than nature uses. There was one shade of yellow that he could never quite get right. He would mix and he would moan. Then, in exasperation, he would call out "Austro!" and Austro would come: he'd take that color-mix out of the room, and in a short while he'd bring it back again, perfect now. Nobody knew what Austro added to make that color, but Drakos insisted that it was imperative to him to have that correct yellow. "That color is what art is all about," George Drakos would say. "That color *is* art."

But why was it necessary to have an artistic secretary in the room for this?

Cris Benedetti made verses. Mostly he made them in Italian (real verse must be in either Italian or Latin or Greek, he insisted), but sometimes he made them (limericks mostly) in English. Does this require an artistic secretary?

Barnaby Sheen created absolutely implausible music on the Mustel

celesta. The Mustel is not like other instruments, and Barnaby was not like other instrumentalists. His wasn't very good music, but it *was* implausible. Did he need an artistic secretary for that?

Harry O'Donovan wrote plays. He wrote the wonderful dramas and melodramas that were put on every Thursday night at the Rushlight Theatre, a non-profit enterprise. The Rushlight was a barnlike building; and the Rushlight Players were an amateur, though excellent, group. Harry also directed the plays, but naturally he didn't direct them in the study of Barnaby Sheen. Was an artistic secretary needed for any of this? Possibly for the correct transcription of Harry's ragged musical notations and scores, but Daisy couldn't read or write music.

Austro, Barnaby's australopithecine houseboy, drew (or mostly rock-carved) that unpublished and unpublishable comic strip, Rocky McCrocky, in the study; and others helped him a little bit with the continuity. (Austro said that it was discontinuity that they contributed: since Austro had learned to talk he had been talking smart.) But an artistic secretary was not needed for the Rocky McCrocky strip. And what else was arty around here?

The four men who knew everything played string quartets sometimes, Drakos on his ukulele, Benedetti on the banjo, O'Donovan on the mandolin, and Barnaby Sheen on the lute. They played about once a month and they played well. But how would an artistic secretary help them play better?

They also sang barbershop harmony in the room, sometimes the same four men, sometimes Austro singing bass in place of George Drakos. But the fine, high voice of Harry O'Donovan, the deep, dark voice of Austro, and the indifferent voices of Benedetti and Sheen didn't need an artistic secretary for their functions.

Nevertheless we had an artistic secretary now, and she didn't intend to withdraw. Daisy wasn't shy.

"We will have to use this room and no other," she said once. "It is the only room I ever saw that is large enough to portray the world. And I believe that, for the optimization of the product, two changes must be made in this group, Mr. Sheen. Get rid of the gaff and get rid of the Laff—" (she meant Austro and myself) " — and bring in any gentlemen from the list I have here as replacements. The improvement will be axiomatic and immediate. You'll see."

"Impossible," said Barnaby. "We will not allow ourselves to be changed or improved. We are a polyander, unchangeable and unsunderable."

"I don't even know what a polyander is," Daisy admitted with distaste.

"It is a group of men who have become one and will remain so,"

Barnaby said. "And what will you do with this polyander, young woman?"

"Commit polyandry with it, I guess," Daisy hazarded. "Oh, is that the same word, or are there two words just alike?"

Daisy wasn't the only one playing it odd here. Roy Mega, a young electronic genius who worked for Barnaby, had also begun to haunt the study instead of applying himself to his job down at the laboratory. And there was a hint of conspiracy: both Roy and Daisy belonged to the amateur, though excellent, Rushlight Players. But don't look at playwright Harry O'Donovan if you're talking about conspiracy: he had not conspired with Daisy nor with Roy.

"Is it that I'm paying you good money to be fluffing off out here rather than laboring at the lab, Roy?" Barnaby Sheen asked that young man.

"No you're paying me shoddy money to invent, originate, stumble over, or put together new and usable techniques. We both know that these are most often uncovered by the process of fallout. I see very fruitful electronic fallout in our employing this stuffy room and its denizens as a hotbed for seedling art, a basis for art amplification. A laboratory is where one labors; this old monastery room is a laboratory for me for the moment." That's what Roy Mega told Barnaby Sheen. Roy was sketching electrical diagrams of fruitful fallout and seedling art as he talked. Austro was studying them avidly. Austro couldn't read words very well yet, but he could read mathematical equations and electric schematics with excited understanding.

"Ah, well, what *is* art, seedling or otherwise?" Barnaby asked.

"Art is the Garden of What Ought to Be selected out of the Jungle of What Is," Roy quoted from somewhere.

"Not quite," Barnaby argued. "Good art is the privileged outpouring of the Holy Spirit, sometimes from one unworthy vessel into another unworthy vessel. Bad art is the outpouring of an unholy spirit. The good is preferable."

"No. Real art is the struggle between good and bad," Cris Benedetti argued. "There cannot be drama without this struggle; there cannot be real art without this dynamism. Static or undramatic art is no art at all. There is only one form of struggle in the world and that is between the Holy Spirit and the unholy or unclean spirits."

"I'm an unwashed spirit but I'm not an unclean spirit," Mary Mondo said out of the air. "There's a difference."

"Who is talking out of the air?" Daisy Flavus demanded.

"You're a neutral spirit, Mary," Barnaby told her gruffly. "Or at least you have a high percent of neutral spirits in you."

"The Putty Dwarf used to say that art was smoke without fire,"

the ghost girl Mary Mondo went on. "And he said that all flesh should be of cardboard or it might be dangerous and alive. I haven't any flesh, so I'm a cardboard spirit. I haven't any art either."

Mary Mondo and Loretta Sheen, the broken ghost and the broken doll, were artless denizens of that room.

"Who is that talking out of the air?" Daisy asked again. "Who are you, smoke-without-fire girl? You're a split-off personality who has lost her prime person; that's who you are." Daisy was correct in this. Mary Mondo was the schizoid or split-off personality of a girl named Violet Lonsdale, and Violet was long since dead.

"I can always use another personality," Daisy continued. "I see you now, girl. You're a smoky black smudge. I'll absorb you, spook-kook."

"You'll not absorb me, Daisy, nor make an under-person of me," Mary Mondo said.

"But I *will* absorb you," Daisy insisted. "And that big busted doll on the sofa, she's unsanitary. Out she goes! She gets sawdust all over everything."

"No, you will not get rid of Loretta," Barnaby said shortly. "She seems to be a big doll, but she is really the undead body of my own daughter Loretta—and her sawdust is self-renewing, she'll never run out of it."

"All right, Loretta, you stay in," Daisy said. "But who will we get to play your role? You may have to play yourself."

"What is the name of the production tonight?" Barnaby asked.

"The name of the production is the same as the secret name of this room," Daisy said. "It's *The Monastery on the Third Floor*."

"Harry," Barnaby asked O'Donovan, "why did you name your little project the Rushlight Theatre?"

"The very first art, caveman art, was done by rushlight," Harry answered.

"Is it true, Austro?" Barnaby asked his houseboy who was sometimes called an ape-boy by those with unseeing eyes.

"Carrock, yes," said Austro. "Fat, oily rushes. They burn, they smell. I drool."

"It's fifteen minutes till curtain time at the Rushlight tonight," Barnaby said. "The wives of you wived ones are all playing in it, I believe. Shouldn't you be going?"

"No, they shouldn't," Roy Mega said. "You all are going to see the play, but you are not going to see it. You're going to stay right here and be in it. But you will have to get into the mood; into the detached reality mood." Roy had in his hands a needle so big that it looked like a burlesque prop. He jabbed Barnaby Sheen in the arm with it.

"That stings devilishly," Barnaby complained. "What is it?"

"Oh, a simple sympathetic transmitter device," Roy answered, and he jabbed George Drakos in the arm with it.

"Damn it, kid, do you know what you're doing?" Doctor Drakos demanded. "I never saw a needle like that. And you've broken it. You've left a piece of it in my arm."

"How can I implant it without leaving it?" Roy asked. "Let it alone! It's carefully tuned to your personality, to your personality as edited and upgraded by myself."

Roy shot an implantation into the arm of Cris Benedetti.

"Is this real or is it a nutty dream?" Cris asked. "Why are you going around shooting people with that needle, Roy? My wife said that the dumb kid who works for Barnaby came by and gave her a shot in the arm this afternoon. I told her that she was crazy, that she'd been into the wine again."

"She had been into it, Mr. Benedetti," Roy said. He shot implantations into the arms of Harry O'Donovan and Austro. Daisy, meanwhile, was roving about the room with her own needle and with an evil look in her yellow eyes. Mary Mondo screamed!

"Oh, oh!" she cried. "How can it hurt me when I'm beyond pain. You can't put a physical implant in me, yellow-hair. I'm a ghost."

"I did it, witch!" Daisy chortled. "I'm one up on you. I believe that will heighten the drama."

"Oh, oh, oh!" Mary Mondo moaned with the pain of it. Daisy needled the arm of the big broken doll that may have been Loretta Sheen. Loretta moaned and spilled a bit of sawdust on the carpet. It wouldn't matter. The sawdust was self-renewing.

Well, the room *was* as big as the world now, and yet it was a discrete fortress set off against the world. There were perspective pictures on the walls (they were in the style of George Drakos, though they were drawn and painted electronically by Roy Mega), and they made the room appear quite as big as the world. There was overture music somewhere (it was in the style of Barnaby Sheen, but it also was produced electronically by Roy—or rather it was edited and amplified by Roy from some Barnaby Sheen original).

"Come along, Roy," Daisy said. "We'll be late. They're beginning at the theatre."

Roy Mega and Daisy Flavus left the rest of us there; yet they took pieces of each of us along when they went.

ii

"*Oh I come from Castlepatrick, and me heart*
is on my sleeve,

But a lady stole it from me on St. *Poleander's Eve"*

– G.K. Chesterton

Why should there suddenly be a playbill in every hand with the title *The Monastery on the Third Floor*? The date, of course, was April 30, but does that explain the strange double happenings? It was St. Poleander's Eve, yes, but St. Poleander had been declared a non-person by the good Roman Church some years before this – a myth, a mere legend.

All of us were, due to the electronic genius of Roy Mega and his implanted sympathetic transmitter devices, in the old study at Barnaby Sheen's and, at the same time, in the Rushlight Theatre. It was now a conveniently sized world; for the study, the theatre, and the world had become, for a while, identical. All were themselves, at their ease in their own place, but bits of each one could be seen in the characters at the Rushlight Theatre – and the Rushlight was a superimposed presence on the old study. Yet the scene *was* the study, surrealistically or cubistically rendered. The scene was even signed (how could a scene be signed?) in one corner "Geo. Drakos". This living scene had been seeded from his mind. Gold, yellow, orange, sienna, and red were the colors of this artificial world; and the studio yellow was predominant.

Down at the Rushlight, Roy Mega, Daisy Flavus, and Austro seemed to be playing many parts. How come Austro? He was still here in the study. Daisy played the part of Mary Mondo, and Mary howled in anger to be so portrayed; then Daisy played variations of the feedback from Mary's anger and integrated them into the role. Daisy also played Loretta Sheen, vomiting sawdust, but moving with a liveliness that Loretta had not shown since the time of her death.

There was rock-dust too, rock-dust everywhere in the air. Some of the action had been cribbed shamelessly from the Rocky McCrocky stone-chiseled comic strip.

Electronics is wonderful. There was a serenity about the whole thing. Steadfast was the study and all the works of it. It was a true formation, a rooted thing; yes, like an old monastery. Electronic tragicomedy does the bucolic bit very well. A fabulously rich and quite medieval countryside had quietly become one of the main persons of the drama. There was, as you may know, about five acres of broken land behind Barnaby Sheen's, between his place and that of Cris Benedetti; and, no doubt, Roy Mega had implanted sympathetic electronic transmitter devices in the area. The half-dozen fruit trees that Barnaby had planted came through as grand orchards. His little patch of buckwheat (Barnaby ate buckwheat pancakes of

his own grinding every morning) was presented as vast province-wide fields of wheat, barley, rye, and millet, all in their late April green touched with gold. The two rows of grapevines that Cris Benedetti had were dramatized as vast vineyards, the great-grandfather's of all the great grapes of Europe.

Roy Mega employed the various elements for theatrical effect. But the whole thing was rooted in the rich landscape paintings of George Drakos. There were cattle, horses, sheep, and goats in profusion. There were geese, ducks, chickens, hares, and hogs. And where were the originals of these? From what had they been amplified? Chiara Benedetti did have a pet goat and a pet duck—they may have been the basis.

Helen Drakos was in the scenes. She made fine small cabinets and chests; she was an artist in fruit wood. Judy Benedetti ran a little inn and wineshop that was adjacent to the monastery. There was superb piano accompaniment to all the settings and all the action—it was Judy's thematic music that was used. Judy, in private life, was dark, pretty, and witty. But a slightly distorted Judy (you had always suspected this) would have set you screaming—and she was on the edge of such distortion.

Catherine O'Donovan was a potting woman and a weaving woman. She was the artisan superb. She did it all: she hetcheled the flax, she glazed the final clay; she made the whole era seem worthwhile as it came to its end.

The Polyander, the great grouping of persons (women are included in a true polyander), was successful. It had balance, it had grace, it had art. But into the superb piano playing and Mary Mondo's ghostly song (electronic, perhaps, but near perfect) there now came a divergent note. It was not a dissonance, but it was a change of mood and a change of world. There was, at first, but a single note of that old goat music; but all the old notes bristled when they heard it. There had been a world in artistic and theological balance. Then it clashed. There was quick death-birth; and then the whole thing was other than it had been.

> *"Was she really singing that? No, of course not. But for a moment it seemed as though she were singing one of those hairy goat songs that came up the road from langue d'oc eight hundred years ago."*
>
> *—Dotty*

What had happened, of course, was that the thousand-year era had ended and the devil was released from his imprisonment. This event

would unbalance the world and rend the seamless mantle of grace that the world had worn. It would scatter burdock and cockle in the wheat, it would kindle new perversions; it would bring back the enslaving permissiveness that is always the mark of the devil loosed. But it would also bring heightened variety and intensity and excitement to art, to all the arts, to the life whose roots are in the arts—and an art theatre was what the Rushlight was.

A savage meanness ran through it all. Let it. There is sharp color and perspective in savage meanness. All watched themselves change in the representations at the Rushlight. They watched their own faces melt like wax, and harden into a more outré wax. They were flesh no more. Ah, but much more arty effects may be got with wax than with flesh that breaks and scorches and burns, instead of melting pungently and quickly into a new and more deforming mold. But the deformity had always been implicit in the flesh. The spirit of the Putty Dwarf was over the face of the world, and the polyander had become a rutting mob.

Characters coalesced and then divided once more. Daisy, Loretta Sheen, Mary Mondo, Helen Drakos, Judy Benedetti, and Catherine O'Donovan were all, for a while, merged into one electronic character, a succubus. It happened in a mere instant, for souls are lost in an instant. This living-unliving apparatus committed abominations with the polyander, the men of the place and the drama, and committed them collectively and individually. Here was total abandon on all sides: animality, and the red-handed killing of children and innocents. (There was a difficulty: the persons hadn't many children of their own, so outside children had to be brought in to be killed.) Here was odd behavior limited only by the imaginations of Daisy Flavus and Roy Mega, who both had made serious studies in perversions.

The spirit of the Putty Dwarf supplied all that the young humans missed. This spirit knew all the things hidden in sour corners. All the men performed divergent carnalities with the protean thing, while in another place they fed the young to Moloch. Chiara Benedetti gave a rattling scream when she was murdered.

Even Loretta Sheen found a voice.

"You can't kill me, I'm already dead; I'm part of this thing!" Loretta protested, and then her own death scream sounded.

All of them took roles in the ruddy thing, except Austro; he refused further parts. He stood apart and fumed in his towering, high-hackled morality. Not even the electronic Austro devised by Roy Mega would be sullied by such outrageousness.

Austro could fight on this field. He was already, according to his nature, somewhat electronic—this is common among people of the early types. Austro would not be subverted and he would not be imi-

tated. He himself entered into every effigy of himself and nullified it. Austro was the battleground; he was the arena; he was the stage. Austro as Rocky McCrocky was very tough; and Rocky was the basic Everyman of the drama. The trend of the drama was settled in Austro and by him. It became not quite the drama that Roy Mega had intended; yet it was even more powerful, of a more sophisticated art than had been planned.

Now Catherine O'Donovan had withdrawn from the succubus in red fury, in redheaded and freckled fury. She challenged the whole business.

"Drag me not down from the light and the grace! Fight you, I'll fight you all over the place," she cried in one of her manifestations. (This was a verse drama. And it was a morality play.)

It went on for two more acts, but Catherine continued to make scenes—scenes that weren't in the Rushlight script at all. Harry O'Donovan had written the original script, but he had written it as a comedy. Austro had rock-chipped the script that was before the original script, and he had composed it as a comic strip. Catherine herself would have to pass through fire and grave before the high comedy was achieved; but higher comedies are never without the smell of burning flesh and crumbling death. There would be no really high comic art if the fire, destruction, peril, and death were left out.

"Bloody much tune for the ravens and cats! Blood on the sharps of it! Rot on the flats!" Catherine O'Donovan caterwauled rather than sang this. The music! There could not be music like that. There were live musicians in the Rushlight and live musicians in the study. There was electronic scrambling and contribution, horny and hairy goat songs from langue d'oc that had crept in somewhere. Barnaby was playing the Mustel celesta in the study, and that instrument was illicitly old. There was the old phenomenon that had first been heard soon after the bloody deaths of Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo (Violet Lonsdale). The sound was not quite in the audio range . . . normal people couldn't hear it, but they sure knew it was there . . . either an ecstasy or a public nuisance—the Symphony of the Seven Spooks and Other Free Spirits.

Then it began to escalate. And what did Daisy and Roy, who seemed to have lost control of the production they were supposed to be directing, have to say about this?

"You can do some things with electronics that you can't do without it," they said.

The lighting! The colors! Into the art yellow, the rushlight yellow, there had crept the dull glow of mud violet from far down the spectrum. This empty color, this ghost color, is part of real art, we suppose. But it brings the sense and sight of shadows without substance.

The audience at the Rushlight was charmed, even as a bird is charmed by a snake. Most of its members took vicarious parts in the perversions, mental and physical, that were being played out on simultaneous levels.

The lines and voices of the actors had taken on a moment, a movement, a rhythm. They could not be reproduced; nor were they later remembered, except as vague impressions. It was of their essence that they be forgotten or buried or sublimated. Emotions twanged like the instruments of the string quartet back in the study.

"We will not serve the climax dish," said a chef who watched for a moment. (The Rushlight was a late supper club as well as a theatre.) "There will be no appetite left in the people, no, not even for beans. It may be good drama, but I hate these plays that make the people lose their appetites."

It had to end. The polyander had been shattered by the polyandry and the murders and deformities; it's high fellowship was tarred with a pitchy brush. The succubus had come apart, but each part was still murderous and shrill. There was satiety, there was revulsion. It was time for the third act, and for the tragicomedy itself, to end. But here, a climax dish *would* be served: Catherine O'Donovan would be served as a dish.

Catherine was crying out lines in high rhyme. She was standing on a little ledge or sideboard before saffron drapes. There was such a sideboard in the study; there was also one in the Rushlight. There were brass and copper bells in her voice when she rang out her rhyme lines.

"Broke *you the fellowship,* poisoned *the well!* Spirits, *bleak* spirits, go *back to your hell!*"

But the spirits—the Putty Dwarf and seven worse than himself—would not go back. The spirit had already gone out of those pseudo-spirits Loretta Sheen and Mary Mondo. The craft of Daisy Flavus and Roy Mega had left them; there were places where their electronics could not follow. The end of the show had been taken out of their hands; it would not be as they had devised it. It was all between the unholy spirits and the spirited Catherine now.

"*Carrot top, carrot top, lose you the fray! You be the going one. We be the stay,*" those spirits rhymed it, and they were coming at Catherine in her high place. They had her threateningly boxed in. Nevertheless she wouldn't go easily, though nobody could or would aid her. She rhymed her defiance.

"*Murders of children and bongers of knell! Devils, down devils, go back to your hell!*"

The Putty Dwarf had leaped onto the sideboard and pulled the velvet rope. The saffron drapes parted. Behind them was a high win-

dow, and behind that was a desolate landscape. The unclean spirits, moving murderously, rhymed a last rhyme: "Carrot top, Carrot top, scuttled by all! Sputter your temper! How far do you fall!"

Then the end was very quick. The Down Devils were onto Catherine there in the window. They flung Catherine O'Donovan (and it was with a great smashing of glass that they did it) through that high window to her death in the desolate landscape below.

She was dead, broken dead, redly dead with her carrot hair and her freckles. And after death is the grave; without obsequies, without coffin. She was dead in a dug grave, with the dirt scooped directly onto her, into her face, her eyes, her nose, her mouth and throat—dead, buried, and dishonored. Poor Catherine O'Donovan!

iii

"We have learned to whittle the Eden Tree
To the shape of a surplice-peg.
We have learned to bottle our parents twain
In the yolk of an addled egg.
We know that the tail must wag the dog,
For the horse is drawn by the cart.
But the Devil whoops, as he whooped of old:
'It's pretty, but is it Art?' "

—Rudyard Kipling

Austro had made cheese things and passed them around, but those in the study had lost their appetites. He ate them himself when no one else would eat. After all, he was innocent of any wrongdoing or wrong thinking. Why should he lose his appetite?

The rest were a little unnerved by the Rushlight drama that they had witnessed without going to the Rushlight. They knew that there was one more scene of the drama to be played, and that it would be played offstage.

They were waiting a little nervously for the first shoe to drop, waiting with anxiety (fear and trembling on the side) for the second shoe to follow it, and waiting with real trepidation for that third shoe to fall.

Roy Mega and Daisy Flavus came into the study, having hurried over from the Rushlight. But they weren't any of the shoes. They took Harry O'Donovan to task for what they believed was mistreatment.

"Mr. O'Donovan, you changed the script!" Daisy charged.

"No such thing," Harry maintained. "I wrote one clear script and

one only. You two changed it a little, but it changed itself back. My scripts will do that. You can get hurt changing them, you know."

"But the Putty Dwarf and his gang weren't supposed to move or act," Roy said. "They hadn't any speaking parts. They were just painted figures lurking in the woods, figures painted by Dr. Drakos here."

"My paintings have a lot of life in them," George Drakos said.

"And they did have speaking and acting parts," Harry insisted. "They were on the last two pages, the pages you said you weren't going to use—and you didn't use them. They used you."

"You used us too, O'Donovan," Roy Mega charged.

"Certainly, certainly," Harry said. "At first I was going to have a couple of psychic types in it and somehow do it mentally. Then I decided to write in an electronics nut and a featherheaded girl instead. You two came through a little sloppy, though, I should have done a little rewriting on you."

"But we were real, real," Daisy protested. "You talk as though you made us up."

"I always use a basis that is real, real, Daisy. I'm a realistic playwright," Harry said.

Helen Drakos came in. She was the first shoe, but thankfully she dropped almost noiselessly.

"I liked it," she said. "The part I liked best was killing the kids for Moloch. George, why don't we have some kids of our own so we can kill them if they get out of line?"

"Whatever you say, Helen," George agreed. "Where are Judy and Catherine?"

"Judy will be here in just a minute. Catherine is delayed. She's dead, so I don't know when we'll see her."

Judy Benedetti came in. She was the second shoe. She dropped a little more noisily.

"Harry, don't you know anything at all about wines?" she demanded. "The wines that you wrote in for my wineshop were inferior, terrible. My customers wouldn't drink them. I had to drink them myself. Now I don't know whether I'm crocked or sick."

"I'm sorry, Judy," Harry said. "If the subject comes up again, I'll let you write the wine."

"But I liked the slaughter of the children, Harry," Judy said. "You could have done much more with it, though. What with us becoming civilized and all, we're in danger of forgetting how much fun it is to kill kids. Oh, it's always been mod and arty! Chiara wouldn't believe that I was really going to do it to her. 'Mother, it's only a play,' she hollered. 'Mother, get that look out of your eyes!' How she screamed when I really killed her though! I liked that—and the poly-

andry was fun. George was pretty good. So was Barnaby. So were you, Harry."

"Where is Catherine?" Harry O'Donovan asked.

"Oh, she'll be a while yet. She's dead. I liked that scene, Harry. It was a great ending. I like her, but I've often wanted to throw her out a window or something."

"Had to—dead, you know," came the voice of Mary Mondo out of the air. "That's what the second Englishman said."

"What did the first Englishman say?" Loretta Sheen croaked from her sawdusty sofa of pain.

"*Ah, I hear you've buried your wife!!*" Roy and Daisy shouted together, cutting Mary Mondo out. Those kids were serious about the theater business. They had gone to the trouble of learning all the old jokes.

Ghostly icy winds blew across the haunted moors! Frightened hounds bristled and bayed in the spooky night! There was a terrible stench of rot, death, and unhallowed ground. A dead person walking, stalking, with that stilt-like walk they have! Living death, walking death, was even now at the door!

Like a soundless scream, the horror-faced, walking-dead Catherine O'Donovan burst into the room. She had grave stench about her; she had grave dirt on her, in her eyes, her mouth, and her carrot-colored hair. She held a burning swamp rush like a torch in her death's hand. She was the third shoe, and when the third shoe drops at night it sets the stoutest heart to fluttering. She dropped, fell, and lay upon the boards—disheveled, derelict, and dead. Austro grabbed the burning rush torch lest it kindle the room.

"Good show, Catherine," said her husband Harry. "I wasn't sure that you could handle the role. Say, you have some pretty bad cuts where you went through the window! Fortunately they are only sympathetic electronic cuts. We may have allowed the electronic amplification to enhance the play a little too much. The mixed-media dosage can well be fatal."

"The play is over, Mrs. O'Donovan," Daisy said, "and you were wonderful."

"Oh shut up!" Catherine burst out furiously, surging shakily up from the floor. "My flesh is rotted and there's grave dirt all over me."

"It's only electronic flesh rot and electronic grave dirt, Mrs. O'Donovan," Roy Mega tried to explain.

"Well, how do I get rid of it?" Catherine demanded.

"I don't know. I'll have to invent something," Roy said weakly.

"I'll get even," Catherine moaned. "Ah, to waken unblessed in the grave!"


Staton

"You woke up in the prop room, Mrs. O'Donovan," Daisy said, "in an old prop grave that we used in 'Queen of the Living Dead'."

"I'll get even," Catherine moaned again. She went over to where Austro and George Drakos had put their heads and gravers and colored pencils together.

"The next one I write, I'll put in a real psychic couple," Harry said, "and they'll be able to create all sorts of effects. But I'll use Roy and Daisy too. There cannot be too many effectors when one jumps the media tracks for greater reality. Ah, what an artist I am!"

"You'd better keep the stage plays on the stage, Harry," Barnaby Sheen warned.

"Oh, how I'll get even!" Catherine was crying, but there was a new liveliness about her now. George Drakos was drawing a death's head with his colored pencils. It was ghastly, horrifying in its death suffering. It was the tortured face of Harry O'Donovan.

"Will it work?" Catherine asked.

"Why not?" said George. "As an artist I can jump media as well as Harry can. And I also have my effectors."

Austro was drawing Rocky McCrocky with a great splitting stone axe held high, and the axe was about to descend murderously.

"Will it work? Will it work, Austro?" Catherine asked.

"Carrock, why not? It always has," Austro said.

"Let me!" Catherine ordered. She took the two pictures in her angry hands. She superimposed one upon the other. The axe descended upon the head. Harry O'Donovan screamed.

"Oh, my head, my head!" Harry wailed.

"I don't think that things can be enhanced too much," Daisy was saying, "just as I don't believe that music can be played too loud. We can't go restricting things just because a few people get blasted."

"I don't believe that the media can be mixed too much," Roy Mega was saying. "I don't believe that reality can be twisted too much, or that we can launch too many combinations. The more little explosions we are able to have, the closer we come to having the big explosion. That's what everybody want's, isn't it?"

Austro was rock graving other pictures with graver and hammer. They had something to do with Roy Mega and with Daisy Flavus. They were effector pictures. They would really blast! (No, no, Austro, don't do it! Sure they are brats, sure they are asking for it. But not that! No, Austro, don't do it! No, no!)

"I have a splitting headache literally," Harry O'Donovan was moaning. "There's no pain like it this side of death." Harry had gone ashen white in the face—with a garish overlay of studio yellow. He seemed to be suffering the tortures of the damned. He was the veritable original of the ghastly death's head drawing by George Drakos. He

moaned. He was living-dying art.

And Austro was doing truly amazing things with hammer and graver on stone. Oh, the screaming to come was implicit in that picture, and Catherine O'Donovan looked at it with anticipation and pleasure.

"It's a little hard not to overdo it when you're getting even, Austro," Catherine beamed through her rot and reek. "I think maybe it's more fun to get just a little bit more than even: now if you draw it here like this—let me have the hammer and graver a minute—like this! Then Daisy and Roy will feel what it's like to—"

"No, no, Catherine, don't do *that!* No, no!" Austro pleaded. "That's a little too much." He took the graver and hammer back from her.

"Ah, what artists we all are!" Catherine gloated with ghoulish pleasure. Really, she wore her grave dirt (and stench and rot) rakishly. She was magnificent!

THROUGH ELEGANT EYES

by R. A. Lafferty

illustrated by Joe Staton

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Through Elegant Eyes

R. A. Lafferty

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