



# MILLENNIUM

five point ohmigod

**DUCK SOUP  
PRODUCTIONS**

i would have  
wanted not  
to die.

i would have  
wanted never  
to grow up.

— cirque du soleil,  
quidam



# TRUTH

## **the grt. circus of life**

get it all in three rings or less

## **the fun page**

how to hide in plain sight

## **pages**

Hello Dali, Goodbye Yellow Brick Road, here comes Moomintroll.

## **film flam**

the brainless horseman

## **playtime**

toys we like

## **necrologie**

too many corpses

## **slings & arrows**

the usual gruff stuff

# FICTION

## **disney world**

grab it all, own it all, drain it all

## **harmony**

good scouting

## **the fortress**

## **unvanquishable,**

## **save for sacnoth**

dreams and how to overcome them

## **the comics pages**

Quirk pays his collective  
unconscious a visit

## **from the editors**

yes by gum and yes by golly



# here we are, back with you again

With those words, Fran Allison, Burr Tillstrom, Kukla the Clown, Ollie the dragon and all the Kuklapolitan Players (Mr. Tillstrom was many people in his lifetime) welcomed you to their little television show... which, more often than not, really was a little show—nothing more or less than Miss Allison standing before a cheap portable proscenium and Mr. Tillstrom standing behind it.

Which was all the show that anyone needed. For two decades *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* outshone much of what surrounded it, eliciting nothing but love—real love—from its many fans. Cleverness, comedy, drama, conflict, music and frenetic action were the order of the day, with plots frequently turning around nothing more earth-shattering than how one of the players could avoid hurting another's feelings (we wish that



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people on television these days thought more about the consequences of impoliteness, but that's another editorial). Aside from a very occasional set-piece, such as a toy factory—setpieces that grew more and more scarce as the show matured—there were no special effects in sight other than what the two performers could generate out of their own minds.

It was the archetypal children's show of the fifties and one of the greatest shows—for audiences of all ages—in the history of televi-

sion. And it was built, not by producers or television executives, but by one man and his imagination.

Many, many of us on the web are attempting our own shows, with our own set of Kuklapolitan players. It's true that we have computing power at our fingertips that was unimaginable in Tillstrom's day, but for all of their capabilities our computers don't actually do much of anything unless we (metaphorically speaking) stick our hands up inside them and jiggle

them around a bit and make them speak—just like a puppet.

Millennium is our little puppet show. We wear all the hats and play many characters. We try to amuse. What we do is in no way near the level of greatness that Mr. Tillstrom achieved with his friends Kukla and Ollie. But we are proud to claim him as one of the earliest of our heroes.



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# DISNEY WORLD

First came the sound of an oldfashioned bell, marked as synthetic only by the fuzz around the edges, then the highpitched squealy laugh: “Ha-HA! The time is ... five ... oh ... three ... AM! Time to get up and out of bed! Oh, boy! It’s a new day! Time to get up and out of bed! Ha-HA! The time is —”

Geri clapped and the

clock fell silent. Geri rested Geri’s head back on a pattern of Little Mermaids. The early morning called for this much: wake, shower, make the kids breakfast and get them off to school. This required The Her: and so Geri was her. She swung her feet out of bed and into a waiting pair of Minnie Mouse slippers. She clapped again and the

television came on, *Good Morning World* with the plastic cheerful announcers in their plastic cheerful suits, no need to clap a third time, it was ABC on all the stations.

The shower was so full of products that there was barely room for Geri. She squeezed a pink bottle and shampoo spewed out of Pocahontas’s mouth.

by d o u g l a s t h o r n s j o

F I C T I O N

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The shower head was shaped like a shower head, but it pulsed water to the tune of "Under The Sea:" *Choo-choo-choo-CHOO-CHOO-choo-choo-CHOO-CHOO-CHOO* so that as she sponged herself clean with her Prince Charming mitt she could not help but repeat "Darling it's better down where it's wetter take it from me..."

By six o'clock she had Figaro fed and the children were happily munching on their microwaved Mouse-ear waffles. Michael Eisner was on the television

with his thousand dollar suit and his smile to announce the opening of the Gettysburg Theme Park. He was pleased to say that

The initial damage to her Mousecartooncard had been staggering, and this was deepened every time a new movie came out.

Employment Opportunities at the new facility would be practically limitless, as they had decided to use real bullets in the re-

enactments. Geri said to her boy child, "Wouldn't you like to work there and just play forever?" Bobby agreed, and asked again

if Santa would bring him the Goofy Repeating Rifle next Children's Day. Geri laughed and tousled his hair.

The children had been with her for two years, ever since she had been turned down for the studio job. "Your work shows some originality," the man had said in reviewing her portfolio. Then she was ushered politely to the street. The man shook her hand. "Don't be discouraged," he said. "Salvador Dali didn't work out with us either."

This was small consolation as Geri had never heard the name before. Two days later, just as the disillusionment was beginning to set in, the children were delivered

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in wooden crates bearing three stenciled inkblots and the notice ©DISNEY on the side. Geri thought there must have been a mistake. But the delivery man pointed out that it was Geri's name and address on the side, and added something to the effect that there was nothing like children to make a house a home.

The boy was wearing blue jammies with Darkwing Duck on them and the girl was wearing Pink with Beauty. They came out smiling. The instructions gave specific care and feeding require-

ments and Geri could see that raising them would take up quite a bit of her time. The portfolio and the tools she had used to fill it were set aside, and forgotten.

As they had come with only their jammies and a Donald Duck each, Geri had had to buy a full wardrobe for them right away. This meant shopping at the company store: Janey initially wanted a Mulan theme to all her clothes but changed this to Maleficent in both dragon and human incarnations when she saw that her brother

was favoring Shere Khan the Tiger. Geri had been appalled at the cost of children's clothing. Plus there were furnishings, curtains, wallpaper, rugs and bathtub toys. The initial damage to her Mousecartooncard had been staggering, and this was deepened every time a new movie came out. Geri settled on a deal whereby her wages were reduced to help pay off the debt.

By seven the children were off to school and it was time to change for the day. Work required The Him and so Geri was him. He dressed in

a white workshirt and slacks with his name stenciled on all the pocketflaps, finishing with a sporty Malibu Mickey necktie. There was still time to spare. Geri decided to stop off along the way for a cup of coffee and a copy of the morning paper.

The weatherman had selected a Casey, Jr. motif for the cloud patterns. Geri opened his garage door and climbed into the yellow two-door coupe parked inside. It had rounded fenders and overstuffed whitewall tires and a rounded front and back. License plate 313, like



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all the others, Geri assumed it was the same one he'd owned for years but had no way of being certain.

The neighborhood was sunny and warm and scrupulously clean. Geri drove out past Micki's house and Lyn's house and Leslie's house with their slightly rounded, yellow stucco walls and their windows like eyes on either side of the front door. There were red shutters around the windows and red shingles on the roofs. There were picket fences and yards with Mickey scooters for the children

and yellow-and-red doghouses for the Plutos. Geri turned at the hydrant onto Dopey Drive.

On either side the sculpted trees rolled by. An army of topiary workers were required to keep them in trim, but they worked at night, no one ever saw them. It had rained sometime before sunrise, just enough to bring out the greens. Geri counted five neighborhoods and turned under the blue and red arch of the station mall.

There was no need to lock the car. Geri

parked between two other yellow two-door coupes and grabbed the empty briefcase from the seat beside him. A huge grey statue of the mouse marked the entryway. As Geri passed between its legs the familiar voice squeaked out: "Hi, Geri! Everybody neat and pretty?" Geri wondered how the statue got his name right every time.

The coffee shop was all glass and steel and painted plastic. Geri gave his order to a metal box with mouse ears and lipstick soldered onto it, then wan-

dered along the book aisles. There were new books by Tom Cruise, Bette Midler, Joe Montana, Rosie O'Donnell and John Wayne Gacey, who had been dead longer than Geri could remember, not that death stopped a celebrity from writing books anymore. There were horoscope books by Nancy Reagan and fitness books by William Shatner. Geri remembered a time when books had been written by writers. Thank heaven Mr. Eisner had put a stop to that. Geri settled on the new Star Wars novel,



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paid at the register, and took a booth close to the center of the main aisle. His coffee and a copy of the daily paper were waiting for him.

The news was all good. There was a boy whose Pluto had saved him from being crushed in a CD press, and a mother who had just celebrated her one hundred and sixty first birthday. It turned out that she had three moles on her cheek in the shape of Mickey's head — according to the story this was certain to cause a new fashion headache for cosmetic surgeons. There was a

picture of the president who was obviously very happy about something. *Adolf*, the new animated musical

Duck shot out of the station exactly on schedule. Geri had his usual window seat, to watch the green blur

could be certain? Geri sometimes thought that the train remained stationary at the center of a motorized circular diorama that whirled around it. You had to admit the possibility: the coffee never so much as vibrated in his cup.

Blackness drew itself over the windows. With the slightest shoosh of prerecorded steam the Silver Duck drew up to a well-lit platform guarded by two security men in white. Geri went through a mechanical door directly out onto Main Street, all gleaming off-white buildings

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adventure about a frustrated artist and his paintbrush friends who found success in a government job, was opening to rave reviews.

The eight-ten Silver

going by. The ride was never more than fifteen minutes — at the Silver Duck's claimed speed, Geri calculated that the ride took him seven hundred miles; but who



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in the Duckburg style, forced perspective pillars that were shorter than what they seemed, dwarf gargoyles, sprayed foam brick and streetlamps made of rubber. The shops had already opened, filling the air with sweet smells. Fashion at the moment was retro, so the mothers and wives out shopping wore high heels and pouffed skirts and sweaters and hair that ended in upturned points. Everyone was smiling. Geri went diagonally across the pedestrian boulevard and entered the office through a revolving

glass door.

Geri rode the elevator down to the twenty-second floor. His cubicle was halfway down along the wall. Coffee had already been set out for him. He settled in behind the desk, logged on to the terminal, and slipped the puppet over his right hand.

It was a Mickey Mouse with a plastic head and a cloth body. The voice box inside made the whole puppet rather too small for his hand, but it would do no good to ask for a change, the puppets were all the same size. It was Geri's job to

watch the programming that played on the terminal screen and monitor the puppet's reaction. There was a wide variety of shows to choose from: courtroom shows and paparazzi shows and computer game shows and shows about theme park doctors, theme park lawyers, theme park policemen. Mostly the puppet just applauded. Sometimes it would look sideways at Geri, and then back at the screen, and then applaud. Whenever the puppet reacted any other way, Geri was required to make a note

of the reaction, log the time, log the program title, log the specific scene that had caused the reaction. If Geri could remember the names of the actors he was to make note of that as well.

The puppet was enjoying his second episode of *The Mighty Ducks in Outer Space* when Geri's boss crooked a finger at him from the corner office.

"You can take that off," Geri's boss said when he had closed the door behind him. Geri had come so quickly that he'd forgotten to remove the puppet.



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Now he peeled it off and held it tight in both hands.

"Is there a problem with my logbook?" Geri said. "I've paid particular attention to detail."

Geri's boss was a slightly rounded person in a blue serge suit who effectively combined the most intimidating characteristics of both the him and the her. "No, your work is just fine," the boss said. "But on a random search of the premises we discovered this in your desk."

The boss pulled something out of a side

drawer and slammed it down between an expensive gold pen and pencil set and a plaster bust of Uncle Scrooge McDuck. It was Geri's portfolio.

At first Geri did not recognize the thing. Then something about the name on the front stirred his memory, and he opened to an off-white page near the center that featured a beautifully rendered pencil sketch of a naked her wearing a cartoon duck's head on her shoulders.

"Oh," Geri said. "That's from an awful long time ago."

Geri's boss leaned forward onto folded hands and gave him an awful, horrible smile. "But your talents are wasted here," Geri's boss said. "How can we ask you to monitor the creatives with something like this in your past? You see my point. Never mind. I believe we have the perfect new job for you."

The boss led Geri back to the elevators. They rode up to the ground floor; there, in an obscure location in shadow behind the elevator bank, was an unmarked door that

opened onto a yard behind the Grumpy Building. For the first time, Geri saw that the buildings of Main Street were all false fronts backed by a latticed network of metal staging, with low box-like rooms squatting behind to house the lobby. Coarse gravel scrunched under their feet. Geri's boss led him across the yard to a long flat building with a metal wheel sticking out of the top. From somewhere deep inside, Geri could hear the muffled rumbling of manufacturing machines.



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On the other side of the main door was a windowless room, ten feet by ten feet, with a smiling framed portrait of Walter Disney hanging on the wall and two metal chutes leading in from opposite sides. An old woman sat working in a high chair at the point where the two chutes met. She took a rubber piece from one chute and a wooden piece from the other, glued them together and threw them into a pile on the floor.

"This is our rubber-stamp division," Geri's boss said, scooping up one of the finished

pieces from the pile. Geri looked at it closely. It featured a reverse-relief picture of the Disneyfied Winnie-The-Pooh.

"You will be our new tester," Geri's boss said. "Here is your ink pad. You'll find plenty of paper over there. Test each one of these rubber stamps for a clean, sharp impression, wash them off, and deposit them in the out bin."

Geri's boss shook his hand with some genuine warmth. "Of course there will be a reduction in your wages. Have fun, now!"

When he was alone

with the old lady Geri introduced himself and the old lady said nothing and went on gluing rubber stamps together. Geri scooped up a handful of the finished stamps, found his station, and set to work. It never occurred to him to object. He stamped the first rubber stamp on the ink pad and stamped it again on the paper. It was fine. He washed it off and stamped the next one. It was fine. He washed it off and stamped the next one. It was fine.



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# harmony

Even a baseball writer must sometimes work. Regretfully I yielded my seat in the P. G., walked past the section where Art Graham, Bill Cole, Lefty Paiks and young Waldron were giving expert ton-sorial treatment to "Sweet Adeline," and flopped down beside Ryan, the manager.

"Well, Cap," I said, "we're due in Springfield in a little over an hour and I haven't written a line."

"Don't let me stop you," said Ryan.

"I want you to start me," I said. "Lord!" said Ryan. "You ought-n't to have any trouble rinding out stuff these days, with the club in first place and young Waldron gone crazy. He's worth a story any day."

"That's the trouble," said I. "He's been worked so much that there's nothing more to say about him. Everybody in the coutry knows that he's hitting

.420, that he's made nine home runs, twelve triples and twenty-some doubles, that he's stolen twenty-five bases, and that he can play the piano and sing like Carus'. They've run his picture oftener than Billy Sunday and Mary Pickford put together. Of course, you might come through with how you got him."

"Oh, that's the mystery," said Ryan.

"So I've heard you say," I retorted. "But it wouldn't be a mystery

by ring lardner

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if you'd let me print it."

"Well," said Ryan, "if you're really hard up I suppose I might as well come through. Only there's really no mystery at all about it; it's just what I consider the most remarkable piece of scouting ever done. I've been making a mystery of it just to have a little fun with Dick Hodges. You know he's got the Jackson club and he's still so sore about my stealing Waldron he'll hardly speak to me.

"I'll give you the dope if you want it, though it's a boost for Art Graham, not me.

There's lots of people think the reason I've kept the thing a secret is because I'm modest.

"They give me credit for having found Waldron myself. But Graham is the bird that deserves the credit and I'll admit that he almost had to get down on his knees to make me take his tip. Yes, sir, Art Graham was the scout, and now he's sitting on the bench and the boy he recommended has got his place."

"That sounds pretty good," I said. "And how did Graham get wise?"

"I'm going to tell

you. You're in a hurry; so I'll make it snappy.

"You weren't with us last fall, were you? Well, we had a day off in Detroit, along late in the season. Graham's got relatives in Jackson; so he asked me if he could spend the day there. I told him he could and asked him to keep his eyes peeled for good young pitchers, if he happened to go to the ball game. So he went to Jackson and the next morning he came back all excited. I asked him if he'd found me a pitcher and he said he hadn't, but he'd seen the best natural hitter he'd

ever looked at—a kid named Waldron.

"Well," I said, 'you're the last one that ought to be recommending outfielders. If there's one good enough to hold a regular job, it might be your job he'd get.'

"But Art said that didn't make any difference to him—he was looking out for the good of the club. Well, I didn't see my way clear to asking the old man to dig up good money for an outfielder nobody'd ever heard of, when we were pretty well stocked with them, so I tried to stall Art; but he



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kept after me and kept after me till I agreed to stick in a draft for the kid just to keep Ar quiet. So the draft went in and we got him. Then, as you know, Hodges tried to get him back, and that made me suspicious enough to hold on to him. Hodges finally came over to see me and wanted to know who'd tipped me to Waldron. That's where the mystery stuff started, because I saw that Hodges was all heated up and wanted to kid him along. So I told him we had some mighty good scouts working for us, and he

said he knew our regular scouts and they couldn't tell a ball-player from a torn ligament. Then he offered me fifty bucks if I'd tell him the truth and I just laughed at him. I said: 'A fella happened to be in Jackson one day and saw him work. But I won't tell you who the fella was, because you're too anxious to know.' Then he insisted on knowing what day the scout had been in Jackson. I said I'd tell him that if he'd tell me why he was so blame curious. So he gave me his end of it.

"It seems his brother,

up in Ludington, had seen this kid play ball on the lots and had signed him right up for Hodges and taken him to Jackson, and of course, Hodges knew he had a world beater the minute he saw him. But he also knew he wasn't going to be able to keep him in Jackson, and, naturally he began to figure how he could get the most money for him. It was already August when the boy landed in Jackson; so there wasn't much chance of getting a big price last season. He decided to teach the kid what he didn't know

about baseball and to keep him under cover till this year. Then everybody would be touting him and there'd be plenty of competition. Hodges could sell to the highest bidder.

"He had Waidron out practising every day, but wouldn't let him play in a game, and every player on the Jackson club had promised to keep the secret till this year. So Hodges wanted to find out from me which one of his players had broken the promise.

"Then I asked him if he was perfectly sure that Waldron hadn't



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played in a game, and he said he had gone in to hit for somebody just once. I asked him what date that was and he told me. It was the day Art had been in Jackson. So I said:

““There’s your mystery solved. That’s the day my scout saw him, and you’ll have to give the scout a little credit for picking a star after seeing him make one base hit.”

“Then Hodges said:

““That makes it all the more a mystery. Because, in the first place, he batted under a fake name. And, in the second place, he didn’t

make a base hit. He popped out.’

“That’s about all there is to it. You can ask Art how he picked the kid out for a star

“Anybody who can sing is Art’s friend,” said Ryan.

from seeing him pop out once. I’ve asked him myself, and he’s told me that he liked the way Waldron swung.

Personally, I believe one of those Jackson boys got too gabby. But Art swears not.”

“That is a story,” I said gratefully. “An old

outfielder who must know he’s slipping recommends a busher after seeing him pop out once. And the busher

jumps right in and gets his job.”

I looked down the aisle toward the song birds. Art Graham, now a bench warmer, and young Waldron, whom he had touted and who was the cause of his being sent to the bench, were harmonizing at the tops of their strong and not too pleasant voices.

“And probably the strangest part of the story,” I added, “is that Art doesn’t seem to regret it. He and the kid appear to be the best of friends.”

“Anybody who can sing is Art’s friend,” said Ryan.



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I left him and went back to my seat to tear off my seven hundred words before we reached Springfield. I considered for a moment the advisability of asking Graham for an explanation of his wonderful bit of scouting, but decided to save that part of it for another day. I was in a hurry and, besides, Waldron was just teaching them a new “wallop,” and it would have been folly for me to interrupt.

“It’s on the word ‘you,’” Waldron was saying. “I come down a tone; Lefty goes up a half tone, and Bill

comes up two tones, Art just sings it like always. Now try her again,” I heard him direct the song birds. They tried her again, making a worse noise than ever:

“I only know I love you; Love me, and the world (the world) is mine (the world is mine).”

“No,” said Waldron. “Lefty missed it. If you fellas knew music, I could teach it to you with the piano when we get to Boston. On the word ‘love,’ in the next to the last line, we hit a regular F chord. Bill’s singing the low F in the bass and Lefty’s hitting

middle C in the bari-tone, and Art’s on high F and I’m up to A. Then, on the word ‘you,’ I come down to G, and Art hits E and Lefty goes up half a tone to C sharp, and Cole comes up from F to A in the bass. That makes a good wallop. It’s a change from the F chord to the A chord. Now let’s try her again,” Waldron urged.

They tried her again:

“I only know I love you—”

“No, no!” said young Waldron. “Art and I were all right; but Bill came up too far, and Lefty never moved off

that C. Half a tone up, Lefty. Now try her again.”

We were an hour late into Springfield, and it was past six o’clock when we pulled out. I had filed my stuff, and when I came back in the car the concert was over for the time, and Art Graham was sitting alone.

“Where are your pals?” I asked.

“Gone to the diner,” he replied.

“Aren’t you going to eat?”

“No,” he said, “I’m savin’ up for the steamed clams.” I took the seat beside him.



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"I sent in a story about you," I said.

"Am I fired?" he asked.

"No, nothing like that."

"Well," he said, "you must be hard up when you can't find nothin' better to write about than a old has-been."

"Cap just told me who it was that found Waldron," said I.

"Oh, that," said Art. "I don't see no story in that."

"I thought it was quite a stunt," I said. "It isn't everybody that can pick out a second Cobb by just seeing him hit a fly ball."

Graham smiled.

"No," he replied, "they's few as smart as that."

"If you ever get through playing ball," I went on, "you oughtn't to have any trouble landing a job. Good scouts don't grow on trees."

"It looks like I'm pretty near through now," said Art, still smiling. "But you won't never catch me scoutin' for nobody. It's too lonesome a job."

I had passed up lunch to retain my seat in the card game; so I was hungry. Moreover, it was evident that

Graham was not going to wax garrulous on the subject of his scouting ability. I left him and sought the diner. I found a vacant chair opposite Bill Cole.

"Try the minced ham," he advised, "but lay off'n the sparrowgrass. It's tougher'n a double-header in St. Louis."

"We're over an hour late," I said.

"You'll have to do a hurry-up on your story, won't you?" asked Bill. "Or did you write it already?"

"All written and on the way."

"Well, what did you

tell 'em?" he inquired. "Did you tell 'em we had a pleasant trip, and Lenke lost his shirt in the poker game, and I'm goin' to pitch tomorrow, and the Boston club's heard about it and hope it'll rain?"

"No," I said. "I gave them a regular story tonight—about how Graham picked Waldron."

"Who give it to you?"

"Ryan," I told him.

"Then you didn't get the real story," said Cole, "Ryan himself don't know the best part of it, and he ain't goin' to know it for a w'ile. He'll maybe find it out



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after Art's got the can, but not before. And I hope nothin' like that'll happen for twenty years. When it does happen, I want to be sent along with Art, 'cause I and him's been roomies now since 1911, and I. wouldn't hardly know how to act with him off'n the club. He's a nut all right on the singin' stuff, and if he was gone I might get a chanct to give my voice a rest. But he's a pretty good guy, even if he is crazy."

"I'd like to hear the real story," I said.

"Sure you would," he answered, "and I'd like

to tell it to you. I will tell it to you if you'll give me your promise not to spill it till Art's gone. Art told it to I and Lefty in the club-house at Cleveland pretty near a nionth ago, and the three of us and Waldron is the only ones that knows it. I figure I've did pretty well to keep it to myself this long, but it seems like I got to tell somebody."

"You can depend on me," I assured him, "not to say a word about it till Art's in Minneapolis, or wherever they're going to send him."

"I guess I can trust

you," said Cole. "But if von cross me, I'll shoot my fast one up there in the press coop some day and knock your teeth loose."

"Shoot," said I.

"Well," said Cole, "I s'pose Ryan told you that Art fell for the kid after just seem' him pop out."

"Yes, and Ryan said he considered it a remarkable piece of scouting."

"It was all o' that. It'd of been remarkable enough if Art'd saw the bird pop out and then recommended him. But he didn't even see him pop out."

"What are you giving me?"

"The fac's." said Bill Cole. "Art not only didn't see him pop out, but he didn't even see him with a ball suit on. He wasn't never inside the Jackson ball park in his life."

"Waldron?"

"No. Art I'm talkin' about."

"Then somebody tipped him off," I said, quickly.

"No, sir. Nobody tipped him off, neither. He went to Jackson and spent the ev'nin' at his uncle's house, and Waldron was there. Him and Art was



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together the whole ev'nin'. But Art didn't even ask him if he could slide feet first. And then he come back to Detroit and got Ryan to draft him. But to give you the whole story, I'll have to go back a ways. We ain't nowheres near Worcester yet, so they's no hurry, except that Art'll prob'ly be sendin' for me pretty quick to come in and learn Waldron's lost chord.

"You wasn't with this club when we had Mike McCann. But you must of heard of him; outside his pitchin', I mean. He was on the stage a cou-

ple o' winters, and he had the swellest tenor voice I ever heard. I never seen no grand opera, but I'll bet this here C'ruso or McCormack or Gadski or none o' them had nothin' on him for a pure tenor. Every note as clear as a bell. You couldn't hardly keep your eyes dry when he'd tear off 'Silver Threads' or 'The River Shannon.'

"Well, when Art was still with the Washin'ton club yet, I and Lefty and Mike used to pal round together and onct or twict we'd hit up some

harmony. I couldn't support a fam'ly o' Mormons with my voice, but it was better in them days than it is now. I used to carry the lead, and Lefty'd hit the baritone and Mike the tenor. We didn't have no bass. But most o' the time we let Mike do the singin' alone, 'cause he had us outclassed, and the other boys kept tellin' us to shut up and give 'em a treat. First it'd be 'Silver Threads' and then 'Jerusalem' and then 'My Wild Irish Rose' and this and that, whatever the boys ast him for. Jake Martin used to say he couldn't

help a short pair if Mike wasn't singin'.

"Finally Ryan pulled off the trade with Griffith, and Graham come on our club. Then they wasn't no more solo work. They made a bass out o' me, and Art sung the lead, and Mike and Lefty took care o' the tenor and baritone. Art didn't care what the other boys wanted to hear. They could holler their heads off for Mike to sing a solo, but no sooner'd Mike start singin' than Art'd chime in with him and pretty soon we'd all four be goin' it. Art's a nut on singin', but he don't



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care nothin' about list'nin', not even to a canary. He'd rather harmonize than hit one past the outfielders with two on.

"At first we done all our serenadin' on the train. Art'd get us out o' bed early so's we could be through breakfast and back in the ear in time to tear off a few before we got to wherever we was goin'.

"It got so's Art wouldn't leave us alone in the different towns 'we played at. We couldn't go to no show or nothin'. We had to stick in the hotel and sing, up in our room or

Mike's. And then he went so nuts over it that he got Mike to come and room in the same house with him at home, and I and Lefty was supposed to help keep the neighbors awake every night. O' course we had mornin' practice w'ile we was home, and Art used to have us come to the park early and get in a little harmony before we went on the field. But Ryan finally nailed that. He says that when he ordered mornin' practice he meant baseball and not no minstrel show.

"Then Lefty, who

wasn't married, goes and gets himself a girl. I met her a couple o' times, and she looked all right. Lefty might of married her if Art'd of left him alone. But nothin' doin'. We was home all through June onct, and instead o' comin' round nights to sing with us, Lefty'd take this here doll to one o' the parks or somewheres. Well, sir, Art was pretty near wild. He scouted round till he'd found out why Lefty'd quit us and then he tried pretty near everybody else on the club to see if they wasn't some one who could

hit the baritone. They wasn't nobody. So the next time we went on the road, Art give Lefty a earful about what a sucker a man was to get married, and looks wasn't everything and the girl was prob'ly after Lefty's money and he wasn't hem' a good fella to break up the quartette and spoil our good times, and so on, and kept pesterin' and teasin' Lefty till he give the girl up. I'd of saw Art in the Texas League before I'd of shook a girl to please him, but you know these left-handers.

"Art had it all framed



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that we was goin' on the stage, the four of us, and he seen a vaudeville man in New York and got us booked for eight hundred a week—I don't know if it was one week or two. But he sprung it on me in September and says we could get solid bookin' from October to March; so I ast him what he thought my Missus would say when I told her I couldn't get enough o' hem' away from home from March to October, so I was figurin' on travelin' the vaudeville circuit the other four or five months and makin' it

unanimous? Art says I was tied to a woman's apron and all that stuff, but I give him the cold stare and he had to pass up that dandy little scheme.

"At that, I guess we could of got by on the stage all right. Mike was better than this here Waldron and I hadn't wore my voice out yet on the coachin' line, tellin' the boys to touch all the bases.

"They was about five or six songs that we could kill. 'Adeline' was our star piece. Remember where it comes in, 'Your fair face beams'? Mike used

to go away up on 'fair.' Then they was 'The Old Millstream' and 'Put on Your Old Gray Bonnet.' I done some fancy work in that one. Then they was 'Down in Jungle Town' that we had pretty good. And then they was one that maybe you never heard. I don't know the name of it. It run somethin' like this."

Bill sottoed his voice so that I alone could hear the beautiful refrain:

*"Years, years, I've waited years*

*Only to see you, just to call you 'dear.'*

*Come, come, I love but thee,*

*Come to your sweet-heart's arms; come back to me.'*

"That one had a lot o' wallops in it, and we didn't overlook none o' them. The boys used to make us sing it six or seven times a night. But 'Down in the Cornfield' was Art's favor-right. They was a part in that where I sung the lead down low and the other three done a banjo stunt. Then they was 'Castle on the Nile' and 'Come Back to Erin' and a whole lot more.

"Well, the four of us wasn't hardly ever separated for three years. We was practisin' all



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the w'ile like as if we was goin' to play the big time, and we never made a nickel off'n it. The only audience we had was the ball players or the people travelin' on the same trains or stoppin' at the same hotels, and they got it all for nothin'. But we had a good time, 'specially Art.

"You know what a pitcher Mike was. He could go in there stone cold and stick ten out o' twelve over that old plate with somethin' on 'em. And he was the willin'est guy in the world. He pitched his own game every third

or fourth day, and between them games he was warmin' up all the time to go in for somebody else. In 1911, when we was up in the race for aw'ile, he pitched eight games out o' twenty, along in September, and win seven o' them, and besides that, he finished up five o' the twelve he didn't start. We didn't win the pennant, and I've always figured that them three week killed Mike.

"Anyway, he wasn't worth nothin' to the club the next year; but they carried him along, hopin' he'd come back

and show somethin'. But he was pretty near through, and he knowed it. I knowed it, too, and so did everybody else on the club, only Graham. Art never got wise till the trainin' trip two years ago this last spring. Then he come to me one day.

"Bill," he says, 'I don't believe Mike's comin' back.'

"Well," I says, 'you're gettin's so's they can't nobody hide nothin' from you. Next thing you'll be findin' out that Sam Crawford can hit.'

"Never mind the comical stuff," he says.

'They ain't no joke about this!'

"No," I says, 'and I never said they was. They'll look a long w'ile before they find another pitcher like Mike.'

"Pitcher my foot!" says Art. 'I don't care if they have to pitch the bat boy. But when Mike goes, where'll our quartette be?'

"Well," I says, 'do you get paid every first and fifteenth for singin' or for crownin' that old pill?'

"If you couldn't talk about money, you'd be deaf and dumb," says Art.



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“‘But you ain’t playin’ ball because it’s fun, are you?’

“‘No,’ he says, ‘they ain’t no fun for me in playin’ ball. They’s no fun doin’ nothin’ but harmonizin’, and if Mike goes, I won’t even have that.’

“‘I and you and Lefty can harmonize,’ I says.

“‘It’d be swell stuff harmonizin’ without no tenor,’ says Art. ‘It’d be like swingin’ without no bat.’

“‘Well, he ast me did I think the club’d carry Mike through another season, and I told him they’d already carried him a year without him

hem’ no good to them, and I figured if he didn’t show somethin’ his first time out, they’d ask for waivers. Art kept broodin’ and broodin’ about it till they wasn’t hardly no livin’ with him. If he ast me onet he ast me a thousand tmmes if I didn’t think they might maybe hold onto Mike another season on account of all he’d did for ‘em. I kept tellin’ him I didn’t think so; but that didn’t satisfy him and he finally went to Ryan and ast him point blank.

“‘Are you goin’ to keep McCann? ‘Art ast

him.

“‘If he’s goin’ to do us any good, I am,’ says Ryan. ‘If he ain’t, he’ll have to look for another job.’

“‘After that, all through the trainin’ trip, he was right on Mike’s heels.

“‘How does the old souper feel?’ he’d ask him.

“‘Great!’ Mike’d say.

“‘Then Art’d watch him warm up, to see if he had anything on the ball.

“‘He’s comin’ fine,’ he’d tell me. ‘His curve broke to-day just as good as I ever seen it.’

“‘But that didn’t fool

me, or it didn’t fool Mike neither. He could throw about four hooks and then he was through. And he could of hit you in the head with his fast one and you’d of thought you had a rash.

“‘One night, just before the season opened up, we was singin’ on the train, and when we got through, Mike says:

“‘Well, boys, you better be lookin’ for another C’ruso.’

“‘What are you talkin’ about?’ says Art.

“‘I’m talkin’ about myself,’ says Mike. ‘I’ll be up there in



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Minneapolis this summer, pitchin' onct a week and swappin' stories about the Civil War with Joe Cantillon.'

"'You're crazy,' says Art. 'Your arm's as good as I ever seen it.'

"'Then,' says Mike, 'you must of been playin' blindfolded all these years. This is just between us, 'cause Ryan'll find it out for himself; my arm's rotten, and I can't do nothin' to help it.'

"Then Art got sore as a boil.

"'You're a yellow, quittin' dog,' he says. 'Just because you conic round a little slow, you

talk about Minneapolis. Why don't you resign off'n. the club?'

"'I might just as well,' Mike says, and left us.

"You'd of thought that Art would of gave up then, 'cause when a ball player admits he's slippin', you can bet your last nickel that he's through. Most o' them stalls along and tries to kid themselves and everybody else long after they know they're gone. But Art kept talkin' like they was still some hope o' Mike comin' round, and when Ryan told us one night in St. Louis that

he was goin' to give Mike his chanct, the next day, Art was as nervous as a bride goin' to get married. I wasn't nervous. I just felt sorry, 'cause I knowed the old boy was hopeless.

"Ryan had told him he was goin' to work if the weather suited him. Well, the day was perfect. So Mike went out to the park along about noon and took Jake with him to warm up. Jake told me afterwards that Mike was throwin', just easy like, from half-past twelve till the rest of us got there. He was tryin' to heat up the

old souper and he couldn't of ast for a better break in the weather, but they wasn't enough sunshine in the world to make that old whip crack.

"Well, sir, you'd of thought to see Art that Mike was his son or his brother or somebody and just breakin' into the league. Art wasn't in the outfield practisin' more than two minutes. He come in and stood behind Mike w'ile he was warmin' up and kept tellin' how good he looked, hut the only guy he was kiddin' was himself.

"Then the game starts



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and our club goes in and gets three runs.

“‘Pretty soft for you now, Mike,’ says Art, on the bench. ‘They can’t score three off’n you in three years.’

“Say, it’s lucky he ever got the side out in the first innin’. Everybody that come up hit one on the pick, but our infield pulled two o’ the greatest plays I ever seen and they didn’t score. In the second, we got three more, and I thought maybe the old bird was goin’ to be lucky enough to scrape through.

“For four or five innin’s, he got the

grandest support that was ever gave a pitcher; but I’ll swear that what he throwed up there didn’t have no more on it than September Morning. Every time Art come to the bench, he says to Mike, ‘Keep it up, old boy. You got more than you ever had.’

“Well, in the seventh, Mike still had ‘em shut out, and we was six runs to the good. Then a couple o’ the St. Louis boys hit ‘em where they couldn’t nobody reach ‘em and they was two on and two out. Then somebody got a hold o’ one and sent it on a line

to the left o’ second base. I forgot who it was now; but whoever it was, he was supposed to be a right field hitter, and Art was layin’ over the other way for him. Art started with the crack o’ the bat, and I never seen a man make a better try for a ball. He had it judged perfect; but Cobb or Speaker or none o’ them couldn’t of caught it. Art just managed to touch it by stretchin’ to the limit. It went on to the fence and everybody come in. They didn’t score no more in that innin’.

“Then Art come in

from the field and what do you think he tried to pull?

“‘I don’t know what was the matter with me on that fly ball,’ he says. ‘I ought to caught it in my pants pocket. But I didn’t get started till it was right on top o’ me.’

“‘You misjudged it, didn’t you?’ says Ryan.

“‘I certainly did,’ says Art without crackin’.

“‘Well,’ says Ryan, ‘I wisht you’d misjudge all o’ them that way. I never seen a better play on a ball.’

“So then Art knowed they wasn’t no more



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use trying to alibi the old boy.

“Mike had a turn at bat and when he come back, Ryan ast him how he felt.

“I guess I can get six more o’ them out,’ he says.

“Well, they didn’t score in the eighth, and when the ninth come Ryan sent I and Lefty out to warm up. We throwed a few w’ile our club was battin’; but when it come St. Louis’ last chanct, we was too much interested in the ball game to know if we was throwin’ or bakin’ biscuits.

“The first guy hits a

line drive, and somebody jumps a mile in the air and stabs it. The next fella fouled out, and they was only one more to get. And then what do you think come off? Whoever it was hittin’ lifted a fly ball to centre field. Art didn’t have to move out of his tracks. I’ve saw him catch a hundred just like it behind his back. But you know what he was thinkin’. He was sayin’ to himself, ‘If I nail this one, we’re li’ble to keep our tenor singer a w’ile longer.’ And he dropped it.

“Then they was five base hits that sounded

like the fourth o’ July, and they come so fast that Ryan didn’t have time to send for I or Lefty. Anyway, I guess he thought he might as well leave Mike in there and take it.

“They wasn’t no singin’ in the clubhouse after that game. I and Lefty always let the others start it. Mike, o’ course, didn’t feel like no jubilee, and Art was so busy tryin’ not to let nobody see him cry that he kept his head clear down in his socks. Finally he beat it for town all alone, and we didn’t see nothin’ of him till after supper.

Then he got us together and we all went up to Mike’s room.

“‘I want to try this here “ Old Girl o’ Mine,’” he says.

“‘Better sing our old stuff,’ says Mike. ‘This looks like the last time.’

“Then Art choked up and it was ten minutes before he could get goin’. We sung everything we knowed, and it was two o’clock in the mornin’ before Art had enough. Ryan come in after midnight and set a w’ile listenin’, but he didn’t chase us to bed. He knowed better’n any of us that it was a farewell. When I and



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Art was startin' for our room, Art turned to Mike and says:

“‘Old boy, I’d of gave every nickel I ever owned to of caught that fly ball.’

“‘I know you would,’ Mike says, ‘and I know what made you drop it. But don’t worry about it, ‘cause it was just a question o’ time, and if I’d of got away with that game, they’d of murdered some o’ the infielders next time I started.’

“Mike was sent home the next day, and we didn’t see him again. He was shipped to Minneapolis before we

got back. And the rest o’ the season I might as well of lived in a cemetery w’ile we was on the road. Art was so bad that I thought onct or twict I’d have to change roommies. Onct in a w’ile he’d start hummin’ and then he’d break off short and growl at me. He tried out two or three o’ the other boys on the club to see if he couldn’t find a new tenor singer, but nothin’ doin’. One night he made Lefty try the tenor. Well, Lefty’s voice is bad enough down low. When he gets up about so high, you think you’re in the

stockyards.

“And Art had a rotten year in baseball, too. The old boy’s still pretty near as good on a fly ball as anybody in the league; but you ought to saw him before his legs begin to give out. He could cover as much ground as Speaker and he was just as sure. But the year Mike left us, he missed pretty near half as many as he got. He told me one night, he says:

“‘Do you know, Bill, I stand out there and pray that nobody’ll hit one to me. Every time I see one comin’ I think o’ that one I dropped for

Mike in St. Louis, and then I’m just as li’ble to have it come down on my bean as in my glove.’

“‘You’re crazy,’ I says, ‘to let a thing like that make a bum out o’ you.’

“But he kept on drop-pin’ fly balls till Ryan was talkin’ about settin’ him on the bench where it wouldn’t hurt nothin’ if his nerve give out. But Ryan didn’t have nobody else to play out there, so Art held on.

“He come back the next spring—that’s a year ago—feelin’ more cheerful and like himself than I’d saw him



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for a long w'ile. And they was a kid named Burton tryin' out for second base that could sing pretty near as good as Mike. It didn't take Art more'n a day to find this out, and every mornin' and night for a few days the four of us would be together, hittin' her up. But the kid didn't have no more idea o' how to play the bag than Charley Chaplin. Art seen in a minute that he couldn't never beat Cragin out of his job, so what does he do but take him out and try and learn him to play the outfield. He wasn't no worse there

than at second base; he couldn't of been. But before he'd practised out there three days they was bruises all over his head and shoulders where fly balls had hit him. Well, the kid wasn't with us long enough to see the first exhibition game, and after he'd went, Art was Old Man Grump again.

"What's the matter with you?" I says to him. 'You was all smiles the day we reported and now you could easy pass for a undertaker.'

"Well,' he says, 'I had a great winter, sin-

gin' all the w'ile. We got a good quartette down home and I never enjoyed myself as much in my life. And I kind o' had a hunch that I was goin' to be lucky and find somebody amongst the bushers that could hit up the old tenor.'

"Your hunch was right,' I says. 'That Burton kid was as good a tenor as you'd want.'

"Yes,' he says, 'and my hunch could of played ball just as good as him.'

"Well, sir, if you didn't never room with a corpse, you don't know what a whale of a time I had all last season.

About the middle of August he was at his worst.

"Bill,' he says, 'I'm goin' to leave this old baseball flat on its back if somethin' don't happen. I can't stand these here lonesome nights. I ain't like the rest o' the boys that can go and set all ev'nin' at a pitcher show or hang round them Dutch gardens. I got to be singin' or I am mis'erable.'

"Go ahead and sing,' says I. 'I'll try and keep the cops back.'

"No,' he says, 'I don't want to sing alone. I want to harmonize and we can't do



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that 'cause we ain't got no tenor.'

"I don't know if you'll believe me or not, but sure as we're settin' here he went to Ryan one day in Philly and tried to get him to make a trade for Harper.

"What do I want him for?" says Ryan.

"I hear he ain't satisfied," says Art.

"I ain't runnin' no ball players' benefit association," says Ryan, and Art had to give it up. But he didn't want Harper on the club for no other reason than because he's a tenor singer!

"And then come that Dee-troit trip, and Art got permission to go to Jackson. He says he intended to drop in at the ball park, but his uncle wanted to borrow some money off'n him on a farm, so Art had to drive out and see the farm. Then, that night, this here Waldron was up to call on Art's cousin—a swell doll, Art tells me. And Waldron set down to the py-ana and begin to sing and play. Then it was all off; they wasn't no spoonin' in the parlor that night. Art wouldn't leave the kid get off'n the py-ana

stool long enough to even find out if the girl was a blonde or a brunette.

"O' course Art knowed the boy was with the Jackson club as soon as they was introduced, 'cause Art's uncle says somethin' about the both o' them hem' ball players, and so on. But Art swears he never thought o' recommending him till the kid got up to go home. Then he ast him what position did he play and found out all about him, only o' course Waldron didn't tell him how good he was 'cause he didn't know himself.

"So Art ast him would he like a trial in the big show, and the kid says he would. Then Art says maybe the kid would hear from him, and then Waldron left and Art went to bed, and he says he stayed awake all night plannin' the thing out and wonderin' would he have the nerve to pull it off. You see he thought that if Ryan fell for it, Waldron'd join us as soon as his season was over and then Ryan'd see he wasn't no good; but he'd prob'ly keep him till we was through for the year, and Art could alibi himself



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some way, say he'd got the wrong name or somethin'. All he wanted, he says was to have the kid along the last month or six weeks, so's we could harmonize. A nut? I guess not.

"Well, as you know, Waldron got sick and didn't report, and when Art seen him on the train this spring he couldn't hardly believe his eyes. He thought surely the kid would of been canned durin' the winter without no trial.

"Here's another hot one. When we went out the first day for practice, Art takes the kid off in a corner and tries

to learn him enough baseball so's he won't show himself up and get sent away somewhere before we had a little benefit from his singin'. Can you imagine that? Tryin' to learn this kid baseball, when he was born with a slidin' pad on.

"You know the rest of it. They wasn't never no question about Waldron makin' good. It's just like everybody says—he's the best natural ball player that's broke in since Cobb. They ain't nothin' he can't do. But it is a funny thing that Art's job should be the one he'd get. I spoke

about that to Art when he give me the story.

"Well,' he says, 'I can't expect everything to break right. I figure I'm lucky to of picked a guy that's good enough to hang on. I'm in stronger with Ryan right now, and with the old man, too, than when I was out there playin' every day. Besides, the bench is a pretty good place to watch the game from. And this club won't be shy a tenor singer for nine years.'

"No,' I says, 'but they'll be shy a lead and a baritone and a bass before I and you and Lefty is much older.'

"What of it?' he says. 'We'll look up old Mike and all go somewhere and live together.'"

We were nearing Worcester. Bill Cole and I arose from our table and started back toward our car. In the first vestibule we encountered Buck, the trainer.

"Mr. Graham's been lookin' all over for you, Mr. Cole," he said.

"I've been rehearsin' my part," said Bill.

We found Art Graham, Lefty, and young Waldron in Art's seat. The kid was talking.



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“Lefty missed it again. If you fellas knew music, I could teach it to you on the piano when we get to Boston. Lefty, on the word ‘love,’ in the next to the last line, you’re on middle C. Then, on the word ‘you,’ you slide up half a tone. That’d ought to be a snap, but you don’t get it. I’m on high A and come down to G and Bill’s on low F and comes up to A. Art just sings the regular two notes, F and B. It’s a change from the F chord to the A chord. It makes a dandy wallop and it ought to be a —”

“Here’s Bill now,” interrupted Lefty, as he caught sight of Cole.

Art Graham treated his roommate to a cold stare.

“Where the h—I have you been?” he said angrily.

“Lookin’ for the lost chord,” said Bill.

“Set down here and learn this,” growled Art. “We won’t never get it if we don’t work.”

“Yes, let’s tackle her again,” said Waldron. “Bill comes up two full tones, from F to A. Lefty goes up half a tone, Art sings just like always, and I come down a tone. Now try

her again.”

Two years ago it was that Bill Cole told me that story. Two weeks ago Art Graham boarded the evening train on one of the many roads that lead to Minneapolis.

The day Art was let out, I cornered Ryan in the club-house after the others had dressed and gone home.

“Did you ever know,” I asked, “that Art recommended Waldron without having seen him in a ball suit?”

“I told you long ago how Art picked Waldron,” he said.

“Yes,” said I, “but

you didn’t have the right story.” So I gave it to him.

“You newspaper fellas,” he said when I had done, “are the biggest suckers in the world. Now I’ve never given you a bad steer in my life. But you don’t believe what I tell you and you go and fall for one of Bill Cole’s hop dreams. Don’t you know that he was the biggest liar in baseball? He’d tell you that Walter Johnson was Jack’s father if he thought he could get away with it. And that bunk he gave you about Waldron. Does it sound



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reasonable?

"Just as reasonable," I replied, "as the stuff about Art's grabbing him after seeing him pop out."

"I don't claim he did," said Ryan. "That's what Art told me. One of those Jackson ball players could give you the real truth, only of course he wouldn't, because if Hodges ever found it out he'd shoot him full of holes. Art Graham's no fool. He isn't touting ball players because they can sing tenor or alto or anything else."

Nevertheless, I believe Bill Cole; else I

wouldn't print the story. And Ryan would believe, too, if he weren't in such a mood these days that he disagrees with everybody. For in spite of Waldron's wonderful work, and he is at his best right now, the club hasn't done nearly as well as when Art and Bill and Lefty were still with us.

There seems to be a lack of harmony.



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# The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save for Sacnoth

In a wood older than record, a foster brother of the hills, stood the village of Allathurion; and there was peace between the people of that village and all the folk who walked in the dark ways of the wood, whether they were human or of the tribes of the beasts or of the race of the fairies and the elves and the little sacred spirits of trees

and streams. Moreover, the village people had peace among themselves and between them and their lord, Lorendiac. In front of the village was a wide and grassy space, and beyond this the great wood again, but at the back the trees came right up to the houses, which, with their great beams and wooden framework and thatched roofs, green

with moss, seemed almost to be a part of the forest.

Now in the time I tell of, there was trouble in Allathurion, for of an evening fell dreams were wont to come slipping through the tree trunks and into the peaceful village; and they assumed dominion of men's minds and led them in watches of the night through the cin-dery plains of Hell.

by lord dunsany

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Then the magician of that village made spells against those fell dreams; yet still the dreams came flitting through the trees as soon as the dark had fallen, and led men's minds by night into terrible places and caused them to praise Satan openly with their lips.

And men grew afraid of sleep in Allathurion. And they grew worn and pale, some through the want of rest, and others from fear of the things they saw on the cindery plains of Hell. Then the magician of the village went up into the tower of his house,

and all night long those whom fear kept awake could see his window high up in the night glowing softly alone. The next day, when the twilight was far gone and night was gathering fast, the magician went away to the forest's edge, and uttered there the spell that he had made. And the spell was a compulsive, terrible thing, having a power over evil dreams and over spirits of ill; for it was a verse of forty lines in many languages, both living and dead, and had in it the word wherewith the people of the plains are

wont to curse their camels, and the shout wherewith the whalers of the north lure the whales shoreward to be killed, and a word that causes elephants to trumpet; and every one of the forty lines closed with a rhyme for 'wasp'.

And still the dreams came flitting through the forest, and led men's souls into the plains of Hell. Then the magician knew that the dreams were from Gaznak. Therefore he gathered the people of the village, and told them that he had uttered his mightiest spell-a

spell having power over all that were human or of the tribes of the beasts; and that since it had not availed the dreams must come from Gaznak, the greatest magician among the spaces of the stars. And he read to the people out of the Book of Magicians, which tells the comings of the comet and foretells his coming again. And he told them how Gaznak rides upon the comet, and how he visits Earth once in every two hundred and thirty years, and makes for himself a vast, invincible fortress and sends out dreams to



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feed on the minds of men, and may never be vanquished but by the sword Sacnoth.

And a cold fear fell on the hearts of the villagers when they found that their magician had failed them.

Then spake Leothric, son of the Lord Lorendiac, and twenty years old was he: 'Good Master, what of the sword Sacnoth?'

And the village magician answered: 'Fair Lord, no such sword as yet is wrought, for it lies as yet in the hide of Tharagavverug, protecting his spine.'

Then said Leothric:

'Who is Tharagavverug, and where may he be encountered?'

And the magician of Allathurion answered: 'He is the dragon-crocodile who haunts the Northern marshes and ravages the homesteads by their marge. And the hide of his back is of steel, and his under parts are of iron; but along the midst of his back, over his spine, there lies a narrow strip of unearthly steel. This strip of steel is Sacnoth, and it may be neither cleft nor molten, and there is nothing in the world that may avail to

break it, nor even leave a scratch upon its surface. It is of the length of a good sword, and of the breadth thereof. Shouldst thou prevail against Tharagavverug, his hide may be melted away from Sacnoth in a furnace; but there is only one thing that may sharpen Sacnoth's edge, and this is one of Tharagavverug's own steel eyes; and the other eye thou must fasten to Sacnoth's hilt, and it will watch for thee. But it is a hard task to vanquish Tharagavverug, for no sword can pierce his hide; his back cannot be broken, and he

can neither burn nor drown. In one way only can Tharagavverug die, and that is by starving.'

Then sorrow fell upon Leothric, but the magician spoke on:

'If a man drive Tharagavverug away from his food with a stick for three days, he will starve on the third day at sunset. And though he is not vulnerable, yet in one spot he may take hurt, for his nose is only of lead. A sword would merely lay bare the uncleavable bronze beneath, but if his nose be smitten constantly with a stick he will always recoil from



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the pain, and thus may Tharagavverug, to left and right, be driven away from his food.'

Then Leothric said: 'What is Tharagavverug's food?'

And the magician of Allathurion said: 'His food is men.'

But Leothric went straightway thence, and cut a great staff from a hazel tree, and slept early that evening. But the next morning, awaking from troubled dreams, he arose before the dawn, and, taking with him provisions for five days, set out through the forest northwards towards the

marshes. For some hours he moved through the gloom of the forest, and when he emerged from it the sun was above the horizon shining on pools of water in the waste land. Presently he saw the claw-marks of Tharagavverug deep in the soil, and the track of his tail between them like a furrow in a field. Then Leothric followed the tracks till he heard the bronze heart of Tharagavverug before him, booming like a bell.

And Tharagavverug, it being the hour when he took the first meal of

the day, was moving towards a village with his heart tolling. And all the people of the village were come out to meet him, as it was their wont to do; for they abode not the suspense of awaiting Tharagavverug and of hearing him sniffing brazenly as he went from door to door, pondering slowly in his metal mind what habitant he should choose. And none dared to flee, for in the days when the villagers fled from Tharagavverug, he, having chosen his victim, would track him tirelessly, like a doom.

Nothing availed them against Tharagavverug. Once they climbed the trees when he came, but Tharagavverug went up to one, arching his back and leaning over slightly, and rasped against the trunk until it fell. And when Leothric came near, Tharagavverug saw him out of one of his small steel eyes and came towards him leisurely, and the echoes of his heart swirled up through his open mouth. And Leothric stepped sideways from his onset, and came between him and the village and



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smote him on the nose, and the blow of the stick made a dint in the soft lead. And Tharagavverug swung clumsily away, uttering one fearful cry like the sound of a great church bell that had become possessed of a soul that fluttered upward from the tombs at night-an evil soul, giving the bell a voice. Then he attacked Leothric, snarling, and again Leothric leapt aside, and smote him on the nose with his stick. Tharagavverug sounded like a bell howling. And whenever the dragon-crocodile attacked

him, or turned towards the village, Leothric smote him again.

So all day long Leothric drove the monster with a stick and he drove him further and further from his prey, with his heart tolling angrily and his voice crying out for pain.

Towards evening Tharagavverug ceased to snap at Leothric, but ran before him to avoid the stick, for his nose was sore and shining; and in the gloaming the villagers came out and danced to cymbal and psaltery. When Tharagavverug heard

the cymbal and psaltery, hunger and anger came upon him, and he felt as some lord might feel who was held by force from the banquet in his own castle and heard the creaking spit go round and round and the good meat crackling on it. And all that night he attacked Leothric fiercely, and oft-times nearly caught him in the darkness; for his gleaming eyes of steel could see as well by night as by day. And Leothric gave ground slowly till the dawn, and when the light came they were near the village again;

yet not so near to it as they had been when they encountered, for Leothric drove Tharagavverug further in the day than Tharagavverug had forced him back in the night. Then Leothric drove him again with his stick till the hour came when it was the custom of the dragon-crocodile to find his man. One third of his man he would eat at the time he found him, and the rest at noon and evening. But when the hour came for finding his man a great fierceness came on Tharagavverug, and he



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grabbed rapidly at Leothric, but could not seize him, and for a long while neither of them would retire. But at last the pain of the stick on his leaden nose overcame the hunger of the dragon-crocodile, and he turned from it howling. From that moment Tharagavverug weakened. All that day Leothric drove him with his stick, and at night both held their ground; and when the dawn of the third day was come the heart of Tharagavverug beat slower and fainter. It was as though a tired man was ringing a bell.

Once Tharagavverug nearly seized a frog, but Leothric snatched it away just in time. Towards noon the dragon-crocodile lay still for a long while, and Leothric stood near him and leaned on his trusty stick. He was very tired and sleepless, but had more leisure now for eating his provisions. With Tharagavverug the end was coming fast, and in the afternoon his breath came hoarsely, rasping in his throat. It was as the sound of many huntsmen blowing blasts on horns, and towards evening his breath came

faster but fainter, like the sound of a hunt going furious to the distance and dying away, and he made desperate rushes towards the village; but Leothric still leapt about him, battering his leaden nose. Scarce audible now at all was the sound of his heart: it was like a church bell tolling beyond hills for the death of some one unknown and far away. Then the sun set and flamed in the village windows, and a chill went over the world, and in some small garden a woman sang; and Tharagavverug lifted

up his head and starved, and his life went from his invulnerable body, and Leothric lay down beside him and slept. And later in the starlight the villagers came out and carried Leothric, sleeping, to the village, all praising him in whispers as they went. They laid him down upon a couch in a house, and danced outside in silence, without psaltery or cymbal. And the next day, rejoicing, to Allathurion they hauled the dragon-crocodile. And Leothric went with them, holding his battered staff; and a tall, broad man,



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who was smith of Allathurion, made a great furnace, and melted Tharagavverug away till only Sacnoth was left, gleaming among the ashes. Then he took one of the small eyes that had been chiselled out, and filed an edge on Sacnoth, and gradually the steel eye wore away facet by facet, but ere it was quite gone it had sharpened redoubtable Sacnoth. But the other eye they set in the butt of the hilt, and it gleamed there bluely.

And that night Leothric arose in the dark and took the

sword, and went westwards to find Gaznak; and he went through the dark forest till the dawn, and all the morning and till the afternoon. But in the afternoon he came into the open and saw in the midst of The Land Where No Man Goeth the fortress of Gaznak, mountainous before him, little more than a mile away.

And Leothric saw that the land was marsh and desolate. And the fortress went up all white out of it, with many buttresses, and was broad below but narrowed higher up,

and was full of gleaming windows with the light upon them. And near the top of it a few white clouds were floating, but above them some of its pinnacles reappeared.

Then Leothric advanced into the marshes, and the eye of Tharagavverug looked out warily from the hilt of Sacnoth; for Tharagavverug had known the marshes well, and the sword nudged Leothric to the right or pulled him to the left away from the dangerous places, and so brought him safely to the fortress walls.

And in the wall stood

doors like precipices of steel, all studded with boulders of iron, and above every window were terrible gargoyles of stone; and the name of the fortress shone on the wall, writ large in letters of brass: 'The Fortresses Unvanquishable, Save For Sacnoth.'

Then Leothric drew and revealed Sacnoth, and all the gargoyles grinned, and the grin went flickering from face to face right up into the cloud-abiding gables.

And when Sacnoth was revealed and all the gargoyles grinned, it



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was like the moonlight emerging from a cloud to look for the first time upon a field of blood, and passing swiftly over the wet faces of the slain that lie together in the horrible night. Then Leothric advanced towards a door, and it was mightier than the marble quarry, Sacremona, from which old men cut enormous slabs to build the Abbey of the Holy Tears. Day after day they wrenched out the very ribs of the hill until the Abbey was builded, and it was more beautiful than anything in stone. Then the priests

blessed Sacremona, and it had rest, and no more stone was ever taken from it to build the houses of men. And the hill stood looking southwards lonely in the sunlight, defaced by that mighty scar. So vast was the door of steel. And the name of the door was The Porte Resonant, the Way of Egress for War.

Then Leothric smote upon the Porte Resonant with Sacnoth, and the echo of Sacnoth went ringing through the halls, and all the dragons in the fortress barked. And when the baying of the remotest

dragon had faintly joined in the tumult, a window opened far up among the clouds below the twilit gables, and a woman screamed, and far away in Hell her father heard her and knew that her doom was come.

And Leothric went on smiting terribly with Sacnoth, and the grey steel of the Porte Resonant, the Way of Egress for War, that was tempered to resist the swords of the world, came away in ringing slices.

Then Leothric, holding Sacnoth in his hand, went in through the

hole that he had hewn in the door, and came into the unlit, cavernous hall.

An elephant fled trumpeting. And Leothric stood still, holding Sacnoth. When the sound of the feet of the elephant had died away in remoter corridors, nothing more stirred, and the cavernous hall was still.

Presently the darkness of the distant halls became musical with the sound of bells, all coming nearer and nearer.

Still Leothric waited in the dark, and the bells rang louder and louder,



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echoing through the halls, and there appeared a procession of men on camels riding two by two from the interior of the fortress, and they were armed with scimitars of Assyrian make and were all clad with mail, and chain-mail hung from their helmets about their faces, and flapped as the camels moved. And they all halted before Leothric in the cavernous hall, and the camel bells clanged and stopped. And the leader said to Leothric:

‘The Lord Gaznak has desired to see you

die before him. Be pleased to come with us, and we can discourse by the way of the manner in which the Lord Gaznak has desired to see you die.’

And as he said this he unwound a chain of iron that was coiled upon his saddle, and Leothric answered:

‘I would fain go with you, for I am come to slay Gaznak.’

Then all the camel-guard of Gaznak laughed hideously, disturbing the vampires that were asleep in the measureless vault of the roof. And the leader said:

‘The Lord Gaznak is immortal, save for Sacnoth, and weareth armour that is proof even against Sacnoth himself, and bath a sword the second most terrible in the world.’

Then Leothric said: ‘I am the Lord of the sword Sacnoth.’

And he advanced towards the camel-guard of Gaznak, and Sacnoth lifted up and down in his hand as though stirred by an exultant pulse. Then the camel-guard of Gaznak fled, and the riders leaned forward and smote their camels with whips, and they went

away with a great clamour of bells through colonnades and corridors and vaulted halls, and scattered into the inner darknesses of the fortress. When the last sound of them had died away, Leothric was in doubt which way to go, for the camel-guard was dispersed in many directions, so he went straight on till he came to a great stairway in the midst of the hall. Then Leothric set his foot in the middle of a wide step, and climbed steadily up the stairway for five minutes. Little light was there in the great hall through



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which Leothric ascended, for it only entered through arrow slits here and there, and in the world outside evening was waning fast. The stairway led up to two folding doors, and they stood a little ajar, and through the crack Leothric entered and tried to continue straight on, but could get no further, for the whole room seemed to be full of festoons of ropes which swung from wall to wall and were looped and draped from the ceiling. The whole chamber was thick and black with them. They were soft

and light to the touch, like fine silk, but Leothric was unable to break any one of them, and though they swung away from him as he pressed forward, yet by the time he had gone three yards they were all about him like a heavy cloak. Then Leothric stepped back and drew Sacnoth, and Sacnoth divided the ropes without a sound, and without a sound the severed pieces fell to the floor. Leothric went forward slowly, moving Sacnoth in front of him up and down as he went. When he was come into the middle of

the chamber, suddenly, as he parted with Sacnoth a great hammock of strands, he saw a spider before him that was larger than a ram, and the spider looked at him with eyes that were little, but in which there was much sin, and said:

‘Who are you that spoil the labour of years all done to the honour of Satan?’

And Leothric answered: ‘I am Leothric, son of Lorendiac.’

And the spider said: ‘I will make a rope at once to hang you with.’

Then Leothric parted another bunch of

strands, and came nearer to the spider as he sat making his rope, and the spider, looking up from his work, said: ‘What is that sword which is able to sever my ropes?’

And Leothric said: ‘It is Sacnoth.’

Thereat the black hair that hung over the face of the spider parted to left and right, and the spider frowned: then the hair fell back into its place, and hid everything except the sin of the little eyes which went on gleaming lustfully in the dark. But before Leothric could reach him, he climbed



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away with his hands, going up by one of his ropes to a lofty rafter, and there sat, growling. But clearing his way with Sacnoth, Leothric passed through the chamber, and came to the further door; and the door being shut, and the handle far up out of his reach, he hewed his way through it with Sacnoth in the same way as he had through the Porte Resonant, the Way of Egress for War. And so Leothric came into a well-lit chamber, where Queens and Princes were banqueting together, all at a great table; and thou-

sands of candles were glowing all about, and their light shone in the wine that the Princes drank and on the huge gold candelabra, and the royal faces were irradiant with the glow, and the white tablecloth and the silver plates and the jewels in the hair of the Queens, each jewel having a historian all to itself, who wrote no other chronicles all his days. Between the table and the door there stood two hundred footmen in two rows of one hundred facing one another. Nobody looked at Leothric as he entered

through the hole in the door, but one of the Princes asked a question of a footman, and the question was passed from mouth to mouth by all the hundred footmen till it came to the last one nearest Leothric; and he said to Leothric, without looking at him:

‘What do you seek here?’

And Leothric answered: ‘I seek to slay Gaznak.’

And footman to footman repeated all the way to the table: ‘He seeks to slay Gaznak.’

And another question came down the line of

footmen: ‘What is your name?’

And the line that stood opposite rook his answer back.

Then one of the Princes said: ‘Take him away where we shall not hear his screams.’

And footman repeated it to footman till it came to the last two, and they advanced to seize Leothric.

Then Leothric showed to them his sword, saying, ‘This is Sacnoth,’ and both of them said to the man nearest: ‘It is Sacnoth,’ they screamed and fled away.

And two by two, all



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up the double line, footman to footman repeated: 'It is Sacnoth,' then screamed and fled, till the last two gave the message to the table, and all the rest had gone. Hurriedly then arose the Queens and Princes, and fled out of the chamber. Ami the goodly table, when they were all gone, looked small and disorderly and awry. And to Leothric, pondering in the desolate chamber by what door he should pass onwards, there came from far away the sounds of music, and he knew that it was the magical musicians

playing to Gaznak while he slept.

Then Leothric, walking towards the distant music, passed out by the door opposite to the one through which he had cloven his entrance, and so passed into a chamber vast as the other, in which were many women, weirdly beautiful. And they all asked him of his quest, and when they heard that it was to slay Gaznak, they all besought him to tarry among them, saying that Gaznak was immortal, save for Sacnoth, and also that they had need of a

knight to protect them from the wolves that rushed mund and round the wainscot all the night and sometimes broke in upon them through the mouldering oak. Perhaps Leothric had been tempted to tarry had they been human women, for theirs was a strange beauty, but he perceived that instead of eyes they had little flames that flickered in their sockets, and knew them to be the fevered dreams of Gaznak. Therefore he said:

'I have a business with Gaznak and with Sacnoth,' and passed on

through the chamber.

And at the name of Sacnoth those women screamed, and the flames of their eyes sank low and dwindled to sparks.

And Leothric left them, and, hewing with Sacnoth, passed through the further door.

Outside he felt the night air on his face, and found that he stood upon a narrow way between two abysses. To left and right of him, as far as he could see, the walls of the fortress ended in a profound precipice, though the roof still stretched



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above him; and before him lay the two abysses full of stars, for they cut their way through the whole Earth and revealed the under sky; and threading its course between them went the way, and it sloped upward and its sides were sheer. And beyond the abysses, where the way led up to the further chambers of the fortress, Leothric heard the musicians playing their magical tune. So he stepped on to the way, which was scarcely a stride in width, and moved along it holding Sacnoth naked. And to and fro beneath him in

each abyss whirled the wings of vampires passing up and down, all giving praise to Satan as they flew. Presently he perceived the dragon Thok lying upon the way, pretending to sleep, and his tail hung down into one of the abysses.

And Leothric went towards him, and when he was quite close Thok rushed at Leothric.

And he smote deep with Sacnoth, and Thok tumbled into the abyss, screaming, and his limbs made a whirring in the darkness as he fell, and he fell till his scream sounded no

louder than a whistle and then could be heard no more. Once or twice Leothric saw a star blink for an instant and reappear again, and this momentary eclipse of a few stars was all that remained in the world of the body of Thok. And Lunk, the brother of Thok, who had lain a little behind him, saw that this must be Sacnoth and fled lumbering away. And all the while that he walked between the abysses, the mighty vault of the roof of the fortress still stretched over Leothric's head, all filled with gloom.

Now, when the further side of the abyss came into view, Leothric saw a chamber that opened with innumerable arches upon the twin abysses, and the pillars of the arches went away into the distance and vanished in the gloom to left and right.

Far down the dim precipice on which the pillars stood he could see windows small and closely barred, and between the bars there showed at moments, and disappeared again, things that I shall not speak of.

There was no light here except for the great



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Southern stars that shone below the abysses, and here and there in the chamber through the arches lights that moved furtively without the sound of footfall.

Then Leothric stepped from the way, and entered the great chamber.

Even to himself he seemed but a tiny dwarf as he walked under one of those colossal arches.

The last faint light of evening flickered through a window painted in sombre colours commemorating the achievements of

Satan upon Earth. High up in the wall the window stood, and the streaming lights of candles lower down moved stealthily away.

Other light there was none, save for a faint blue glow from the steel eye of Tharagavverug that peered restlessly about it from the hilt of Sacnoth. Heavily in the chamber hung the clammy odour of a large and deadly beast.

Leothric moved forward slowly with the blade of Sacnoth in front of him feeling for a foe, and the eye in the hilt of it looking out behind.

Nothing stirred.

If anything lurked behind the pillars of the colonnade that held aloft the roof, it neither breathed nor moved.

The music of the magical musicians sounded from very near.

Suddenly the great doors on the far side of the chamber opened to left and right. For some moments Leothric saw nothing move, and waited clutching Sacnoth. Then Wong Bongerok came towards him, breathing.

This was the last and faithfulest guard of Gaznak, and came from

slobbering just now his master's hand.

More as a child than a dragon was Gaznak wont to treat him, giving him often in his fingers tender pieces of man all smoking from his table.

Long and low was Wong Bongerok, and subtle about the eyes, and he came breathing malice against Leothric out of his faithful breast, and behind him roared the armoury of his tail, as when sailors drag the cable of the anchor all rattling down the deck.

And well Wong Bongerok knew that he



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now faced Sacnoth, for it had been his wont to prophesy quietly to himself for many years as he lay curled at the feet of Gamak.

And Leothric stepped forward into the blast of his breath, and lifted Sacnoth to strike.

But when Sacnoth was lifted up, the eye of Tharagavverug in the butt of the hilt beheld the dragon and perceived his subtlety. For he opened his mouth wide, and revealed to Leothric the ranks of his sabre teeth, and his leather gums flapped upwards. But while Leothric made to

smite at his head, he shot forward scorpion-wise over his head the length of his armoured tail. All this the eye perceived in the hilt of Sacnoth, who smote suddenly sideways. Not with the edge smote Sacnoth, for, had he done so, the severed end of the tail had still come hurtling on, as some pine tree that the avalanche has hurled point foremost from the cliff right through the broad breast of some mountaineer. So had Leothric been transfixed; but Sacnoth smote sideways with the flat of his blade, and

sent the tail whizzing over Leothric's left shoulder; and it rasped upon his armour as it went, and left a groove upon it. Sideways then Leothric smote the foiled tail of Wong Bongerok, and Sacnoth parried, and the tail went shrieking up the blade and over Leothric's head. Then Leothric and Wong Bongerok fought sword to tooth, and the sword smote as only Sacnoth can, and the evil faithful life of Wong Bongerok the dragon went out through the wide wound.

Then Leothric

walked on past that dead monster, and the armoured body still quivered a little, And for a while it was like all the ploughshares in a county working together in one field behind tired and struggling horses; then the quivering ceased, and Wong Bongerok lay still to rust.

Aiid Leothric went on to the open gates, and Sacnoth dripped quietly along the floor.

By the open gates through which Wong Bongerok had entered, Leothric came into a corridor echoing with music. This was the



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first place from which Leothric could see anything above his head, for hitherto the roof had ascended to mountainous heights and had stretched indisnoct in the gloom. But along the narrow corridor hung huge bells low and neat to his head, and the width of each brazen bell was from wall to wall, and they were one behind the other. And as he passed under each the bell uttered, and its voice was mournful and deep, like to the voice of a bell speaking to a man for the last time when he is newly dead. Each

bell uttered once as Leothric came under it, and their voices sounded solemnly and wide apart at ceremonious intervals. For if he walked slow, these bells came closer together, and when he walked swiftly they moved further apart. And the echoes of each bell tolling above his head went on before him whispering to the others. Once when he stopped they all jangled angrily till he went on again.

Between these slow and boding notes came the souiid of the magical musicians. They

were playing a dirge now very mournfully.

And at last Leothric came to the end of the Corridor of the Bells, and beheld there a small black door. And all the corridor behind him was fbl of the echoes of the tolling, and they all niuttered to one another about the ceremony; and the dirge of the musicians came floating slowly through them like a procession of foreign elaborate guests, and all of them boded ill to Leothric.

The black door opened at once to the hand of Leothric, and he found himself in the

open air in a wide court paved with marble. High over it shone the moon, summoned there by the bauld of Gaznak.

There Gaznak slept, and around him sat his niagical musicians, all playing upon strings. And even sleeping Gazoak was clad in armour, and only his wrists and face and neck were bare.

But the marvel of that place was the dreams of Gazoak; for beyond the wide court slept a dark abyss, and into the abyss there poured a white cascade of marble stairways, and widened out below into terraces



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and balconies with fair white statues on them, and descended again in a wide stairway, and came to lower terraces in the dark, where swart uncertain shapes went to and fro. All these were the dreams of Gaznak, and issued from his mind, and, becoming marble, passed over the edge of the abyss as the musicians played. And all the while out of the mind of Gazoak, lulled by that strange music, went spires and pinnacles beautiful and slender, ever ascending skywards. And the marble dreams moved slow in

time to the music. When the bells tolled and the musicians played their dirge, ugly gargoyles came out suddenly all over the spires and pinnacles, and great shadows passed swiftly down the steps and terraces, and there was hurried whispering in the abyss.

When Leothric stepped from the black door, Gaznak opened his eyes. He looked neither to left nor right, but stood up at once facing Leothric.

Then the magicians played a deathspell on their strings, and there arose a humming along

the blade of Sacnoth as he turned the spell aside. When Leothric dropped not down, and they heard the humming of Sacnoth, the magicians arose and fled, all wailing, as they went, upon their strings.

Then Gaznak drew out screaming from its sheath the sword that was the mightiest in the world except for Sacnoth, and slowly walked towards Leothric; and he smiled as he walked, although his own dreams had foretold his doom. And when Leothric and Gaznak came together, each looked at each,

and neither spoke a word; but they smote both at once, and their swords met, and each sword knew the other and from whence he came. And whenever the sword of Gaznak smote on the blade of Sacnoth it rebounded gleaming, as hail from off slated roofs; but whenever it fell upon the armour of Leothric, it stripped it off in sheets. And upon Gaznak's armour Sacnoth fell oft and furiously, but ever he came back snarling, leaving no mark behind, and as Gaznak fought he held his left



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hand hovering close over his head. Presently Leothric smote fair and fiercely at his enemy's neck, but Gaznak, clutching his own head by the hair, lifted it high aloft, and Sacnoth went cleaving through an empty space. Then Gaznak replaced his head upon his neck, and all the while fought nimbly with his sword; and again and again Leothric swept with Sacnoth at Gaznak's bearded neck, and ever the left hand of Gaznak was quicker than the stroke, and the head went up and the sword rushed vainly under it.

And the ringing fight went on till Leothric's armour lay all round him on the floor and the marble was splashed with his blood, and the sword of Gaznak was notched like a saw from meeting the blade of Sacnoth. Still Gaznak stood unwounded and smiling still.

At last Leothric looked at the throat of Gaznak and aimed with Sacnoth, and again Gaznak lifted his head by the hair; but not at his throat flew Sacnoth, for Leothric struck instead at the lifted hand, and through the wrist of it went Sacnoth

whirring, as a scythe goes through the stem of a single flower.

And bleeding, the severed hand fell to the floor; and at once blood spurted from the shoulders of Gaznak and dripped from the fallen head, and the tall pinnales went down into the earth, and the wide fair terraces all rolled away, and the court was gone like the dew, and a wind came and the colonnades drifted thence, and all the colossal halls of Gaznak fell. And the abysses closed up suddenly as the mouth of a man who, having told a tale, will

for ever speak no more.

Then Leothric looked around him in the marshes where the night mist was passing away, and there was no fortress nor sound of dragon or mortal, only beside him lay an old man, wizened and evil and dead, whose head and hand were severed from his body.

And gradually over the wide lands the dawn was coming up, and ever growing in beauty as it came, like to the peal of an organ played by a master's hand, growing louder and lovelier as the soul of the master warms, and



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at last giving praise  
with all its mighty  
voice.

Then the birds sang,  
and Leothric went  
homeward, and left the  
marshes and canie to  
the dark wood, and the  
light of the dawn  
ascending lit him upon  
his way. And into  
Allathurion he came ere  
noon, and with him  
brought the evil wiz-  
ened head, and the peo-  
ple rejoiced, and their  
nights of trouble  
ceased.

**This** is the tale  
of the  
vanquishing of The  
F o r t r e s s

Unvanquishable, Save  
For Sacnoth, and of its  
passing away, as it is  
told and believed by  
those who love the  
mystic days of old.

Others have said, and  
vainly claim to prove,  
that a fever came to  
Allathurion, and went  
away; and that this  
same fever drove  
Leothric into the marsh-  
es by night, and made  
him dream there and act  
violently with a sword.

And others again say  
that there hath been no  
town of Allathurion,  
and that Leothric never  
lived.

Peace to them. The  
gardener hath gathered

up this autumn's leaves.  
Who shall see them  
again, or who wot of  
them? And who shall  
say what hath befallen  
in the days of long ago?



**MILLENNIUM**

# this is fun?

In the World of Tomorrowland you will be required to conceal your true self under many clever disguises. To aid you in this regard, in order that you may breach this future world head on, so to speak, we have at great expense to ourselves (but at no charge to you) provided you with a very clever disguise that will amuse your friends and discomfit your enemies for a great many seconds. Feel free to print and wear this marvelous weapon of concealment. Be certain that you remember to cut out the eye holes, for it is inadvisable to go out into the world when you are blinded for any reason.

-- The Management.

*(the complete mask can be found  
on the following page.)*







# the great circus of life

While the rest of the nation spends their Sunday afternoon watching a gaggle of hulking hyper-thyroid morons battering each other senseless in a contest to decide if football can possibly make us dumber than, say, *watching* football, I shall be watching an angel triumph over gravity. Video tape was made for Super Bowl Sunday, and thanks to video I can take my Day of Athleticism in the form of the Circus.

Where team sports represents the suppression of the individual and the crushing of one's opponent into the dirt, the modern circus presents a team of an entirely different sort, where individual strengths are always given the chance to shine, and the goal is common attainment of flight. Where football fans dream of breaking bones, the circus dreams of breaking natural laws, of aspiration, of stretching flesh and

bone to the limits of the heart and mind. This is nothing more or less than evolution in the purest sense: the effort of man to haul itself bodily out of the limitations of clay.

There are good circuses and there are not-so-good circuses, the latter almost certainly giving rise to the myth of the Circus of Darkness or evil as personified in Ray Bradbury's masterful *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. It is the

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good circuses that concern us here — and North America is fortunate to have at least three Very Good circuses alive and thriving as the datebook turns over its latest page. In one form or another I've been fortunate to see the work of all three... and they are what I'm here to talk about.

The three-ring circus is purely American in design: growing out of the idea that more is better and that audiences served up with more than they can possibly digest in one sitting will come away from the performance

in a state of effulgent dizziness, sated beyond all the dreams of glut-tony. Ringling Bros. & Barnum & Bailey is to other circuses what the United States Government is to, say, the Government of Finland: huge, tentacled, sprawling, and layered with level upon level of support systems. And damn damn damn do they put on a show.

We saw the 124th Edition in Boston nearly four years ago. Our reservations about three-ring circuses were well-founded: because there's an inherent

unfairness about them for the performers, who must try to hold the attention of the audience over two other acts (and sometimes many more) simultaneously in performance. In theory this is probably designed to spur them on to greater heights, but we doubt that's how it works in practice.

The featured act that year were the baby elephants Romeo and Juliette, and as a featured act they were kind of a bust. Never mind. In a three-ring circus there is always more to see. There were dancers spinning about in spi-

derweb ropes thirty feet above the ground, hanging by their toes or their teeth, balanced on one hand; there were dozens of acrobats flying over, around and through each other at dizzying speeds, creating an atomic effect on a grand human scale; there were Cossak riders and plate balancers and animals both wild and tame. In Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey, the moral seems to be not so much that the natural laws of space and gravity can be broken, but they can be broken easily, repeatedly and en-



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masse. Even the clowns, many experts in their craft, came by the dozens: because of their Florida Clown School, Ringling is able to turn out highly skilled clowns in numbers that would choke even one of those little VW Cars that spits out clowns in alarming quantity. There's no time for subtlety in this kind of Clown Show: we are provided with an entire race of the things, each moving through their performances with the precision of an aerialist.

In 1995 we were honored to witness the

"Grandma Meets Mummenshanz" edition of The Big Apple

American circuses, Paul Binder's Big Apple Circus is unbe-

and the closeness of the seats to the ring, but for the one-on-one interaction of the performers with the crowd.

In a beautifully designed tent layered with cloth and canvas, stars and stripes, a modern band played on a platform above the ring and the acts rolled out one by one. With a refreshing lack of pretension the performers — each of them among the best in the world — went through their paces before and above us: because The Big Apple takes a traditional approach to the circus arts, and takes them

Circus, an unusual edition of an already unusual circus. Easily the greatest and classiest of one-ring

lievably intimate in atmosphere compared to the Ringling Production, not only for the smallness of the tent



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more seriously than any of the small American circuses, the audience was given a complete array of acts presented with straightforward dynamism: the idea being that acts themselves are dazzling enough without a bunch of unnecessary glitter. Highlights included an amazing three-person strength/statue act, the lovely Elena Panova on trapeze, horses, balancing, high-flying and an elaborate juggling set-piece. Only the pig act disappointed; the oinkers did not seem to be co-operating that afternoon.

Perhaps in a concession to the open artiness of La Cirque du Soleil, this edition of the Big Apple Circus included performances by the panto group Mummenshanz, which proved that they can be as engaging circus performers as any. In one sequence they worked closely with featured clown Barry Lubin, who appeared throughout in his justifiably famous Grandma character. The combination was electric, adding a note of unique specialness to this edition that the Big Apple does not seem to have achieved

since then.

There are those who view Canada's Cirque du Soleil as avant-garde, or nontraditional; but to our minds the Cirque is about as traditional as they come. The question is which tradition. There are no animal acts, which is a departure; and the tone owes as much to Cirque artistic directors Franco Dragone and Guy Laliberté's background as street performers as it does to the circus. The effect is entirely European, and in that regard the tradition that Cirque follows may go back farther than any

other circus in the world.

Like The Big Apple Circus, Cirque du Soleil plays in a single ring under a tent that seats a relatively intimate crowd. Lacking the animal acts, it combines feats of almost inhuman skill and daring with world-class clown performers, exciting original music, dramatic lighting, loosely structured plot settings and an unusual "Greek Chorus" of brightly garbed, masked onlookers. We have seen them only on video: the best of these (WE REINVENT THE CIRCUS,



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NOUVELLE EXPERIENCE and the just-released QUIDAM) represent shortened versions of the tours — and the best that circus arts have to offer.

In QUIDAM, La Cirque repeats a device from an earlier show: the inhuman visitant who bestows a Magic Hat upon a frustrated and drab want-a-lifer (in this case a young girl whose parents hide behind newspapers), who then experiences ecstatic visions of human attainment: the clear message being “We can do this: we can touch the sky: and by

extension, so can you.”

Standout acts include a man inside a wheel — just like a European toy from the last century — the obligatory but always astonishing statue act (as literal a metaphor as you will ever find for man’s ability to mold exquisite beauty and eye-popping achievement out of raw clay), some very fine clowning and, best of all, an aerial act of exquisite beauty in which a woman suspends herself thirty feet above the ground merely by wrapping herself in silk.

But then, circus aeri-

alists are the most beautiful women in the world, for dreaming and daring and flying above us all. Try getting that from a stinking football game.



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# playtime

Last issue we published an appreciation of the 1968 animated Beatle-fest *Yellow Submarine*. This issue we reveal that we are proud owners of an original Corgi Yellow Submarine issued at the

time of the film's original release: not the reproduction that Corgi brought out last year for the restored re-issue. We do not have the original box: but our Yellow Submarine has four small Beatles that

pop out of its hatches fore and aft, and periscopes that rotate as the sub is pushed along the floor.

In those days retroactive licensing and marketing would have been unthinkable:



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but in the new world with three zeroes attached, many companies are finding that they own the rights to perfectly good characters: lacking the creative juice needed to do anything substantive with those characters, they've still devised a way to draw income from them, which explains the flood of toys and dolls based on characters who flourished in a bygone age.

And, you know, some of the stuff is better than it ever would have been at the time. Take the new Yellow Submarine "action fig-

ures" from McFarlane Toys.

McFarlane is one of those people that we hate having to say anything nice about: only because his good luck is all out of scale with his talent. He made a fortune for himself by being in the right place at the right time, a fortune derived from his work on a *single issue* of Marvel's *Spider-Man*. Suddenly flooded with wealth beyond any reasonable expectation for drawing a funny book, McFarlane did a damned smart thing: he left Marvel, started his own comic book com-

pany where he could work out from under the interfering fingers of Suits, and made an even bigger fortune, which he then plowed into building his own toy manufacturing company.

Right out of the box, the action figures his company produced were better than anything being done by his competitors, though the subject matter (McFarlane's own gruesome Image Comics characters) left something to be desired. But last year McFarlane did a truly, monumentally unex-

pected thing: he licensed the toy rights to Yellow Submarine.

There's Ringo, Paul, George and John all done up in plastic and looking just like their animated selves, ranging in height from six to seven inches, articulated at the neck, shoulders, wrists, hips and feet, and painted exactly in accord with the film's design to the extent that each sleeve of their jackets and each leg of their pants are done up in slightly different colors. As if that wasn't enough, each Beatle comes packaged with another figure



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from the movie: Paul with the awful Flying Glove mounted on its own stand (“Oh-BLUE-ter-ate them!”) John with Jeremy Hillary Boob (“Ad hoc and Quid Pro Quo! So much to do! So Much to Know!”), Ringo with a marvelous representation of the Chief Blue Meanie (“Come to me, my Glovey-Dovey”) and George with the Yellow Submarine itself (complete with wind-up propellers).

They’re heavy, they’re big, they’re colorful, they look great on our desk. As you might have guessed from the

above paragraph they are fun to play with whilst reciting sections of the film. They retail for \$10 per, but can be found around and about for as little as \$8. We’ve got ours.

You didn’t ask, but we’ll tell you anyhow: the character we most identify with is Jeremy. He’s a real Nowhere Man, sitting in his nowhere land, making all his nowhere plans for nobody.

While we’re on the subject

We never did “get” Colorforms. We had a

Batman Colorforms set back in the 60’s, and it wasn’t nearly as much fun as watching the TV show. Too static, if you’ll pardon the bad joke. In the early ‘80s Colorforms issued two sets that we thought very much better, both featuring Mickey Mouse and his pals: a Circus Fun House with three full levels of possibilities, a wide selection of figures and props, and a board that could be illuminated from behind: realistic neon and Chinese Lantern effects that were more beautiful than anything else we

have ever seen from a toy; and a “Magic Hat” set, where Mickey (and the player) actually performed transformations in a circusy setting. Both of these toys were designed by noted Disneyana collector Mel Birnkrant.

Anyone who derived more interest from trying to fit their colorforms back onto the black storage palette than from making scenes with pre-drawn, prefigured cut-outs will be glad to know that a reproduction of the original 1951 set has been issued: and this is Colorforms as most of



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us have never seen them. There are no pre-printed characters or props to pose against a pre-drawn background, just a black board with five basic shapes of colorforms in five different colors: circles and squares and triangles that can be used to build any picture you might imagine. Now that makes sense.

The cleverest variation on building blocks that we've seen appeared maybe ten years ago in the F.A.O. Schwartz catalog: a European toy called ZOLO, a sort of building block set seen

through the eyes of Pee Wee Herman. A nondescript packing case stuffed with excelsior featured a variety of wooden forms, skewed and angled like something out of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and painted in bright pop-culture colors. Anything you could build with this set was by definition surrealist, which makes it unique in toy history. The original set has been licensed out and is available in plastic sets of various sizes. Perfect for raising eyebrows at work.



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*A Real, Live Moomin House...  
somewhere in Finland.*

# PAGES better than real

We were happy to learn that Manguel and Guadalupi's monumental *Dictionary of Imaginary Places* has been reissued in a new (albeit smaller and less attractive) edition. This "travel guidebook" to fictional lands has occupied an important place on our bookshelf for better than a decade, and as an introduction to authors and fantasy lands that you might otherwise have missed

it is unsurpassed. It never does quite live up to its "travel guide" conceit — too many of the entries settle for merely synopsisizing the plots of the books, rather than making that required leap of creative imagination and providing tourists with the vital information they would need to travel in these many lands — but in the end it hardly matters: there is so much scholarship here, and

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so much to feed the imagination, that criticism is reduced to gamesmanship. The new edition has been expanded with additional entries, but these are too few and too minor to warrant buying the book again if you already own any of the earlier editions. For the first time these listings contain places invented by comic-book writers — but the emphasis is on cachet (notably Neil Gaiman) authors, and many places devised by more interesting and talented practitioners of the comics form have,

again, been slighted. Surely Elsie Segar's Goon Island warrants inclusion; and that's



just one imaginary land that you won't find here.

Used as a springboard, *The Dictionary*

*of Imaginary Places* will provide you with many hours of page-flipping, browsing and



note-taking. It is the definitive guidebook to fantasy literature so far.

A similar, but not

nearly so inclusive, guidebook devoted to the *creatures* who inhabit these places is Jorge Luis Borges *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, written with Margarita Guerrero. Borges is more concerned with mapping what Jung called the collective unconscious than he is with literary invention, and his choices reflect iconic creatures rather than whimsical ones. Written in the author's trademark dry documentary style — almost a lack of style rather than the presence of one — the book deals in

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monsters out of Classical Dictionaries and ancient texts, and favors beasts over sentient creatures. It's fascinating reading in its own right, but again its primary virtue is as a pointer to other texts. Our favorite "chapter" — if the brief, clinical sections of the book can be called chapters — falls right at the beginning: "Animals in the Form of Spheres," in which it is suggested that the planets and stars are themselves living, breathing, "endowed with reason" and that their movement and rotation is a

conscious act of communication.

## Finn Family Moomintroll



*The Dictionary of Imaginary Places* has this to say about Mooninland: "... on the coast of the Gulf of Finland, to the south of

Daddy Jones' Kingdom. There are no human habitants in the valley itself... The valley takes its name from certain creatures who

live there... small, white, hibernating animals with large snouts, short tails and smooth hairless skin..."

It is impossible to get

a feel of Tove Jansson's marvelous creations from such a dry recounting of the land they inhabit. Flavored with the sensibilities of Finland (the young Moomins drink beer, wine and coffee with their elders) but universal in scope and appeal, Jansson's Moomintroll books are simple, rich and sweet as anything you will find printed on paper.

The plots are thin to the point of non-existence. In *Kometjakten* (Comet in Moominland) we are introduced to young Moomintroll, who

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spends his days roaming about in a state of delighted curiosity. When he learns that a comet is approaching the Moomin Valley from outer space, he and his closest friend, a “small animal” named Snufkin, journey far away to the Mountain Observatory where scientists are studying the phenomenon. The scientists turn out not to know very much; and so Moomintroll and his friends (for he has met a great many interesting people along the way) go back and hunker down in their valley, waiting the arrival of



the comet — which just misses the planet and roars off again into space. That’s it — the entire story. But as you’ve no doubt guessed, the plot isn’t the point: curiosity and discovery in the form of meeting new people and seeing interesting

things along the way are what the book is really about.

The later books follow much the same happy pattern: in *Trollkarlens Hatt* (Finn Family Moomintroll), the children stumble across a Hobgoblin’s Hat (capable of causing

amazing transformations) and decide that it must be returned to its owner. In *Trollvinter* (Moominland Midwinter), Moomintroll wakes up unexpectedly during the winter hibernation period and begins to explore the strange, transformed winter world inside and outside of the Moominhouse.

Written with a delightfully light touch and accompanied by equally gentle illustrations, the Moomintroll books are perfect for a fine quiet afternoon with your favorite glass

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of beer, wine or coffee. If good-heartedness is the quality most to be desired, then the Moomintroll books are among the finest on the planet.

## Miss Bianca

I was fortunate to have met Miss Bianca first in print. The animated movies made several years apart by the Walt Disney Company (*The Rescuers* and *The Rescuers Down Under*) are faithful to the spirit of the books, but as you might expect, the books are so much richer in

detail and, for being British and for being set in a vaguely defined faux Victorian period, possess a deep Romantic quality that the heavily Americanized movies can only stumble about and suggest.

In fact the books are plain, unadorned Victorian Gothic thrillers that happen to feature mice in the parts of the heroes. In *The Rescuers*, first of the series, a Norwegian poet is being held political prisoner under intolerable conditions in The Black Castle. When the Prisoner's

Aid Society, an August Body of staunch British Noblesse Oblige mice, decides that something must be done about it, a meek Pantry Mouse named Bernard is sent to enlist the aid of one Miss Bianca — a mysterious and pampered white mouse who lives in a Golden Pagoda inside the Norwegian Embassy. The adventure that follows takes them over water and under carriage wheels to the dungeons of The Black Castle itself, where a monstrous cat named Malamouk may cause the rescuers as much trouble as the bar-

baric, drunken jailer.

The stakes are considerably higher in *Miss Bianca*, with Bianca and Bernard penetrating the Diamond Palace, a place of crumbling old-world elegance populated by automatons, to save a little girl from captivity at the hands of The Duchess (easily one of the ghastliest villains in children's literature). This is the story that was adapted into the first movie, with much of its gothic terrors (and all of its Victorian eloquence) stripped away.

Moral ambiguity enters the stories with



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*The Turret*, arguably the best book in the series, when the Prisoner's Aid Society takes on the case of Mandrake, the Duchess's wicked major-domo, now a penitent and maltreated prisoner in his own right. With the aid of the stallion Sir Hector, Miss Bianca and Bernard nobly bring every ounce of their talents to bear on this case, fully aware of the prisoner's history. A fourth book, *Miss Bianca in The Salt Mines*, merely repeats the themes of *Miss Bianca*, and while it is never less than enter-

taining it never quite carries the moral weight of the earlier books.

Like Joan Aiken and other practitioners of the Children's Gothic,

The villains are genuinely frightening and emotionally complex, while the heroes frequently have choices to make that go against their natural inclinations.

Margery Sharp is first and foremost a writer of so-called "books for grown-ups," which may be the single most important factor in her

work for children, in that the author never writes down to her audience. The villains that she invents are genuinely frightening and

emotionally complex, while the heroes frequently have choices to make that go against their natural inclinations; villains and

heroes both inhabiting a an ornate, Romantic world: as complete and fine a creation as anything to found in literature for young or old. Illustrated by the incomparable Garth Williams at the height of his powers, these are books that have been underappreciated and forgotten to a deplorable extent. They deserve to be passed on from hand to hand with the best of children's literature.



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## The Magic Book

In my years as a bookstore clerk my eyebrows were lifted on a regular basis by customers, usually young men, asking for a copy of something called *The Necronomicon*. That the book in question, a volume of despicable villainess written by the Mad Arab Abdul Alhazzrad depicting the return of the ancient Beast-God Cthulu, does not exist, never existed, is completely and wholly an imaginary creation of the horror writer H.P.

Lovecraft is a fact that was mostly lost on them — and a testimony to the power of one man's creative ability.

The Magic Book has been a standard device throughout the history of fantasy literature. So powerful a symbol is it that rational people still seek to find, in real life, that one Magic Book that will answer all your questions and dispel all of life's mysteries in one blinding flash of light from its pages.

In fact the book does exist, but in the most unexpected of forms; and as you might expect, it comes with

problems, it is oblique and deliberately nonsensical; and driven by the vision of a talented madman.

In this case the magic book I speak of is *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, written and designed by the surrealist painter Salvador Dali. Dali's subject is painting, but in addressing the theory of painting he addresses the theory of Creativity and by extension the beginning of sentient life itself. It is a book that only Dali could have written and it contains absolutely everything that you might

expect from a work bearing his name: surrealism, beauty, ugliness, biological distortion, skill and elegance of style sometimes juxtaposed with slapdash execution, crazed egomania, wry acknowledgment of same, wild insight into the human psyche and grotesque mis-pronouncement. In a very real sense it is exactly what it purports to be: the work of a crazed magician imparting unto you, the reader, the ultimate secrets of the universe. That the secrets he presents are wrapped in ceremony and



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metaphor only adds to this impression: frequently laughable, the book nonetheless is full of truth, carrying the genuine weight that only truth can endow. Dali on natural antipathies: "Know also that the orange combined with lettuce is a moral monstrosity and that this monstrosity becomes even greater at the approach of a storm." Dali on constraining the limitlessness of nature: "You must choose a small part of [the universe] and nevertheless, in this small part, you will have to make felt all the

antipathies of the entire universe." Dali on art: "Painting had, indeed, lighted the wick of the human brain... and for lack of an appropriate

pearing in the darkness of blind or abstract iconographies." Dali on Dali: "... in the three or four days since I have begun to write this book

ink drawings, Dalinian notations scribbled in the margins, giving a reader the impression of looking direct into the madman's notebooks. Like everything Dali did, the book is thoroughly contrived and calculated to produce an effect. We are intended to realize this, and the realization does not prevent the effect from taking place. Even the troubling frivolity of the thing appears to have been calculated. Yet it seems clear that Dali truly wanted to create that most mythical of mythical objects, The Magic Book... and

Like everything Dali did, the book is thoroughly contrived and calculated to produce an effect...

combustible liquid on which to keep alive, this little flickering and precious flame risked at every moment disap-

I already feel myself more intelligent than before."

Of course the text is embellished by pen and



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because he was Dali, he came closer than is particularly comfortable to success.

## Pretentious Nightmares

We mentioned just above that to our minds Neil Gaiman is overrated, and *Sandman Midnight Theater* — a comic book from Vertigo-DC-Time-Warner-Turner-Netscape-America Online, which recently crossed our desk thanks to a generous friend — proves the point.

We've come to hate

painted comics over the years: the artists are uniformly bad painters and worse storytellers, with the reader getting the worst of both worlds. But it's Gaiman who really drops the ball on this one: it's a good idea — the two different versions of The Sandman coming face to face in the past, at a time before the inception of Gaiman's version of the character when The Master of Dreams is being held prisoner in the cellar of a loathsome old man — but when it comes to delivering anything that might carry emotional

or spiritual weight, Mr. Gaiman comes up short every time. His good idea is an undeveloped one, typical of the man for whom success has come so easily and so rapidly that he no longer feels any need to put flesh or blood on the bones. There are some good dream images, some well-crafted sentences: but that's the easy part of writing, and the part that has carried Gaiman to unjustified heights. *Sandman Midnight Theater* shows real talent — but a talent muffled and chained by emotional laziness.



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## Looking Ahead Into The Past

We can think of no better way to greet the future than by hauling out our video copy of the original **Flash Gordon** movie serial. Directed by Frederick Stephani from Alex Raymond's all-conquering classic of a comic strip, this is to

movie serials what *The Wizard of Oz* is to features: packed with gorgeous Art Deco style, a breathless story about well-focused characters in need, and a veritable boatload of wonderful (if not necessarily wonderfully talented) character actors to portray them.

Episode 1 of the serial opens with the Ultimate Y2K menace of all time: a mysterious

planet rushing headlong on a collision course with the earth, causing atmospheric disturbances and mass repentance from New York to Delhi. Whilst bailing out from a passenger plane driven down by the storms, star athlete Flash Gordon (Buster Crabbe) becomes — ehm — closely acquainted with the lovely Dale Arden (Jean “ee-urp” Rogers). On



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making a safe landing the two are menaced by a crazed scientist bearing a revolver: the eminent Dr. Zarkoff, who proposes a desperate plan to save the Earth.

That plan carries the trio via Rocketship to Mongo, where the Merciless Emperor Ming (stock villain player Charles Middleton in his greatest role) agrees to spare our planet — proposing instead to take it over lock stock and barrel. Fortunately for us all, lust takes precedence over global domination, and Ming drops his plans long enough to

force Dale into marriage with him. Thanks to intervention from Flash, Zarkoff, Ming's daughter Aura and practically everyone else in the movie, the nuptials of Dale and Ming are

continually delayed, and Earth is saved through sheer unrequited lust as Ming's army pursues Dale and Flash through thirteen chapters of encounters with Shark Men, Hawk Men

and tortures of every conceivable sort (including one delightfully surreal sequence in which the scantily-clad Miss Rogers is forced to witness the Hawk King's dreaded display of the art of Shadow Puppetry). It is all truly bizarre, and truly wonderful.

It's hard to imagine, in our softer times, that so much open lust and violence — including a disturbing fight between a shark and an octopus and Crabbe's frequent half-naked bouts with grotesquely fanged wrestlers — could ever have been



*Lust in Space: Princess Aura and Flash*

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intended for children. There is a raw edge to the film, and an open chauvinism that would make NOW and Action for

Children's Television squirm and spit. But heroes and villains never came this big, either before or after FLASH GORDON, and there's a quality of dreaminess and surrealism on display that raises this of all serials to the level of high art.

Fashionable people love to scoff at FLASH GORDON's special effects, at the sparkler-shooting exhaust of the spaceships, and if

photo-realism is the aim then they're right to scoff. But seen as Art Deco contrivance, as design in action, the effects in FLASH more than stand their ground today. They are part of the Grand Opera that is FLASH GORDON, sputtering and fuming across the screen, in a Neverland of Floating Cities where men have wings and Virtue is its own reward.

## The Brainless Horseman

In *Sleepy Hollow* Tim Burton turns a clever, human horror story into a shallow, inhuman one, bereft of the original tale's sly humor. The new screenplay imagines Washington Irving's menace of the mind as a literal, supernatural menace, leaving no mystery and no doubt, forcing Burton to dwell on the sort of gore and grisly detail that further degenerates the film into just another slasher

movie, albeit a wildly stylized one.

Not content to remake the Headless Horseman into a real and actual Movie Monster gleefully lopping off heads left and right ("Hessian Horseman," get it? "Hessian" sounds sorta like "Headless!" Damn that's Hollywood cleverness for you), the screenwriters commit a larger violence against the anti-hero of the tale, Ichabod Crane, who is transformed from a gawky, fussy school-teacher meddling in the town's crop of Available Woman into a



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poised Hollywood-cute fussy Policeman With His Career On The Line and Something To Prove — presumably to bring the character in line with the '90s notion of what a Hollywood Hero should be — DIE HARD in Colonial Drag. What remains of Washington Irving? Just the names.

Burton's arty but typically artificial style is here in abundance, and so is Johnny Depp's obtuse charm, but as with *Batman Returns* Burton allows distaste and nastiness to gain

the upper hand; worse, some of the best visual "bits" are a direct rip-off from the (much better) Walt Disney cartoon made decades ago. Christina Ricci is even creepier and uglier as an adult than she was as a child. If I gave out stars to movies, this one would merit a wrinkled nose.

## Let's do the Time Warp again

Fifteen or twenty years after the fact, it seems inevitable that **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** should have become what it did: because even now, even on video's tiny scream, uhm, screen — and perhaps especially in the privacy of your home or apartment, there is something about this almost unbelievably mediocre movie that invites participation.

At first it is nothing

more than a feeling: though the movie is ponderous and clunky, the songs are lively enough and the actors (notably Tim Curry, in a masterfully controlled performance as the out-of-control Dr. Frank N. Furter) at least seem to be having fun: the action involves a hopelessly nerdy couple being lured into a big unrestrained party destined to dissolve into a bickering orgy, and what kind of an actor wouldn't have fun with that?

By the end of the movie that feeling of invitation is made



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explicit when Curry chants to us out of the screen, “Don’t dream it, BE it, don’t dream it, BE it” — and in that second it takes only the slightest sense of feeling the outsider combined with a certain boredom generated by the movie to imagine leaping out of the audience seat and into one of the film’s outlandishly costumed setpieces.

So let’s say that **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** is a classic — not for what it is, but for what it became and what it represents: because how often have you sat in the dark and

wished that you could join the characters on the screen in their glorious movie life? With **Rocky Horror**, that wish was granted for the first time.



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## Who was that Masked Man?

It is damn near prophetic that Clayton Moore — who played The Lone Ranger on television during the 1950's — should die just a day or two before the odometer turned on mile 2000. We know next to nothing about Moore the man. As an actor he played many

other parts in his lifetime, most of them “heavies” of the effectively menacing variety, the sorts of villains who did not waste time twirling their mustaches or making speeches, but instead made a quiet and concerted effort to murder the heroes at every possible turn. Moore was a good actor simply because he wasn't showy. You couldn't *see* him acting. It was-

n't simply that the bulk of the roles he played were underwritten to the point of nonexistence. Moore had a naturalness on camera that stood him in good stead whatever the color hat he was wearing at the time.

But it isn't the man's death at the very end of 1999 that deserves the word “prophetic” — it's the death of what the man represented: the

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black and white world where good and bad existed in equal and easily recognized quantities, and also the world where stolid professionalism could have a huge and lasting impact on a large segment of the population.

On radio, in the Western pulp magazines, in the comics, in the movies and then on television, The Lone Ranger was not simply big. He was ten miles high and twice as broad, known to everyone in the nation, followed by fans of all ages — not just children. In some form, The

Lone Ranger was in your house every day of the week, and though there were plenty of Lone Ranger toys and licensing spin-offs these were merely supplements, ways of taking the character more to heart; in that time, the stories still took precedence over marketing.

Everything has changed since then: the Suits and Money Men have replaced writers so that now in the Age of Pokemon it's the toys and chotchkas that come first, with the stories and content added later, if need be, usually

crafted with very little care or talent simply to cash in on the already-existing marketing phenomenon (the Pokemon movie disappeared under the waves with an almost audible sigh, as of millions of kids realizing that their favorite character was nothing more than a balloon: bulky and round and cute but containing nothing more entertaining than hot air).

Heroes, once a noble lot, standing for something bigger than unrestrained self-interest, are now represented by a loudmouthed, uncouth rabble of fur

and boobs and claw who kill without a second thought and are frequently indistinguishable from the villains they face.

But in a more personal sense, Clayton Moore represents a vanishing breed of professional actor who worked hard all their lives for comparatively little compensation, making ten to fifty movies a year and thereby becoming deeply ingrained into the culture in a way that modern actors cannot. In one form, at one level or another, people like Moore, Roy



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Rogers, Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Judy Garland and a host of others were in front of us all the time, hugely productive, always working, never resting on their laurels. They were not merely participants in the culture. They *were* the culture.

## Running the Numbers

The scientists and mathematicians are right and proper when they suggest that the Millennium does not begin until the year 2001. But there's some-

thing magical — or at least genuinely portentous — about rolling over every single number on the calendar that demands recognition. Like it or not, that big letter TWO with those three big ZEROs after it changes everything, rendering the new ancient with the stroke of a pen. We are continually astonished to discover things that we cherished on a daily basis becoming History — and by History's constant retreat farther and farther away from reach.

But what of the 1990s? So much of that

recently-passed decade already seems old hat, and to some extent we're more than glad to see it go. We can do without the social and technological predictions that the pundits are falling all over themselves to offer: instead we will settle for quoting from an impossibly old (it now seems to us) television show from the spiritual (if not the literal) century just passed. "One day I shall come back," the Doctor said away back in the still-grey year of 1964, in the body of British character actor William

Hartnell. "Yes, I shall come back. Until then, let there be no tears, no anxieties. Just go forward in all your beliefs, and prove to me that I am not mistaken in mine."



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## SLINGS AND ARROWS



### Kibbles ‘n’ Bits

We owe a debt of gratitude to Mssrs. Alan Keyes, Orrin Hatch and Gary Bauer for proving to us conclusively that we do indeed live in a free society. Only in a free society would a raving, spitting, bible-thumping lunatic (Keyes), a moronic boob powered purely by ego (Hatch) and a

creepy little troll styling himself as a moral gangster (Bauer) be allowed to seek the highest office in the country. Thank you, gentlemen. Our hat is off to you all.

### The BDB

Every time we encounter a social enemy — by our definition, one who is not only exceeding all expectation in meanness, vulgarity, stupidity,

ty, self-absorption or heel-grinding jack-booted thuggedry but proving the value of such behavior through the audacity of being successful — we whisper a silent prayer, something to the effect of “Thousands of people die every day — why can’t one of them be you?”

We are tired of passive praying and are now proposing a proactive initiative which we



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call the Bus Driver Bounty, wherein public employees (Bus Drivers) can supplement their income while removing villains from our society. For every Social Villain that a city bus flattens, the driver should earn a monetary reward, the amount depending in the degree of villainy achieved by the target. Below is a tentative and fragmentary list of some of the criminals who could thus be neatly and conclusively removed from our society:

1. STEVE FORBES: who could have put his

(inherited) millions to beneficial uses in the world, and has instead chosen to expend them to balm his grotesque ego through trying to buy the White House. The cost of this game is now in excess of \$30 million, essentially wasted; the crime could be forgiven if Forbes was in fact a worthy candidate: but he isn't, the entire world knows it, and the only function that he serves in the political race is that of a spoiler for more qualified men. The feeling we get from watching Steve Forbes commercials is one of a man

trying desperately to convince *himself* that he is good enough to hold public office, and failing even at that — such a pity that his particular brand of dim-wittedness has prevented Forbes from realizing that benefactors are justifiably more admired than politicians. REWARD: \$80 Million to charities of the Bus Driver's Choice.

2. KATHY LEE GIFFORD: Easily the most repulsive woman on television, not for her appearance (which is barely visible under piles of make-up — although what is visible

— relentlessly visible since Ms. Gifford insists on wearing clingy boob-revealing clothing — is clearly heading south) nor even for her employment of slave labor, but for the desperate phoniness that permeates every level of her being. With her oh-so-sincere-blinking-back-the-tears-but-staying-faithful-and-strong weepiness Ms. Gifford could be the poster girl for Faux. Her one contribution to the culture has been to prove that absolutely anyone or anything, no matter how desperately untal-



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ented, can become a national celebrity given a daily hour of television exposure and a mouth. REWARD: \$50

3. TOM CRUISE. It's proof positive that life isn't fair when brilliant stars like Henry Fonda and Jimmy Stewart have to get old and die, leaving us with people like this. Cruise is merely a face. In their time, Robert Redford and Paul Newman would never have survived in Hollywood had they not possessed the talent to back up their looks. But Tom Cruise has proved that talent and substance are no

longer necessary, that surface appearance is all that counts, and in that he represents everything that is wrong with Hollywood today. This is why he makes our criminals list. REWARD: \$100,000

4. DONALD TRUMP. We do not for one minute take his candidacy seriously, nor do we believe that Mr. Trump takes it seriously. But the fact that he could announce his intention to run for president and not be met with millions of Americans laughing in his face is terrifying.

We can't blame Trump for dumbing down America to the point that they would seriously consider electing a gangster to their highest office: but in an interview with CBS News Trump advocated replacing our political leaders with businessmen, and we *can* blame him for that. It's likely that most of our government is already bought and paid for by Big Corporations, but what Trump proposes is a bloodless coup: bypassing the nasty business of buying candidates and simply putting the Corporations, Suits and

CEOs in charge of *everything*. This would consolidate what is already an artificial Ruling Class into an Official one. The suggestion is chilling to say the least. REWARD: \$60 Million and The Trump Plaza to be used as a Bus Driver's Retirement Home.

More to come...

## His Way

In last November's local elections the voters in Portland, Maine decisively rejected a bill that would have closed down their local neighborhood schools



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and consolidated them into one big central uber-school. That same night, the Suits who'd backed the bill in the first place were on the air vowing in no uncertain terms that the uber-school was something that they had planned on and they were going to find a way to make that plan happen whether the voters wanted it or not.

We hate to keep sounding the same note — that Suits represent a tide of Pure Evil that must be turned back somehow if mankind is to survive — but this latest bleeding of

excess Suits out of the businesses and into the community really gets our dander up. Not content to make the workplaces miserable for anyone who doesn't fit the mold, The Suits are now applying their same principles of consolidation and homogenization to the community — and in typical Suit fashion, they're going to have Their Way and the rest of us are damned well going to like it — or be forced out.

The voters put them in their place this time. But Suits have incredible tenacity, and by not

being willing to ever take no for an answer they can keep right on pushing until the voters are cowed or bullied or resigned to submission. We believed the man when he said that he was going to make his uber-school happen — and that belief puts us on guard for the future.

## The Uni-Mind at Work

Overheard recently on a Saturday morning vid-show: an indignant parent figure imparting

values to the kiddies at home: "This is a TEAM effort! There's no room in this outfit for hot-shots acting ALONE!"

That's a direct quote, boys and girls. And no, the character spouting this philosophy was not the villain of the piece. He was one of the heroes, the word "alone" being given particular emphasis as something close to an obscenity. The makers of the program were making it abundantly clear that none of that "individualism" crap would be tolerated in The World of Tomorrow.



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This would not be anything worth writing about it if weren't so pervasive in our culture. You see it all over, especially in Help Wanted ads where "must be a Team Player" is the catchphrase du jour, a code-word roughly translating to "must be content to operate as a faceless cog in our conglomerate machine; no sense of self-worth nor individual effort will be tolerated."

Our culture has allowed the death of individualism to happen because it can be made to have positive

effects: when Jesse Jackson calls for us to find Common Ground, he is simply asking for us all to get along and stop killing each other over trivial differences. But when the call for Common Ground begins to smother the contradictory cry of "Viva La Difference," something is wrong. We believe that it's the differences between us that make us valuable to each other, not the similarities. That's why incest and inbreeding are against the law: because they weaken the race. So too must the call for staying in

line and achieving total commonalty be perceived as weakening the race — incest on a colossal and horrifying social scale.

Thirty years ago children (and adults) were listening to THE PRISONER and others, with their message that maybe the uni-mind WASN'T right, maybe an individual CAN contribute something to the world greater and more precious than anything concocted by what we now refer to as a team — which in those days was dismissed by SF writer Ted Sturgeon as "a thing with six heads

and no brain." Where is that voice in popular entertainment today?

## False Assumptions

1. You can be successful on your own terms.
2. Everything happens for a reason.
3. Those in Authority can be trusted to do the right thing.
4. The Police are your Friends.



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# the COMICS pages

featuring QUIRK,  
Space Reject



The story thus far: Quirk has been trapped into playing the notorious Big Game -- with the lives of his pals Carpy, Smith and Sludge hanging in the balance! His challenger turns out to be none other than MAX-OR THE CLOWN, who harbors a deadly and misguided grudge against our heroes! Now, deep inside the psycho-realm of the game (where anything the players can imagine becomes real), Quirk must find and answer THE BLACK TELEPHONE -- before Max-or beats him to it!

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 **HAT NIGHT:**

"I'D USED EVERY TRICK IN TH' BOOK T' FIND MAX MALLOY, BUT TO NO AVAIL. FINALLY, IN DESPIRATION, I'D CALLED POLLY, T'SEE IF SHE KNEW ANYTHIN'. SHE'D AGREED T' STOP BY MY APARTMENT T' TALK IT OVER."



"I HAD DIS OMINOUS, OVERSHADOWIN' FEELIN' DAT SUMPIN' BAD WUZ GONNA HAPPEN..."



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"AN' POOR MAX MALLOY, (WHO PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW) WHAT TH' HELL WUZ GOIN' ON, JUST STOOD AN' TOOK IT.



"WITHOUT A WORD, WITHOUT EVEN A SOUND, SHE BROUGHT OUT TH' GUN. THERE SEEMED TO BE NO MALICE IN HER MOVEMENT, BUT RATHER A GLOOM OF PRE-ORDAINED MURDER..."



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*...to be continued...*

(and be sure to read the adventures of QUIRK every  
week on the web at [Duck Soup's website!](#))



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