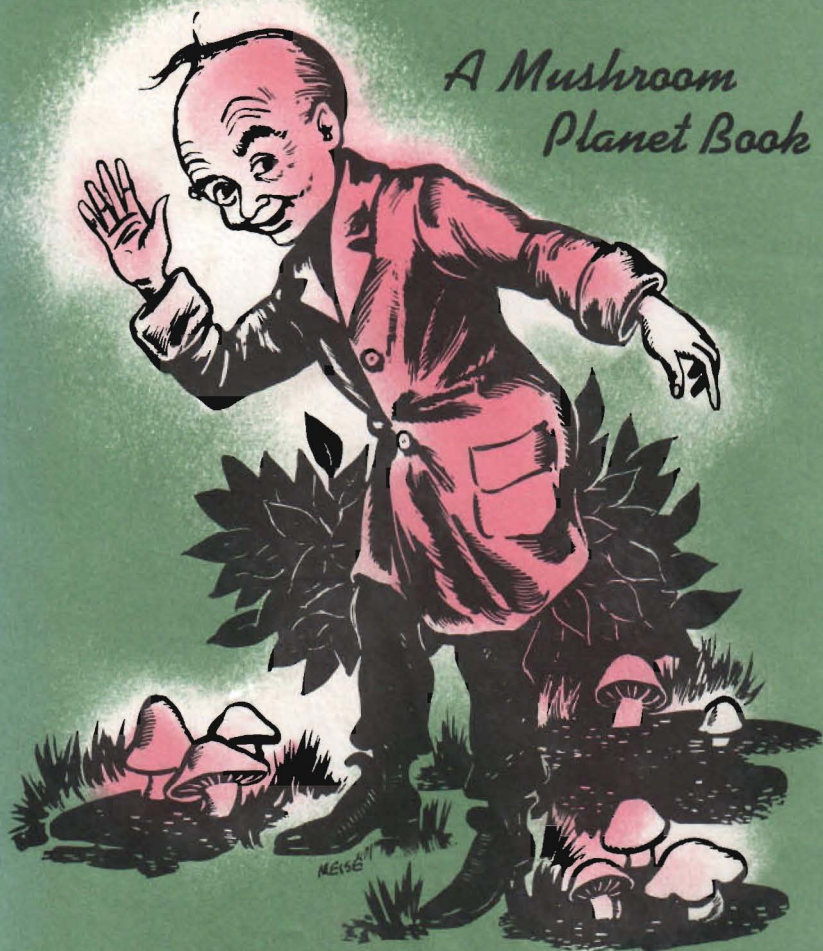


TIME and MR. BASS

*A Mushroom
Planet Book*



Eleanor Cameron

Illustrated by Fred H. Meise

BOOKS BY ELEANOR CAMERON

The Terrible Churnadryne

The Mysterious Christmas Shell

The Beast with the Magical Horn

A Spell Is Cast

THE MUSHROOM PLANET BOOKS

The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet

Stowaway to the Mushroom Planet

Mr. Bass's Planetoid

A Mystery for Mr. Bass

Time and Mr. Bass

Time and Mr. Bass



By Robert Bly

Illustrations by Seymour Chwast



TIME AND MR. BASS

A Mushroom Planet Book

by Eleanor Cameron

Illustrated by Fred Meise

An Atlantic Monthly Press Book

Little, Brown and Company BOSTON TORONTO

*This book is for David, who waited nine years,
and for Susie, Julie, Ellen and Paul Bernstein,
and Bob and Tom and Philip Neches*

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Eighth Printing

ATLANTIC-LITTLE, BROWN BOOKS
ARE PUBLISHED BY
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS

*Published simultaneously in Canada
by Little, Brown & Company (Canada) Limited*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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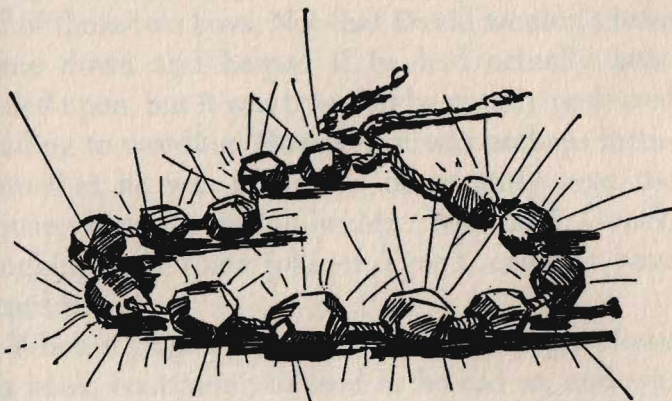
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PART ONE

The Necklace



Questions, Questions, Questions

ON A JUNE AFTERNOON of swinging wind and high scudding clouds, Chuck was down in the garden at 5 Thallo Street helping Mr. Bass pull weeds, and David was up in the observatory reading. Which was pre-cisely, as Tyco Bass would have put it, typical of those two boys. Not that David wouldn't have come down and helped if he had actually been called upon, but it was true that he greatly preferred reading to weeding. However, it was perhaps fortunate that he was up in the observatory near the phone, because certainly Mr. Bass and Chuck, laughing over some joke of Tyco's, couldn't have heard it.

When it began ringing, David slowly put down his book, continuing to read as he did so, and was still lost in the story as he went dreamily across to Mr. Bass's desk. But the instant the voice on the other end of the line came through to him (it was a woman's voice and had an odd, familiar accent), everything else darted right out of his mind.

"Long distance calling — person to person for Mistar Tyco Bass from Mistar Towyn Niog in Llanbedr, Wales. Is this Mistar Tyco Bass speaking?"

David was speechless for an instant, blinking, then:

"No, ma'am, it isn't. But he's right here. Just a second — he's down in the garden. I'll go right —"

"Who is this — who is this — ?" came an impatient male voice. "Tyco? Tyco, we want you *not* to come home just yet. We want —"

"Just a moment, *please*, Mistar Niog," came the female voice. "I'm *trying* to get your party —"

"I'll go right now, ma'am," said David in high, carrying tones as if trying to make himself heard clear across half the world. "Just hold on, please — Mr. Bass will be right up."

Llanbedr! Llanbedr in *Wales*! And Towyn Niog was a member of the Mycetian League of which Mr. Bass was the president, or master. (David had laid the receiver on the desk and was on his way down the steep observatory stairs, two at a time.) Golly, it must be terribly important for Mr. Niog to be calling long distance, and it had sounded as if those people on the other end, David remembered wonderingly, had been right here in Pacific Grove, in California.

"*Mr. Bass — Mr. Bass!*" he began the minute he hit the floor of Tyco's living room. He banged out onto the porch and rattled down the steps, still

shouting at the top of his lungs. "Mr. Bass, it's Mistar Niog in Wales" (David had no idea he was pronouncing "Mistar" in the Welsh way) "and he's calling long distance! He says he wants you *not* to come home, Mr. Bass."

"Yes, David. All right —"

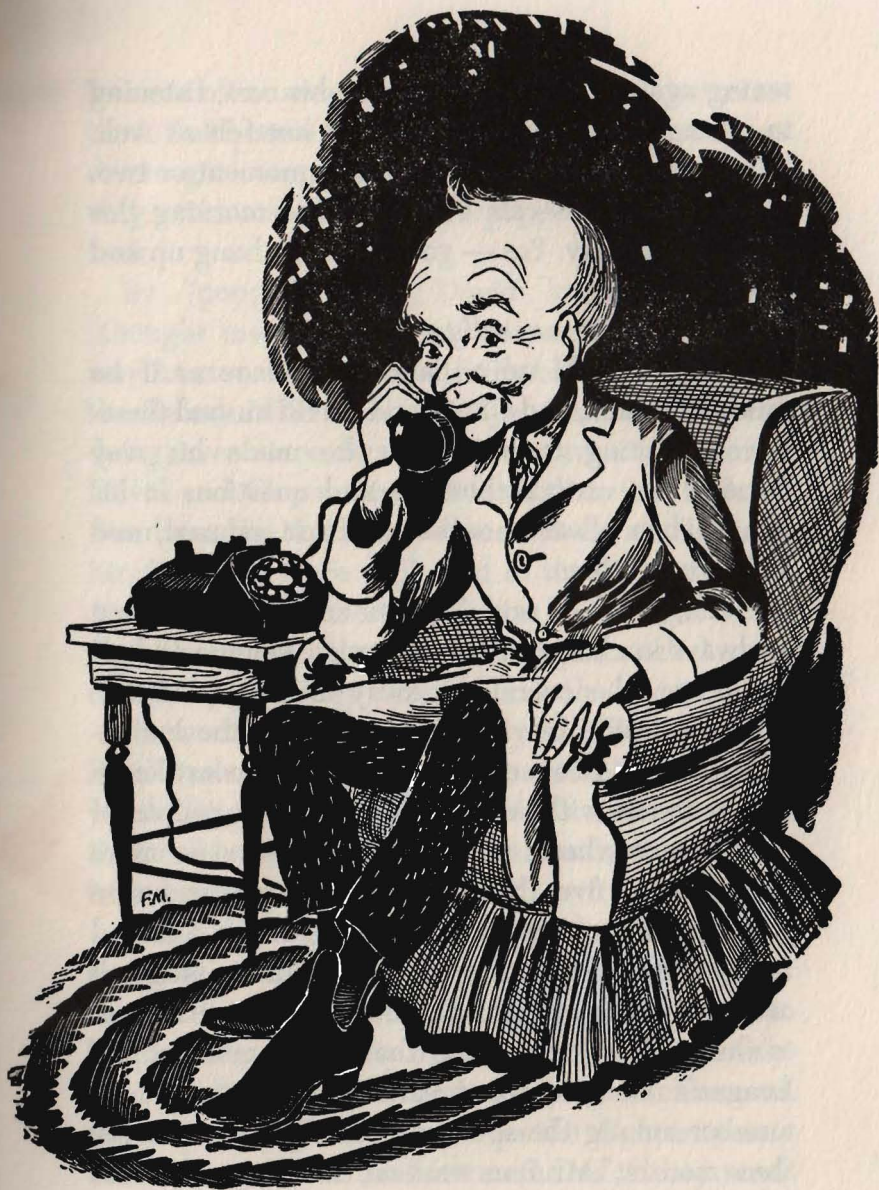
That was Tyco, though he was not in sight from where David stood in the green and gold flecked dimness of the path that led around to the cellar, which was Mr. Bass's workroom. But now Chuck's flushed, dirty face rose out of a thicket just in front of David, and he looked absolutely astonished. He stared about.

"But he was here just a second ago!" Then his face changed abruptly. "Oh, of *course* — he thought himself in to the phone. I keep forgetting —"

At once David turned, sped back along the path, up the porch stairs and into the house again, with Chuck right at his heels and passing him so as to get through the door first. Which he did. He always got places first, as a matter of fact. And there, when they came in, was little Mr. Bass in his gardening coat and elastic-sided boots, sitting in his favorite arm-chair with the downstairs phone at his side, the receiver at his ear and his large, baldish head, with its few wisps of white hair, tilted slightly as he listened with intentness to what Towyn Niog was saying. His eyes, brown with bronze flecks, gazed off into

the distance, but not vaguely. Rather, they seemed to be picturing with precision and clarity all that Mr. Niog was telling him. Or perhaps far more.

"Yes, Towyn, of course, I quite understand. No, no reason whatever why we can't put off the meeting. I still have a good bit of work to do here — my notes for *Random Jottings* are all behindhand and there are one or two puzzling questions that have arisen in my mind in going back over the history of the Mycetians. These I want to discuss at the meeting. Yes, Saturday morning, then, around six or so." He chuckled. "What are all of you up to, anyway? But I won't ask. Just give everyone my best regards, and tell them I shall be there early. Yes, for breakfast. And I think I shall have the boys with me if their families approve. It's high time they saw my old home, don't you think?" He glanced up at the boys and winked, grinning with mischievous delight at their expressions of amazement and at their open mouths. Then he stopped smiling. "You don't think it would be *wise* just now, Towyn! But why not? Is anything wrong?" Tyco listened. "Good heavens, they could occupy themselves in a million ways, and they're very responsible, you know. Yes, I should really like to bring them, Towyn — they're extraordinary boys, as you well know. Tell me, Towyn, are you well? You haven't been sick, have you? You don't sound quite yourself." Now Mr. Bass was lis-



tening again with more than just his ears, listening to what could not only be heard, but felt as well. "That's right, Towyn," he said in a moment or two. "All three of us — six o'clock in the morning this coming Saturday. Yes — good-by." He hung up and looked grave.

"Mr. Bass, are we *really* — ?"

But Tyco held up a hand for silence as if he wanted to think, and Chuck and David hushed themselves, waiting tensely while he made his way through the various thoughts and questions in his mind. Then all at once he sat back, relaxed, and looked up at them.

"Well, now," he said. "As you know, Towyn Niog is always in charge of the Mycetan League and all its doings whenever I am away in Galaxy M 81." Yes, and inside David's head was also the knowledge that the League was a kind of law court keeping in touch with Mycetians (or spore people of earth) everywhere, of which there were no more than around five thousand throughout the entire world. And the purpose of the League was, and had been since time immemorial, to hear and to judge all cases of wrong or injustice done by Mycetians or to them. David knew also that the number of the League's members was invariably thirteen, a lucky number among the spore people. "We meet every three months," Mr. Bass went on, "meetings which, as

I am so often away these days, I cannot always attend. But I came back to earth early this time in order to give my papers here in Pacific Grove some very serious study before I popped over to Llanbedr."

By "popped over," David knew he meant "thought myself over," which was, of course, the way he traveled back and forth between earth and the Galaxy M 81 in Ursa Major. This he had been doing ever since he had blown away right after David and Chuck returned from their first flight to Basidium, the Mushroom Planet. It was at that time, Mr. Bass had since explained to the boys, that the Ancient Ones had bestowed upon him the gift of being able to travel by thought, and had made known to him the work they wanted him to do in M 81.

"How did Mr. Niog know you'd be *here*, Mr. Bass?" asked Chuck. "Don't you usually just think yourself right to Wales when there's a meeting, and then come to Pacific Grove afterwards, if you have time, before going back to M 81?"

"Yes, I do, Chuck. Which is what leads me to suspect that something extremely serious must be afoot, though Towyn was trying to make very light about keeping me away. Very light, indeed — suspiciously so. By calling me here, he was taking no chance of not intercepting me if there was the slightest possibility he could. He made it sound as if they were

concocting some sort of surprise for me over there and didn't want me interrupting before everything was ready."

"Maybe they're planning a birthday party for you," said David eagerly. "Is it your birthday pretty soon?"

Tyco put back his head and burst out laughing.

"A birthday party!" he exclaimed. "Can't you just imagine an old man like me sitting down to a vast birthday cake with hundreds and hundreds of candles on it — and where would I get the breath to blow them all out, and how could I ever make a wish big enough to go with that cake? My goodness, I haven't had a birthday celebration in centuries, though Mycetians do love them. But nobody except you and your families and Theo, because he's my cousin, and the members of the League know when I was born. Very rare spore people of my age — and I'm the oldest one in existence at present, with Cousin Theo next — just cannot go around confessing their years. Someday I must tell you what it has meant in my life, being so terribly old." He smiled at them, then began singing in a minor key:

*Maytime, fairest season,
Loud are the birds, green the groves,
Ploughs in furrow, ox under yoke,
Green is the sea, lands are many-colored.*

*When cuckoos sing on the tops of fine trees,
Greater grows my gloom.
Smoke smarts, sorrow cannot be hidden,
For my kinsmen have passed away.*

"That is what I would sing to myself sometimes before I had grown accustomed to my second hundred years. I used to get so lonely."

"Tell us about it, Mr. Bass," begged David.

"Please?" pressed Chuck. "Do you realize you're our very best friend, and we don't know anything about your life — not really?"

"I will, Chuck, I will — but not just now." And Mr. Bass seemed lost in thought and a little anxious as he got up and went over to the door. "What *could* Towyn be up to! And it was so odd that at first he didn't at all like the idea of my bringing you two to Carn Bassyd."

"Well, why don't you just think yourself over right this second, Mr. Bass," asked Chuck in that downright, direct way he had, "and find out? They haven't any right to keep secrets from you."

Mr. Bass gazed at Chuck in surprise.

"But, Chuck, I have been asked *not* to come — not right now, that is. I wouldn't think of doing such a thing to Towyn as appearing against his wishes, especially when he seems so upset."

"What's Carn Bassyd, Mr. Bass?" David opened

the screen door and they went out on the porch. He wanted to know everything possible about Tyco and had had long, fantastic dreams concerning the events in Mr. Bass's life.

"Goodness, haven't I ever told you? But there are dozens of things I haven't had time to tell you! Carn Bassyd is my home in Wales, built when I was just a boy back in the late 1500's — 1593, to be precise. You see, back in those days, my name was Bassyd, in the Welsh fashion, instead of plain Bass. In fact, my name was Tyco ap Bassyd — Tyco, son of Bass. As for carn, it means 'pile of stones' in Gaelic. And that's just what it is: a pile of stones belonging to the Basses, only I'm the only Bass left, except for Theo. But, of course, Theo's never there and so, long ago, I turned the house over to the Mycetan League for their meeting place, to hold councils and trials. And always, the person I leave in charge of the League — Towyn Niog, of course, right now, as he is my chief assistant — lives there with his wife as caretaker and overseer, because Carn Bassyd is full of treasures of great antiquity — books and carvings and metalwork that have come down to us from our ancestors."

"And *we'll* see them, Mr. Bass?" Imagine, David thought, being allowed to see the private treasures of the Mycetan League!

"Of course you shall — you shall see everything

and hear all about everything. And now, while I get to work on my papers, I think you two had better skip along and find out about Friday. That is the last day of school, isn't it?"

"Yes — yes, it is —"

"Well, good. So you find out if it's all right to come with me. But I imagine, as you've been allowed to travel by space ship on other journeys, your families won't be too concerned about this little jaunt."

Chuck's hazel eyes widened.

"I never thought. But, naturally — we'll go by space ship! Dave, isn't that funny? From here to Wales, just a hop around the globe. And why not?"

"Indeed, why not?" echoed Mr. Bass. "As you said, Chuck, I could simply think myself over. But why should I, when I can go in the company of my two closest friends?"

The boys went on down the stairs and, when David looked back to say good-by, Mr. Bass was still standing on the porch. Just as on that first day they'd met in April of last year, the sun was sending down a golden light through the leaves of the trees above the porch, deepening the tint of Mr. Bass's hands and face — that wise, humorous, youthful face — to the palest possible green.

A Hop, a Skip and a Jump

AT LAST it was Friday, the Friday night before summer vacation, with the stars out and a sliver of moon floating on its back in the sky. Ten minutes of nine, to be precise.

And there, upended on Cap'n Tom's beach, stood the space ship.

It was, without doubt, the most fortunate thing in the world that David's and Chuck's houses were the only two that looked down on that beach. Because here was the cave in which the space ship was hidden when it wasn't over in Mr. Bass's cellar work-room being checked out to see that every smallest part was in absolutely perfect working order. And from this beach the space ship always took off. It was also exceedingly fortunate that the Topmans' property (David's folks) and the Mastersons' property (Chuck's folks) joined together somewhere near the center of the bluffs at the back of the beach and extended the full way round on either hand to where the bluffs met the sea. What could have been more

private? And what more necessary when such unheard-of events as two boys soaring off into space took place every now and then — always after dark, of course.

So far, there had been no really uncomfortable questions concerning strange, thunderous bursts, though one or two neighbors had asked Mrs. Topman at the market on the morning after the last take-off if she had heard anything unusual the night before.

"Why, yes," she had replied brightly, "yes, I believe I did."

"Probably rocket testing over at the missile base," another neighbor had observed, "though it *did* seem much closer than that —"

"It's certainly very odd it was so *loud*," the first woman had gone on, the one who'd brought up the subject in the beginning. "It was as bad as those jets breaking the sound barrier, only this wasn't sudden. It was a kind of gradually increasing roar —"

Chuck grinned when he heard about the questions.

"Grandpop always heads them off into an argument about flying saucers. People are usually either awfully hot for (though not many) or awfully hot against flying saucers, or they just think the whole thing's silly, and Grandpop says that bringing up this subject gets them sidetracked."

Chuck's grandpop, Cap'n Tom, was for. He and Chuck had been having a fine time together, just the two of them, while Chuck's mother and father were away on what was to have been a year-long trip. But when the year had been up in April, the Mastersons had decided to take two more months to finish out their journey around the world. They were due home in a week or so.

At this moment Dr. and Mrs. Topman, Chuck and David and Mr. Bass and Cap'n Tom were all down on the beach around the foot of the space ship where it stood poised and ready for flight. How smoothly and elegantly, like an enormous spindle-shaped shell, it tapered out gradually from the tail section. Its widest girth was almost three-quarters of the way up, where the door and the broad plastiglass window were, then it curved in again to its gleaming nose, long and needle-like, pointing to the heavens as if eager to pierce them.

Nearby stood the four-wheeled carrier on which Cap'n Tom and Dr. Topman had wheeled it down from the cave to a tall rock that rose out of the sand. From this rock David and Chuck and Mr. Bass would climb through the space ship door and into their seats, unless, of course, Mr. Bass should choose some other approach.

Which he did.

One moment he was standing beside Annabelle

Topman. He had just finished checking over the list of things he wanted to take to Wales — several volumes of his *Random Jottings* that covered about ten years, certain other books and papers on ancient languages, various tools, and a can of resinoid silicon sealer in case they needed to coat meteor scars on the exterior of the ship before returning home. He had just answered the last of her mom-like questions about when they'd be back, and would he let her know that they had arrived safely, and did he think the boys had the right clothes for early summer weather in that climate. The next moment he had disappeared and was next to be seen smiling down upon them from inside the space ship.

"Mr. Bass!" cried Annabelle Topman. "Never will I get used to you doing that. I cannot believe that you actually —"

"Astonishing — *absolutely* astonishing!" murmured Dr. Topman, gazing up at the small, merry face under the domed head, as stunned as he had been the only other time Mr. Bass had done this in his presence.

Cap'n Tom said nothing, being quite unable to.

Usually Mr. Bass did not think himself places in front of anyone but David and Chuck, the main reason being that he did not want to get into the habit and disappear some time when strangers were about. But no doubt, with the prospect ahead of



showing the boys his beloved Wales, he was filled with mischievousness and gaiety, and then, too, he had always liked his little jokes. Now he was beckoning.

"Come on, boys, let's get under way. It's two minutes of nine and we're all ready." He disappeared again, but this time only to move over to the controls.

Up the rock, scrambling eagerly, went Chuck and David, and in at the door of the ship. Then they turned and their heads appeared side by side.

"'By, Grandpop. 'By, Dr. and Mrs. Topman —"

"Good-by, Mom and Dad — Cap'n Tom — don't worry about us —"

"Imagine worrying about them after the flights those two have taken," observed Dr. Topman.

"— *and* alone," said Cap'n Tom. He rubbed one reddish-brown hand back and forth through his thatch of thick white hair and stood grinning up at them.

"But I always do worry just a little at first — I can't help it," said Mrs. Topman, waving. "It's such a comfort to know Mr. Bass is with them this time."

The space ship door closed and there was a moment or two of silence while it was bolted shut, making the ship completely airtight. Then Mr. Bass must have pressed the ignition button and pulled back the control stick, for a throbbing roar started up under the tail, at which Dr. and Annabelle Topman and Cap'n Tom moved hastily away. A white-hot bloom of flame began spurting down onto the sand; Dr. Topman said something more, but nobody heard.

Next, the spurting flame, which seemed, all by it-

self, to be pushing the ship slowly aloft, became blinding. Up, up went the ship with the ribbon of flame streaming behind it until, at last, trailing an arc of airy, pinkish-silver light, it soared away over the sea where the arc faded and was lost against the bright-patterned sky.

"They're gone," murmured Mrs. Topman. "They're gone."

"But they'll be back before you know it," and Dr. Topman slid his arm through hers. "Did Tyco say when?"

"No — he wasn't sure."

They turned, and there was Cap'n Tom already pulling the four-wheeled carrier back up the beach to its place in the cave.

David came out of his take-off shock listening. Yes, there it was — and he smiled to himself. Pheep, pheep, pheep! Very softly and regularly. It was the oxygen urn, another of Mr. Bass's inventions, as was the rocket motor they were using, and the space ship fuel with precisely four drops of atomic triteta-methylbenzcarbonethylene in it, and the fluid resinoid silicon sealer which coated the space ship inside and out, making it proof against unscreened cosmic rays, extreme degrees of heat and cold, and against the impact of any meteors that might cross their path. The oxygen urn piped its small cheery whistle:

to let them know this trip had started under a good omen; but how could it possibly have started otherwise with Mr. Bass aboard?

"Mr. Bass!" Something had struck David all at once. "Just think, this is the very first time you've ever come with us. Imagine that, when you were the one who started everything. Here it is, more than a year since Dad first showed me that little green ad you put in the newspaper for two boys to build a space ship, and Chuck and I *did* build one and took it over to 5 Thallo Street —"

"—and everybody's eyes bulged, watching us with it on the way over to your house," went on Chuck with pride. "And you said — I'll never forget what you said — 'What a *beautiful* piece of work — I never in the world expected anything like this. It's far beyond my wildest dreams.' That's what you said."

"Yes, Chuck, so I did," recalled Mr. Bass. "Imagine you remembering! And it *was* — far, far beyond my wildest dreams. All it needed was a little tinkering, then I put in the rocket motor, slipped the fuel tanks into place, and we painted the ship with the sealer. Then —"

"— then off Chuck and I went on our first flight," finished David. Never, *never* would he forget the least thing had happened.

The wonderful flight — that's what it had been.

The wonderful flight to Basidium, the Mushroom Planet. And he and Chuck had gone back twice since then to visit their good friend, Ta, the king of the Mushroom People, and his two little Wise Men, Mebe and Oru, and Ta's subjects and Mr. Theo, Tyco's cousin, who had gone from earth to live on Basidium and teach Ta something of the workings of the universe and to do research with him on the history of the Basidiumites.

David leaned forward, as Chuck was doing, to watch through the broad window of the space ship the dwindling lights of earth, now mere pinpoints, which marked the great cities of the Western Hemisphere. After a little, Mr. Bass turned off the rocket motor and caused the ship to level out into orbit. It was by now far above the atmosphere and still moving at seven miles a second, carried forward through space by that first enormous thrust that had shot it up from the Pacific Coast.

Before them, innumerable suns and far-off galaxies blazed beyond the screen of stars that is the Milky Way, our home galaxy, which our medium-sized sun, out near the edge, Mr. Bass told them, circles once every two hundred and thirty million years.

"Oh, but if only I could show you our galaxy face on instead of edge on! How can I give you any idea of this spiraling sea with veils of light swirling out

from the glowing center and all spangled with globular clusters of stars: the young, hot, new stars — many of them blue giants — and the very ancient red giants, some born at the time the galaxy was just beginning to rotate out of a thin, expanding primeval gas, and then the red dwarfs and white dwarfs — and the tiny, shrunken black dwarfs that are all that are left of exploded suns.”

David thought it sounded like a fairy tale.

“Mr. Bass,” he said in a low voice, “Chuck and I were wondering something the other day. Could you — I mean, if you think we’re — well, *worthy* — would it ever be possible for you to give *us* the gift of traveling by thought?” Now David’s heart was positively bumping, so that he realized he’d had no least notion when he began his question what a preposterous thing he was asking.

Mr. Bass’s long, delicate hand came out and rested lightly on David’s arm.

“That I cannot do, David. This is a power given me by the Ancient Ones, and only because it was necessary in their view for me to be able to travel back and forth between M 81 and earth. Apparently they thought it valuable for me to carry on my work in both places. I have known of very few Mycetians to whom the Ancient Ones have given this privilege, and the first one was my great-great-great-multiple-great grandfather, whom I have always called Elder

Grandfather. He was the founder and first master of the Mycetan League back in King Arthur's time. I shall tell you about him one of these days."

"Mr. Bass," ventured Chuck, "if you can think yourself around to different places the way you do, couldn't you just think yourself into Towyn Niog's thoughts so you wouldn't have to wonder what the trouble is at Carn Bassyd?"

Mr. Bass seemed shocked.

"I would never think of going into someone else's mind, Chuck, even if I could. I don't know if I can, but it would be wicked. I can sense what another person is thinking and I have very strong, usually correct hunches — as when I feel, clear off in M 81, that you and Chuck need me, or the League needs me. But that is all."

"But how do you travel by thought, Mr. Bass?" persisted Chuck, who always liked to know just how things worked.

"Can you go *anywhere*?" David asked.

"Answer to first question first," said Mr. Bass. "How do I travel by thought? I don't really know, any more than you know exactly how you think. You simply do it. I *see* the place I want to be in, or at, or on, and I am there. As for being able to go anywhere, David, if I cannot see the place, if I have never been there, then I can't go. However, if the Ancient Ones wish me to go to a certain place in the

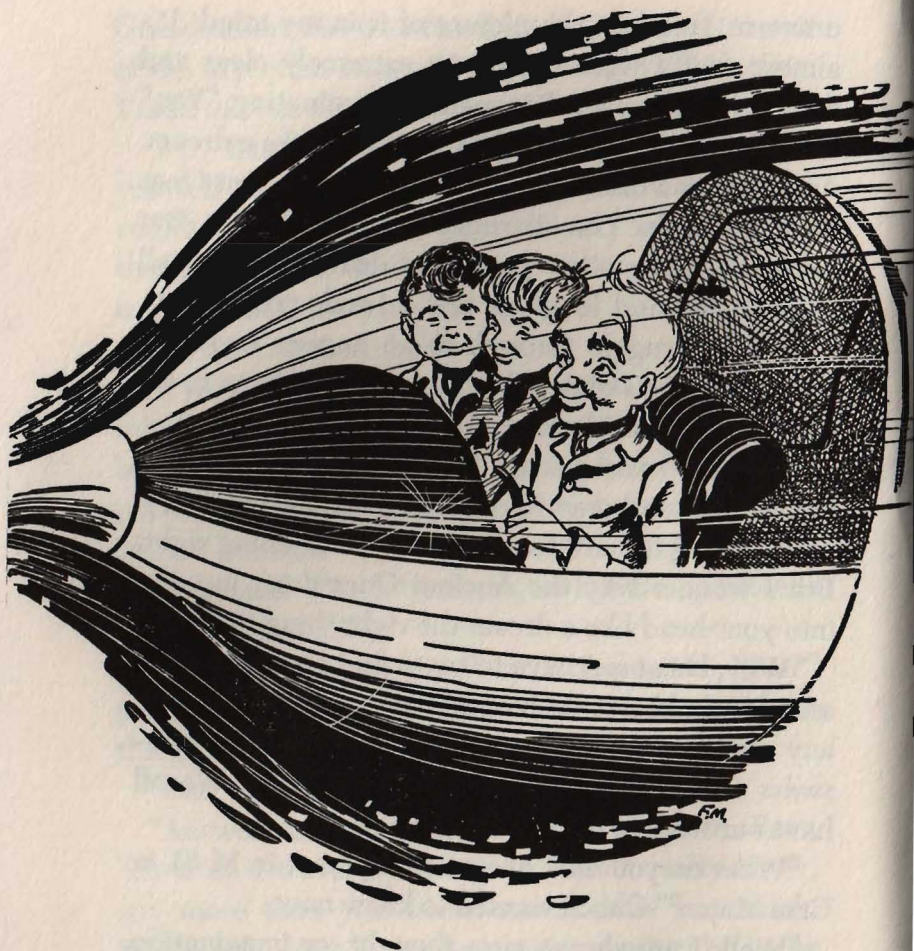
universe, they put the picture of it in my mind. It's almost as if I were having an extremely clear and detailed dream." Mr. Bass paused, ruminating. "Yes," he said, "that's precisely the way it is — like a dream. And, as if in a dream, I know what the Ancient Ones want me to do. The instructions are very clear. But because I have other people to deal with, and all *their* wishes and longings and refusals and doubts, I have to struggle through to an answer myself. I would never *make* people do anything. I have to try to find out what is best to do."

"So then," said David, "so then, if there's some awful mess at home in Wales when we get there, you're going to have to try to make everything right. But I wonder why the Ancient Ones don't just put into your head like a dream the right thing to do."

"Why, because I have to try to find an answer myself. It would not do me, or the Mycetan League, any earthly good to be simply handed the right answers or to be pushed around like pawns. We all have our work to do."

"What do you *look* like on that planet in M 81 in Ursa Major?" Chuck wanted to know now.

"Well, I am almost pure thought, or imagination — or, more nearly, a mixture of the two. You, as you are now, Chuck, would not be able to see me, or any of my companions. But when I come here again, I am — as you know — in my earthly body with



clothes on it as I last was on this world." Mr. Bass smiled at them. "All questions answered?"

"All but one," said Chuck. "Remember when you blew away, right after we got back from our first

flight to Basidium? What did you feel like? Did you know what was going to happen to you, that you were going to begin traveling by thought?"

"Did you say one question, Chuck? Well, perhaps they are, really, all one. You will recall I told you at that time that I knew I was about to have the most important appointment of my life. I knew somehow that the Ancient Ones had work for me to do, but I did not know what work, nor where. And so when, moved by some strange impulse, I went out into the wind and looked up into the sky, I had a feeling that I was about to leave earth and I was happy and peaceful that I had left my affairs in good order. Then — away I went, lifted up, up, as if by the wind, but I knew it was a greater power than the wind trying to teach me something I had never experienced before.

"At first I was hollow with loneliness, for it seemed to me that surely I had been cast adrift forever in the vast reaches of space. And even after I found myself in my new home on a little planet in a solar system in the galaxy of M 81 in Ursa Major, it was as if I were a blurred picture of Tycho Bass trying to become clear again. I couldn't seem to get focused — I couldn't get my 'me' focused. And when I first used to travel by thought, it exhausted me because I was trying so hard to help my mind and my imagination (because they work together) do something

they can do quite easily by themselves. But no longer — no longer. Now I am focused very clearly and I can do whatever I have to do.”

“Thanks, Mr. Bass,” said Chuck solemnly. “That’s all the questions, at least for now. Golly, it’s staggering. What if the members of the Society of Young Astronomers and Students of Space Travel knew the things we talk about, and what if Miss Pilchard, our teacher at school, knew? Boy, and she thinks *she* knows so much!”

“Do you suppose,” said David, “that you could come to school with us some time and meet Miss —”

But just as he spoke, a ray of sun like a sudden needle flashed past the black curve of the world. In only half an hour they had orbited to where morning was beginning to break, so that the earth appeared to be wearing, on the edge of night, a crescent of palest blue.

“You must put your watches forward eight hours,” said Mr. Bass, “from ‘twenty-eight minutes past nine, which is the time right now back on the Pacific Coast of America, to twenty-eight minutes past five, which is the time right now in Wales. We shall land at five-thirty precisely.”

Just as the boys were in the midst of spinning the hands on their watches forward, the auto-reversatron in the bowels of the space ship began working. Slowly the constellations began to tilt and swim un-

til the tail of the ship pointed earthward. Now Mr. Bass turned on the rocket motor again and the throbbing roar started up, signaling the spurting of that white-hot energy which was thrusting once more against the gravitational pull of earth. But it was a far weaker thrust this time than the one that had sent them upward at a speed which had reached seven miles a second, because all that was needed now was a brake to their fall.

As they entered the atmosphere, a soft light flooded the interior of the ship. The sun's rays were being broken up and scattered by the blanket of earth's air, and the air, as it became denser, turned blue. But as they neared earth and were hidden from the rising sun, it was the dim light of early dawn touched to a faint rosiness in the east that seeped in the window as the space ship settled with a soft jolt.

Mr. Bass turned off the rocket motor and then — what silence, what deep, pulsing silence dropped around them, except for the small pheeping of the oxygen urn. But only for an instant. Suddenly a flood of bird song burst on their ears and, as it began, Mr. Bass lifted his head as if happy to hear it.

"What bird is that, Mr. Bass?"

"The stormcock, David. Did you ever hear such a song? How I have always loved him!"

"Will there be a storm, do you think?"

"Not in the air, no. We're not in for a rain. But

there will be another kind of storm, and I hope you two are bursting with energy, because you're going to need it if I'm to judge by the pricking in my thumbs. Now, Chuck — back you go and turn off the oxygen urn, and we'll be on our way down the Roman Steps to Carn Bassyd."

Mr. Bass Peppers His Tea

THE ROMAN STEPS! David could hardly believe that at last he was going to behold with his own eyes that flight he had seen in his dreams, and climbed in his dreams, ever since Mr. Bass had first described them.

Out he jumped with his satchel of clothing, and when he landed on the thick, springy turf of this upland meadow — coomb, Mr. Bass would have called it — he thought it was rather like jumping onto the surface of Basidium, it was so cushiony and damp-smelling.

He stared up and found that they had landed on a small, intensely green pocket in a mist-wound, savage tumble of crags and boulders. Ramparts of bare rock swept upward on every side, and as the gray mists moved and changed, a golden stain began spreading in the east; now one of the crags began turning pink on its eastern face. To David, it seemed they must be alone on the naked summit of the

world, and when he heard a raven's call, it sounded among the crags like the voice of loneliness itself.

Then Mr. Bass was at his elbow, having floated down light as a spore in his bird-bones and his fragile flesh, clasping books and papers in one arm and the latest volume of *Random Jottings* in the other.

"Don't forget the other *Random Jottings*, Chuck," he called up. "Those three volumes I took out of the box. I have an idea I'll need them."

"I'm *hungry*," announced Chuck, landing rather more solidly with his zipper bag and Tyco's notebooks. "What are these mountains?" He squinted up at the naked crags. "Are you sure we've landed in Wales, Mr. Bass, and not on some asteroid?"

"Quite sure, Chuck. These are the Rhinogs, and if you have big wide eyes with you, look, then, for this has been the heartland of the Mycetians since time beyond telling."

They followed Mr. Bass across the tussocky little coomb and, as they walked, three lapwings tumbled above them uttering plaintive cries, and the flanks of the crags, where the mists were burning away, were turning rosy one by one. First they got into heather up to their knees, then it thinned and they were about to enter a murky little wood of oak and beech when Tyco suddenly put his hand on David's arm and turned him about.

"What do you see?" he asked.

"Why, the meadow, Mr. Bass, with the space ship sitting over there, and rocks sticking up out of the grass, and yellow flowers —"

"You know," said Mr. Bass, "I have the strangest feeling about this place, though I haven't been here for almost a century — in this particular spot in the Rhinogs, I mean."

"Why did we land here and not close to Carn Bas-syd?" asked Chuck.

"Because the inhabitants of the village below my home are just as capable of being frightened out of their wits as the people near your beach in Pacific Grove. I've never come down onto Wales like this before."

They turned and went into the wood, and when they came out of it into a steep and narrow defile on the mountainside, there at their feet, winding away crookedly toward the sky on the one hand and crookedly downward on the other, lay the Roman Steps.

"Two thousand of them," Mr. Bass said. "Great slabs of rock that climb from a little lake near my home right up over the mountain pass, put here by what hands, and when, no human knows. Which is curious, indeed," said Tyco, smiling, "for the Welsh have the longest memories in the world, so that to them six or seven hundred years are nothing."

Long, long before the Romans came, Mr. Bass had

told them once, the Mycetians were going up and down these steps to and from a certain place up there where you turn off into a hidden path that leads to the Mycetian burying ground — a burying ground that has been in existence for thousands of years, and which no human creature can ever find alone nor may ever be shown.

David turned and stared up through the dark passage to where the rough slabs of the stairway tilted into the mists. And perhaps it was the height of the crags making him dizzy, or the wineyness of the air turning him lightheaded, but he could have sworn he saw, just there above him, a ghostly little band of figures no taller than Mr. Bass wending their way into nothingness. And suddenly he felt himself as bird-boned and spore-begotten as they, completely at one with them and privileged to follow wherever they might go.

“Chuck and I will be shown, though, won’t we, Mr. Bass?” he said happily. “We’ll see the burying ground —”

“No, David, never — being what you are. Not even I can ever lead you there. Or rather, I *could*, but I *may* not.”

Mr. Bass and Chuck turned and began the descent again. And for the first time, perhaps because he had felt very close to Tyco on this journey, David knew himself bereft and ordinary, overwhelmed by



the fact that he was not and never could be Mycetan. No matter how many things Tyco might tell him and Chuck that he would tell no other humans, their difference lay between them, bottomless and uncrossable.

Mr. Bass drifted lightly down in his small, old-fashioned boots as if he were being puffed along, and Chuck skipped and leaped from one crooked slab to the next. *He* was bursting with joy and eagerness, talking about food and asking Tyco what he thought Mrs. Niog might be cooking for their breakfast.

They left the Roman Steps and came to a small lake sitting under the dark mountain. Its name was Cwm Bychan (Cum Buck-an, Mr. Bass pronounced it), all surrounded by heather and bilberry and hart's-tongue, and ferns sprouting from the rocks, and woodland and pasture. Now they were following a tumbling river, the Artro, Mr. Bass said it was, and that the name always put him in mind of Artos, the Bear, the great King Arthur himself — praise be to him! — just as if King Arthur had died only yesterday. Then they saw smoke rising from another little wood of birch and larch and mountain oak, and —

“There it is, there it is!” cried Mr. Bass. “Still with a chimney about its ears, at any rate, despite the sound of Towyn’s voice, trying its best to be merry.”

They came around a bend in the path and there, some way beyond a herd of black Angus standing up to their bellies in a pond of river water, stood Carn Bassyd. David devoured it with his eyes so as never to forget: Mr. Bass's boyhood home and now the center of the Mycetian League, to which Mycetians came from all over the world. A carn, right enough, it was — a great old heap of stone, built of rough-hewn slate blocks and rather squarish and high, with two big chimneys, one at the front and the other toward the back.

Chuck, as usual, was running on ahead.

"What's that up on the porch, Mr. Bass? Do you have a dog? But it looks queer, the way it's lying up there. I don't think it's a dog —"

"Oh!" said Mr. Bass sadly. "No, Chuck, it's my lovely dog fox, and he's dead. Now, that's a shame. I thought he and I had come to an agreement that he'd let our hens be, but someone's gone and shot him — Towyn, I expect — and so I take it he did *not* let our hens be." On the porch of the Carn, where the dog fox lay, Mr. Bass leaned down and ran a gentle hand over the narrow, snowy muzzle, then up over the red head and down the beautiful, red-gold back. "Warm. Not long shot. Tchh! This is bad — this is very, very bad." Tyco straightened and gave a couple of raps with the big brass knocker that hung on the tremendously ancient-looking grained

and knotted oaken door, then opened the door and stepped aside for Chuck and David to go in over the bright copper doorsill. "Morfa, my little one," he called, "there is good it smells — your new-baked barley bread — and it's for breakfast, surely? We're here, my friends David Topman and Chuck Master-son, with great appetites in us like sea eagles. Have you some cawl for me, Morfa?"

The delectable fragrance of bread fresh from the oven came wafting about their noses. David, going in, saw polished oak dressers and chests and settles, all a warm brown, and a grandfather clock and a great shining gold harp about six feet tall standing nearby. And there was an enormous stone fireplace at one end of the room with bookshelves on each side filled top to bottom with books, and a stone staircase at the other end of the room. He saw arched beams up above, flying across from one side of the lofty ceiling to the other, with a gallery or balcony partway down and doors opening off of it. And he saw richly carved doorways around him and a high carved screen separating this room from the one beyond. From the other room came a glad cry.

"Tycol!" There was a rush of feet across the flagged floor, and a little apple-faced woman no taller than Mr. Bass came running, wiping her hands on a towel and then holding them out to him. "Oh,

there is good it is you're here, Tyco! Towyn's just back and he's not well, see, for he *would* go to find what could be done, but there was useless it was, as I was telling him before he left this place, and he just up from his old bed with a voice like a little craik on him from the bad throat he had — wandering in the night, he was, talking, driven out of his mind with worry at what you will be saying —” Mrs. Niog grasped both Mr. Bass's hands in her own two, looking as if she would burst into tears. Then she recovered herself when Tyco introduced Chuck and David and held out a hand to each of them. “There is much I have heard from the League what dear friends you are of our Tyco Bass. Therefore let you be home where our home is. Come you, now, and speak to Towyn, the poor man, and have to eat.”

She turned, in her starched apron, and led them through the door in the carved screen into what was plainly the kitchen, for here was a big black stove with a shining brass kettle on it, which was singing away to itself. And here was another tremendous fireplace, only this had a nice fire going in it, and there were hams hanging from the rafters, and sides of bacon with salt glistening on them, and a great long trestle table laid ready for breakfast with bowls on it and jugs, one filled with mountain flowers, and in the midst a wooden slab with a mound of golden

butter sitting there all dewy. From the stove there was commencing to be a sputtering and the rich, deep, spicy smell of sausages frying.

Mistress Niog settled Chuck and David on one side of the table facing the fire and Mr. Bass on the other, and she was just starting to spoon batter onto a large griddle when a door to the right of the fireplace opened and let somebody in.

It scarcely seemed possible, but this somebody, David saw, was Towyn Niog, the man he and Chuck had last beheld as prosecutor at a trial held by the Mycetan League back in Pacific Grove in judgment upon a most stubborn Mycetan. Yet *could* this pitifully pale, red-eyed, hollow-templed, round-shouldered small person, wrapped hastily in a dressing gown with one side all hiked up, be that same grim-faced individual with the heavy black brows who had sat to the left of Mr. Bass at the judgment table, shooting one stern question after another at the accused?

Yes, it was Mr. Niog, all right, and David had the strangest feeling of Fate coming round full circle. And Chuck must have gotten the same feeling because he gave David a jab in the ribs that said as plain as plain, "Oh, boy — *now* look who's scared!"

"Tyco," ventured a trembling voice, and Towyn came shuffling over the flagstones in his slippers and sank down at the table by the side of David without

taking any notice of the boys. "Tyco, you will not be forgiving me — not in time without end will you be finding it in your heart to forgive me, for there is an incredible thing I have done — a shocking, unheard of thing and how shall I be telling you about it?"

"First one word and then another, Towyn," said Mr. Bass.

Towyn buried his face in his hands, and Mistress Niog came over with a platter of steaming griddle cakes and then with a platter of golden-brown sausages. She filled one jug with milk and the other with berry syrup, and put a bowl of broth in front of Mr. Bass that smelled of bacon and was decorated, would you believe it, with marigold blossoms floating on the top! Could *that* be cawl? wondered David.

Towyn lifted his heavy head and regarded the boys for the first time, as they busily buttered and syruped their griddle cakes and helped themselves to sausages.

"If I am to tell, they must go," he said harshly.

"On the contrary," said Mr. Bass, beginning to sip his cawl and speaking with the greatest firmness, "they are to stay, Towyn. I have a feeling, not to be denied, that they must hear everything, and for a good purpose."

"I have no way of knowing what you mean, Tyco. But so be it. Two weeks ago this very morning,"

Towyn began in a low voice, "I went into the Council Room to look at one of the legs of the council table which is beginning to loosen. This leg I had been meaning to do something about for a month or more — namely, calling in old Penmaen Parry to fix it. At the same time I thought of a paper I was wanting to consult in the treasure chest. But when I went to unlock it, there was surprised I was to find that the lock would not work, and I could not figure out if it was the lock itself had gone amiss, or the key worn down after these fifteen hundred years —"

"Fifteen hundred years!" gasped the boys in a single voice.

"One or several of the notches worn to the place," went on Towyn, "where they could no longer turn the lock, which is very complex, see, and not one you would be finding on any box or door or chest for a score of centuries. But Penmaen could be taking care of *both* the leg and the old lock, for he has a kind of uncanny magic in his fingers to be fixing any manner of thing made of wood or metal. And so —" here Towyn drew a long, quavering breath and swallowed, "I called him, and he came with his little bag of tools by him, and his little case that opens out and is all filled with bottles of stain and wax and varnish and paint, and polishing cloths and camel's hair brushes, and I took him into the Council Room — but what *else* could I be doing, Tyco, even if he is

one of the Other Ones?" cried Towyn desperately.

"Not a Mycetian, Mr. Niog means," explained Tyco. "But it is quite true that no one else around here could do the job. I knew Penmaen's parents before he was born, and he is a fine, gifted, honest old man and I would trust him anywhere, with anything."

Mistress Niog brought more griddle cakes and sausages, poured Mr. Bass a cup of tea, then sat down and gazed at her husband.

"I took Penmaen into the Council Room," continued Towyn, "and there was mad he was over that table — completely mad. Made in such a way as he'd never seen a table made in his life, and it would last until the sun went dead. Next he saw the treasure chest, and he bent down and stared at the lock and there was something in the eyes of Penmaen then as if he could have nursed it in his hands, that old lock. And I got out my keys and was trying to show him how it would not work any longer, when there came such a cackling and a cawing and a squawking from the hen house that I said to myself it was the dog fox come again, and I rushed from that old room and there was *no* dog fox, and *no* hens missing, only a sea eagle riding the winds overhead, so I hunted about for a bit, and when I got back —" Towyn groaned and then lifted his eyes to meet Mr. Bass's, "when I got back, Tyco, our scroll was gone

from the chest and — and the necklace of Ta as well, and so was old Parry and he has not been seen or heard of since.”

For the first time since they had known him, Chuck and David saw Mr. Bass struck absolutely speechless, and so shocked that, with his mind wholly absorbed by Mr. Parry, he drew forward his cup and began industriously peppering his tea.

“Penmaen!” he exclaimed with the greatest sorrow in his voice. “Oh, my poor old Penmaen!”



Towyn Eats His Words

“**M**R. Bass — not pepper!” cried David.

But Mr. Bass seemed not to hear. He put down the pepper pot and Mistress Niog took away his tea.

“Have you told the League, Towyn?”

“No, no, Tyco, I have not. I *couldn't*.”

“Well, at least,” said Mr. Bass, “there has been no chance, then, of news of the theft leaking out and complicating things generally. We cannot have Penmaen being picked up by the police because, after all, what he has done he cannot help —”

“Can’t *help*!” exploded both the boys.

“Can’t help,” repeated Tyco calmly. “I will tell you why later. Now, Towyn, you’ve been to Penmaen’s house, of course —”

“Yes, I went running like a madman from here to Penmaen’s place immediately I discovered the theft, but no one was there and there has not *been* anyone there from that day to this.”

“Have you got in touch with his Cardiff relatives, Towyn? Have they seen or heard from him?”

"That's where I've *been*, Tyco. But they know nothing of him — haven't heard from him in months, they said. So then back I came and sick in my bed I was with worry and fever for almost a week, then got up and phoned you, Tyco — then hurried away to Penmaen's people in London, but nothing there either. They've not heard from him in years. There is lost to sight he is, Tyco — lost with our treasures. There will be nothing for it now but to put the police onto him —"

"That we will not do, Towyn," returned Mr. Bass quietly and sternly. "He is *not* a thief in the ordinary sense of the word. Now, one more thing before I leave to speak to the Cardiff relatives. Did Penmaen take our keys, too? You must have left the keys when you heard the chickens, else Penmaen couldn't have opened the chest."

"Yes, Tyco — yes, I did. He had them in his hand — he was working with them at the lock when I turned and ran out. But here they are," and Towyn drew from his pocket a large ring heavy with keys and put them before Mr. Bass. "He took nothing — nothing at all but the scroll and the necklace. And such a state I have been in all these days that when I saw the dog fox from the window just a little bit ago, trotting out of the wood, I took up my old gun and shot him for all the bad luck he had caused me,

thinking it was him at the chickens. And it was such a curious thing, Tyco — when I leaned from the window with my gun lifted, he only stood and stared at me as if he did not think it could be him I was aiming at, and there was a heavy hand on my heart when I killed him, though I can't think why."

"Well, we had a pact, he and I. But what is done is done and it is a great pity" — with which Tyco vanished, only to reappear almost immediately. "A thought," he said. "While I am away, Chuck and David, I should like you to go down to Dai Ellis, the Garage, and rent a car for one week. We shall be starting out the moment I get back, because while the power of Ta's necklace on poor Mr. Parry will be bad enough, heaven knows what will happen should the necklace, or any of the stones, get into anyone else's hands. Here is the money — I believe that will be about right. Tell Dai we'll call for the car later."

But at Tyco's words, Towyn got up and leaned with both hands on the table, staring at Mr. Bass.

"The *boys* and you! These Other Ones? But why will you be delaying yourself with these slow, bumbling humans when you can flit from place to place in the flick of a thought?"

"Towyn," said Mr. Bass, "I wager you will have cause to take back that accusation before our adventure is over. Now, Morfa, my little one, will you be

packing food and blankets, please, and whatever other articles you think handy for a journey in which inns might not always be practical."

"That I will be doing, Tyco."

"Very well, then —" and once again Tyco disappeared.

When they set off for the village, David could see Chuck was seething with fury.

"Slow and bumbling!" he burst out the minute they'd shut the door. "*Bumbling* — and after all *he* didn't do after he'd discovered the robbery, which shouldn't have happened in the first place. *Didn't* call Mr. Bass — *didn't* get the League together —"

"Well, he couldn't have called Mr. Bass, not right away, because Mr. Bass wasn't back on earth yet," pointed out David reasonably. "But, Chuck, what do we care about Towyn Niog? *We're* going to have an adventure."

Tyco reappeared about an hour later, during which time the boys rented a nice little blue Austin from Dai Ellis, the Garage, down in the village, and explored a ring of stones they found in a meadow on the mountainside. Mistress Niog said those stones were all that remained of an ancient beehive hut built by the mountain people who had lived in this place in prehistoric times.

"There are remains like that all through the

mountains of Wales," she told them. "The past is very near us — the entire land of Wales is thick and murmuring with it, and especially is it very near to Tyco because of his age and because of the kind of person he is."

"But Mrs. Niog — beehive huts. Do you mean they were kind of igloo-shaped?" asked Chuck.

"Well, now, you could say that perhaps they were — rounded, so —" and she made a motion of her hand.

"But that's what the houses on Basidium are like," said David.

She gave the boys a look.

"There is a haunting thing it is to me that you two humans have seen what none of the League has seen. Just to think — the ancient beehive huts of Wales so like the houses on that little planet! There is strange it is." She was wrapping a cheese to put in the basket of food she was packing.

"Yes," said Tyco, appearing beside them, "There is strange, indeed, Morfa, that they are both rather igloo-shaped, you might say."

Chuck and David jumped at the suddenness of his voice, and Tyco chuckled. But Mistress Niog turned and gazed at him with serenity.

"Everything is ready, see, Tyco. There is all your food in this basket, and your blankets and everything else piled on the table. Go you now, and say

good-by to poor Towyn before you will be leaving."

"But first, Mistar Bass," said Chuck, his hazel eyes glinting, "there is something you might be wanting to read in the Barmouth newspaper our Daffyd and me found down at Dai Ellis's."

Mistress Niog burst out laughing and roughed up Chuck's already rough hair.

"Listen to the boy — speaking in the Welsh way, and he with us only two hours or so!"

Tyco took the newspaper, glanced down to where David pointed, was silent for an instant, then began reading aloud with the most intense interest.

"'Mushrooms Key to New Health Theory' — listen to this, Morfa. 'Dr. Evan Treadwelly, noted physician of our city, stated yesterday that he is convinced that mushrooms are the key to health and that he intends developing a mushroom farm as soon as possible. His researches during the past two weeks have proved to him, he says, that since ancient times the most amazing cures have been obtained by the use of mushrooms. Only through a detailed knowledge of these growths, he says, will he be able to determine what kind of mushroom is the cure for any given ailment, or if many different kinds of mushrooms contain the same germ-fighting chemicals. Dr. Treadwelly, until just two weeks ago, had a most successful medical practice in this



city. He plans now, however, to abandon it entirely. There have been many expressions of concern among his friends and colleagues that he should be willing to give up his practice after only two weeks of re-

search into a most complex subject.' ” Tyco looked up, his face alight. “*Ex-cellent*, boys! *Ex-cellent*! Just what made you bring this to me?”

“I don’t really know,” said David, vastly puzzled. “First we read it because of the mushrooms — we’re always interested in them. Then that two weeks sort of struck us, because it’s been just exactly two weeks, Mr. Niog said, since Mr. Parry ran off. All the same, I don’t understand.”

Mr. Bass beamed. “Towyn!” he cried. “Towyn, just you wait till you see what our poor, slow, bumbling humans have brought back from Dai Ellis’s.” But already Towyn was at the door and coming forward, his curiosity too strong entirely to keep him cooped in his bedroom. “Take back your words, Towyn! Take ’em back. Right here,” and Mr. Bass tapped the paper, “right here is the first leg of our journey — to Barmouth. And the boys have determined it.”

Towyn’s eyes swept the column in an instant or two, then he gazed up at Chuck and David.

“Of *course*,” he breathed. “But of *course*.”

“Do you eat your words, Towyn?”

“Oh, I do. Indeed I do. Good work, my friends — I congratulate you.”

David swallowed his bewilderment and now Mistress Niog piled Tyco’s arms with blankets, and the boys got the big basket between them, and good-bys

were said, and fervent wishes expressed for good luck on the journey. Towyn and Morfa waved and waved to them from the front door as they set out for the village, and then, as soon as he could, David turned to Mr. Bass.

"But *what* does a silly old doctor raising mushrooms for sick people have to do with Mr. Parry?"

"He's not silly, David," said Mr. Bass. "Foolishness is not his trouble."

Collapsed

WHAT AN ASTONISHING THING it was to see Mr. Bass driving a car. Though why it should have been, David couldn't imagine, when he had looked perfectly natural in command of the space ship. But then a space ship was somehow much more magical and other-worldly-seeming than an automobile.

"— and it's lucky we got a little car, isn't it, Mr. Bass, so you can reach the brake and the gas pedal. Now, please begin telling."

"Well," said Mr. Bass, "first of all you must know that Cousin Theo has finally managed to build himself a space ship about the size of yours, so that once I gave him the formula for atomic tritetramethylbenzcarbonethylene, he was able to come to earth from Basidium for the last meeting of the League, at which time he presented our members with a gift from Ta — one of his necklaces of Basidiumite jewels, which are taken from the Hall of the Ancient Ones —"

"Just like the necklace Ta gave Chuck and me the first time we went to Basidium?"

"Well, David, almost like that, with the little symbols in ancient Basidiumite carved on each of the stones. Second, you should know that the scroll Penmaen has taken is the only one we have left of what was once a set of thirteen scrolls, which are a history, so legend goes, of the Mycetians from far, far back up to the year the scrolls were written. What has happened to the other twelve, no one has any idea, but the one scroll we possess has been treasured by the League for many centuries, and has always been kept in our treasure chest as long as I can remember."

"Can you read the scroll, Mr. Bass?" Chuck wanted to know.

"No, Chuck, I cannot, though I have puzzled over it time and time again. Somehow, the characters remind me vaguely of the little signs or symbols carved on the stones of Ta's necklaces. Some of these I know the meaning of, because the meanings have come down by word of mouth in Ta's royal family. But they do not help me at all with the scroll.

"Now, about Penmaen Parry and his theft, which he could not help. For a long time Penmaen has been fascinated by ancient languages, and did a great deal to help in the deciphering of ancient Hit-

tite. Actually, the translating of ancient languages is now Penmaen's passion, rather than antique locks and furniture.

"Which leads us directly to the theft. Once Penmaen was left with Towyn's keys, it was perfectly natural for him to start fiddling with the lock. Being Penmaen, he was no doubt able to open the chest at once — and what did he see? An obviously time-worn roll of parchment, palely scribbled in some language he had never set eyes on before. And what next did he see? A necklace of such incredibly beautiful stones as are simply not to be found on earth, and carved with more strange signs, perhaps some sort of hieroglyphs, he may have thought.

"Now he picked up the necklace — and in the same instant was determined to keep it and to decipher the language of the scroll. Having so determined, he was quite lost to reason and conscience, and snatched up the scroll and ran. With all the cunning of a man absolutely stubborn and desperate in his purpose — almost unbalanced you might say — he got himself quickly and secretly out of the neighborhood and has not been heard of since.

"Now, *why*, you will ask, would a hitherto decent, upright, respectable old man do such a thing? *Because of the power of Ta's necklace.* I do not know how this power works. I know only the results of stealing the stones, which is to deepen and

strengthen any passion or obsession a person might have, and even to give it some new and strange twist. Only Ta is privileged to give his necklace away. But should the necklace be stolen, or any of its stones, the results are appalling, as I have heard from Ta's own lips. So you see what has happened to our good old Penmaen — and to the doctor!"

Now Mr. Bass turned left onto the coast road and, as he drove at a surprisingly good speed, it was not long before they were looking down over rolling, wooded hills onto an intensely blue estuary that penetrated like a finger into their greenness. Enormous cloud shadows swept over hills and water, then the sun was out again, turning the blue of the estuary into innumerable sparkling points.

"That town right down there is Barmouth," said Mr. Bass. "And it may be we'll be crossing the bridge over yonder to the other side of the estuary if Penmaen has left."

Twenty minutes later, after looking in a telephone book for Dr. Treadwelly's address, they were parking in front of a neat cottage sitting behind a beautifully kept garden. You had a feeling that someone loved every plant in it.

"Mrs. Treadwelly?" questioned Tyco when the door was opened by a sad-faced little woman who gazed at Tyco and then at the boys. "I am Tyco Bass and these are my friends, Chuck Masterson and Da-

vid Topman. We are inquiring after Mistar Penmaen Parry, and are wondering if —”

But the moment Tyco spoke that name, David thought Mrs. Treadwelly (if so she was) might be going to close the door. Indeed, it seemed that only courtesy stopped her. How her faced changed! It became flushed and frightened and indignant all at once, and her lips trembled.

“*Penmaen Parry* — !” she repeated in a stifled voice.

“Yes, Mrs. Treadwelly. And if I could speak to you for a few minutes — if I could speak to your husband — I am quite certain I can help you. I have a very good idea you need help.”

With a look of amazement on her face, Mrs. Treadwelly asked them to come in and then excused herself for a moment to put on the kettle, for surely Mistar Bass would be wanting some tea. Then she sat down and gazed at Tyco, her blue eyes filled with tears.

“There is terrible it is — *terrible!*” she burst out. She put her hand to her mouth for a moment before she could go on, and the tears welled over. “A friend of my husband’s all these years, Penmaen has been. And when he came to the door two weeks ago, with a wild, desperate look about him, we thought he was sick and wanted to put him to bed at once. But, no — he will not go to bed, he says, then calmed down

seeing we were so worried, and explained he had work to do and could he stay for a while in the spare bedroom.

“In no time at all we knew he hadn’t a shilling — not a penny, not a ha’penny — and he kept looking in the newspapers for something, and he would jump when people came to the door. He had something hidden in an old black leather bag he had with him, and finally, after two days, he said he must go the very next morning and he came out of the spare bedroom with a necklace, a great rope of stones it was, but such terrible, frightening stones as I have never seen in my life — dreadful, strange colors and all changing and bright and dark all the time, and carved with little outlandish pictures, you might say.

“Well, Mistar Bass, Evan’s never cared a tin farthing for stones or jewels, see, but because Penmaen was needing the money, he bought one — two pounds, he gave, and there was a great hollow in my insides I had when I saw him do it. Oh, and then something devilish happened, Mistar Bass. No sooner had my poor Evan given over the money and put the stone in his pocket, than he sank back in his chair as if he’d been hit on the head and said not a word for almost an hour. And then he began talking about mushrooms, and there was a kind of glitter about him, and Mistar Bass, it was just like what was in Penmaen — that same feverish glitter and nerv-

ousness, a kind of blindness to everything outside himself. He had got to find out about mushrooms, he said, because there was the most staggering and stupendous idea he had with him, now, a kind of revelation. So away went the two of them, Penmaen and Evan, down to the library — Penmaen to find a book on some old language or other, and my poor Evan to read about mushrooms.”

Mrs. Treadwelly stopped and her mouth began trembling so that David was very much afraid she was going to burst into tears again, and he didn't know where to look. And there was the kettle out in the kitchen making hissing and spluttering noises and the lid jumping up and down because she'd filled the kettle too full.

“Mrs. Treadwelly, shall I turn down the —” But Chuck was already jumping up, and he went out and did it.

“And that's the way it's been ever since, Mistar Bass. Penmaen went off the next morning, and Evan hasn't seen a single patient to this day, for almost two weeks. And oh, Mistar Bass, *what* am I to do, with Evan wanting to take all our savings for his mushroom farm? Oh, here he comes — *don't* say anything — *don't* let him know I —”

In came Evan Treadwelly and in a shaken voice his wife introduced everybody. Then there was a little silence while Mrs. Treadwelly went out to make

the tea and, by the fragrance, some chocolate for the boys, and Mr. Bass gazed in a considering sort of way at the doctor. He certainly did seem to glitter, David thought. His little dark eyes were far too bright, his plump face was flushed, and he looked as if he were burdened, or swollen with some monstrous and overwhelming news. Smiling and eager, he suddenly leaned forward and, scarcely stopping for breath and not even noticing the cup of tea his wife put in front of him, began talking about mushrooms.

“—you take the mycelium—the mushroom spawn, see, Mistar Bass—and you put it in a container that shakes it one hundred and ten times a minute so that you get little chopped up pellets, and then you put these pellets into molasses and they turn into pea-sized mushroom balls in just four days—why, we can get all the protein the world needs from the vast tonnages of mushrooms I shall be growing on my farm, because more protein is what the world needs, see, Mistar Bass, more protein, no end of protein, and as for germs—two hundred and thirteen kinds of mushrooms are germ-stoppers—now, I’ll wager you never knew that did you, Mistar Bass, and think of it—minute quantities tried out on white mice with all different kinds of diseases checked the germs instantly, and no side effects, Mistar Bass, no side effects whatever —”

“Evan, Evan, your tea is getting cold —”

“Dr. Treadwelly,” said Mr. Bass, “you are as possessed by mushrooms as I am by stones. I hear that you have bought a most handsome stone from my friend, Penmaen Parry.”

The doctor’s torrent of words broke off, and he stared, startled, at Mr. Bass.

“Why, yes — yes, here it is — my good luck piece, I call it. But there is foolish it is, good luck. Look, boys — look, Mistar Bass, what is carved on it,” and he held out a brilliant, reddish-orange stone with a strange shimmering light in its heart. “See — hieroglyphs all around, and there in the middle, a mushroom.”

“I have a feeling, Dr. Treadwelly,” said Tyco, “I have a very *strong* feeling that this is the sole reason you are obsessed by mushrooms — this stone,” and Tyco put out a long finger and touched it and the strange shimmering light in its heart blazed brighter than ever so that poor little Mrs. Treadwelly gave a frightened cry. “If you will let me buy it from you for exactly what you paid, I promise you faithfully that your obsession will leave you.”

“My obsession, Mistar Bass! My *obsession!* Poppycock! Do you mean to tell me you believe this stone has a power? Do you mean you believe in such medieval nonsense? I am not obsessed, Mistar Bass.

I am a man of science. I am of a sound and scientific turn of mind —”

“Then if you *are* of a sound and scientific turn of mind, Dr. Treadwelly,” pursued Mr. Bass, “you will no doubt be willing —”

“To sell Mr. Bass the stone to *prove* —” broke in David, unable to restrain himself.

“That the stone *hasn't* any power,” finished Chuck.

“Quite,” said Mr. Bass, flicking the boys a shining glance, then picking up his cup and taking a quick sip of tea.

The doctor's eyes gleamed as he stared from one to another of his audience. And finally, when Mrs. Treadwelly, so distraught and tense that she dropped her spoon and spilled her tea, burst out, “Oh, *please*, Evan!” he held up his hand with dignity.

“Very well, then,” he said, smiling in lofty amusement. “Here, Mistar Bass, you may buy the stone. Two pounds I paid for it. Two pounds, then, is what I will be asking of you — and we shall see what we shall see.”

Tyco took out a wallet from somewhere inside his gardening coat and put two pound notes into the doctor's hand upon receiving from him the bright orange stone, which now seemed shadowed, as if

its prisoned energy or heat were already cooling.

Immediately a most extraordinary thing happened.

From a man plump and rounded with some feverish vigor which had kept him shifting and turning as he spoke, face reddened and eyes bright as jet buttons, Dr. Treadwelly suddenly turned pale. Even as you watched him, David remembered afterwards, he seemed to fall in upon himself like a balloon losing air. And as if he were going to faint, he slumped forward and his head positively fell onto both hands held palms up ready to receive it.

"Oh, Evan — Evan — what have we done to you!" Mrs. Treadwelly was trying desperately to get out from behind the tea table without sending everything crashing, when all at once the doctor staggered up, staring all around.

"What day is it?" he cried. "What time? Why am I home when it's at the office I should be? *Beth*, what day — ?"

"Saturday, Evan —"

"And eleven o'clock in the morning! But I have an operation on Mistar Williams at the hospital — ten-thirty —"

Instantly he was across the floor, the door slammed and they heard his car start up and the tires skid along the gravel as he backed out the driveway and went tearing off down the street. In the complete silence that followed after he had left,

with only the clock to be heard ticking steadily away on the wall as if nothing in the least peculiar had happened, Beth Treadwelly gazed at Mr. Bass and then at Chuck and David with her eyes wide and terrified and her mouth open. Then she sank down onto the couch where her husband had been sitting.

"But — it *was* the stone —"

"Yes, my dear," said Mr. Bass gently, "it was. Now, if you please, we *must* hurry. Did Penmaen say where he was going next? Does he have any other friends hereabouts? Any that you know of?"

"Friends?" she wavered. "Going? He — he didn't say. Though it seems to me — yes, I think I heard him mention Swansea — a man in Swansea —"

"*Good*, Mrs. Treadwelly!" cried Tyco. "Good for you! Now, what was his name? Can you remember that? And may I use your phone? If things are to go on like this — people's lives being so frightfully disrupted — we haven't a moment to lose."

Once You Get the Idea

MRS. TREADWELLY did at last manage to remember the name of Penmaen Parry's friend in Swansea, and Tyco telephoned, only to be told that the friend was out; however, he was expected back at any moment. Having telephoned Swansea, Mr. Bass talked to Mrs. Treadwelly in the kitchen for a few moments, then took Chuck and David into the front garden.

"Now, boys, you must search Mrs. Treadwelly's morning papers, as many as she has kept, with absolute thoroughness while I am gone —"

"While *you* are gone!" exclaimed Chuck indignantly and looking as if he couldn't believe it: that he and David were to be left. "But why can't *we* go?"

"Because, Chuck, Swansea is a good hundred miles from here, and it would take us at least three hours, perhaps more, if we were to drive. Also, this could be a fruitless journey, so there's no point in my not just going at once in my own way, and returning

as quickly as possible. I'll take the car and drive off somewhere around here where I can be alone, and meanwhile — *do* get on with the newspapers. If you have no success, you might even go down to the library and look through those of the last two weeks for any oddity that might catch your eye. I asked Mrs. Treadwelly when I was in the kitchen if you two could stay for a bit and she was delighted. I have an idea she wants to ask you questions about me. Tell her enough — but not too much."

Away went Mr. Bass in the little blue Austin to find some nice lonely spot to vanish in, and the boys went back into the house and asked Mrs. Treadwelly for the papers. She had those of the last three days and the result was, not that *they* found anything to help them in their search but that Mrs. Treadwelly, glancing down at one of the papers, got angry.

"New church, indeed," she cried, putting a platter of cold sliced lamb on the table. "There is a fine church Morgan Caithness will be giving us for our money — only none of us will ever be sitting in it, see — and after my Evan giving twenty-five pounds to the church fund. Morgan is touched in the head with him, is what I have been thinking. A perfectly fine plan he had been working on, and now this — a beehive building with five frilled towers on it. There is a scandal it is, and all that money —"

Mrs. Treadwelly bustled into the kitchen and came back with glasses of milk, then told the boys to wash their hands because it was almost twelve and they were going to eat. When they sat down, David was frowning.

"Mrs. Treadwelly, did he suddenly change?"

"*Change!* Did he suddenly change, the boy is asking!" and she held a large loaf of bread against her chest and began cutting slices from it. "A most beautiful plan he had, with oak timbers and a belfry — a large, dignified building, and there was happy we were after the shabby old church. But round it is now, stuck with silly towers that have hooded tops all pleated underneath, you might say, as if Morgan will be making fun of us."

"How long ago?" asked David. "How long ago did he change?"

Mrs. Treadwelly put down the bread and thought.

"Why, a week or so it will be —"

"Where is he? Could we walk?" asked Chuck eagerly. "Is there a streetcar?"

She stared from one to the other as if they, too, like everyone else, were taking leave of their senses.

"A tram, will you be meaning? But what is it with you? You will go from here, now, with your good food uneaten, to speak to that madman?"

"But don't you see, Mrs. Treadwelly? Don't you *see?*" shouted Chuck as if she were deaf. "He's *changed* — he's suddenly *changed*, just the way your husband did."

At this, her eyes widened and a look of understanding dawned across her face like a sunrise.

"Ye-e-e-s — two secretaries leaving him, one after the other, and his poor young daughter, Rhondda — barely fourteen she is — going to the office to work for him, and she with a face like a young wraith on her, and great dark circles under her eyes —"

"Phone him, Mrs. Treadwelly — phone him and ask him if we can see him about the stone —"

"*Phone him!*" Mrs. Treadwelly's face went pale. "And he shouting at me the last time I called about the church as if he will be tearing the phone out by the roots? He having a temper like a bull with him? No, I will not phone that man. But I will tell you where he is and you will go, now, and speak to him."

Well, it was all very fine to go running helter-skelter as fast as their legs could carry them, over two blocks and down three and over one. But when they got to the street, and then to the number, and then stood outside the big door painted dark green with thirty-five in large brass numbers nailed up and a signboard that said *Morgan Caithness, Architect* swinging in the wind over their heads, that was a

different thing. "*He having a temper like a bull with him —*"

"— and he tore the phone out by the roots," said David.

"Oh, he did not," said Chuck bravely. "Mrs. Treadwelly said she *thought* he would."

They could see through the wide bow window a young girl sitting at a desk, typing with slow desperation and surrounded by papers. The telephone rang and she answered it and listened and tried to speak, but it was no use; after a bit she hung up and looked as if she were going to cry. Then she typed again and made a mistake and scrubbed the paper like fury. When David thought of asking to speak to her father, his stomach felt hollow.

"You go first, Chuck."

"No, you go first — you're the tallest."

"But you can talk louder —"

"But you know words better."

So David went in and when the girl stared up at them, he could see that she did indeed have dark circles under her eyes and that her face was very white and thin.

"We're —" began David, "we're — that is, I'm David Topman and this is Chuck Masterson, and we're friends of Tyco Bass's and *he's* a friend of Mr. Parry's. You remember Mr. Parry — well, maybe

you don't. What I mean is, we've come to see your father because —" but here David lost his voice entirely, and when it came back it was away up high, "because —"

"Because of the stone," said Chuck much too loudly. "It's terribly important. Maybe we can save him, but anyway we've got to speak to him *immediately*."

Rhondda Caithness gazed at them as if they'd appeared out of the floor.

"The *stone*! What do you mean *save*?" She stood up and David saw that she was shaking. "Well, you can't speak to my father. Nobody can because he won't talk to anyone, especially boys, especially not now, with everything so ghastly and upset." She closed her eyes and put her hands up to her forehead as if she felt it would break. Then she looked at them again. "How did you know about the stone? It's mine. At least it's going to be mine, for my birthday. My father's having it put on a chain for me —"

"Oh, but he can't," gasped David. "He just can't — you mustn't keep it —"

"Why mustn't I?" demanded Rhondda. "It's me that begged him to buy it, and I love it. It's the most beautiful thing I've ever had in my life. And what did you mean by saving my father? Save him from what?"

"From what the stone is *doing*," said David, convinced, even as he spoke the words, that he and Chuck were making the most stupid, blundering mess of this perfect chance to help Mr. Bass and surprise him. "Remember when your father bought the stone? Didn't everything begin going wrong, and hasn't everything *been* going wrong ever since?"

Rhondda suddenly leaned on the desk with both hands, her head bent and her black hair swinging about her face, hiding it.

"Yes," she said in a low voice. "Yes, everything has been awful ever since. You can't imagine! Everybody says my father is daft and that he should be sent off somewhere to have a rest. And he keeps laughing at everyone in the most horrible way, or shouting with rage — and Mr. Ruddlan wants all the money back he gave Father for the plans, and — oh, he's coming out — *please* — you must leave — oh, *please* go — !"

For there had been the most tremendous, floor-shaking thud and Rhondda stared at the door, tense as a deer. Now it burst open and before them stood a small, powerful man with a squarish bald head and a squarish body like a prize fighter's, and he had great dark eyes like his daughter's, but rather bulging and sparkling, and they took in David and Chuck at a single sweep.

"Well?" he demanded of them in a voice that

went through David like a saw blade. "What rubbish will you be selling with you?"

"Selling nothing, Dada," said Rhondda. "These boys are Daffyd and Chuck and they have come to tell you that —"

Morgan Caithness let out a kind of bark, and without seeming to move he suddenly had the boys by their collars and was shaking them unmercifully until David thought he would bang their heads together, except that Chuck managed to struggle away.

"Dada!" screamed Rhondda. "Dada, *don't* — they have come about the stone — it is magic, just as I told you, but wicked magic and I don't want it any more —"

But her father was not listening, and he flung David from him so violently that David went sprawling across the floor.

"Tell your people they can go and scratch before they shall be having their money back if they don't like my towers — but I will be having my towers, see — and I will be having my round church. Now get out of this place and don't let me see your faces again —" And he went to the door and wrenched it open, and charged across the street and vanished into the building opposite.

At once Rhondda flew across to her father's inner office and from it came the sound of one drawer

after another being pulled out and the rattling of small objects and papers being shoved around and Rhondda uttering cries of desperation.

"*I know* I saw him put it — but maybe he's taken — oh, if he's taken it with him — but *I know* I saw it in a little box, and he slid it right to the back — *here*. Oh, it's here, Daffyd and Chuck. I've got it — I've got it —" and she came out, hands clasping something she was holding against her chest. She came to them and stretched her hand out — and opened it — and there in her palm lay one of Ta's stones. It was not just one color, but four colors, five — sea-in-a-storm, peacock, gentian, fire-coal, cobalt — each color burning by turn under the clear surface, and the stone itself was like a great drop of water carved over with the minute symbols of ancient Basidium.

"Take it!" said Rhondda. "Take it, quick!" But even as she said the words, her eyes clung to it and she drew back her hand a little.

At once Chuck's fingers closed around it, and in the same instant David held out all the notes he had left from the car-renting money, which Mr. Bass had let him keep — just in case you should need them at any time on the trip." Rhondda took three.

"This is what my father paid. I remember, because I thought how little it was for anything as lovely and magical as that stone. Now go — go right

away before —” and then her eyes seemed to be caught by something, for she stared beyond David into the street. David and Chuck turned, and there was Morgan Caithness, standing right in the middle of the road, his face as blank as a pudding. A car came along, honking and honking, and then another behind that, and another, all honking. “But what can be the matter with him?” cried Rhondda, and she ran and opened the door.

Her father walked over and stood in the entrance, dazed and wondering — lost-looking, thought David, and meanwhile held himself tense and ready to dodge at the first sign of rage. But quietly, quietly, Morgan Caithness stared about as if he had come back from a long, long journey. Then he crossed to a large watercolor, which must have been the new church, and without bothering to take out the pins that held it to the wall, he clawed it down, tearing it roughly as it came.

“There was something you were saying to me about the stone, my daughter,” he reminded her in a low voice.

“Magic, Dada. I told you it was magic, but evil magic it was, and not what I thought at all, for it’s been doing you harm. So I’ve taken your money back — here it is — and given Daffyd and Chuck the stone to take away with them.”

Like a volcano that had stopped erupting, Morgan

Caithness went into the other room and closed the door. And Rhondda said:

"I could hardly wait for my birthday. I've never wanted anything so much in my life as I've wanted that stone, and it isn't true I don't want it now — I do, even if it is wicked."

"Not wicked," said David. "Just not meant for those it hasn't been given to by the right person. Good-by, Rhondda. Everything will be all right now — quiet and peaceful. I promise you it will."

Later that afternoon in Mrs. Treadwelly's little parlor, Mr. Bass was sitting at the table, which was laid with an extremely high tea (lavish, this means) because the boys had been so full of their story when they got back that they'd had no lunch and neither, it turned out, had Mr. Bass.

It had all been rather ticklish when he arrived.

"But you don't mean you've driven clear to *Swansea* and back!" cried Mrs. Treadwelly in complete bewilderment when she opened the door and found Tyco standing there. "Why, it would take six hours —"

"Ah," said Mr. Bass, stepping in. "So it would. But, as a matter of fact, I didn't drive. There was no need." Well, *that's* true, thought David, wondering with glee how Mr. Bass was going to manage a complete explanation. "Do you know, Mrs. Treadwelly,"

said Tyco, spying the table, "I've had no lunch." Oh, my! And away she went to make more tea and replenish the shortbread. "*Most* disappointing results!" he whispered while she was off in the kitchen. "Great waste of time if we'd driven there when I could go instantly in my own way." Now Mrs. Treadwelly came in again, not only with more shortbread, but with hot buttered scones and cranberry tarts and cheese. "Seems that Penmaen's friend got detained somewhere," went on Tyco aloud, "and he didn't come back and he didn't come back, and when he finally got home, he told me he hadn't seen or heard of Penmaen in years. Very discouraging." Mr. Bass took a sip of tea and sighed.

"Dear!" said Mrs. Treadwelly, handing him a tart as if to comfort him. "So I presume it was phoning you did instead of driving."

Tyco did not reply to this, but bit thoughtfully into the tart.

"Well, it's awful to see *you* discouraged, Mr. Bass," said Chuck hastily, and he meant it even though David could see he was bursting with secret triumph. "We're not used to that, are we, Dave?"

Now he drew something from his pocket and slowly, watching Mr. Bass's face, he held out his open hand. Wonderingly, Tyco took the stone, then gazed up at them in utter astonishment. What a moment that was — *what* a moment! So now they told

him the whole story of how they had got it back, and he could not get over how very intelligent of them it had been to go truthfully straight to the point without trying to be sly or roundabout which, in this particular case, would have done them no good whatever.

"Would you believe it!" he said. "Would you believe it—and all by yourselves! Wait until Towyn hears about this. Bumbling, indeed!"

Gossip Among the Artifacts

MR. BASS decided that the only thing to do next was to go to Stonehenge in the middle of the Salisbury Plain in England. For Penmaen's friend in Swansea had mentioned *another* friend living in a village near Stonehenge, and Mr. Bass, all through tea, had been turning this over and over in his mind.

"Now I've got it!" he exclaimed at last. "Now I've got it! Dr. Hugh Pippinfield, the antiquarian — yes, I remember Penmaen talking about him. And it seems to me he would be *pre-cisely* the sort of person who would be attracted to one of these stones. Of course, I may be on the wrong track entirely, but at least we shall be a great deal nearer London, which I have a feeling is our final goal. I shall phone Dr. Pippinfield immediately."

Yes, said Dr. Pippinfield, he had indeed bought one of Mr. Parry's jewels, and he would see Tyco the next afternoon right after his lecture on the architectural remains of unknown peoples, which was to

start at one o'clock on the dot. He couldn't possibly spare time before then.

"But I do assure you," cried Mr. Bass urgently, "that it is of the utmost importance that I see you about the stone *before* —"

"No, no," said Dr. Pippinfield. "Couldn't possibly — couldn't possibly. And now, sir, if you will excuse me —"

"Tchk! The poor gentleman," said Mr. Bass as he hung up. "I shudder to think of what tomorrow holds for him. At any rate, we shall start at once, have a late meal by campfire light somewhere along the road, sleep in our blankets under a tree, and get to Dr. Pippinfield's village in good time for the lecture, which I am very much afraid is going to have the most unfortunate results."

Dr. Pippinfield lived in a decayed mansion surrounded by a grove of oaks, which grew so close to the house that only a subdued greenish light filtered through the tall windows. The hallway, the rooms opening from it, and the drawing room itself where the lecture was to be held, were so crowded with cabinets and cases, and the shelves of these with such a clutter of objects — mummified animals, small statues, jewelry, knives, shrunk heads, carvings, pieces of clothing, vases and pots of every de-

scription — as to seem a museum in which the curator had gone right out of his mind.

Because the drawing room was already full of people, the boys and Mr. Bass had to settle themselves on hard little folding chairs, hideously uncomfortable, right at the back.

“Goll-ee-ee,” breathed Chuck, staring at the displays. “I’ll bet Dr. Pippinfield bought every one of Mr. Parry’s stones, and so we won’t have to hunt any farther. I’ll bet anything he had to have every single one.”

But it was all very puzzling.

Dr. Pippinfield, thin, parched, as though baked by a hundred summers, got up on a platform at the front of the room and rambled and piped in a reedy treble. Then he lost his notes, and when he found them, lost his place, and when he found his place he dropped his spectacles and had to fish for them under the table. But at no time did he talk of anything but what an antiquarian *would* talk about if he were lecturing upon the architectural remains of unknown peoples.

“I can’t understand it,” whispered Mr. Bass, shaking his head. “I can’t understand it at all.”

And then right in the middle of the lecture there came a subterranean thud, and everyone shifted and murmured and gazed anxiously around. But Dr. Pippinfield paid no attention whatever and went

right on piping. Then came another thud, and a thin cloud of dust began drifting through two open windows. At once, a lady got up and abruptly closed them, so that from then on the room became extremely stuffy and the camphor smell of the artifacts quite overpowering. Until almost the end of Dr. Pippinfield's talk, the thuds continued at intervals.

When the piping had ceased and everyone was getting up and pushing against everyone else, Mr. Bass said to the boys,

"I'll just go to him now and get this over with as quickly as possible. You two wait by the door in the hall."

Away went Tyco, and Chuck and David wandered out and stationed themselves under the arms of a tall Egyptian statue, much cracked and weathered, upon which someone, perhaps Dr. Pippinfield himself, had hung a deerstalker's hat on one hand, and a bowler hat on the other.

"Insufferable in there!" exclaimed a woman in red. "Absolutely insufferable! And then that Sarsen Rollright —"

"— but Pippinfield didn't even consider the broch builders," said a little round man with a long nose and pink cheeks. "This I do not understand. The broch builders —"

"What do you mean — 'that Sarsen Rollright'?" said a woman in yellow to the woman in red.

"But I thought that the broch builders were *not* unknown," said a tall, earnest young man, drooping over the little round man. "I thought that the Picts —"

"Ell-ee-ee!" came a sudden shriek. "You get right away from those glass doors. Don't you dare touch or you'll get smacked —"

"Oh," said the woman in yellow, "I remember. The sculptor. The one who's unveiling those figures tomorrow morning —"

"Do you know what he's been up to?" demanded the woman in red. "Off and on for about a week he's been having men come and shove those great ugly chunks he calls statues out of his studio, and now there they are — a vast sort of wreckage of the most horrible shapes right under our back windows. He lives right across the way from here —"

"Oh, was *that* what all that thudding was! So he's still at it —"

"Ell-eee-ee! What did I tell you — now look what you've done —" *Smack!* and Ellie, sending up peal after peal, was hustled away.

When Mr. Bass got back, David could tell instantly that he was amused with himself.

"Well," he said, "here is a lesson for us. One cannot inquire too carefully. I described to Dr. Pippinfield on the telephone just what the stones would be like; in fact, I described several of them in detail. But

do you know what he has? A large drop of amber with a green beetle embedded in it which Penmaen once had made into a ring, and which now rests on Dr. Pippinfield's middle finger. He paid Penmaen a pound for it. Well, well, another false lead. We shall now go to the library, do some questioning, and search through a week of newspapers —" A week, thought David. A *week*, and then it passed from his mind. "We would go directly on to London," said Mr. Bass, "but that I'm having some of my strange feelings about this place — just as I had about that coomb in the Rhinogs where we landed — and these feelings I never ignore."

But was it possible Mr. Bass's feelings could be wrong this time? For neither searchings through the newspapers, nor inquiries of the librarian as to unusual happenings in the village or the sudden odd behavior of some individual, led them anywhere at all. And so at last, reluctantly, they got up to go. As they filed past the desk, the librarian said,

"Don't forget the unveiling tomorrow morning." And then brightly, at their blank faces, "Sarsen Roll-right's druids, you know — in the town square — ten o'clock. We can't wait to see what he's done."

"Oh," said David. "Yes. That dust coming in the window at Dr. Pippinfield's. And the thuds."

"But Dr. Pippenfield," said Mr. Bass, "explained to me that someone is building in the neighborhood."

"Nope," said David. "At least there was a woman there who lives near this Sarsen Rollright, and she said that for about a week now, off and on, he's been having men come and take out —" and then David stopped, blinking. "For about a *week*," he repeated to himself.

"For about a week — *what*, Dave?" pressed Chuck impatiently.

"Yes, do tell us what," said the librarian, leaning forward with smiling interest. "Sarsen is quite a character."

"— been having men come and move all the big chunks of statues out," finished David, intent upon his own ruminations.

"Ah," said Mr. Bass. "For about a week. I do believe we have something. Shall we go and see?"

Sarsen Rollright's house was easily found: a great shape of stone blocks somewhat like Carn Bassyd, but unblessed by the mellowing touch of the centuries as the Carn was. All that saved it in its raw newness, the boys and Mr. Bass decided, was that vines were beginning to grow over it, and that it commanded a fine view through the trees of Salisbury Plain, vast and empty in the afternoon sun.

Their visit was not fortunate. A little harassed rabbit of a woman, all eyes and stray wisps, answered the door.

"'E wants nothink nor nobody disturvin' 'im," she

said firmly. "'E's in that much of a stite. 'E wants 'is tea, an' if 'e doesn't get it *when* 'e wants it, 'e'll start — *there!* — wot did I sye? Excuse *me* —" and the door closed.

"Tchk!" said Mr. Bass. "Poor creature — house-keeper, no doubt. Well, we shall just be off to Stonehenge and make our camp and have our supper, quiet and peaceful. And you shall watch the moon come up behind the silhouettes of those enormous stones, and I shall tell you three strange experiences I had when I was a young man — one of them to do with the murder of Elder Grandfather and two of them to do with King Arthur, and all three, I am beginning to suspect, having to do with the scroll we are after, because of Elder Grandfather's enemy. You know, I am beginning to be haunted by the thought of his enemy."

At Stonehenge

A SMALL WIND sang to itself, eerily, high up under the lintels and around the crowns of the stone giants. They had stood stark, as if cut out in black paper, against the salmon and pale gold of the sunset: the three huge oblong arches of the inner horse-shoe and the monoliths that still stood upright in the outer circle. Now all you could see of them in the darkness were bossings picked out in silver in the moonlight.

The boys and Mr. Bass had made their fire some way off beyond the fence that surrounds Stonehenge, and their faces in the red glow seemed disembodied.

"Now," said Mr. Bass, as they commenced their supper of hot leek soup and thick, buttered slices of Morfa Niog's golden-crust ed barley bread, "I shall tell you my three strange adventures.

"You must know that the Welsh have always believed that a child born after dark and before midnight will have second sight — that is, the power of



seeing what is invisible and unknown to others. I was born at eleven o'clock on the night of June 28, 1580, and I have always had second sight. But it did not become clear to my parents until I was older just how deep my second sight would be and that, like Elder Grandfather, I would prove to be a rare Mycetan, capable of taking my place as head of the League, of sustaining around four or five hundred years of life on this earth, and that the Ancient Ones would give me the gift of traveling by thought.

"You must know, too, that Elder Grandfather formed the Mycetan League in the time of Uther Pendragon in the fifth century —"

"And Uther Pendragon was King Arthur's father, wasn't he?" said David.

"Yes, David. In those days, even before Arthur first led the Britons against the Saxons in 516, Elder Grandfather had been training Mycetians to become spies and messengers for the Britons because our people are small, quick in mind and body and wit, and able, as you know, to slip out of the grasp of any enemy who might capture them, because of the compressibility of their bones. Also they could go like the wind on their little Welsh mountain ponies — sturdy, courageous beasts whose small hoofs took them, like mountain goats, over narrow, dangerous passes where no other horses could possibly go. In those days and all through Arthur's time, the

Mycetians succeeded in the most impossible tasks, and because of this, and because of their unusually large heads, they were thought to be either intelligent out of the ordinary or perhaps magical, related to the Little People, the fairies, the Tylwyth Teg as the Welsh call them. We are no more intelligent than humans, but most of us are quick to feel what is hidden, just as animals seem to sense what humans are not aware of. So Mycetians made superlative messengers and spies, and brilliant warriors as well —”

“And was Elder Grandfather a brilliant warrior, Mr. Bass?” asked Chuck.

“No, Chuck. He was Royal Bard, or poet, to both Uther Pendragon and Arthur, and because of his second sight he served as advisor as well. He sent messengers the length and breadth of Britain warning the counts that if they did not fight together for Arthur they would be lost. But, as you know, the counts fought one another instead and deserted Arthur, one by one, until at the final battle of Camlan, the Saxons triumphed and Arthur received the wound that killed him.

“What I know of Elder Grandfather has come down by word of mouth in our family, for we have nothing written that dates from that time — unless the scroll that Penmaen Parry has stolen proves to be a record. You see, after Arthur died, chaos de-

scended upon Britain, and the Mycetan League disbanded. It disappeared for over a hundred years, so that there is a darkness in there we have never been able to penetrate —”

“But maybe *you* could penetrate it, Mr. Bass,” said Chuck with intense eagerness. “If we can only get the scroll back, somehow, and you can translate it —”

“Yes, if we can, Chuck, and if I can. Now Elder Grandfather, so the legend goes, loved Arthur with his whole heart. And when I was fourteen and uncertain as yet whether I would be the inheritor of those powers Elder Grandfather possessed, I had my first of three experiences which proved to me that I had inherited at least one of them: the power of being able to see into the past.

“I was walking home alone one night across the Rhinogs, those mountains where we landed. And in a little meadow where I could look up and see the moonlight flooding the crags, I built myself a small flickering fire just like this one. No sooner had I started the blaze when I heard someone sobbing, and I lifted my head and saw an old man, whom I knew at once to be a Mycetan, sitting opposite me on the other side of the fire. He was wrapped in a blue plaid robe and was weeping. Then all at once he took up a little harp he had by him and began playing and singing to himself.” Mr. Bass paused as

though to bring back more clearly to his inner ear
that song that had been sung in the year 537.

*When word came to me
Of Arthur's death,
It was as if the wind had been killed
Or the sun shot down.
I cannot encompass what has been done.
He who was called The Bear
By those who loved him
Is gone.
He is dead
I must tell myself.
I shall not see his face again
In the little oak woods
Or the places near the cliffs,
His face coming out of the mists to comfort me.
They move over the Western Sea.
They will enfold all the hills and valleys
In their gray cloaks forever
Now that he is gone.*

“As I listened to that heartbroken song and the
twanging of the harp, I was sure that this was Elder
Grandfather. And all at once I felt such a bleak and
bitter sorrow wash through me that I knew I was
feeling what he felt — that, in a way, I was part of
him. Now I was drawn, for some reason, to glance to

one side and I saw an evil face watching him, a narrow face with a long nose and hollow cheeks and deep-set eyes, shadowed so that the eyeballs were reduced to mere chinks of light. And the skull was so narrow that you wondered how there could be room between its temples to house the entire brain. The chinks of light watched Elder Grandfather with hard hatred, and I knew instantly that he would conspire against Grandfather until he had brought him to his death. I tried to cry out a warning, but I had no voice, and as I struggled in desperation to get out even a single sound, to make Elder Grandfather know what was going to happen to him, he faded from my sight, and when I turned to look at the other one, he too was gone and I was alone on the Rhinogs as I had been before.

“When I told Younger Grandfather, who was then Master of the League, what had happened to me, and sang the song to him — every word and note of which seemed burned in my mind — he looked at me in silence for a little. Then he said:

“‘Tyco, I have had a feeling for a long time that you would be the next Master of the League, and now I am sure of it. That was Elder Grandfather’s song, handed down from generation to generation through a single person in our family, and as I have never sung it to you, you could not possibly have learned of it except in the way you did. I am certain

you will have more of these glimpses into the past and that you will go far beyond me in your powers.'

"This has proved to be true, for Younger Grandfather lived the usual span of a Mycetan, about one hundred and twenty-five years, and was never able to travel by thought."

"Have you and Elder Grandfather been the only two, Mr. Bass?" asked David.

"The only two to journey beyond this world. My second strange experience came on the day Younger Grandfather died in 1605, when I was twenty-five years old and became Master of the League in his place. We had taken him up to the Mycetan burying ground and I left the others after we had sung our Song of Farewell. Because I was young and because I had loved Younger Grandfather very deeply, I felt a need to go off by myself so that I shouldn't have to talk to anyone. But all at once I felt ill and weak and light-headed. I stood up there in the wilds all alone and the sun was pouring down on me and yet I felt colder than I had ever felt in my life.

"Suddenly it was night. There was no moon — it was almost pitch dark except for the light of the stars — and I heard grunts and the scuffling of feet and then the sound of digging and the rattling of stones. Gradually my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, and then I was aware that someone was being buried, or was about to be buried. This was not the

Mycetian burying ground, yet it was in the mountains, for there were crags and a cruelly cold mountain wind blowing, but no habitation of any kind — scarcely a tree as far as I could make out. Now I saw that there was a wrapped figure lying on the stony ground near the black hole out of which earth was being thrown up. How deep they wanted this poor murdered soul buried! Oh, yes — I knew he had been murdered for why else would they put him away at night in this lonely place, and with scarcely a word among them except for occasional quick whisperings and sharp hisses from the person who seemed to be directing the operation. Deep, deep, deep they dug, and while they were at it, a great lantern of a moon swung free of the highest peak. How they cursed it under their breaths! But at last they lifted up the body and to my horror I beheld, when a corner of the robe fell back, the pale and sunken features of Elder Grandfather.

“Up went my head and my gaze was sucked, as if pulled by a physical power, to a face I instantly recognized. There were the caves where the eyeballs sat in blackness, there were the hollow cheeks, the long nose, the narrow skull. I did not know then if it was possible for him to see me — possible in time, I mean — but whatever happened between us sent a thrust of ice from my brain to the soles of my feet. It was so terrible that I fell to the ground, and when

I came to myself it was daylight again and I was lying on the spot on which I had been standing when some far-off night in the year 545 overtook me.

“It was in that year that Elder Grandfather disappeared from among my people, and though no written record that we know of has come down to us of what happened, we have always been certain he was murdered. How can I make you understand what that knowledge did to the Mycetians? It is as if President Lincoln had been murdered secretly and his body never found. Imagine the grief and shame of your people — it would have been even deeper and more bitter than we know it was. You see, there is an ancient triad that means much to the Mycetians:

Three sacred things:

Bards, graves and kings —

and because Arthur had loved Elder Grandfather so greatly and held him in such high regard, the murderer had outraged all three of these. The long darkness of invasion and desolation and ruin following Arthur's defeat had already settled over Britain, and it was during this time, after Elder Grandfather's disappearance, that his enemy, whom I have always called Narrow Brain, must have gained power over the Mycetians. For never since then have they expressed themselves as they did before, never done such fine things. We have even diminished in num-

bers, century by century. We seem somehow to be slowly losing strength and courage and imagination."

"But if you could find Elder Grandfather's bones, Mr. Bass, and put them up in the burying ground where they belong, would that help?" David was leaning forward and spoke with the greatest urgency.

"I think," said Mr. Bass slowly, "that that would be at least a beginning, a kind of ceremony. But we must do infinitely more, though what it is I am not yet certain. One thing I will admit to you — I am sure that the spirit of this murderer, this Narrow Brain, still exists and that his hatred is not dead."

"But *why* are you sure?" breathed David. He moved a little closer to Mr. Bass and noted how the flames of their small fire bent low as if a wind had blown over, and then saw them lift themselves again. "What makes you think that Elder Grandfather's murderer still exists — or at least his spirit, or whatever it is?"

"Because, David, of my third experience. A year ago I was alone here at Stonehenge one evening, sitting in almost this same spot but with no fire, watching the night come down over this ancient place. I was thinking of Elder Grandfather and of his lifelong friendship with Arthur, when all at once — there it came!" Mr. Bass put back his head and stared with wide eyes into the black sky and his long hand went up. "It was that by now familiar sensa-

tion of weakness and light-headedness and of a kind of hollow coldness as if my body no longer existed.

"I was not at Stonehenge. I heard a babble of excited voices and here were monks crowding together among the gravestones of the cemetery, and before me I beheld a great leaden cross on which I could make out the words," and here Mr. Bass's voice deepened and grew more powerful and penetrating, as if he were repeating the solemn chant of a litany, "'*Hic jacet sepultus inclitus rex Arthurus cum Guineveria uxore sua in insula Avallonia.*' 'Here lies buried the glorious King Arthur and his wife Guinevere on the Island of Avalon.' Therefore I knew that I was in Glastonbury, which is the Island of Avalon — the Island of Apples, as it was known then — lying due west just about forty-five miles from here —"

"But *when*, Mr. Bass?" Chuck spoke low as if he did not want to be overheard, and he hunched forward closer to the fire with his knees drawn up and his arms folded round, his eyes fixed on Mr. Bass's face. "When was all this happening?"

"It was the year 1190, 653 years after the death of Arthur and 390 years before I was born. Now, once more, the earth was being thrown up out of a deep grave, but this time it was to uncover and not to bury. I made my way forward through the press of monks and, looking down, saw that a long — incred-

ibly long — oaken casket was being uncovered. And when the monks who were working down there had finally got it clear and had heaved up the lid, I beheld all that was left of King Arthur — *rex quondam, rexque futurus*, the once and future king — and I tell you, my friends, his bones were enormous! Never, in all my life, have I seen such a frame. Had that skeleton been standing, his shinbone would have come an arm's length above the knee of the tallest man in the graveyard. And his head, which was huge, bore ten wounds, all of which were healed together save one gaping one which must have been his death blow.

“When the monks, who were gathered there, gazed down into that deep grave and saw all that was left of the man whose memory they had loved and kept green since they were old enough to be told of him, a great sigh was given out like the breath of a spent breaker. Then in absolute silence the accompanying casket was unlidded — and there lay the bones of Guinevere covered by the shreds of what she had last worn. Her hair, braided with wondrous art into two thick plaits, which were all interwoven with pearls and precious stones, still lay upon her shoulders.

“Now there is a legend that tells how at this moment, when the lid of Guinevere's casket was lifted off, a monk jumped into that deep grave to touch

either Arthur's robes or Guinevere's. But it is not true. I can say this because I saw what happened. As we stood looking down, there was a movement among the monks as someone roughly shouldered his way through. Without seeing this person's face I knew instantly who it was. He kept his head down as he stared into the grave and then let out a strange, triumphant cry and, as he did so, gave a leap and landed neatly and lightly as a cat midway between the two lengths of hollowed-out oak. He poised there for an instant and then, to everyone's horror, leaned forward as though to touch Guinevere's braids, or perhaps to snatch up the jewels woven into them.

"Someone tried to stop him, to keep back that thin, dark, reaching hand. But the restraining arm was brushed aside and in another instant he of the narrow head had grasped one of Guinevere's braids, and lo and behold, it crumbled away to dust under his fingers as if it had never been. In the next moment all the shreds of purple and gold of their robes vanished under the touch of the air, and all that was left were pearls and stones fallen to the bottom of the caskets.

"Hands were laid upon Elder Grandfather's enemy, but before the monks could force him out of the grave he looked up at me. And he knew me, for he gave a soft, almost gentle chuckle that said as clearly

as though he had spoken out loud to me, 'So there you are, heir of Bassyd. So there you are, as far out of your time as I am out of mine, I living forward in pursuit of you, and you living backward in fear of me. I haven't forgotten you — I saw you at that other grave. And because you know what you should not know, we shall meet again, you and I.'

"From then on, all was confusion and struggle. The man was hidden from me, and soon afterward I found myself lying flat on my back under the night sky here at Stonehenge, and my heart was beating as though it would burst my chest."

David's gray eyes had never left Mr. Bass's face but now he glanced, without moving his head, from this side to that.

"And have you met him again?"

"Oh, yes — several times, once not long ago. He is vigilant, and growing more so. I have been wondering if it is because the murder of Elder Grandfather and some possible connection between that and the scroll have been so much on my mind."

Silence. Then:

"Is he — is he here now? Narrow Brain, I mean?" David did not like pronouncing that name aloud.

Mr. Bass smiled, and he looked very peaceful and merry.

"Do you feel anything, either of you? Any threat of evil, or subtle unrest?"

Both boys looked down sideways, concentrating, then glanced across Mr. Bass at each other. And David almost had to smile because Chuck appeared so stern and serious, as if he were testing the atmosphere for a coming storm.

"I don't feel anything," announced Chuck solemnly.

"Me neither," said David. "I just feel full of dinner and stories. And I'm tired. I think I've got to go to bed now."

"*Bed!*" burst out Chuck in disgust. "Well, you go ahead and Mr. Bass and I'll sit here and —"

"But, Chuck," said Mr. Bass, "I'm going to bed too. Do you realize it's been almost nineteen hours since we set off from Pacific Grove for Wales? Out with the blankets, now!"

So all three of them rolled up, side by side, and the little fire flickered while they slept. When it would reduce itself almost to embers, Tyco would rouse himself and feed it again so that it kept their toes warm until morning.

Around two o'clock, buried deep in his blankets against the chill of the ground fog that rolls across Salisbury Plain toward dawn, David dreamed. Once again he was on the Roman Steps, but now, instead of running down behind Mr. Bass and Chuck, he was at the bottom looking up. And there, as before, he saw the little Mycetians wending their way up-

ward as though in some grave ceremony or procession, but behind them, as there had not been before, was a tall, dark, hooded figure. In his dream he knew who that figure was, and where it intended to go, and what its purpose was. He tried to cry out, to warn the Mycetians of that dark figure following them, but he could not make a sound. Nevertheless, Narrow Brain turned now and looked down at him and, in a moment of timelessness, the two of them studied one another until David could not bear that merciless gaze any longer. His eyes flew open in terror and he found himself damp from head to foot with perspiration.



Yet, when he woke in the morning to the fragrance of toasting barley bread and bacon frying over the coals and oat porridge bubbling in a saucepan, he was perfectly happy. He had a vague notion that there was something he must tell Mr. Bass, but he could not for the life of him remember what it was.



No Difference to Sarsen

DAVID THOUGHT, when Sarsen Rollright unveiled his druids the next morning in the town square, that he and Chuck and Mr. Bass were going to be trampled underfoot.

"Oh!" went up from over a thousand assembled lips, an "Oh!" bursting with fury, astonishment, scorn, disbelief and enraged disappointment. A roar of insults surged over the platform. "Thief! Sharper! Fraud! Money back — we want our money back! Smash 'em up — teach him to play his jokes on us! We've been swindled that's what we've been!"

For there on the platform, around which the crowd was now milling, stood a small, skeleton-like group of figures roughly modeled in clay. They appeared to be draped in robes, but their shanks showed pitifully thin, their arms were sticks, upon their wizened shoulders rose pipestem necks and on the pipestems sat round naked heads like globes wreathed in oak leaves.

"Just what had you expected, madam?" inquired

Mr. Bass of the muscular, commanding-looking woman next to him.

"*Expected!*" she retorted wrathfully. "I'll tell you what we expected. Something huge, like all the rest of the sculptures he's done. Something magnificent — powerful. And we expected something finished — what's he been up to all these months, I'd like to know? Well, he shall be had up in court, *that's* what. And I shall see to it."

There couldn't be the least doubt that she would.

Around noon Mr. Bass and the boys were sitting in Mr. Rollright's studio at an enormous table laden with roast chicken, a large prime rib of beef, bread, crumpets, cheese, a great pudding, tarts, a bowl of fruit and nuts, and the biggest teapot David had ever seen with a kind of fitted cushion over it which he knew by now was called a tea cozy. It was a very stained and dirty tea cozy. The table top was thick with stone dust and littered with drawings as well as the tools of Sarsen Rollright's work: hammers, chisels, drills and gauges. All this had had to be pushed back out of the way by the wispy little woman, whose name was Mrs. Graybill, in order to make room for the plates, but she did not trouble to shove back the papers. To judge by the food stains on them, they had been gathering where they were for a long, long time.

At the end of the table sat Sarsen, tearing the meat off a chicken leg with his big, square teeth.

"Druids!" he snorted, and tossed down the chicken bone and started to work on a rib of beef. "Not got a thing to do with Stonehenge, druids haven't. Observatory, that's what it was. Did you know that, Mr. Tyco Bass?" and he pointed the beef rib at Tyco, and Tyco smiled. "But try to tell *them* that. Anybody who lived four thousand years ago was a savage, and that's the end of it. Savage! One of those villagers sitting in front of his telly with nothing but soccer scores in his head is a turnip compared with the Britons who created Stonehenge. And nobody in this village will care, but one of these days there'll be a price set on my group of druids of fifty thousand pounds, and it'll be a national treasure. You wait." He buttered a crumpet very thickly and bit it in half.

"Mr. Rollright," put in Chuck, whose plate was quite indecently crowded with everything he had been able to reach, but so was David's and David was not even finding time to say anything, "Mr. Rollright, how come your names are just right for you? I don't see how they could be any better."

"Well, I'll tell you, young fellow me lad," said Sarsen, "just how it was. My mother loved Stonehenge and she used to walk out across the plain before I was born and stand there and look up at those wal-

loping big stones and have thoughts to herself. 'The sarsen stones,' she used to say over and over, because to her the words had such a prehistoric, awesome, satisfying sound. As for naming me, Sarsen it had to be. No other name would do, though my father said she was a knuckle-headed woman and that I should have a good sensible name like his: Archibald. But she would have none of Archibald and stuck to Sarsen; and she said I would be a sculptor and shape huge stones and that I would be famous the world over. And so I became, and so I do, and so I am. As for Rollright, that goes back a long, long way, and it was just waiting for me to come along so that Sarsen could be hitched on to it."

He leaned back, looking very contented and pleased with himself and went on eating, remembering meanwhile to press more food and drink upon Tyco and the boys.

"But, my friend," said Mr. Bass, setting down his cup, "you know, you cannot go on putting together these metal sticks with knobs on the top and selling them to people as art for large sums of money. That is, not if you have any respect for yourself as an artist."

Sarsen Rollright stared at Mr. Bass and then burst out laughing. He ran his hand through his thick, wild hair.

"And why can I not, if you please, Mr. Tyco Bass?"

I shall do anything I am jolly well moved to do, because I have a vision."

"No," said Mr. Bass, "you have *not* got a vision. You have got a stone."

"A stone! A kidney stone or a gall stone? You mean I'm sick?"

"Not sick," said David before he could stop himself, "but magicked. You're magicked by that stone Mr. Parry sold you."

"You're not *quite* yourself, are you, Mr. Rollright?" asked Mr. Bass gently.

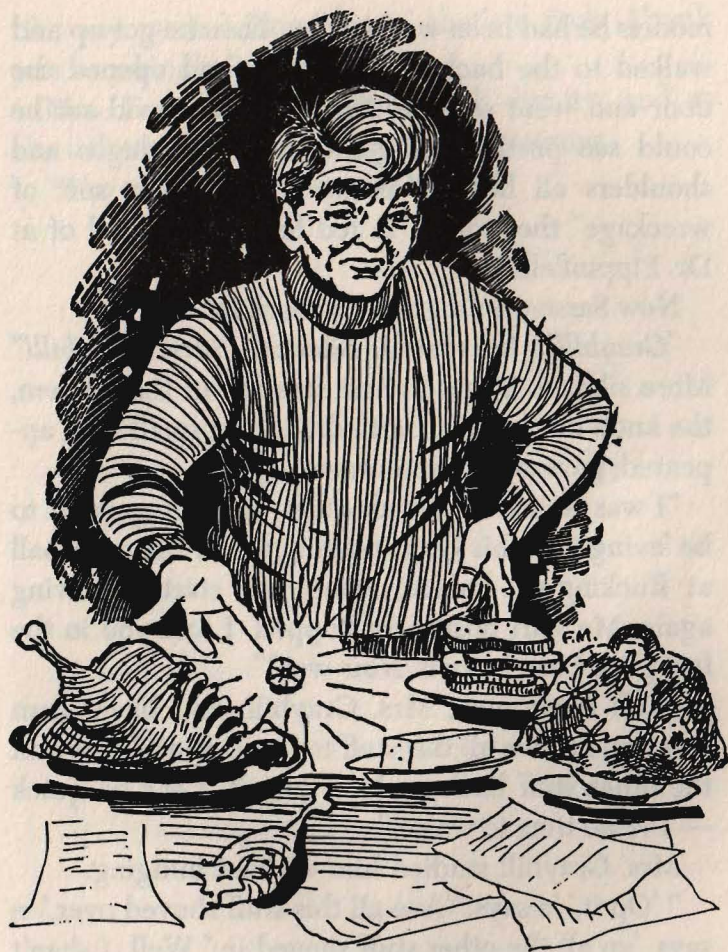
Sarsen Rollright got up all at once and went over to a starved-looking object modeled in clay — it might have been a horse — and ran his hand over it. "I'll tell you something, Tyco Bass. It's queer — very queer. These days I can't believe I'm in this big, clumsy body of mine. I'm working away on my figures and I get a shock when I come to and look down at myself — at my chest like a boulder with a sweater on it — because I've been thinking and feeling the whole time that I'm more like you, small, wispy, fragile, with a large, baldish head. And when I put my hand up and there's this mat of hair like thatch on a roof, I don't know who I am. So it's odd you saying I'm not myself right now. All the same, I have my vision." His hand dropped from the horse-like object and he came back to the table. "Nothing can change *that*, Tyco Bass, and as for me being

magicked, that's rot. Here's your stone. Take it. Whether I've got it, or you've got it, or Penmaen Parry's got it, makes no difference to Sarsen Rollright, the sculptor."

He reached in his pocket and tossed a stone onto the table where it rolled and then stopped, rocking slightly. The boys leaned forward and stared at that appalling fragment of greenish yellow. In its heart there seemed to float a dark spot, and from this spot there rayed out delicate lines through an area more green than the rest of the stone. What was it *like*? David asked himself and could not keep his hand from reaching out and picking it up. But when it rested on his palm he almost flung it from him in horror because at once it struck him that it resembled nothing so much as an eye, a still living eye, fierce, searching, relentless, with the dark spot for a pupil and the dark green rayed area the iris.

"A hawk's eye — an eagle's eye — *that's* what it's like," said Chuck under his breath.

Mr. Bass took it and slipped it away into hiding under his gardening coat with the rest of the stones, and David wondered how he could possibly bear to carry around all that hot, working, seething mass of magic. Or was it quiet now: were *they* quiet — the stones — because they were no longer stolen? Mr. Bass put a five-pound note on the table and Sarsen Rollright offered no change for it but slowly and



thoughtfully folded it and slipped it into his wallet. Then he stared up and around. For a full thirty seconds he did nothing but stare around at all the clay

models he had been working on. Then he got up and walked to the back of the studio and opened the door and went outside. From where David sat he could see portions of giant arms and thighs and shoulders all heaved about in that "vast sort of wreckage" the woman in red had complained of at Dr. Pippinfield's.

Now Sarsen Rollright came back in.

"*Graybill!*" he roared. Silence. "*Mrs. Graybill!*" More silence. Then a chair scraped in the kitchen, the knob on the door rattled and her small face appeared, pursed with resentment.

"I was 'aving me tea all quiet, as I'm supposed to be 'aving it at this hour, reading about the grite ball at Bucking'am Palace, when you start bellowing again. Me 'eart positively stopped. I told you in the fust plice I can't tike it. *Now wot?*"

"Call those men, Mrs. Graybill, and have them come and shove all this stuff to one side and move all the other stuff back in. Now hop it. Let's be quick — I've no time to waste."

Mrs. Graybill studied him without budging.

"'Op it,' 'e says.' 'Ave all this stuff shoved over,' 'e says, 'an all the other stuff shoved in.' Well, I shan't do it. An' I'll tike me leave, thank you very kindly, Mr. Rollright, *an'* me wiges. Because I've 'ad me fill. Wot I mean is, I can't tike any more dust, nor I can't

tike any more bellowing, an' that's a fack. Thank you very kindly."

Mrs. Graybill turned away with dignity, and as she did so, David heard Mr. Bass muttering,

"The grite ball — the grite ball —"

Poor Old Penmaen

WHEN MR. BASS and the boys got into the blue car and set out on the London road, it was by then almost two in the afternoon.

"Now," said Mr. Bass, "seventy-eight miles to go. And Penmaen may not even be in London, but for some reason I can't get hold of, I have a strong feeling he is. What a pity we can't stop at Staines. Runnymede's there, where King John signed the Magna Carta. A pity — a great pity. And I have a dear friend in Middle Wallop about six miles from Andover, which we shall pass through. However, we have years and years ahead of us, and we'll visit innumerable places and see all kinds of sights and wonders and have all sorts of fun."

"*Will* we, Mr. Bass?" David couldn't imagine having more fun than they were having right now on this adventure. "Mr. Bass, what's a grite ball?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Bass, and he chuckled to himself and shook his head. "That's it — that's it. Mrs. Graybill meant the great ball, and now I've got my reason

— the one for thinking Penmaen may be in London. In one of the London newspapers I saw at the library, I glanced over an account of that ball at Buckingham Palace, and something tweaked me but I didn't really hook on. It was Lady Threadneedle. She was furious because her fashion designer, after twelve fittings, had delivered a ball gown which looked like a raincoat." The boys waited in silence. "Raincoats!" cried Mr. Bass. "Think about raincoats, the kind you can almost see through, maybe pale green, or pink, or beige or yellow. However, not coats, really, but robes, graceful and falling in many folds. Remember?"

"Tal" said David. "Ta's robe with the top part sort of draped, the way the Greeks wore theirs, and pale green. And Mebe and Oru in robes, too, but different colors from his —"

"No Basidiumite," said Chuck, "ever seems to have just exactly the same color robe as another person's —"

"Because they are made of mushrooms — the robes, I mean," said Mr. Bass. "You knew that, of course."

"But I thought," said David, "that Ta told us they were made of the flesh of the bilba trees —"

"Well, some are. The bilbas give a less durable material, though. You see, when the Basidiumites cut down the biggest mushrooms — the giants, about

ten or fifteen feet tall — they cut the trunks into blocks and let them dry out until they're rather like balsa wood, very light and porous, and these blocks they use to build their beehive-shaped houses, just as the Eskimos use blocks of snow.

“But the hoods of the mushrooms they crush into a pulp, and when they have rolled the pulp smooth and flat, they let it dry out very gradually. Then they take this stiff, crackly substance, which is by then an ugly, dull, grayish color, and rub it and rub it very gently with a brew they have distilled from a certain kind of delicate mushroom that grows in small groves in the highest mountains. This mushroom is inky black, and yet the brew they distill from it is quite colorless. Gradually the stiff, grayish, dried-out pulp becomes pliable and translucent and soft, yet very strong. And at the end of the process each flattened-out piece has almost magically, it seems, recovered the color it had when it was living: pale plum or ivory or golden-orange or brown or flame, or whatever. And out of this substance the Basidiumites fashion their robes, which I think are quite becoming to them. I can't imagine them wearing anything else that would be so suitable to their faces and bodies, and so satisfactory for the climate of the Mushroom Planet.

“You know,” went on Mr. Bass, “it is incredible how unerringly the power of the stones is working

— some designer in London, with her love of clothes and style, making up what look to other people like raincoats for the great ladies of London to wear to court balls! And of course everyone thinks she's insane. Now, I know two people there who design clothes, and one of them is a Mrs. Peachey whose street we shall come to first."

Being entertained as they sped along by Mr. Bass's stories of the past, which various towns by the way reminded him of, it seemed no time at all to David before huge trucks (lorries and vans, Mr. Bass called them) began rumbling beside them, so that what with the thickening traffic, David knew they were getting into London. Tyco, in the midst of it all, drove as if he knew precisely where he was going, taking now a right turn here, and a left turn there, and of course all on the wrong side of the road — but then, of course, so was everybody.

They hadn't gone far into London when Mr. Bass turned onto a dignified, rather shabby backstreet, parked the car, ran up the walk of a building buried in trees and was out again in about ten minutes. He looked somewhat dazed.

"Good heavens!" he cried as he got into the Austin. "That shows you what time means to me. The last I saw of Mrs. Peachey, she was in her fifties and being extremely successful at fashion designing. Now she is in her eighties and her daughter and

granddaughter have taken over the business. Mrs. Peachey was stunned to see me and couldn't seem to get over the fact that I still had on my gray gardening coat and wanted to know if it was the same one!" Mr. Bass chuckled at the merriment of Chuck and David over this, though he did look a trifle surprised. I guess, thought David, he never even *thinks* about his clothes. "But at least," went on Mr. Bass, "she knew it was a Miss Bryony Fell, a young friend of hers, who made the raincoat for Lady Threadneedle. Of course she was overcome with curiosity as to how a ball gown could possibly resemble a raincoat, and I couldn't seem to explain.

"Now — Lamb's Conduit," murmured Mr. Bass. "That is the extraordinary name of the street where Miss Fell has her shop, and as it's near the British Museum, we are very fortunate."

"We *are*?" said Chuck. "But what's the British Museum got to do with anything, Mr. Bass?"

"It's got to do with Penmaen Parry, my boy," replied Tyco. "If Penmaen has sold a stone to somebody in London, I scarcely think he will leave without going to the British Museum, which has one of the finest libraries in the world. And once inside, once settled in one of those reading cubicles with books on ancient languages stacked around him, and being firmly determined to unlock the language of the scroll, he'll have no desire to leave the city. He

will no doubt have taken lodgings as close by as possible, and will be waiting for its doors to be unlocked in the morning and will be the last person to leave at night, though he just may come out for supper."

"But shouldn't we go right to the Museum, then, and catch Mr. Parry first?" asked David anxiously.

"Possibly," said Mr. Bass. "Possibly. However, I have a feeling we must go to Miss Fell's first. And I should really like you two to spot Penmaen before he can spot me, so that we can follow him to his rooms. If he sees me first, there'll be a chase and we might lose him. Ah, yes, here we are — Piccadilly. And then we turn onto Shaftesbury Avenue and that will take us over to Lamb's Conduit and Miss Fell."

Ten minutes later, Mr. Bass parked the little blue car on a busy thoroughfare, and he and the boys had just gotten out in front of a tall, narrow-faced building and gone over and opened a paneled door with a brass plate that said *Bryony Fell — Fashions*, when a young woman arrived at the doorway in the same instant. She had thick, glossy, blue-black hair done up on top of her head, and a laughing face and the biggest, darkest eyes David had ever seen. And he noticed (which was odd, because he hardly ever noticed things like this) that she had golden rings in her ears, so that she looked rather like a gypsy.

"Miss Bryony Fell?" questioned Mr. Bass. She nodded. "I am Tyco Bass, a very, *very* old friend of

Mrs. Helena Peachey's, and she has told me of you. We've driven in from Salisbury on some rather urgent business and I'm so hoping I can have a word with you about it. Do you have a moment?"

Bryony Fell quietly studied Mr. Bass's face as if searching there to find the inmost Tyco, and then smiled at him and held out her hand. She'd taken to him — David could see that.

"You shall have tea with me," she said. "Surely you haven't had time if you've been on the road, and the boys will be starving. Boys always are —"

"I'll say!" said Chuck fervently.

"So you must come up with me," she continued, stretching her arm to round up the boys, "and we'll put the kettle on and talk at our leisure, because my help have left me, every one. I have a jar of strawberry jam and plenty of butter and these absolutely fresh buns the baker down at the corner took out of the oven just five minutes ago. Oh, isn't this fine! Do you know, I've been working since morning all by myself with never a bite to eat and now here you three come to save me. Come on — up we go —"

But Tyco put a hand on her arm.

"Miss Fell, thank you — but we must know only one thing. Did you buy a stone from an old gentleman by the name of Penmaen Parry?"

She looked utterly astonished.

"Why, *yes* — but how did you guess? I bought

three stones, and I treasure them. It was simply a crime — here, do come inside.” They stepped into a little entrance hall and sat down on a bench there, and Bryony, opening an enormous purse she had on her arm, began burrowing in it. “Now where have they got to! It was simply a crime what that poor fellow was asking for them. I’d been to the Museum, going over some old French fashion plates — that’s often how I get my ideas — and as I was going down the steps outside, I saw Mr. Parry with these stones in his hand, showing them to a man. And the man was shaking his head and turning away, but when I saw those stones, Mr. Bass, I knew I had to have them. But I couldn’t make Mr. Parry take more than five pounds apiece, and they must be priceless. Family jewels, I imagined they were, but he was too proud to say. Here —” and she held them out, cupped in her palm: chunks of deep violet just the color of Bryony Fell’s eyes, but flecked with gold — not specks, but moving glints.

When she tilted her hand in the sunlight falling through the little window behind them, they turned purple, then magenta, and the golden glints widened into veins and narrowed again. Sometimes the stones darkened as if shadows were passing over, then brightened as if from some inner fire.

“Did you ever see anything so beautiful? They make me feel warm and comforted just to look at

them and hold them. They make me feel, for some reason, that I'm right about my work and my new ideas even though all my help thought I'd gone out of my mind. But I don't see why."

"Well," said Mr. Bass, "we shall talk about that presently. But, Miss Fell, do you have any notion where Penmaen Parry lodges? Have you seen him since he sold you the stones?"

"Why, yes," she said. "I often see him on this street and up near the Museum. I think he must be staying close by. See over there?" And she got up and pointed through the window. "Well, that's where he takes his meals, and other times I've seen him buying great, thick books in that shop — you know the one I mean — over on Shaftesbury Avenue. As for where he's staying, I'm not sure but I think he goes into that door up there near the end of the block — or it could be the very last one."

"Good!" cried Tyco. "Good! And now, Miss Fell, I must ask you one last question. Will you sell me your stones?"

She looked positively astounded.

"Sell you my stones! But I *couldn't* — I've told you what they mean to me, and I'm convinced they're magical. Oh, no — I wouldn't sell them for anything on earth."

"Ah, well," said Mr. Bass, and he sighed. "So I thought. Now, Chuck and David, instead of going to

the Museum, I want you to stay right here and watch up and down this street, and don't stop watching for an instant. Do not let any single person pass on either side unnoticed. A tall, thin old man, probably with books, is the one we want. Very scholarly looking, wearing glasses, and with a most distinctive shabby gray coat, skirted, coming down to his knees. And he will have thick white hair and will be wearing a hard hat, somewhat like a top hat but not tall — what is called a porkpie hat. You can't possibly mistake him. The minute you spy him, one of you come in and get me and the other must watch just where he goes —”

“And no buns and jam,” said Chuck wistfully.

“How can you be so mean, Mr. Bass?” cried Bryony.

“Under the circumstances,” said Tyco, “I can be, especially as these young ones are far from starving.” He gave the boys a wink. “Meanwhile, I shall accept your invitation to go upstairs, Miss Fell, where we can speak privately, and I shall try to explain how your difficulties and mine are intermingled.”

“Well, then, the boys shall have part of their tea, at any rate,” said Bryony. “Here,” and she held out the paper bag. “There's nothing quite so good as warm, fresh buns.” Into the bag went two grubby hands. “Oh, take another each,” urged Bryony.

"Well, O.K.," said Chuck. "Maybe we better, just to be on the safe side."

"Golly — thanks," murmured David. The smell was delectable.

"But we could have taken turns down here," said Chuck when he and David were out on the sidewalk. "So's we could listen to them talk, I mean."

"But just one of us couldn't watch both sides of the street, Chuck — not thoroughly, that is. You watch this side and I'll watch the other."

"I bet anything," said Chuck, "we won't see him."

But Chuck was wrong. It was no more than ten minutes later that David, in a very small space between an omnibus and a lorry, caught sight of an old man, very thin and tall and with an old-fashioned skirted coat on and an odd hat, with his arms full of books, coming out of the restaurant opposite. Oh, but what quick eyes that old man had. For as the omnibus passed, he happened to see David pointing at him. "It's him!" David yelled. "Chuck, it's *him* — !" which was, of course, exactly the wrong thing to do, and old Mr. Parry took off like a hare.

David managed to dodge across between the omnibus and the car behind it, and when he quickly turned to call out, "Get Mr. Bass — go up and get Mr. Bass, Chuck —" he saw that Chuck was being held up by four cars in a row and was hopping with desperation, and when he started running again he

found that Mr. Parry had disappeared. But as he passed a doorway out of which two people were coming, he happened to spy a pair of long legs, with coattails flying, bounding up a stairway at the back of the hall inside. Up the steps to the door went David, bumped into the two people, snatched open the door that was swinging closed behind them, only to be confronted by a very stout lady with a large shopping bag.

"'Ere, 'ere!" she bawled as David charged into her and tried to get past, and she caught him by the arm and swung him round. "Wot's orl this, wot's orl this, nha?"

"Oh, let me go, ma'am — please let me go — it's terribly important. We've been trying and trying —" and David gave a great, desperate tug and tore himself loose, went scrambling up the stairs and, as he reached the first landing and glanced back, saw thankfully that the woman must have had an appointment because she was turning away, shaking her head and muttering indignantly to herself. David banged on up the second flight.

It was old Mr. Parry's age that finally did him in. For though he had had a good head start, by the time they got to the fourth floor David was gaining and Mr. Parry must have been spent because he stumbled on the last two stairs. Now he was up and staggering along the dark hall, but he had no sooner

pulled his key from his pocket and turned it in the lock of his door than David was upon him. They plunged into the room together and all the old man's books went spilling across the floor. The key flew out of his hand but he still managed somehow to hang on to an old black leather bag he had with him. David, as he grabbed Mr. Parry's arm, was horrified to hear the old man's breath whistling in his throat in a most ghastly way as if, at any moment, he might fall down dead of heart failure. His lips were as pale as his face.

"Mr. Parry — please don't try to run off again — *please* — I can't let you go —"

Silently old Mr. Parry struggled, all the while gasping for breath. Once he actually managed to escape to the door, but instantly David was upon him again, pushed him away, banged the door closed and leaned with his body pressed against it and his hands grasping the knob behind him. As if he had used the last thread of his strength, Mr. Parry staggered over to the bed and fell across it, still with the black leather bag clasped to his chest.

David stared at that fallen figure in horror, his stomach sick with anxiety.

"Oh, Mr. Parry, are you all right? Mr. Bass will be here soon — I know he will. I know he'll find us."

The old man made no answer and David stood

there gazing at him, and then all around that dim, bare, hideous room furnished with nothing but a table, a chair, and a bed. What must he do now? He could not see the key that had spun out of Mr. Parry's hand, and if he left the door to hunt for it, or if he went out to look down into the street from the front hall window to try to catch sight of Mr. Bass and Chuck without first locking the door, he knew that Mr. Parry would be up and away. If only he could get that black bag from the old man, because obviously the scroll was in there, and perhaps the necklace too. Was Mr. Parry really spent, or was he only playing possum in the hope that David would go out to find Tyco?

Now David moved away from the door. Quietly — quietly he went around the bed and, bending over, saw that the old man's eyes were half-open but with only the whites showing, that his pale bluish-gray lips were parted with no breathing audible, and that his arms were but loosely clasped around the bag. David, his heart beating fiercely, reached out and touched the bag and waited, then grasped it with firmness and began pulling. It slid. It slid. Then like a madman Penmaen tugged it back, his eyes flying open and their wild gray-green staring up insanely. Neither would let go, and the old man kept sobbing, "No — no — no —"



The next instant the door was thrown open and there stood Mr. Bass and Chuck, and in the same moment Mr. Parry gave up and lay still.

"Penmaen," murmured Mr. Bass, leaning over him, "Penmaen, can you ever forgive us? But there was nothing else we could do. Fortunately Chuck waited until he saw you and David turning into this building or I don't know what I should have done — wasted time while you were exhausting yourself struggling. Tchh! Are you all right?"

Mr. Parry heaved a deep, wavering sigh and closed his eyes.

"Yes, Tyco — I think so. But this boy! What a young hurricane to send on my heels. Where did you get him? All the same —" and Penmaen paused to breathe slowly and quietly for a second or two — "all the same, I was a fool to attempt the stairs. If I'd just kept going, I could have — I could have outrun him. By all the gods, I could."

But Not to Dream

MR. PARRY, STILL holding tight to his black leather bag, sat there on the edge of the bed facing them. David noticed that his cheekbones were gradually gaining color, but that his green-gray eyes, as they studied his captors, were still brilliant with obsession. He reached out a hand and grasped Mr. Bass's arm.

"Tyco, let me finish the scroll — only let me finish! I know I'm nothing but a common thief and I'm bitterly ashamed, but I plead with you to just let me finish my deciphering. I swear to you that then you can do anything with me you like — turn me over to the police, sue me, have me jailed —"

Mr. Bass seemed stunned.

"Let you *finish* deciphering, Penmaen! Do you mean you've begun? Get it out — get out the scroll and let me see your translation. Let me see what you've got so far —"

But the old man made wild, calming gestures with

his free hand and then gripped Tyco's arm again so tightly that his knuckles went white.

"No — wait! I don't mean that I've exactly *got* anything, but I think I almost have a kind of glimmering as to how it's to be gone at. Now, you remember the Boghaz tablets, Tyco, which were mostly in Hittite and Akkadian. But some of the tablets, you will remember, Tyco, were in Hurrian, which was the language of the *people* of Mitanni, and also in Aryan, which was the language spoken by their *rulers*, while still others of the tablets were in Sumerian, a language *studied* but not *spoken* at the time —"

"Penmaen," cried Tyco, laying his hands on Mr. Parry's chest, "Penmaen, listen! Stop talking! Have you sold any more of the —"

But the old man's strange eyes neither wavered nor changed expression. It was as if he were in a trance.

"— *and* in Luvian, which is related to Hittite, *and* in Palaic, which is related to the Indo-European languages, *and* in Hattian, the language of the aboriginal inhabitants. But Palaic was our key, Tyco. Right there we had it, because if there is any known element at all in a group of unknown languages found inscribed together, we can go ahead no matter how difficult the task. In the case of the Boghaz tablets, the relation of Palaic to the Indo-European tongues

was the frail, narrow bridge across which we could creep from the known to the unknown and subdue it. But now, Tyco, in the case of the scroll, even should we discover that elusive bridge, there is still the matter of how one is to commence —”

“Penmaen — !”

“— of how one is to commence one’s reading, the place of entry, the direction one’s eyes are to follow. Do we begin reading the scroll from the left-hand top or the right-hand top, or from the left-hand bottom or the right-hand bottom? The Hamath stones, you remember, Tyco, were to be read boustrophedon — as a farmer plows, you know — from left to right, the next line from right to left, the next from left to —”

“Penmaen!” exploded Tyco again, and the volume of voice that now issued out of the little man was truly incredible. *“Penmaen, where is the scroll? And did you sell any more stones after you saw Bryony Fell?”*

Mr. Parry was shocked into silence. His hand dropped. He stared at Tyco.

“Stones?” he asked after a little, in a leaden voice as if he hadn’t an idea in the world what Tyco meant.

“Yes, Penmaen, the stones of the necklace you took out of the treasure chest at Carn Bassyd. Have

you sold any more since the three you sold Miss Fell?"

Mr. Parry gazed at the floor as though thinking deeply, then he looked up at Tyco and there was something sly in his expression which didn't at all go with the kind of person David was sure he really was.

"I sold no more stones after those three, and I will turn over all that are left, Tyco, if you will just let me stay here, quite privately, without being bothered by anyone so that I can go on working on the scroll."

Tyco sat down on the bed beside him.

"Penmaen," he said, "neither the stones nor the scroll are mine. Therefore I cannot make a bargain with you. I can only say this: I promise you faithfully that if you will return to me the stones you have stolen, you will then be at rest about the scroll."

"*I will be at rest*," murmured the old man, his eyes widening in wonder. "I will be at rest, you say. But how *can* I be unless I get some glimmering into its meaning? I tell you, Tyco, you can have no idea — you can have no possible idea of the unceasing hunger gnawing inside of me to unlock the door of this unknown language. We have never been able to translate Etruscan, and I thought I couldn't possibly be more tantalized by any language than I have

been by that one. But I did not know what unrest was. I have even thought at times lately that I might be going mad. Would you believe," and here Penmaen gazed at the boys and then around at Tyco with his great desperate eyes, "would you believe that I have not really, deeply slept since I left Carn Bassyd? I am exhausted but I cannot sleep. I am sick for want of sleep, but my brain never stops working. The scroll will not let me alone. I am beset and bedeviled by it, and I cannot give it up — *I cannot* —"

"No, Penmaen, as long as you keep the stones, you cannot," said Tyco quietly. "But I think that you must sleep for a while now, or you are going to be so seriously ill that we won't be able to get you back to Wales. Come, give me the stones and then you shall sleep. And when you wake, your brain will be as fresh and ready for the new day as a boy's."

"To sleep!" cried the old man with longing. "Oh, if only I could. To sleep — but not to dream. Oh, I don't want to dream!" He sat silent as if asking himself a multitude of questions, or as if searching his soul for some final answer to his dilemma. Then he reached in under his greatcoat and began fumbling with the lining of the jacket he had on underneath. Presently out came his thin old hand and, dangling from it, a slender woven cord knotted at the top and with seven stones strung thereon. Chuck gave a cry of triumph.

"Thirteen!" he exclaimed with relief. "Thirteen altogether, with the six Mr. Bass got back — or did you, Mr. Bass, get back those three from Bryony Fell?"

Smiling, Mr. Bass nodded and took the necklace and cradled the stones in his hands. "And the scroll, Penmaen?" he reminded gently.

Mr. Parry had been looking down at the old black bag on his knees, his fingers curled over the clasp as if they could not bear to let go. But at Tyco's words, with sadness and solemnity as if completing a ritual, he gave the bag over. Then he stood up and it struck David — surely he hadn't seemed so frail and thin before! He was gazing at that ugly, battered table where he must have worked day and night, struggling without letup for almost three weeks to find some key to a language quite untranslatable by any human creature. Then he went to it and sank down in the chair, scrabbling his hands among his work papers which he knew now were simply an accumulation of rubbish.

"And so it is all gone, Tyco, just as you said it would be — all my bedevilment, my hunger and my longing! What have you done to me simply by taking back those stones? I am at rest — but do you call this rest? What am I to do? *I feel so lonely,*" and the poor old man put his head down on the table and great, broken sobs burst from him. "Share with me

what you know about the manuscript, Tyco, even if I can never fully understand. Let me help you — I beg of you to let me help you. I cannot live like this — so empty — so empty —”

Never had David seen Mr. Bass more deeply distressed and unhappy.

“But I cannot let you help me, Penmaen. I simply cannot, though I would give anything if you could. This is something I can never do, and for you to try would be quite hopeless.”

After a while Penmaen became quiet and, the bitterness of his sorrow having passed (he must get over this whole experience as best he could, David realized, and pitied him with his whole heart), he and Chuck took the old man by the arms and helped him up, and with Mr. Bass leading the way, went downstairs, got into the car and started off for home.

“But I don’t understand,” said Chuck from out of his thoughts as they drove through the London traffic. Mr. Parry, all folded up in the back seat, was so thoroughly asleep that he did not move even once during the entire journey. “I don’t understand about Bryony Fell. She said she wouldn’t sell you those stones of hers, Mr. Bass, not for anything on earth. I remember.”

“I know, Chuck, but again, as in all the other cases, it was a matter of appealing to that quality in

Miss Fell which I felt at once was central to her nature. Do you remember Dr. Treadwelly's giving up his stone? What quality central to *his* nature did we appeal to? Intense pride in a purely scientific turn of mind. As for Rhondda Caithness, it seems to me from what you told me that love and concern for her father were what you both felt most strongly. And what made Sarsen Rollright give up his stone? Why, ego! As for Bryony Fell, she is one of the kindest, most compassionate people in the world — you remember she wanted to pay Penmaen more than he asked for the stones because she thought he must be giving up the last things he had of any value — and when I explained to her his tragic plight, in which he would be trapped interminably unless she changed her mind, she let me buy back the stones without a moment's hesitation."

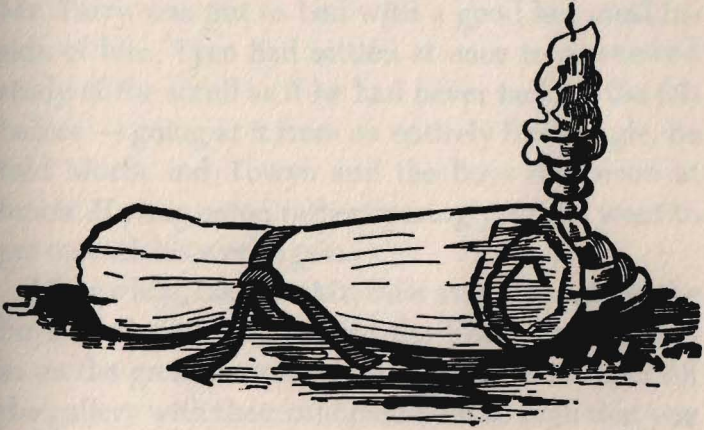
"You *explained* to her, Mr. Bass!" said David in amazement.

"Oh, yes — she seems to understand all about magic and spells and enchantments."

"She understands about boys, too," said Chuck. "I surely liked her — and not just because of the buns and jam."

PART TWO

The Scroll



The Beckoning of a Fox

DID MR. BASS never rest? He had driven all night while the boys took catnaps beside him, yet ever since their return he had been hard at work in the big main room at Carn Bassyd. After seeing that old Mr. Parry was put to bed with a good hot meal inside of him, Tyco had settled at once to a renewed study of the scroll as if he had never tackled the job before — going at it from an entirely fresh angle, he told Morfa and Towyn and the boys that noon at lunch. Having eaten rather sparingly, off he went to get on with his work again.

Meanwhile, because Mr. Bass said they might, the boys went exploring around the Carn. They looked in on the great bedrooms up on the second floor off the gallery with their canopied beds so high that you had to have a little ladder to climb onto them. Chuck, of course, had to try one of them, and he pronounced it so soft that David got up beside him and could have settled at once for another snooze. Morfa said, when they went downstairs again, that all the

mattresses were filled with down. Of course, because Mycetians are so light, they rested upon them like ducks on the bosom of a lake, which, she said, was a necessity peculiar to Mycetians. They could never bear being wrapped about with hot blankets nor their persons sinking into mattresses, nor pillows fluffed up about their ears, but needed always to feel free and airy and unencumbered.

She showed them the bedroom where they would sleep on the first floor next to hers and Towyn's, then took them to the Council Room, which was like an enormous hall running the full length of the back of Carn Bassyd.

"As you can see, this place is a kind of museum," she said, "being filled with our treasures from the long, long past. When the Carn was first built, when Theo and Tyco were boys, Mycetians came from everywhere bringing whatever precious thing had been handed down in their families, hidden away during the Dark Time after Arthur died. How our council table ever got through the Time in one piece, we do not know, except that it is made of bog oak, which is like iron. Our treasure chest, there on the table, is also carved of bog oak, and comes down from before the Dark Time too."

The place seemed filled with a special stillness. Sun slanted through the tall, pointed windows, paned with amber glass, so that the room was flooded

with amber light. Hung upon the paneled walls, which went up the full two stories of the Carn, were shields of leather and wood and metal, all of them battle-worn, and each metal shield sending forth its own gleam. Ranged around the room were suits of armor of all ages, most of chain mail — fine link as well as overlapping metal leaves — and two of the heavy, cumbersome sort that covered a man in a metal shell from head to foot. None, David noted with delight, were much taller than himself or Chuck or Morfa because they had been fashioned not for humans, but for Mycetians!

There were swords, too, all marked with intricate Mycetian designs and symbols, Morfa pointed out, except one sword which was much larger than the others and broken into two pieces. It lay apart on dark purple velvet on a table under a glass cover, and there was a red stone as big as a plum set in a claw on the top of the hilt. Now the sun, slanting down in a shaft of light onto the table, moved a little westward and all at once the great red stone came blazingly alive as if a fire had been set burning.

"That sword was Arthur's," said Morfa, as simply as though speaking of some possession of Theo's or Tyco's or Towyn's.

"Not Excalibur!" cried David.

"No," said Morfa. "Not Excalibur, but another he had before that."

Arthur's hand held that sword, thought David, catching his breath in cold awe, and his hand polished that blade. The carbuncle seemed to quiver with a life and heat of its own — and then the sun passed on and the jewel's fire sank and was hooded over once more.

"What's *that?*" asked Chuck, pointing up at an enormous tapestry hanging above the glass-topped table. "It looks like Carn Bassyd to me."

"So it is, Chuck," returned Morfa. "It is the Carn, right after it was built. The two boys standing down in front, see, are Tyco and Theo, and the others standing behind them are the gentlemen of the League and their ladies. They are all playing their harps and singing because there was a great celebration when the Carn was finished in 1593, and this tapestry was stitched to commemorate it. Notice, will you, that the Carn is sitting in the middle of a fairy ring — see the mushrooms down there in the grass?"

How haunting, unbelievable it was, to see Mr. Bass and Mr. Theo, dressed in the fashion of the sixteenth century — Queen Elizabeth's time — and with heads of thick, dark hair! Then — a celebration, thought David all at once, *a celebration*. And an idea burst through him so suddenly, and the dart of astonished excitement with it, that he came out all goose bumps up and down his arms. But with the

meeting of the League coming in a few days, could it be managed? He would have to think about it before he could tell Chuck and Morfa, though he was almost bursting to tell them now — this instant.

When they went back to Mr. Bass, they found him in front of the fire whispering to himself and scribbling out notes while referring to one or another of the fat volumes he'd taken from the shelves — volumes written in Mycetan, of course.

"Modern Mycetan, Mr. Bass?" asked David.

"Modern, middle, *and* ancient. But what I can't make out," and Tyco leaned back in his chair and stared at the fire with half-closed eyes as if considering the whole business of language relationships, "is why the symbols of the scroll should seem so hauntingly familiar and yet their meanings be as shut away from me as if they belonged to another culture entirely. Which simply does not make sense, because this scroll has been handed down from century to century within *my* culture. Therefore, as I cannot translate it, it seems to me that these symbols must not represent the written language of any group of ancient Mycetians, but perhaps the secret language of the League at some past time."

"Do you have any idea what time?" asked Chuck.

"By my own method of dating," replied Tyco, "as well as by carbon dating, I arrive at around fourteen hundred years, which means the scroll could have

been written by Elder Grandfather. If he did write it in some secret language of his own, then I may be defeated, and yet I feel certain that if I keep tugging away at these maddening, cobwebby scratches, something will occur to me. They make such an exasperating echo in my mind as if they might even be some form of Basidiumite and yet, if so, it is no form I am familiar with. *Therefore —*” His lower lip came out and he considered. Then he handed the book he had been studying to Chuck. “Chuck, my boy, would you put this back in its place on the shelf? You can tell by the number on the spine where it belongs. Both of you could, if you will, put all the rest back for me, and then I think that we must be on our way.”

“Be on our *way!*” cried David, painfully jolted out of his happy preoccupation with Mr. Bass’s fascinating affairs. “You mean everything’s come to an end?” So there would be no chance, after all, he mourned to himself, to carry out his absolutely magnificent idea.

“Indeed everything has not come to an end, David. It may hardly have begun,” returned Tyco, rolling up the scroll and tying it with a very sturdy linen tape to replace the old ragged one, which looked as if it might not hold much longer. Next he got a piece of heavy silk, wrapped the scroll in it, then put the whole thing into a box of myrtlewood (Mr. Bass told

them it was) handsomely decorated with a design of inlaid silver. It was a box worthy of the scroll, David thought.

"So then, where are we going?" pressed Chuck eagerly.

"To Basidium, Chuck. I keep thinking about the work Ta and Mr. Theo have been doing, unearthing the Lost City, where you and David landed the last time you went. What I need to know now is just what they have uncovered. Something that might be very, very useful," and he tapped the myrtlewood box.

"And will there be something you'll want us to do, or something you'll want us to help you with?" persisted Chuck.

Mr. Bass smiled and got up.

"Yes, on Basidium — and then here, whether or not I can translate the scroll. But that I shall speak of later. When we come back we shall have the meeting of the League and you two shall be there — the first humans ever to attend." His large golden-brown eyes rested with affection on their faces, and the boys could say nothing at all, they were so overwhelmed.

A little later, out in the kitchen after he had talked to Morfa and Towyn about his plans, Mr. Bass said he ought really to pop over to Pacific Grove and tell Dr. and Mrs. Topman and Cap'n Tom that they

would be away longer than he had at first thought, and that everyone was safe and happy.

"Lots cheaper than telephoning," Chuck observed. "You're very convenient, Mr. Bass."

Tyco agreed that he was, at least in this respect. Also, he thought, he might just as well drop by 5 Thallo Street and do the watering (which Chuck and David usually did when he was away) and see what the mail said.

The moment Mr. Bass disappeared, David thought he would explode with his secret, but he held on for a bit to be certain Tyco wasn't going to reappear. Towyn, apparently quite recovered from his illness, had gone off to feed the chickens and could be heard singing, as he passed just beyond the kitchen windows:

*Little Shona Mor-rgan,
Shentleman of Wales,
Came riding on a nanny goat,
Selling of pigs' tails. . . .*

"Mrs. Niog," whispered David, as if Tyco might be hovering in the air above their heads, "when was Mr. Bass born? He told us, but I've forgotten exactly — June, sometime —"

Morfa was busy at the stove starting the evening meal. She paused, then went on stirring the soup in the big soup pot while she reflected. It was leek

soup, made with ham and potatoes, and onions fried in butter, and it smelled most heavenly.

"Well, now, let me be thinking." Morfa poured in two beaten eggs and some cream. "It has been so long since I have put my mind to it. But June 28th it was. There is sure of it I am — June 28, 1580, he was born. Why, two days from now the 28th will be — this Friday. Tyco, three hundred and eighty-five years old!"

"His *birthday!*" shouted Chuck, giving a leap of joy and then grasping Morfa by one plump arm. "His *birthday*, Mrs. Niog!"

"Yes," said David, his gray eyes alight, "so let's give Mr. Bass a party. Remember he told us, Chuck, that he hasn't had one for centuries and what a big cake he'd need to have to hold all the candles? Well, let's *have* a cake, and all the League will be here for the meeting, so we could have the dinner first — only it must be a real banquet, with all the wives invited — and then the cake, and then the meeting, when Mr. Bass will read the scroll. And it will be a huge, tremendous celebration of Mr. Bass translating the scroll, as well as the celebration of his birthday."

"Oh, *bo-o-o-o-y!*" sang out Chuck. "And we'll let Ta and Mr. Theo in on our secret, and we'll bring Mr. Theo back for the party, if he'll come, and Mr. Bass must come back with us, too, in the space ship,

instead of by thought, so that you can have plenty of time, Mrs. Niog, to get everything ready and tell everybody that it's to be a surprise party. They must all get here ahead of the banquet, and they must all come in just as if it was any sort of evening, and then when everybody's here they must all start singing 'Happy Birthday!' Will you tell them that, Mrs. Niog?"

"Indeed I shall! And I will be making such a cake," said Morfa, her eyes shining with delight, "such a cake as the League has never seen, or Tyco either, and every beautiful kind of food, and we shall be having such singing and playing on the harps as this old house hasn't heard in a long running of years. What a thought it is for Tyco you boys have had — what a thought!"

Now Chuck said he wanted to make a big, long list of everything Mrs. Niog would need for the banquet, every single thing that would have to be bought or brought in from the storehouse — and he would put down just when it would be needed. But David, oddly restless, filled almost too full of excitement, said he wanted to go out for a climb, which was very strange, because it was usually Chuck who was the restless, impatient one.

He thought he would fly into a million pieces with happiness as he ran along by the banks of the Artro,

and its bubbling and chuckling echoed the bubble of thoughts in his head.

*Little Shona Mor-rgan,
Shentleman of Wales,
Came riding on a nanny goat,
Selling of pigs' tails. . . .*

he sang. He wished he knew the rest of it, if there was any more.

Under the high, dark mountain he came to the tarn, the lake all surrounded by bilberry and hart's-tongue. Dark, indeed, was the mountain. Dusk falls late in the British Isles during the summer months, so that it was not night coming on; rather it seemed as if a storm might be threatening, David saw with surprise as he got out into the open. He'd thought the sun had slipped behind the mountain, but while some few, far-off peaks of the Rhinogs were still golden, here above the Artro and the Roman Steps clouds were rolling in. And when David came to the first of the Steps and looked up that wandering flight, it struck him how every detail of leaf and rock ledge stood out with a kind of fierce clarity. The light in the pass was green tinged with purple. The mountain was still now as if all small animals and the birds, even, had gone under cover to wait for the first big, pattering drops.

Well, but what if a storm *was* coming on? It

wouldn't matter to Mr. Bass and Chuck and him. The space ship cleared earth's atmosphere so quickly that they'd be out of the turmoil in a minute or two anyway. No, nothing would stop them.

Now he was on the Steps, and when he lifted his head he saw a fox standing above him. In the green light, its red-gold coat seemed to hold a light of its own; it seemed almost illumined against the dark tangle of wild growth. This is the mate of the dog fox Towyn killed, David told himself, and he paused, staring up at her. She stood looking down at him, her ears pricked forward, poised, intent. Then she turned, glancing back over her shoulder, and started up. Was he coming? she seemed to ask.

Stirred by a kind of shudder in his blood, David followed.

"No more than an hour, now, our Daffyd," Morfa had said, "and then you must be back in this place, for I shall be having the table ready."

About three-quarters of an hour left, his wrist watch told him, and he ran up after the fox. Fifteen minutes up, and fifteen minutes down, and fifteen back to the Carn. And if the fox went padding up beyond the turnoff to the meadow where the space ship stood, he would just let her go on and not follow. But who was to say she wanted him to follow? Yet why, then, did she stop now and again on her small, dainty feet, with her front paw up ready to go

on, and look back at him with her mouth open a little and her tongue panting in and out so that it seemed as if she were smiling? She kept drifting up — drifting up — looking back occasionally, and her thick red-gold tail with its snowy tip rippled behind her.

But when they came to where the rocks fell away on the right and there, just beyond, stood the little oak wood, he could not stop or turn. Now it was in his head that she was leading him to that place Mr. Bass said he never could see — the Mycetan burying ground — the place no human could ever see or be shown. But not being human, the she-fox had seen it and now she desired, for some secret reason, that he should see it, too.

Lightly, as if she had no need to press her paws against the steps to send her upward, she sprang ahead, quickly, always more quickly — only just in sight, the tip of her tail vanishing round some farther bend. And his heart, David thought, would pound out of his body, yet he could not stop for long but went leaping after, pausing only to take great gulps of air, then struggling up again through the purplish-green gloom.

It seemed now that they had reached a summit, but David could not tell for certain because the storm light had deepened. I have lost her, he thought with relief. She's disappeared and I can go

back now. I *must* go back — I'll be late and they'll be worried. But, no, there she sat at a little distance from the last of the steps, off to the right, and she was watching him, her ears pricked forward, her mouth still open — smiling — and her tail curled round her feet. When he turned toward her, she melted into the stunted undergrowth among the rocks and he, running forward, thought he could make out a path. Yes, there could be no mistake: it was a path, trodden, well-worn — the Mycetian path. But he should not follow — *he must not follow* —

"Oh, but, Mr. Bass," burst out David, "Mr. Bass, I can't help it!" It was as if two opposite-pulling forces were tearing him apart.

"Can't you, David?" The question rang soundlessly yet quite clearly in the air above him, or in his heart, perhaps. "Can't you?" Never had he felt so miserable with guilt.

He stopped and put his head against the cold, dark rock and then he turned suddenly and started back toward the Roman Steps. But almost instantly he checked, for he knew without the least doubt that something was waiting for him on the other side of the rock. He listened, straining to catch any least, small sound above the thudding of his heart, which seemed like a wild thing ready to burst from his chest. He listened so acutely, with such painful,

stretching intensity, that his ears felt almost separate from his head, as if they had a life of their own. Then with a cry he dashed into the heather at the side of the rock and went hurtling and scrambling down the mountain, falling, picking himself up, blundering into boulders that seemed to rise out of nothing, to shoulder him about and then let him go again. He never looked back once, but went leaping and stumbling down — he had no idea in what direction.

And then the heather and the tumble of rocks fell away and he was astonished to find himself in the meadow where the space ship stood. There were the little yellow flowers and the great standing stones.

He *wished* he didn't have to go through the oak wood, but he turned toward it, looking down as he made his way across the rough slope. And when he looked up again, he knew that it had done no good to run, for he had escaped nothing.

There ahead of him, by one of the tall stones with a cleft down its center, stood a figure in a long cloak and with a wide-brimmed hat pulled down so that the face was hidden. The man might have come from the wood — and yet he would not have had a chance to walk that distance without my seeing him, David thought, and why was he standing there in that peculiar fashion, as though expecting him, or waiting for him — standing between him and the little wood?

David's heart beat more fiercely than ever and he was shaking with fright. He was not at all sure his legs could get him to the wood. What did the man want? Why did he stand there so silently in that *waiting* posture? Can I get by him? David asked himself. Yet what reason was there, really, to be afraid? The man had said nothing, done nothing. No, but as in a nightmare, David measured the distance that lay between the man and himself, and between himself and the waist-high wilderness of heather that began several feet to the right. If he ran to the left, it would be safer — more open. But now, somehow, they seemed closer, he and the man, and yet he could swear that neither of them had moved. Now the man lifted his head as if to look out from under the broad-brimmed hat, an old shepherd's hat that, like the long, dark cloak that swung from the man's shoulders, had an antique air about it.

"He will die," said the man, quietly and clearly, as if out of some deep, sure knowledge. And David knew, just as he had known that the golden fox was the dead dog fox's mate, who the man meant. All the same —

"What do you mean?" whispered David. "*Who* will die?"

"The old Bassyd," came the soft, triumphant reply. "The old, old Bassyd — *he* will die. He will

die now and be buried lone and lonely forever, away from his kind, and the petrels shall nest in his skull and he will never rest, and a curse upon him and all his people to follow after —”

“He will *not* die,” screamed David, and he went for the man in blind, desperate rage. “You can’t hurt him — I won’t let you — I won’t let you —”

But his fists flailed against nothing. They beat the air, beat the shape of darkness which was the cloak and the great antique hat, and his hands met nothing but coldness, a black cold so intense that his flesh turned numb. The cold closed over him and pressed him down and snatched the breath out of his throat, and he was left on the ground sobbing, not because he was hurt, nor because he was terrified — no, but because of Mr. Bass.

He never afterwards remembered the journey home. He ran — leaping down two steps at a time, all the way down the mountain, and when he banged on the door of Carn Bassyd, and Chuck and Morfa and Towyn Niog came and let him in, they stared at his scratched, white face and dirty, bloodied hands as if they did not recognize him.

“Mr. Bass — Mr. Bass!” Wildly he shoved them aside and ran about like a crazy person, searching, for he had taken it for granted that Mr. Bass would

be there. He had been depending upon it all the way down, yet with dread weighing in his stomach like a stone.

"He isn't here yet, our Daffyd," cried Morfa. "But there is a fearful sight you are — what is it with you — what is it?"

So then he told them, and there wasn't the least doubt in his mind that they believed him. It had not been a nightmare, not a dream. It had been real, and they knew it.

"We won't let anything happen to him, will we, Chuck?" David kept saying. "You won't let anything happen, Mr. Niog — you won't, will you? You've got to tell Mr. Bass not to come back to earth again. Not ever again. He must just stay safe on Basidium or the little planet in M 81."

"He'd never do that," said Chuck, without, apparently, having to stop and think.

"No, Daffyd," said Towyn, "he would not. He would never accept that sort of safety and defeat." Silence for a moment, then, "I wish he were home."

But it was all right. He arrived at the Carn not more than half an hour later.

Not Even Christmas

FROM THE HOLLOW of the black, upland coomb, where nothing was visible but the tiny circle of Morfa and Towyn's lantern light, and nothing was to be heard but the thin, high singing of the wind under the crags, the boys and Mr. Bass took off for Basidium at precisely midnight.

The storm never broke. It went muttering and slamming its way across the Rhinogs in the direction of England, flashing out now and then in brilliant scratches across the sky. The clouds hoarded their rain over Wales. Nothing in the least unexpected had happened on the way up the Steps. "But he is simply biding his time — or rather biding events," said Mr. Bass. "He can afford to because, so far, I have accomplished nothing with the scroll." Tyco had his little satchel which contained the myrtlewood box, his work papers and two volumes of *Random Jottings*, which he thought he might need on Basidium.

Now the roaring of the space ship was over, and

the long silence was settling in — silence, except for the steady peeping of the oxygen urn. Never had it seemed so comforting as now, for it had entered David's head, just as he watched Mr. Bass's finger commence to press the starting button, that this could be the moment the stranger had been waiting for. Perhaps this was the moment planned upon in which Mr. Bass's life was to end — and what matter if his and Chuck's ended too in the general explosion? However, the space ship had taken off as usual; they were here together, safe, released from earth and that dread presence in the curious hat and cloak. But —

"But what about *them*, Mr. Bass?" came Chuck's quick, thought-reading question.

Yes, what about them — Morfa and Towyn going back alone across the meadow in the cold wind and the blackness with only their little lantern?

"They will never be in any danger," said Mr. Bass. "Never in any real danger."

"Only you? Is that what you mean?" asked Chuck after a second or two. Mr. Bass did not answer, but seemed to be thinking — going back in his mind over all that David had told him: everything, except why David had followed the fox and where he knew it was leading him. This he had not been able to confess in either the first or second telling, even

though he was quite certain Towyn and Mr. Bass knew. "But why was the stranger there on the mountain?" persisted Chuck. "And the fox — where do you suppose it was taking you, Dave?"

David could feel Mr. Bass waiting. There was no avoiding any longer.

"To the Mycetan burying ground," he said in a muffled voice.

Chuck was astounded.

"But — but if you *knew* where it was leading you, why did you follow, after Mr. Bass said that we must never —"

"I know — I know," burst out David, furious in his guilt. "When Mr. Bass said that no Mycetan, not even himself, could ever take us there. But I couldn't *help* following — I don't know why. I even thought what a joke it would be on everyone. I thought — fifteen minutes up and fifteen minutes down, but even when I knew I'd been following the fox for almost half an hour, I didn't care. I didn't care what Mr. Bass or anyone would say —"

"You didn't *care*!" David had no need to look at Chuck to understand that he was shocked to the core of his being.

"No. I just had to keep going, and it seemed as if the fox was smiling, as if she was saying, 'Come on — come on —' and I think she was trying to get re-

venge for her mate being killed. You remember, Mr. Bass, you said you'd had a pact with the dog fox, and that Towyn had betrayed it?"

"Yes, I remember, David. And now she was trying to make you betray me. And here is something more: it was because Towyn heard the hens and thought it was the dog fox at them that he ran out and left Mr. Parry with the treasure chest open. If he hadn't run out, Mr. Parry would never have been tempted to steal the scroll and the necklace —"

"And so then — so then —" went on David tensely, "does it seem as if maybe the man on the mountain had some connection with the foxes? Did he make the dog fox get Towyn outside? I understand that — I mean I understand the reason. But why did he make the she-fox try to get me up to the burying ground?"

"Because only if you betrayed me, David, would the stranger have had power over you. Only in that way could you have been destroyed. And if you had been destroyed, I could not have endured it. I should have had to endure it, but I do not see how I could."

David was crushed into silence. Then:

"Why couldn't I touch him? Unless he was —"

"Not a man, but a phantom," said Mr. Bass.

"Narrow Brain," finished David. The words were not a question, for he had known all along, only he

had not been able to bring himself to say the name.

"And *was* he narrow, Dave?" asked Chuck fearfully. "I mean, the way Mr. Bass said he was? His head — his face — ?"

"I don't know. I couldn't see. His hat brim made a shadow, and it was getting dark because of the clouds. But I had a feeling there wasn't any face, that there was just the hat and the cape with nothing but cold underneath — black cold that froze me up when I went into it to hit the man with my fists. I can't tell you how it was. I remember, Mr. Bass, you saying that Narrow Brain wasn't a person anymore, but a — a presence of evil. Yes, that's what you said."

"A blind, one-track-minded evil," said Mr. Bass, "that feeds on the triumph of Elder Grandfather's murder and his burial in a spot no Mycetan has ever found. How ironical it is that to Elder Grandfather, who has long since gone on to other existences, it matters less than nothing where his earthly remains lie buried. Yet to Narrow Brain, it is the very staff of his endurance."

"And the scroll, Mr. Bass?" asked David. "If Elder Grandfather did write the scroll, then —"

"Then if I can translate it, I am certain I shall find something there to help me. And my reason is this: during the entire last meeting of the League, my thoughts turned again and again to the mystery of

the scroll and the key to its translation, but I could do nothing about it before I returned to M 81. Now, it seems to me to be intensely revealing that the scroll should have been stolen not long after, and that you, David, have met Narrow Brain. It is as if he is being forced into action through fear. Possibly there is meaning in the fact that you saw Narrow Brain in the upland coomb. Oh, yes — there is plainly something here for me to think about. Of that I am quite sure.”

He leaned over and turned off the rocket motor, for now they were out beyond the pull of earth's gravity and there was no longer any need for propulsion. They would cruise in free fall to Basidium.

The boys slept presently, as they always did going to Basidium and then again on returning to earth. David had never been able to decide if they fell asleep out of exhaustion from excitement (though it was true this time that they had not had much rest on the road home from London, and had not slept since then), or could it be because of some enchantment that had its own way, first of teaching them an unearthly tongue on the journey out, then wiping it from their minds going home. And David wondered, just before he dropped off to sleep, if the Ancient Ones were the givers, who would forever keep to themselves their own mysterious purpose. Or, one day, would Mr. Bass know that the right moment

had come at last to teach them the language himself on earth, so that it would be theirs for the rest of their lives no matter where they might be?

"Wake up, boys, wake up!" It was Tyco, breaking through their dreams, and David was awake at once.

"It's the same — everything's just the same as always!" He understood the joy and relief in Chuck's voice, recognizing at once the thin, high, resonant tones that Chuck's own mother would scarcely have known as her son's, and the words — curious words full of liquid l's and v's.

"And the light — the light, Chuck — just the same —"

Pale blue-green, the atmosphere of Basidium surrounded them on every hand, suffused with silvery earthshine. David leaned over beside Chuck to stare down through the mists that always veiled the little planet, protecting the sensitive eyes of its people from the sun's brilliance, whenever it circled around, and their moisture-loving flesh from its burning.

"In about *one* minute we'll be smelling the good smell and hearing their voices."

The clean, damp, fresh, penetrating smell, Chuck meant, and the clear, delicate voices, like wind chimes, of the Mushroom People — of Ta, their king, and Mebe and Oru, his Wise Men, who chattered like mice and who were not really very wise,



but who were absolutely indispensable to him because there was nobody else even remotely like them and he was so fond of them.

"Will everyone be there waiting for us, do you suppose, Mr. Bass?" David's throat tightened with eagerness as Tyco turned on the rocket motor again to cushion their landing.

"I hope so, David — I hope so," came the surprising reply, but David was too happy to even turn and glance at Mr. Bass.

"There they are — everybody's coming — they heard us —" shouted Chuck.

Yes, now you could see the crowd gathering, because Basidium, which was racing up at them at an appalling speed, seemed to be shedding its mists at their approach. Before they could take another breath there was a jolt and a shudder and then everything happened at once.

"Back you go, Chuck," reminded Mr. Bass, and the boys tore off their belts, Chuck scrambled down to turn off the oxygen urn (that, he must *never* forget) while David slid over to where Chuck had been sitting, and unbolted and pushed open the door. In came the happy cries of hundreds of Basidiumites — *but why wasn't Mr. Bass happy?* hung at the back of David's mind, for by now he knew every intonation of Tyco's voice.

"Go on, Dave — *go on!*" urged Chuck impatiently, up beside him again in three seconds.

"Mr. Bass is here — he's right here with us this time," called out David joyously to everyone below, and shoved by Chuck, he landed almost on top of little Mebe and Oru, who had been waving and jumping up and down as if they were no older than the children crowded around them.

It was good. To David, not even Christmas or the first day of summer vacation could ever quite compare with this moment. Now Chuck was beside him,

and Mr. Bass with his satchel and, like birds all piping and cheeping and whirring and chattering at once, the pale green-golden Basidiumites flowed around them. The women held up their minute babies, and the tiny children ran forward, shaken with laughter and excitement and perhaps, too, with awe, just to touch the boys and Mr. Bass and then run back behind their mothers.

The boys tried to take everyone's hands at once.

"Mr. Theo — Mebe and Oru — how are you? Is everyone all right? Is everyone just the same? What's been happening? What about the Lost City — what have you found — can we go there?"

But:

"Where is Ta?" asked Mr. Bass.

As elegant in his Basidiumite robes of soft reddish-gold as he ever had been in his earthly clothes, Mr. Theo had an arm across the shoulders of each of the boys, while Mebe and Oru were everywhere at once, never still for a moment. Nevertheless they had heard, and now, like two anxious mice, they came close to listen.

Mr. Theo absent-mindedly gave two quick brushings-forward to the thick, dark hair that grew at the sides of his otherwise bald head.

"The Great Ta has been very ill, Tyco," he said in a low voice.

"But why didn't you let me know, in one way or another?"

"I wanted to, many times, but Ta would not hear of it. He said you had enough to occupy your mind without being bothered by the trivial ailments of a silly old man —"

Instantly David remembered.

"You guessed, didn't you, Mr. Bass?"

"No, David, I did not guess that Ta was ill, but the nearer we came to Basidium, the more certain I was he would not be here to meet us, and I was concerned, though I didn't understand why. When did he take sick, Theo? How long ago? And what do you think is the matter?"

"Well, it's the strangest thing —"

"Ai, yai — yai —" wailed Mebe suddenly, his eyes filling with tears.

"*Qui-et!*" hissed Oru. "Can't you remember for two breaths that the Great Ta told us no one is to know? Be still!"

Mebe was still, blinking very fast. And now Mr. Theo turned to the waiting crowd with a gesture, and at once they fell back and separated into two groups, one raising flutes, which the Basidiumites called maleetles, to their lips, and the other group commencing to sing their ceremonial song of welcome to the accompaniment of the flute-playing. It



was a song in a minor key that rose and fell in long, slow surges that reminded David of how the wind and the sea might sound together if they could make a kind of anthem. As on two other occasions, it caused the hairs to rise along the backs of his arms and he knew that this, too, was what he had been waiting for. Except now, why did the singing seem to hold an edge of sadness when the Basidiumites knew nothing at all of their king's illness?

"It's the strangest thing," began Theo again, putting his arm through Tyco's and drawing the boys to him on the other side so that they could all walk along together. "Two and a half weeks ago Ta suddenly began losing sleep. At first he said nothing about it, but I soon noticed that he seemed so weary when we went to the Lost City to direct the work that he could scarcely think. Finally, when one day he decided not to go, I insisted that he tell me what was the matter. He said that he simply could not get his rest at night. He would fall asleep only to dream the most confusing and unhappy dreams, full of oppression and menace and with no shape or detail. He said he seemed to be constantly searching for something, but for what, he did not know. He would awake, trying to tell himself what it was, but never could he come to any conclusion, and night after night woke up exhausted and haunted. It seemed to him there was a face he wanted to see — that he was

struggling to see — and he thought that if only he could look upon that face, he would know everything and his search would be ended. All the time he connected you with his dreams in some way, Tyco, though in what way he couldn't decide. I don't believe that he is physically ill. I think he just needs sleep — but he cannot get it. I have tried every curative plant I know, every sleep-giving plant, but nothing helps him. I have been so concerned that if you hadn't come soon, I would have gotten in touch with you in spite of Ta. I can't tell you how thankful I am that you're here."

"But, Theo," said Mr. Bass, "didn't Ta tell you anything about getting some relief a day or so ago?"

Theo stopped and stared at his cousin for a moment before going on. Then:

"I don't know why I am astonished, knowing you as I do, Tyco. But, yes — Ta *did* get some relief not long ago. He said he seems not to be searching any longer, but the dreams continue and he still cannot see the face."

"He will before long — if only I can succeed in what I have come to do. Now, Theo, was it precisely two weeks and four nights ago, earth time, that Ta became dream-haunted, and was it the night before last, earth time (as we are now into a new day), that his dream-search ended?"

Again Mr. Theo gave Tyco a look.

"Yes, yes — it was! Now, please tell me how — and what —"

"I shall, Theo — I shall tell you everything, or rather both you and Ta at once as we are almost at the palace."

They had just passed the observatory, which the Basidiumites called the Place of Mystery, and which had been built at Mr. Theo's request according to his design. It was pale pinkish-gray, as were all the homes of the Mushroom People, larger than any of them but not so extensive as Ta's palace standing yonder in its own garden of silvery mushrooms and glade of fern trees. From the roof of the observatory rose many round-topped towers, one taller and broader than the rest, and when David saw them, the words "five frilled towers" came into his mind and, "I *will* be having my towers!" he heard Morgan Caithness cry. Oh, Rhondda, David said to himself, if only you could see these towers, almost exactly like the ones in your father's drawings, and see this little planet, and the six of us walking toward Ta's palace, and hear the Basidiumites singing and playing! He wished she could have seen the forests of giant mushrooms, tall as trees, of every soft color one could imagine, as well as combinations of them. There was a kind whose stem or trunk, and whose gills underneath the hood, were a clear canary yellow, but the top of the hood was like a butterfly's

wings: emerald, blue-green, yellow-green or flame according to the way the light struck it. But even though a group of these, seen from a distance through the winding mists, were almost unbelievable, they were not quite David's favorites. For some reason he liked best the coppery-golden ones that had gills (or pleats, as David called them to himself) of deep, velvety green, their slender stems leaning out from a central clump.

Ta did, indeed, look very gaunt and ill, though he had lost none of his kingliness. He was lying propped up on a thick, high bed of some sweet-smelling dried plants, fine and soft and silky in their dried state. The royal necklace, whose stones seemed larger because of his thinness, rested upon his chest, and the stones, each in turn, shone now one incredible color and then another as they changed position with his movements and reflected gleams from the torches burning on the walls.

"Tyco, so you have brought them at last! How I've looked forward to this — seeing our young friends again — the dark one, so lively and merry, with eyes the color of ours," and Ta rested a hand on Chuck's rough thatch, "and the light one, the slim, quiet one, who has eyes the color of an evillya's wing. It does me good just to look at the three of you. I don't need to ask what Theo has told you — I see you know



why I am here, resting, rather than getting up to welcome you as I should."

"Tyco knows to a day — or rather, I should say to a night, when your dreams began, Great Ta," put in Theo. "And he knows to a moment, I expect, when you ceased your dream-search for something you cannot name."

"But, you see, Tyco is magical," announced Mebe, who was sitting curled up at Ta's feet.

"Well, who hasn't always known *that!*" said Oru, who could never bear Mebe making interesting announcements all by himself.

"Hush, now," said Ta. "I want Tyco to tell us what has happened."

"The boys and I will tell you," said Mr. Bass, and they did — all together, first one and then another, how they had been led in a kind of long drawn-out paper chase across Wales and England in search of Penmaen Parry.

"And so it was my necklace I have been so desperately hunting for — it was my necklace I was reaching out after in all my nightmares," murmured Ta. "But this I know — I was not dreaming simply because of the necklace —"

"No," said Tyco. "The whole thing goes much, much deeper than that. Tell the Great Ta your story, David, your experience with Narrow Brain."

And when David had finished:

"So there is the face." Ta's deep-set eyes lifted and he stared across their heads into his own thoughts. "The face I can never see and that you, David, could not see either, for perhaps it is not there to be seen. There is only blackness and an intense cold. And his voice, David?"

David studied Ta for a moment in silence, because all at once for the first time he knew something.

"I never heard it."

"But then — but then *how*," cried Chuck, appalled, "did you know what Narrow Brain said?"

"I never heard his voice," said David slowly and surely. "The words were in my head — they were just *there*, as if they were thoughts that had been put there. I spoke out loud — I screamed — but I never once heard Narrow Brain's voice."

Ta leaned forward and the big necklace slipped and swung.

"This evil presence, Tyco — your Elder Grandfather's old enemy — this phantom you call Narrow Brain, has concentrated itself out of the layers of time because, instinctively, it senses what you have in mind to do. You must go now directly to the Lost City so that you can see the wall inscriptions we have uncovered thus far, and determine if there is

anything there that will help you. The blessings of the Ancient Ones go with you! I pray for your success."

And when they were outside:

"The results of a single act never stop working," said Tyco. "In this case, I mean the theft of the scroll. In the affairs of living creatures, once a stone is dropped in the water, the circles go on widening forever. One has reached even here, to Basidium."

The Great Designs

FROM AMONG THE RUINS of the Lost City they could hear choppings, scrapings and brushings, the "chock" of stone against stone, and saw the movement of Basidiumites who were busy cutting down great mushroom and fungoid growths that were forcing walls apart. Some of the workers were carefully removing moss and lichens, and were cleaning away the stains of centuries that disfigured those vivid wall paintings which, after perhaps two thousand years, had still not faded. But even though the workers from Ta's city were busy throughout the ruins, a hush presided over these walls and columns and storage towers which the murmurings and scrapings did not greatly disturb. All sounds seemed subdued as though out of respect for the long, long past.

The Hall of Writings did not appear, on the outside, to be much different from the other ruins. But when David parted a curtain of long, delicate fronds and peered in through a broad crack in the wall, he

beheld how this part of the temple, which was by now roofless, had all been painted in vast clouds of varying colors, unfaded, but stained by damp and mold in many places. They were indescribably glowing colors that seemed to be a part of the walls themselves and not just laid upon the surface. They seemed lighted from within — pale azure, green that deepened from apple to soft jade, amethyst, coral, peach. And across them had been inscribed, in deep black, enormous designs made up of circles of hieroglyphs: tiny figures, symbols, feathery scratchings.

"Chuck — Mr. Bass — Mr. Theo!" he called, tense with excitement. "Come and look!" Tyco was there at once, opening his satchel, the boys and Mr. Theo pressed up close and when he stretched out the scroll, "The scratch-like markings are the same, Mr. Bass — they're the *same*!"

"It's as if," said Mr. Theo, glancing up, glancing down, "the writer of this scroll had been in a desperate hurry, so that each character he has written here is only a slurred likeness of those strokes or scratches up there —"

"In a desperate hurry," repeated Mr. Bass. "Ye-e-es, it's an idea which has haunted me from the very beginning. However, all this gets me nowhere, at least for the present, because there is no known ele-

ment." No known element! Who else had said that? Where? When? But David had taken it for granted, because he was excited, and wasn't thinking that the scroll was practically translated. "I can see now," said Mr. Bass," that my only solution is to stay on Basidium until I have unlocked the secret — right here in the Hall of Writings. Perhaps this whole building is going to have to be cleared of stains and fungi before we can find the key. Or perhaps it is a matter of studying the various inscriptions until, from our knowledge of modern Basidiumite, we can somehow work our way back. At any rate, the next meeting of the League is going to have to be held without me."

"But it *can't* be, Mr. Bass! It just *can't*!"

Mr. Bass turned and looked at David in surprise.

"Why ever not? It has before."

David could have cried, and that was the truth. His stomach was sick with disappointment — all his and Chuck's and Morfa's beautiful plans come to nothing! There was Morfa out there on earth cooking and cleaning and making everything festive, and baking Mr. Bass's birthday cake for nothing; and the League members, who would all have been told by this time, would be practicing their songs of celebration and their harp-playing and counting on the party. But Mr. Bass wasn't coming home. As David

turned away, his face must have shown his bitter disappointment because Chuck came up behind him and took hold of his arm.

"Dave," he whispered, "we can have the party next year —"

"Next year — *next year!*" repeated David roughly and pulled his arm free. "What do you care about plans? They don't mean a thing to *you!*"

"But, Dave — what difference does a party make compared to the scroll getting translated?"

David absolutely couldn't abide Chuck when he was being sensible and he himself couldn't manage it. He kept on going because he knew that if he stayed he would give himself away in front of Mr. Bass.

Miserably he wandered from one ruined and overgrown corridor to another, becoming aware, against the background of stillness, of secret hummings and whirrings and snappings and clicks. He caught glimpses now and then of some of the astonishing creatures — scarcely seen for more than than a breath — that he and Chuck had been told the names of on their journey to the Lost City: vlil-seenas, moorvleernos, vrodilrinads, tleelalingas and frayoomnairos. The moorvleernos were the small flying dragons related to the lalas that David and Chuck had seen on their last flight to Basidium, and in a slanting bar of earthlight falling onto the floor

of the corridor he startled a little flock of them. Chirring and snapping, they flashed above his head in streaks of garnet and peacock and rich purplish-blue, and were gone.

Not much later he saw ahead of him in a pool of bronze-green gloom a herd of *tlillnings*. They were shaped rather like horses, but were no bigger than cats and were covered with long, silvery hair that shone luminous in the shade, so that to himself David called them moon deer. When they heard him they turned to him their small, watchful faces topped by ridiculously long ears that slanted backwards and from which hung drifts of silky hair. Their deep green eyes changed to flame, to amber, then back to green again. Suddenly they seemed to vibrate all over and then — disappeared. What a good name, thought David, because they did just that — *tlillning* — and then vanished.

The *vlilseenas* were shaped exactly like ruffled fungi, and when David stooped to touch one that sported what looked like a carnelian-striped skirt flaring out all around, it swooped away on almost invisible feet. The *frayoomnairo*s, too, mimicked their vegetable neighbors, but they looked like egg-sized mushrooms, their pale, shimmering, rainbow-colored shells appearing to be smooth as lacquer. Only when they moved could you tell they were alive. David did not pick up any of them, for Mr. Theo

had said that if you held one, an unbearable prickling immediately shot through your hand and up your arm. Which was extremely odd, because the frayoomnairos neither bit nor stung, nor secreted any fluid.

In the joy of solitary exploration, David almost forgot his disappointment, but at last he came to such a chaos of debris that he could go no further. He was about to turn back when he caught sight of a vague center of radiance beyond the tracery of dark growth and tumbled mass of rock. He searched but could find no way to the other side until he got down on his knees and discovered a kind of tunnel through the jungle of matted stems and mushroom trunks. Beyond was a fall of light hidden within the surrounding shade and silence as if it burned for itself alone.

He did not know the reason for the impulse that urged him to force his way through the almost too narrow tunnel. If he had gotten stuck he was sure no one could have heard him call for help, because he had long since ceased to hear Mr. Theo and Chuck, and Mr. Bass and Mebe and Oru. All the same "he scraped and scratched and scrabbled and scrooged." Now who had done that? Yes, it was Mole. He was just like Mole — and he *did* get stuck, and then "he scrooged again and scrabbled and scratched and scraped," until all at once, working away with



his paws just as Mole had, he chuckled to himself thinking of what that man who had written *The Wind in the Willows* would have said if he had known that one day a boy fifty thousand miles out in space would remember those words.

When he had finally succeeded in struggling through, he saw that the end of this long, dark corridor opened into a high room, perfectly round, the great main doorway to it being so overgrown that none of Ta's workmen had yet forced an entrance. The walls flowed up and slightly inward on all sides, like waves mounting, and closed overhead in a dome. In the center of the dome was set a broad, circular sheet of some substance like opaque glass — a sheet of translucent stone through which light descended in a flood. The walls of the room, all of deep corn yellow, gave back the light so that David, entering, felt he was swimming in a golden sea.

He looked up and turned and turned, staring at what was painted here. For line upon line was inscribed right around the walls, the lowest line being those feathery symbols, or cobwebby scratchings, in which the scroll was written. Above was another line of quite different signs, with still another kind inscribed above that, and another above that. And each separate sign or scratching or picture was ranged neatly just above the one underneath, or

sometimes three or two stood above one, and sometimes one stood above two or three, or even four.

And at the very top was a line of small pictures which caused David to catch his breath and hold it. Then:

"Here it is, Mr. Bass," he said aloud in the silence, in a voice that was oddly quiet considering what he had discovered. "Here it is at last — your key, the language you've already translated, that will tie all the others together."

Absolutely Extraordinary!

“YES, IT IS, isn’t it, Tyco? Your key,” said Ta, almost two hours later. “I would give a great deal to know just what made David force his way through a space that was almost too small for him. I have an idea it was not simply youthful curiosity.”

Once again Mr. Bass’s singular mode of travel had come in handy. For when David returned, breathless with running and excitement, to where they were all waiting for him and wondering what had happened, and he had told them the news of his discovery, Mr. Bass immediately slipped back by thought to Ta’s palace to ask if his bearers could bring him with all possible speed to the Lost City. Which had been done, and not only did Ta arrive with a retinue large enough to quickly remove the debris choking the corridor, but with all kinds of delicious foods as well.

Still reclining upon his bed of dried plant fronds, Ta gazed about him, exclaiming at the beauty of the

place and what it contained. In this corn yellow light all of them — all of the Mushroom People — seemed turned to gold from the bottoms of their sandled feet to the tops of their large bald heads. Even Chuck was gold.

“But, David,” said Ta, “what made you *know* that these lines of different sorts of signs would help Tyco? This I don’t quite understand.”

“Well, you see, Great Ta, I remembered what Mr. Parry said — the old man who stole the thirteenth scroll, you know. He said that if you find a stone or a tablet with lots of languages on it, and you understand *one* of the languages, then you stand a good chance of being able to translate the others. Of course, if each language is saying exactly the same thing, then it’s easier. But he said there has to be a *known element*.”

“And,” added Chuck in triumph, “up there — right up there at the top — are signs that look just like the little signs, or drawings, that are carved on the stones of your necklacés, Great Ta. In fact, some of the signs are *pre-cisely* like the ones on the stones, and Mr. Bass told us once that you and he and Mr. Theo know what those signs mean. So there’s the known element.”

“But still,” persisted Ta, “even with the known element, as you call it, what if these sentences are not saying the same thing? What if one language

doesn't work at all the way any of the others do? What if none of them work alike? What if the idea or meaning behind each picture or sign or scratching is not present as an idea or meaning in any of the signs in the other lines?"

"Ah-ha!" exclaimed Mr. Bass, watching David's face intently.

"But," said David, "I think that these lines are not sentences, but alphabets, or at least the basic parts that each language is made up of. And I think this because the signs are lined up — one sign of one language is neatly written just above a sign of the language right below it."

"And where one sign or symbol doesn't mean exactly what's right underneath," said Chuck, as if he had only just now understood, "why, then, they put two or three above the one below, or however many it takes to mean what that sign underneath means."

"Bravo!" cried Tyco. "Bravo!"

"Oh, my — you could both of you almost be Wise Men," observed Mebe in enormous surprise. "If only you could stay, Oru and I could work with you and help you."

Ta chuckled to himself at this remark as he studied the two boys.

"You are quite young persons," he said, "and yet you see beyond what first meets the eye. If all those on the Great Protector think as clearly, seeing mean-

ings and just how they connect, one with another, then I can understand why your home is a place of marvels as Theo tells me it is. But what I cannot understand is why everyone there is not almost as happy as it is possible to be —”

“Ah,” said Mr. Theo, and out came his lower lip in exactly the considering way Mr. Bass had, “but unfortunately, greed and cruelty and ignorance and selfishness often prevail, so that the marvels are used to unworthy and tragic ends —”

“Which reminds me of Narrow Brain,” spoke up Tyco. “I must get back to work at once. In the time it took the bearers to bring you, Great Ta, I have made a rather scattered beginning by translating a few combinations of characters here and there within the body of the scroll. Meanwhile, Mebe and Oru and Theo and the boys have been copying for me so that I can take all the alphabets inscribed here on the walls back to Carn Bassyd in case I should ever need them.”

“Then I, too, shall copy,” said Ta, “after I have eaten. For the first time in many days I have a *most* satisfactory appetite. Come, now, Tyco, put aside your work for a little and sit down with us.”

But Mr. Bass was not hungry. They must all go ahead and eat without him, he said, because he could not bear to stop at this point. And it did not seem to matter how much they laughed and chattered, he



paid no attention for he was completely absorbed. Presently, when David had his mouth almost too full of some kind of mushroom that tasted a little like

apricots, but also a bit like fresh pineapple with a touch of peach, Mr. Bass was heard to mutter to himself:

“Ye-e-e-s, ye-e-es, just as I thought —”

“Just as you thought *what*, Mr. Bass?” asked Chuck, looking at the pale brown fungus in his hand as if, guessed David, who had already had some of it, he was trying to decide if it tasted like waffles and butter and syrup, or more like hot buttered toast with peanut butter and plum jam.

“The scroll *was* written by Elder Grandfather —”

Everyone waited eagerly for him to go on, but he lapsed into silence again and was lost. Somewhat later, after they had eaten and were busy copying, he looked up, his eyes shining.

“Ab-solutely extraordinary! He was indeed in a hurry, writing under the most desperate circumstances. I am almost certain of it, unless, of course, I am giving meanings to the characters that I want them to have rather than those they should have. And yet I have a most exciting sense of *rightness*. Theo, I should most especially like you to be at the next meeting of the League, which is to be held the day after tomorrow. By then I am hoping to have the scroll translated and perhaps also I shall have some long, long awaited news for the League members. Would you go back to earth in the space ship with the boys? Could you spare him, Great Ta?”

"I could, Tyco — most assuredly, for I am already nearly myself again."

"Good! Oh, Theo, I can scarcely wait for this particular meeting. I have a feeling that it will see either one of the great triumphs or one of the great defeats of our people, and I cannot conceive of a defeat. But, I have been waiting for this moment too long."

The First Endurance

TYCO WAS STILL ON BASIDIUM and would be for an hour or so longer, but Mr. Theo and Chuck and David were on their way home. Mr. Theo was once more dressed in his top hat, striped, narrow trousers, sparkling white shirt, black string tie and the black cape with the frogged fasteners. He looked so fresh and impeccable that, really, had he been called upon, he could have appeared at a court ball despite the somewhat rusty appearance of his old cape. He would have only to put on the white gloves which were now folded in his jacket pocket to be able to murmur, "Your Majesty!" to any queen. At present, however, he sat at the controls of the space ship with Chuck in the middle this time and David by the door.

"His cape was longer than yours," said David suddenly out of his thoughts. "It was a black thundercloud you could get lost in and never come out of again, and it covered him all over, clear down to his heels —"

"Narrow Brain's, you mean," said Mr. Theo.

"Yes, and I *have* seen him before that time the fox's widow tried to tempt me up to the Mycetan burying ground —"

"You *have*? But where, Dave?" Chuck was staring at him.

"It was in a dream," said David slowly, "the night you and Mr. Bass and I slept at Stonehenge. But the dark figure was as clear as that man I saw on the mountain in the old hat and cloak. I could see the face under the hat in my dream, and it was narrow and white and cruel, just the way Mr. Bass described him when he was telling us about the times he'd seen Narrow Brain. The figure was up on the Roman Steps, standing above me, looking down at me hard and cold and steady, and I knew in my dream that I was dreaming and that this was Narrow Brain and that my dream was trying to tell me something. But I didn't know what it was."

Chuck was still gazing at David in awe.

"But — why didn't you tell Mr. Bass and me about it the next morning when you woke up?"

"Because I didn't remember. I haven't remembered a thing about it — I haven't remembered it at all — until this very minute, thinking about Mr. Theo and how his cloak is so different from Narrow Brain's. But, Mr. Theo — what did it mean, do you

suppose? Maybe nothing, but it's all so strange — as strange as Ta trying to find his lost necklace in his dreams, and trying to see the face —”

“But is this so unusual with humans, then, David? It happens to me and my people quite often — this dreaming of what is to come, or of what is happening elsewhere, as if time eddies about in many directions inside one great Now, rather than moving in a single direction. But perhaps for humans time is more rigidly channeled than it is for the spore people — the Mycetians and the Basidiumites.”

“But why has Narrow Brain been getting interested in me?” asked David anxiously, his voice coming out considerably higher than he would have liked it to. Chuck's voice wouldn't have.

“Because in some way,” said Mr. Theo, “he must have felt that you were to have a part in Tyco's finding the key to the scroll. You know, I have an idea we're in for difficulties now that Tyco is well on into the translation, and I can't see any reason why you two should be subjected to whatever endurances are to come. These are Mycetian affairs — wouldn't you two rather go back to Pacific Grove?”

“You mean miss the *party*, Mr. Theo?” Chuck apparently couldn't believe his ears.

“But it may all be extremely unpleasant, Chuck.”

“Well, we're not going back, are we, Dave? At

least not me," said Chuck firmly. "We've helped Mr. Bass so far, so we'll just go along and see what happens."

David swallowed. He thought that if ever he were to become entangled in that long black cloak, he did not know how he could stand it. He tried to say something — to echo Chuck's courage; he wanted to, yet he could not get out a single word.

"But I really believe," said Mr. Theo, "that the decision must be up to Tyco. I think that he would feel a responsibility."

The time of the first endurance, as Mr. Theo had called it, came sooner than was expected. The boys were so overjoyed to spy Mr. Bass, who had arrived not five minutes before, waiting there on the grassy meadow in the Rhinogs, that they forgot Narrow Brain entirely — at least for a moment or two. They had left Basidium at precisely four in the morning, earth time, as they always did, and it was now six in the morning when the space ship came down on Welsh soil. The sun was brilliant in a sky of the purest blue, and it seemed to David that bird song showered on them from every side. It was almost as if, as they jumped from the door of the ship, every bird Mr. Bass had told them about — larks, lapwings, curlews, stormcocks, redstarts, chiffchaffs,

swallows — were all singing and calling out at once.
An exultant morning!

But then something happened.

As Tyco and the boys and Mr. Theo started off across the coomb, the whole place seemed suddenly to darken, yet David remembered afterwards that at the same time there was sunlight away out on the fells and on the crags up beyond the surrounding shadow. Now a roaring wind sprang upon them, a cruel, bitter wind, burning in its zero coldness, so that his face and his ears and his hands ached intolerably with it. He could not even speak with that terrible wind sewing up his lips; he could scarcely breathe. He could only stare at the others with watering eyes and knew that they too, bent with their heads down against the wind, were caught in this freezing turmoil. Mr. Theo had Tyco's satchel, in which he was carrying not only the scroll and the papers on which they had copied out the alphabets from the yellow room of the Temple of Writings, but all those work sheets on which Mr. Bass had been struggling with his translation. Suddenly, the wind rushed upon the satchel with such unexpected ferocity that it was almost wrenched from Mr. Theo's grasp, but instantly he clasped it to his chest with both arms and lowered his head over it. If the bag had been tugged from him, David knew, the wind would have torn it



open and the work sheets and the papers would have been snatched out and whipped away over the crags, never to be seen again.

Through the sullen air, through the dimness, the sun smoldered without rays like a sick and malignant eye. The birds seemed no longer to be singing but screaming as if in pain, and there was a stench in the wind as if dead things lay hidden in the underbrush. David could hear the groan of breaking branches and crashings as if trees were falling. It seemed to him he could hear an ominous grinding, as if great boulders, far up on the sides of the crags, were beginning to loosen and slide downward. And when he and Chuck and Mr. Theo and Tyco had put behind them the terror of the little wood, twisted into an agony by the wind, and had come to the Roman Steps and begun the descent, he could no longer think. He could only endure — the cold, the smell, the constant fear of being crushed by boulders and trees, and the conviction that all four of them were about to be caught up at any moment and blown right over the black and timeless edge of the world forever.

When he forced himself to lift his head again — lo and behold, there was Carn Bassyd, and he could have cried with thankfulness at the sight of it. He had no memory, then or afterwards, of having passed by the side of the little lake that is called

Cwm Bychan, nor of pasture and woodland on the way down. The descent had been nothing but a blind pushing on for David, knowing dimly that the others were beside him. But now, suddenly, there was the Carn.

And when they set foot on Carn land, instantly the wind was not. The darkness was not. Groans and grindings and shrieks were not.

Here they stood in a peace of sunlight and clear, pure air and bird song, with the Artro trickling and bubbling and murmuring in the background. Only — right there, a little way ahead, sat the red she-fox, her white-socked front paws neatly together and her white-tipped tail curled round. She gazed at them steadily with a kind of promise in her eyes and again, as it had before, it struck David that she was smiling. "There, that was just the beginning," she seemed to say, and then she got up and, without a glance over her shoulder, trotted off into the woods.

A Promise of Terror

NOTHING, SAID MORFA to the boys the next morning after the three little men had left the kitchen, nothing could have been more fortunate, considering the fact that the big main room of the Carn was to be decorated and the long table laid for the feast. For Tyco had announced at breakfast that he wanted to remain closeted the entire day with Theo and Towyn in the Council Room so that they could go over his rough translation of the scroll in peace and quiet, without interruptions, in preparation for his reading of it at the League meeting that evening.

Good, Morfa had said, and she would be seeing to it that he had no interruptions.

But surely there must have been some other business afoot than that of working over a translation, for would reading and discussing involve thuds, queer knockings and, once, a great crash? "There is mad they are — entirely mad!" cried Morfa. "What is it with them, then?" and would have beaten upon the locked door to be let in so that she could see with

her own eyes what they were up to, but that Tyco might have come in answer, and both Towyn and Mr. Theo had been sternly instructed that he was not to be let out under any circumstances, no matter what excuses they might have to give him. And when they themselves emerged, Towyn once to get some tools ("But there is strange it is, indeed, they would be needing tools for a translation!" said Morfa) and Mr. Theo to take in a tray of lunch, there was a look in the eyes of those two both exalted and overwhelmed (Morfa's words) as if from some incredible revelation. But they would tell nothing, no matter how the boys wheedled and Morfa tried slyly to get round them.

"I'm thinking," said Chuck, "there is some sort of surprise our Tyco will be having for us in return for our surprise for him."

And he was right. But first — oh, but *first*, long before Tyco's surprise was revealed — here came all the members of the League and their ladies, arriving quietly, couple by couple, and opening their eyes wide, and their mouths, though without saying a word, at the placing of branches and flowers that had transformed the old room into a place of high festival. "All their doing!" said Morfa in a whisper as she presented the boys to each couple, and the idea

of the party, too, she said, and the American song they were all to sing when the cake was brought in — “Happy Birthday to You” — which they must learn before Tyco came out of the Council Room.

Now everything was ready, and David thought he would never forget as long as he lived how handsome he and Chuck had managed to make the big room, and especially the table with its candles all alight and its garlands and the place cards they had lettered with very black thick and thin lettering. The room looked all rich and dark green and golden with the candlelight and firelight playing on the thick-leaved branches so that the leaves seemed to be moving.

“Oh!” said everybody soundlessly. “Oh, *oh!*”

“Tyco!” called out Morfa, when everyone had come. “Theo — Towyn! Have you big, strong appetites with you, then? Come you now, and have to eat.”

Mr. Theo and Towyn must have been waiting for that call because here they came, pushing Tyco ahead, directly Morfa called them. And when Tyco saw everybody — and the transformation of this room he had known for so many generations — and the candles shining everywhere — and the table all ready for the feast — and David and Chuck grinning at him, their eyes dancing with mischief — he just stood there and couldn’t get out a single word.

"Happy birthday, Tyco!" shouted everyone, crowding around him. "Happy 385th birthday!"

"Oh, my friends," he got out in a small, shaken voice. "Oh, my dear, dear friends —" and then he couldn't say any more, but one arm went around Chuck and the other around David, and they led him over to his place at the head of the table.

At one end stood a huge baron of beef, succulent in its juices and unbearably tantalizing to the nostrils and, just as tantalizing at the other end, a glistening, mahogany-brown giant of a roast goose. As if these two platters weren't enough, there were salmon and trout, fresh out of the ice-cold mountain stream, baked with mushrooms and herbs according to an ancient Mycetian recipe, as well as a leg of lamb completely covered in a suet crust half an inch thick that had been kept well basted during the entire roasting, and bowls of jelly made of mountain-ash berries and apples to serve with it. And there were peas and beans just gathered out of the garden an hour ago, and bara tato, which are Welsh potato cakes but which the Mycetians make a little differently than the Welsh do. And there were three kinds of homemade bread and mounds of yellow butter and six different kinds of Morfa's preserved fruits and jams.

But first of all they must drink to Tyco with Towyn's home-brewed mead — fermented honey

and water — which is such powerful stuff for any but accustomed heads that Morfa put berry juice at David's and Chuck's places.

Later, much, much later, after jokes and laughter and tale-telling of wondrous Mycetan happenings throughout the long years of Tyco's life, Morfa and the boys and two of the women set about clearing the table so that the cake could be brought in. There it sat on the trestle table in the kitchen waiting for its candles to be lighted. Three tiers it was, and all frosted white, with lettering in Mycetan green on the bottom tier saying, *Loving good wishes to Tyco*, with candles along the edge, and on the next tier, *on your 385th birthday*, with candles along the edge, and on the top tier a whole little forest of candles.

So then David and Chuck lighted them, and between them lifted it up on its silver tray. "Careful!" cried Morfa. "*Careful!*" But they never wobbled once and got it safely into the other room and set it down in front of Tyco. And he stood up, and the candle flames, all those small wavering points, cast a glow over his face and seemed to dance in his eyes.

"Happy birthday to you — happy birthday to you — happy bi-irthda-ay, dea-r Ty-co-o, happy bi-irthda-ay to-o you-u-ul" sang Chuck on one side of him and David on the other, and Morfa and Towyn, and Mr. Theo at the far end of the table, and Mr.

and Mrs. Selwyn Llandovery, and Mr. and Mrs. Llewellyn Jones, and Mr. and Mrs. Ellis Cwymawynn, and Mr. and Mrs. Hue Ebbyn, and Mr. and Mrs. Mostyn Rhyl, and Mr. and Mrs. Rhys Colwyn, and Mr. and Mrs. Davies Machynleith, and Mr. and Mrs. Emlyn Garn, and Mr. and Mrs. Owen Ogmores, and Mr. and Mrs. Carreg Dynog. A deep, swelling, organ-like harmony all those voices made, for the Mycetians are as incapable as the Welsh of a careless, half off-key flinging out of notes. Even this simple, time-worn tune was woven together in beauty, all the voices mingling in different ranges.

"Thank you," said Mr. Bass. "Thank you from my heart, all my good friends. Surely you must know how I am feeling — rather like one of these little flames, bobbing up and down and shining, and utterly incapable of expressing one adequate word. As I told the boys a week or so ago, I haven't thought of my birthday in centuries, but now that these two young rascals have thought of it for me, I couldn't ask for any greater happiness than to spend it here in the bosom of the League with them. *Well* — now for the candles and my wish." He leaned over, drew in a deep, long breath and, as he slowly let it out, moving from the bottom tier to the middle one and turning the cake as he blew, the flames vanished one by one.

But then a most curious thing happened. Mr. Bass

was just lifting his head to blow on the topmost candles when — *out they went* — just like *that*, as if a hand had come down over them.

Nobody said a word. But in the stunned silence that followed, David shuddered. Mr. Bass, however, only lifted his eyebrows, gave an odd little chirp of laughter and straightened.

“Touché!” he said, gazing up and around into the deep shadows that moved and changed in the vaulting above their heads. “Touché, my unseen enemy! I am about to make my wish and you, as if you could read my thoughts, give me this small warning. Very well, then, I have it. But I shall ignore it. I shall go ahead as I had planned, though my wish has been forestalled. But not made powerless, my enemy. Remember that.” And Tyco suddenly caught up the carving knife, which David had forgotten to take away, and he brandished it, and it flashed like a dagger. “*But not made powerless, that I promise you,*” he cried with passion.

For a very good reason, what had just happened failed utterly to cast a pall over the birthday party. Everybody ate his cake and chattered and laughed as if nothing the least unusual had occurred; and they were not pretending to be happy. They *were* happy. It’s because of Mr. Bass, David thought in wonder, watching him. Something in his face — a fearless serenity — seemed to radiate over every one



of them and they all felt it, very powerfully and deeply.

At last, after Chuck had discovered a sixpenny piece in his slice of cake, David a threepenny piece in his, and Mr. Bass a golden sovereign in his, and after everyone had finished every last crumb and drunk up all the tea. Mr. Bass stood up again.

"Now," he said with enormous relish, "I, in my turn, have a surprise for you — I mean Towyn and Theo and I have a surprise for you. Yes," he said, gazing round at all their waiting faces, "rather an astounding surprise, I believe it is. In fact," and here Tyco scratched the tip of his ear, "I should say surprises, for there are at least two and I am fairly certain there will turn out to be three." An eager, impatient buzzing rose from the entire company and Mr. Bass looked pleased. Then he took the myrtlewood box, which Towyn had brought to him, and opened it. "The first surprise," he said, "is that I have at last been able to translate the thirteenth scroll — and I want everyone here to know —" but at this point the cries of joy and astonishment were so loud that Mr. Bass had to stop for a moment — "I want everyone here to know that had it not been for the discovery by David of an alphabet which had kept its secret for over a thousand years in an isolated and overgrown ruin on Basidium, I should never have been able even to begin it."

At this unexpected revelation in connection with the first surprise, David blushed scarlet and had to stare modestly down at the tablecloth while he fiddled and fiddled with his threepenny piece and everyone exclaimed how unbelievable it was that a *human* should have made the discovery — and just to think of those two boys out there, wandering about on a little world that they themselves, Mycetians, had never seen and likely never would see.

“Hooray for our Daffyd!” burst out Chuck all at once, and, “Hooray for our Daffyd!” shouted everyone, and David didn’t know where to look except up at Mr. Bass, who was smiling at him.

“I wouldn’t think of trying to tell you in my own words what is written here,” went on Mr. Bass, taking the scroll out of the box. “It will not take me long to read, and as I read, remember that this is the voice of a man speaking to you out of the year A.D. 542.” He paused while the boys laid books, top and bottom, on the curling edges of the scroll so that he would not have to keep them flat as he read. “‘I, the Bassyd,’” began Tyco, and the hairs lifted along David’s arms because Tyco’s voice had now taken on a deep, vibrant quality as if, suddenly, he were no longer Tyco Bass but Elder Grandfather himself. “‘I, Creator and Master of the League of all the Mycetians, who was once Royal Bard to Arthur the King, have not much longer to look upon my be-

loved land. I am now almost five hundred years old, and I am weary. All my quicknesses and powers are spent. I am ready for death, but had thought to rest in the ground of my own people rather than to be tumbled, as I feel I shall be, into a nameless grave on a bleak mountainside with three crags at my head and one at my feet.

“I have filled twelve scrolls with the songs and legends and history of my people, for I have been aware during the last days that my enemies are drawing their net about me, a net woven by the snake-pale, narrow-faced one, who sat opposite me at the campfire when I mourned Arthur. His fear-hatred of me is at its peak, and because I am spent, because I have not the mental and imaginative strength now to transport myself to some far place by the power of thought, I know that I cannot elude him any longer. I could hide, it is true, but I should only be putting off the final moment and would inevitably cause the torture and death of those who are innocent.

“In the past, because I have escaped from his quickest and fiercest grasp, the snake-pale one thought I was magic. Because of the prophetic lays I sang as Arthur’s bard, all of which came to pass, he thought I was magic. Because I saw to the depths of his evil designs upon Arthur’s life and his devouring ambition to rule in Arthur’s place, he loathed me,

and because I stood between him and Arthur and managed to live despite his most secret treacheries against us both, he thought I was magic. Had he known that I have traveled by the power of thought to worlds beyond this world and that I am capable of writing for safety's sake in the language of a people who live on a tiny globe that circles between the earth and the moon, he would not have allowed himself a moment's rest in his efforts to bring such unbearable magic to an end.

“But I am not magic. I am no Merlin. I am simply a Mycetian upon whom the Ancient Ones have bestowed certain unusual abilities because I had an unusual work to do. In time there shall come another like me among my people, born after dark and before midnight, who shall have second sight. He will be one of my descendants who shall also bear my name, the Bassyd, and he too shall be thought worthy of being given the power of travel by thought. Therefore, if it is still in existence, he shall translate this scroll.

“Therefore, I am now speaking to you, my descendant.

“In your time, our people shall have lessened in numbers, but perhaps this will not matter because, for many generations, they shall have contributed little of value to their different lands in those arts in which, for hundreds of years, they have been most

gifted: in the art of song and the creation of great stories, and in the working of metals, the carving of wood and stone, and in aiding those who govern by our quickness of action and wit and perception. There is a weight on my heart to know this of the future, but I know too why it shall come to pass.

“No longer in your day, my descendant, will the Mycetians gather in the Homeland from all places on earth once every thirteen years to bring their finest handwork and to sing the songs they have composed and to tell the word-hoards that they have woven in thought pictures and passed from lip to lip. For these joyous gatherings will have been spoiled by the love of gold for which Mycetians shall compete rather than purely for the love of composing and creating. Vanity and perfidy and greed shall have defeated our Throngings. No longer will the flickering rush of sure judgments mount like a rising wind to one full-throated “Yeal” of agreement at every best-wrought offering of each kind.

“First, my descendant, if you can discover my bones, put me to rest where I belong among my people and thus bring to an end at last the dishonoring of those three things which all Mycetians hold sacred — bards, graves and kings — as well as the existence of him who draws power from that dishonor.

“Second, help our people to find strength again.

Remind them of the Great Thronging. Encourage them to weave their word-hoards and songs as they used to, to fashion what gives joy and release to the spirit with their skilled fingers, and to find satisfaction in this without thought of gold. *Tell them that only in the act of creation can our people discover themselves again, and regain strength and courage.*

"I have hidden the twelve scrolls of songs and legends and history in the hearts of those twelve faithful supporters of all our councils. And I ask that you recover them and make plans to —"

Mr. Bass stopped and looked up, and his eyes went from one tensely waiting face to another.

"Well, Tyco — ?"

"Go on — go on —"

"I can't," said Mr. Bass. "That is the end of the thirteenth scroll. Elder Grandfather's last word ends in an awkward scratch, so that I can only imagine he had intended slipping the scroll into hiding with one of the other twelve, but heard his enemies approaching before he could finish. He must have poured away his ink, broken his reed to splinters and then given the scroll into the keeping of some servitor his enemies would never notice — one who could pass it to another, and that one to another until at last the scroll could be put with the rest — which, as we know, was never done."

Now David leaned forward, his face intent and puzzled and eager.

"You said, '*slipping* it into hiding,' Mr. Bass, with one of the other twelve. But I don't understand. I thought Elder Grandfather had given the scrolls to twelve of his most faithful supporters. Or didn't he say — hidden them in their hearts? But if the scrolls are real, how could he have done that?"

"'Twelve faithful supporters of all our councils,' " murmured Chuck, speaking slowly and dwelling on the words. But no light came into his face.

"*You* know, Towyn and Theo," accused Morfa, "for there are the smug, sly looks you have with you, now —"

"Tell us, Towyn, tell us, Tyco — Theo — tell us!" cried everyone, and in the midst of the hubbub Tyco burst out laughing and so did Theo and Towyn, and then the three little men got up and trotted away to the Council Room, and when they came out, each of them had four scrolls in his arms.

"But *how* in the name of goodness — ?" cried everyone. "But *where* — ?"

They put the twelve scrolls down at Tyco's place and he rested his delicate, long-fingered hands lightly upon them.

"Can no one guess?" he smiled.

"There is only one thing I have to ask, Theo and Tyco Bass and Towyn Niog," announced Morfa

sternly. "What was it with you all the day long, then, closeted with yourselves and such a crashing and a dragging and a banging as I have never heard in a decent house? Was it taking the walls down you were doing? Was it there the scrolls were hiding? But if they had been, see — you, Tyco, and Theo would have known it from the beginning —"

"Ah!" said Hue Ebbyn softly, and he put the tips of his fingers together, which suited him, for he was a precise, neat little Mycetian with an orderly mind. "Ah, yes! There is a wondrous notion it was of Elder Grandfather's, now, considering that old table of ours, wrested as it was out of bog oak and put together for the ages — standing through fire and flood and wars, no doubt, and through the hackings and batterings and turmoil that go with them. And all of this through well-nigh fifteen hundred years, see, and that big old table protecting in its twelve hearts its twelve treasures, and being hauled from place to place, and it weighing fifty stone so that it would take at least three men to heave it over —"

"*The twelve* —" exploded Chuck and David.

"*Pre-cisely!*" cried Hue Ebbyn, borrowing Tyco's word. "What Elder Grandfather meant was not twelve human supporters — not twelve human hearts, but the twelve thick legs of our council table!"

"*Oh-h-h-h-h-h!*" cried everyone. "*Of course* —"

“And when that great old table was tipped over against the wall, there were six of its supporters free of the floor to be worked upon and loosened and taken off, their tops unplugged and their hearts unburdened of the treasures that rested hidden within. And so it was with the six on the other side. Am I right, Tyco — Theo — Towyn?”

“There is *clever* they were, now — however could they have guessed at such a thing as that!” marveled all of the ladies.

Tyco raised his hand and grew grave again.

“We must speak quickly now of Elder Grandfather’s two wishes, for the night will be coming on and we must hurry. First, remember his words, ‘Help our people to find their strength again, my descendent. Remind them of the Great Thronging —’ What say you, members of the League? Shall we do this thing? Shall we start up the Thronging again after so many centuries? Shall we send out word over the whole world to all Mycetians everywhere to start their composing of songs and their creating of poetry and stories, their carving of wood and stone and fashioning of metals, their drawings and paintings — all the arts of the hands, and without thought of gold, in preparation for another Great Thronging here in the Homeland in the year to come?”

“Yes!” went up from every throat, and the boys were so deeply moved and excited that they, too, be-

fore they could stop themselves, joined in. "Yes, Tyco, yes! We must begin our plans at once. But only after we have done the other thing."

"Agreed," responded Tyco. "Only after we have done the other thing: taken Elder Grandfather up to the burying ground of his people. He has not told us in so many words where his grave lies, so that I am certain he did not know exactly where it would be. He knew only through his prophetic powers, which were no longer as strong and clear as they had once been, that it was to be on a bleak mountainside with three crags at his head and one at his feet. That tells us something, but not nearly enough. I, myself, as all of you know, beheld the scene of his burial in a moment of second sight, but he was buried at night and what mountainside it was I could not tell. And yet—I have been doing some thinking." Tyco paused and then all at once he looked down at David, and he studied David's face with such concentrated, brooding intensity that for a moment or two, while the whole room remained silent, David grew self-conscious and fidgety. "Just where was it on the coomb that you met the man in the long cloak and the wide-brimmed hat?" he asked presently. "Do you think that you could lead us to that spot?"

David stared up at Mr. Bass and his hands and feet went stone cold and his heart quickened. Did everything, then, depend upon him? Was that it?

"Yes, Mr. Bass, I'm almost sure I could. I'm *almost* sure. But I don't understand —"

"I may be mistaken," said Tyco, "but it occurs to me that Narrow Brain might all unwittingly have told us where he and his fellows buried Elder Grandfather: on that very spot where he appeared to David. But why *that* spot? you may ask. Because, I believe, he is consumed by the knowledge of what lies hidden there. It is only a hunch, but a strong one. And we must either go now, at once, before the dusk comes down, or tomorrow morning, because David must be able to study the whole coomb." Suddenly Mr. Bass leaned forward, resting his hands on the table.

"If we go, members of the League and my two young friends, I must make it clear that I can promise you nothing but terror if we find the spot. Terror not so much for the boys as for you spore people, whose senses are almost as keen as an animal's and whose nerves are as tautly strung and finely tuned as harp strings. Will you go? Are you willing?"

"I believe," said Mr. Theo, "that it is up to David, Tyco, because we can do nothing without him. As for the rest of us, you know what we feel."

David looked down at the table.

"Do not be afraid to say 'No,' David," said Mr. Bass in a low voice, "because we shall understand. We will be caught up in Narrow Brain's last, desper-

ate spasm of fury, and we shall simply have to go ahead in spite of this. We shall have to be stubborn and stoical and enduring, pitting our very souls against him. There will be no bodily hurt — *that* he cannot manage. But hurt to the senses and the emotions, temptations to our minds to betray us — this there will most certainly be. Therefore, you and Chuck shall not stay for the digging, but be brought back here to Carn Bassyd the moment you have shown us —”

“No, Mr. Bass!” cried Chuck. “*Please* let us stay —”

“I think,” said David slowly, “that I’d like to stay, at least as long as I can. Chuck and I began with Penmaen Parry, and I guess we’d like to go on now to the very end.”

Mr. Bass put out a hand to grasp each boy by the arm, and the look of gratitude he gave them was enough.

“I would not let you go if I didn’t know that you could endure — far better than the League will be able to.” He paused, as if considering what was likely to happen. “Now, then, members of the League,” he said, “are we ready?”

“There is ready we are, Tyco,” they answered quietly, and all got up and pushed their chairs in at the table.

The Drumming

BUT THE WOMEN would not be going, it was decided. They wanted to, but it would be foolish for them to go up into the biting wind of the mountain-side, their husbands said, where they might have to stand and wait, serving only by holding the lanterns or carrying buckets of earth.

"And we can do that, Dave and me," said Chuck. "The lanterns can sit on the ground and we can be quick with the buckets and keep warm that way."

"In the end," said Mr. Bass, "you women shall come with us — up to the top of the Steps, because we shall need all the grand voices, rejoicing, *if* we shall be rejoicing, which is not absolutely certain."

So all the men and Chuck and David set out into the last light of late evening, for though it was now nine-thirty the sun had only just gone down. The western sky was all fiery salmon and gold, but down in the little hollows of earth it was getting chill and dim. All the same, up on the meadow it would still be light enough, David thought, then realized with

anxiety that he was trying to comfort himself because of the quaking in his stomach. But if it was quaking now, what would it do later?

No use thinking, he told himself. *No use thinking.* He looked up at the others to catch the expressions on their faces and to guess, if he could, what they were thinking. But he could guess nothing.

They were carrying ladders and shovels and buckets and lanterns, and he and Chuck had a lantern and a shovel apiece. Between them, Mr. Bass and Mr. Theo were carrying a box about a foot wide and two and a half feet long. It was made, Mr. Bass had told them, of oak, ash and thorn: oak on the outside, ash on the inside, and thorn for the words *The Bassyd*, in Mycetian, inlaid on the lid. He had fashioned this box, he'd said, long, long ago when he was a young man, right after his experience of seeing Elder Grandfather's murderers digging the grave. He had made it and carved the leaves and flowers around the edges and put a silver handle at each end just to be able to do something for Elder Grandfather and to honor his memory — a box to put his beautiful, shining bones in if ever they should be found.

David listened. How still was the mountain! But, no — for the Artro was bubbling and rushing and murmuring to itself just as usual, only he had not heard it at first because he was so used to that fresh,



cold sound by now. Then he was aware that his ears ached with listening as he climbed, just behind Chuck and in front of Mr. Theo and Mr. Bass, along by the shore of Cwm Bychan lying under the dark crags, and then up the Roman Steps, mounting steadily.

Now they turned off from the Steps and entered the oak wood, dim as a dream with the dusk coming on, now that it was almost ten in the evening. And suddenly the wind swept down from the peaks and whistled in the shivering branches, and the leaves set up a high, desperate hushing together. David felt his stomach curl with fear, for it would rise, maybe — the fierce wind sound — into a steady shrieking that would tear the nerves ragged. But he was resigned to this. He expected it. And he thought perhaps, because he'd endured it once, he could stand it again.

But what else was he listening for? His ears felt like a fox's, pointed, stretched, strained to the utmost sensitivity to catch whatever might be coming — something that would grow under the wind sound.

They were almost out of the wood and he realized afterwards that the Mycetians had heard it some time before he and Chuck had. It was — yes, he was quite certain — a menacing, far-off —

“— throbbing,” said someone, when they all

stopped, their faces lifted. "A kind of beating, or thudding. A kind of —"

"— drumming," said Mr. Bass, "that seems to come not so much from the air as from under our feet, like vibrations."

"Steady," observed Mr. Theo, "without let-up, and from no particular direction, as if it comes from behind the mountains on all sides."

"So then it begins," said Towyn, "the endurance."

Now they came out of the oak wood into the coomb, and David stood with Chuck on one side and Mr. Bass and Mr. Theo on the other, and the League members behind, waiting. His heart stopped as if a fist squeezed it, for there to his horror were several standing stones on the left side of the coomb near the steep, heather-covered slope where he had seen the dark figure. There were many of them, of all heights, scattered about the coomb, and at least three in the vicinity of that spot where he and Narrow Brain had stood.

"Oh, but Mr. Bass," he breathed, "it was one special stone I was thinking of. It was what I was depending on. I didn't see the others —"

"I know, David. I thought perhaps it might be like that. But don't worry — it's this glimmering time of evening is the trouble, no longer light and yet not quite dark, when details are so bewildering. Come over and stand at the foot of the slope and face to-

ward the wood as you were doing then. *Now* — does any one rock seem likely?”

It had been about his own height, he remembered, or maybe a little taller, with more than one peak to it on top. And something else there had been — something else about that rock. *But what?* (If only the drumming would stop! He couldn't seem to think, to remember anything clearly, with the drumming in his ears — very low, still coming from deep behind the mountains, but possibly a little louder now, gradually, without anyone being sure of the increase, a little stronger and more penetrating, more ominous.)

David faced the wood with the mountain slope on his right now and the coomb on the left, and studied the whole scene in order to get relationships. But he could not tell one stone from another, for all three, standing within twenty yards of one another, seemed now to have peaks in the glimmer of dying light.

“I can't — I can't seem to —”

“Well, what was the exact *shape* of the rock, Dave?” demanded Chuck in a rage of impatience, just as if the earth weren't vibrating in their stomachs — or was it in their brains? — and as if Chuck himself would never have been so careless and forgetful.

"If I could remember the exact shape, there wouldn't be any trouble!" retorted David furiously.

"Tchkl!" said Hue Ebbyn, gazing at David in reproach from out of his own neatness, for now all the League members had come over and were standing nearby.

"*Tut!*" said Mr. Bass. "We shall simply combine David's memory of the general location with what Elder Grandfather told us in the scroll: that he was to be tumbled into a grave on a bleak mountainside with three crags at his head and one at his feet." And Tyco, standing beside David, looked up to the crags whose peaks stood out deep black against the powerful blue of the evening sky. He pointed aloft on his left. "Three tall crags and a low one — and on the other hand, two crags. Won't do." He went to another standing stone and looked up, turning from side to side, shook his head and moved on. Again he paused and turned, moved and paused and turned, and now the whole League was following.

"When you move from place to place," said Mr. Theo to the boys, "look how the crags change to different positions, or seem to, according to where you stand. See — now that we're over here, the little low crag's gone up on our left, and there're just three crags showing. But over on the other side, still two."

"David!" cried Mr. Bass from a stone David

would never once have considered, so much farther from the wood was it than he remembered. "Would this be it?"

And they all went and looked, and up on the left, three crags, and on the right one crag only, because its neighbor, viewed from this position, was hidden directly behind it. "Now, David," and you could see, even in the deepening dusk, and you could tell from his voice, how profoundly excited Mr. Bass was, "now, all you have to do is to tell us where Narrow Brain was standing in relation to this stone. Can you remember? If not, my boy, we shall just dig in every direction, no matter how long it takes us."

David faced the wood again, faced the stone, and — and he thought he saw — only he couldn't be sure in this light — what he had been trying and trying to remember ever since the search began. He went over and ran his hand the length of the stone from where the two points at the top had been weathered to a valley in the center.

"Mr. Bass — here's what I've been trying to get back in my mind, this join, or crack, all the way down. This is *it* — this *is* the stone — and Narrow Brain was standing about here, about five or six feet away."

Now he saw Chuck's mouth open to give a shout of triumph, but no sound came, though his mouth remained open. And everyone stood very still.

"It's stopped," whispered Chuck. And he meant the drumming.

"Ah," said Mr. Bass. "Never fear — it will begin again. I promise you it will. But we shall light all the lanterns and set them in a big circle around this place, and we shall get to work."

Mr. Bass then ranged everyone with their shovels in a nine by nine feet square around the spot where David stood, and he and Mr. Theo began digging in the middle while the boys kept carrying earth away in their buckets. And because it is quite astonishing how much progress can be made when a number of men dig hard all at the same time, there was, after a bit, a depression in the surface of the coomb nine by nine feet and two feet deep.

But when an hour had gone by and the hole had gotten considerably deeper and blacker —

"Mr. Bass, why don't we come to the bones?" Chuck wanted to know, unable any longer to bear his anxiety in silence. "Do you s'pose Dave was wrong after all our work?"

"No, Chuck. Remember I told you that it seemed to me Grandfather's murderers dug and dug and dug — for how long I couldn't tell, but away 'way down. And a lot of rubble will have washed over this coomb in fourteen hundred years and more — and stones, too. For instance, I have no memory that in my second sight I saw this stone standing here —"

"Then we could be wrong, Mr. Bass."

"We shall see —"

"Well, anyway, *he* must've gone to sleep — old you-know-who — because there hasn't been any —"

Yet why did there fall a sudden hush upon the League? They went on working, it is true, but though there had been a constant exchange of joking chatter before, it seemed now that not a soul had anything to say to any other soul. There were only breathings and scrapings and the fall of earth. The coomb was black and cold, and quite silent to David's ears — far too silent. No night bird called. Even the wind brooded to itself far up on the barren heights, and what a pathetic circle of light, in all that thick dark, the lanterns made.

Then from far, far off, David caught it, too — the drumming again, though for the life of him he could not tell from what direction. And *was* he hearing it, or feeling it along his nerves, in his blood and bones, this sickening vibration coming up through the earth? No one said anything. Chuck dumped another load of dirt, and David scrambled down the ladder to fill his bucket. Once more Mr. Bass straightened.

"It is coming now," he said, "the real endurance. We must all, no matter what happens, simply keep working and remember that what seems so, is not."

"Dave," whispered Chuck presently, as they stood

together at the edge of the digging, and how small and white his face looked against the blackness with the pallid glow of the lanterns cast up over it, "Dave, is it getting closer? What is it?"

"I don't know. But whatever it is, it sounds — or feels — like it's almost here."

By now, so that too much earth should not pile up on the floor of the digging, both Mr. Theo and Owen Ogmores were helping the boys with the buckets. And the far-off drumming, or vibration, was swelling to a deep, steady roar, a sweeping approach from all sides that reverberated against the crags, and the coomb quaked under their feet.

"It's the fell ponies!" cried out little Hue Ebbyn in terror. "It's the fell ponies gone mad! If they come this way they'll pile into the pit on top of us —"

"Not so," shouted Mr. Bass. "It is not so! Just keep working —"

And then the fell ponies came. You could not see them, only hear — only feel or *know* them inside yourself, as if flesh and bones and nerves were in truth being ridden over and crushed — time after time — wave after wave of insanely rushing, beating hoofs, and there was the creak of leather as if the ponies bore riders, and the bitter reek of sweat and the clang of metal on metal. David and Chuck were out in the open on the edge of the digging with Mr. Theo when the assault came, but David did not see

their faces because his eyes were closed in the purest horror he had ever known, hearing and smelling and being overwhelmed by what was in timelessness, by what had happened in some far-off night of early Britain, when the Bronze Age men in their hundreds rode the fell ponies to war, and yet by every testimony of his senses seemed to be happening in this instant.

But Mr. Theo had his arms around their shoulders, and when David opened his eyes, there was Mr. Bass smiling up at them. And unbelievably, as if under a living floor of hoofbeats, the work was gotten on with. Now some of the men were bringing the full buckets up the ladders and the boys and Mr. Theo took them and emptied them and brought them back. The men went on digging, and gradually — gradually — the hoofbeats faded, receded into a far, low tremor, a kind of faint humming in the earth. And then all was still.

"Where are the bones, Tyco?" called out someone.

"Yes, why don't we come to them, d'you suppose?"

"Never fear — we will."

Three times in the next hour and a half the fell ponies came back. And surely, David told himself, if I *know* they're not really riding over us, not in our

time, and that we won't be smashed, it's stupid to be afraid. Yes, but all the same, he *was* afraid — he was sick with fear — yet he kept working, and so did Chuck, and so did they all.

In the midst of the last assault he knew that he was tired, tired right into his very middle. Perhaps fifteen minutes more, he said to himself, and then he must tell Mr. Bass. But at the end of the assault he knew something else — that he was quietly happy. He and Chuck were managing; they were still working along with the men. Yes, even though there was still no sign of the bones of Elder Grandfather and even though he had still not conquered his fear, he was happy to be here.

Owen Ogmores brought up the bucket of earth David leaned to pick up, the little frail-seeming Mycetian who had once or twice during the last hour looked as if he were going to faint when the pounding of the hooves was at its height. Because for the spore people, David remembered, this was much more frightful than it was for him and Chuck. Now Owen put out his hand and touched David's arm.

"There is plucky lads you've been, our Daffyd, you and Chuck. And there is proud of you we are!" David grinned at him and was just turning away when out of the corner of his eye in the lamplight,

he saw Owen's pinched face change, and Owen wasn't looking at him. He was staring down into a far, dark corner of the pit where Towyn Niog was working. "Towyn," he cried, "the *light!* Tyco — look there — look there! The light — the glow of the bones!"

David dropped the bucket and started down the ladder, then stayed where he was, for now all the members of the League, shouting, joyous, wrought to the highest pitch of excitement by the tension of waiting and endurance of the beating hooves, were crowding around Towyn. Chuck and Mr. Theo had run around the pit and were kneeling at the edge, and now David followed and knelt beside them. From here it seemed, in the dark of the pit, as if a section of buried moon were sending up soft rays of silver faintly tinged with green.

"Careful, Towyn," said Mr. Bass, and he got down beside the glow. "Let's see — this is the top of Grandfather's head, and so he would be extended in *this* direction. Yes, three crags at his head and one at his feet. So then we must dig along here. Chuck, would you and David reach me down the box?" Though David could see his face only dimly, he knew that it was filled with happiness and peace. No matter what happened now, even though it might be worse than what they had already endured, it

could be dealt with. "You *did* remember, David," he said. "I was absolutely certain you had. I never doubted it for a single instant."

The boys were now sent home to Carn Bassyd to bed. There would be no need for them to stay, Mr. Bass said. Only four men, or at most five, could dig around Elder Grandfather at once, for it would be a slow, difficult, pernickety business, exactly like picking out treasures at an archeological site.

But exhausted as he was, bone, bone tired — and Chuck, over there in the other bed, was already breathing deep and hard — David could not seem to fall asleep. He kept seeing the fox, the widow fox. For they had come upon her, he and Chuck and Mr. Theo, on their way through the little oak wood at the edge of the Roman Steps. It was Chuck who caught sight of her first, crumpled on the path before of them, as the lantern light reached ahead and pointed her out. When they bent over, they saw that her amber eyes were wide open, strained and desperate and staring.

"Poor beast," said Mr. Theo softly, and he knelt and took the slim muzzle in his hand and lifted her head. "Poor beast, she died of the most extreme terror." Gently, he closed her eyes.

Chuck reached out and stroked the red coat.



"Narrow Brain was angry because David wouldn't follow her to the end."

"Possibly, Chuck — possibly, because apparently no other animals, no birds, heard what we heard —"

"But, Mr. Theo, if Narrow Brain could finish her," said David, "why not us?"

"Because we had what we needed inside of us, a kind of spiritual fortitude to withstand the terror. She didn't, being nothing but a poor panic-stricken animal who couldn't escape from what she thought was real. She ran until she could run no more."

But he didn't want to think of the poor fox anymore. There was nothing could be done for her now. He wanted to think of the tapestry, the new one Morfa and the women of the League were making for the Great Thronging.

When the boys and Mr. Theo came into the main room of the Carn, there they all were, gathered around the cleared-off banquet table where an enormous length of heavy, durable linen lay — the exact size, Morfa told them later, of the tapestry hanging in the Council Room. And all the women's eyes were shining, half with apprehension, half with expectancy, when they turned toward the opening door.

"You found them?" ventured Morfa. "Surely you — you *did* find them — the bones of Elder Grandfather?"

Then they had to be told the whole story, in

minute detail, just exactly how everything had happened from beginning to end. And after the boys and Mr. Theo had answered every last question:

"There was impossible it was for us to sit here, doing nothing after the dishes and pans had been washed and put away," said Morfa. "Nothing but talk, see, of how it might be going with you and Tyco and Towyn and the others on the mountain — and no use at all to that, we soon found. So then we tried to plan for the Great Thronging and began wondering what there was we could do, and we thought of what a fine thing it would be — if only Elder Grandfather's bones could be found and put away up in the ancient resting place — to stitch another tapestry telling the whole story, to match the tapestry in the Council Room celebrating the building of the Carn.

"For here is a far greater subject we have now, Theo — a deed of drama and deep meaning in the history of the Mycetan people. And you will be in it, Chuck and Daffyd. See here," and Morfa took them to the table to show them, "here, where these small sections are blocked off down the left-hand side and along the bottom, will be scenes in the story of the theft and recovery of the scroll, and the discovering of the lost alphabet on Basidium, and the digging on the coomb with three crags on the left and one on the right, and the dark figures mov-

ing within the circle of lanterns near the standing stone. The great scene itself will be the one on the Roman Steps tomorrow morning — no, *this* morning, for look, it is almost two o'clock — when all the men of the League shall be climbing up, bearing the box to the top of the mountain, followed by those Mycetians who will be coming here as soon as we can get word to them, Theo, and singing songs of thanksgiving."

Chuck and I will be in the tapestry, David told himself, as one scene after another formed itself behind his closed eyelids. Chuck and I — but he could scarcely believe it. A tapestry to hang in the Council Room for all of time to come, as long as it should hold together and the Carn should last. Ages and ages after he and Chuck had left the earth, the tapestry would be hanging there, telling its story, and Mr. Bass would stand and look up at it, remembering. For if he were to be anything at all like his Elder Grandfather, he still had — well, he still had over a hundred years, anyway. Think of that! And so he will know Chuck's and my children, David told himself, and maybe our grandchildren, so he won't be lonely. Thank goodness he won't be lonely, and he won't miss us.

Comforted, David fell asleep.

The Vision and the Dream

HE WOKE TO SINGING.

"Dave!" cried Chuck. "What is it — are we dreaming?"

No, they were not dreaming. David thought he had never heard such singing in his life, not even on Basidium. It seemed to be all around the Carn: a great choir sending up a song of solemn joy.

He ripped off the covers and flew to the window. Yes, there were people all around Carn Bassyd, Mycetians standing close to one another and singing with all their hearts, with no books in their hands but simply lifting up their faces and letting the music pour out: different harmonies mingling and drifting through and around and above and below the central melody in a way that was indescribably beautiful. It was as if shifting colors blended with and played upon one another — the voices constantly changing, and yet all carrying on the one theme of thanksgiving together.

Neither boy moved while the singing lasted, but

when it had finished they got into their clothes as quickly as they could. They found Mr. Bass at the front of the Carn with Mr. Theo, and both of them, despite the long, exhausting job of the night before, looked as spruce and fresh in their persons as if they had just come from their morning baths — which perhaps they had. Mr. Theo had on his top hat, white gloves and a clean shirt, and Mr. Bass's gray gardening coat was newly ironed. It had never once, David recalled, appeared even faintly grubby or soiled the whole time the boys had known Mr. Bass, though he had often worked hard in the garden at 5 Thallo Street. The only signs now that gave the two little men away were a drawn look about the eyes, the shadows underneath them, and a certain paleness in their cheeks. They had not by any means come through unscathed.

But between them on the ground rested the carved box of oak, ash and thorn, and the lid had been secured.

"You found all of Elder Grandfather's bones, Mr. Bass?" But you could tell Chuck was certain. "Every single one of them?"

"Yes, Chuck — every one — every single one — and oh, what a light they gave off in the early dawn. I wish you two could have seen them. Now, Theo — are we quite ready?"

"Quite ready, Tyco."

So then Towyn Niog stepped forward, and David saw that he, too, like Mr. Bass and Mr. Theo and the other members of the League, was shadowy-eyed and drawn, but quietly, deeply happy. He and Mr. Theo raised the oak box between them and started away toward the Roman Steps. After them, the members of the League fell in, then their wives, and then all the other Mycetians who had been gathered around Carn Bassyd. Away they streamed, and as they walked, they lifted their heads and began singing again, and David was so carried away by the sound that as he and Chuck and Mr. Bass followed along behind, he forgot for a little to wonder at the oddity of Mr. Bass's being with *them*. But all at once it struck him.

"Why, Mr. Bass!" and he stopped, and Chuck and Tyco stopped too. "You should be up at the head of all of them, helping to carry the box. He's *your* Elder Grandfather."

Mr. Bass smiled from one boy to the other, and then he put his arms along their shoulders, Chuck's on one side and David's on the other, and they walked together.

"But I wasn't sure that I wanted you two to be alone at this time. I could have taken Towyn's place, it is true, and Theo and I could have carried Grandfather, which would have been fitting. But somehow I knew I would feel better being here with you."

Along by the Artro rose one song after another, and then by the shores of Cwm Bychan and over to the Roman Steps. And when David looked up the Steps from where he walked at the end of the procession with Mr. Bass and Chuck, he saw that the mountain was all drifted over with fog. The sun had been shining back at Carn Bassyd, but up here the morning was only beginning to turn faintly rosy through the winding mists.

The three of them stood watching as the procession went singing upwards and David knew that he and Chuck could go no further, because this was a private thing for the Mycetians alone.

Now suddenly he drew a sharp breath because it struck him — it struck him that *this* was what he had experienced before: this scene, this very scene. He and Chuck and Mr. Bass were coming down the Steps after they had first landed in Wales. And David had turned and looked back, and there — far up in the mists, far, far up — he had seen the small figures ascending, but silent then because it had been a vision. It had not yet happened. And now it was happening.

“Mr. Bass — this is it. This is what I —”

But he felt Mr. Bass’s hand tighten on his shoulder and he felt the little man move close to him, and David looked up — and around — and it was as if a cloud were enveloping them, a freezing cloud that

swooped down and swept them to earth, and the pale mists were blotted out and David was conscious of nothing but the cold, the intense black cold, like acid biting to the bone, and he knew that it was the ancient cape that had enfolded him at last.

He tried to speak — to cry out. He struggled just to turn his head and look up at Mr. Bass, but could neither move nor make a single sound, and he thought that surely he must die of the cold. He felt numbness creeping through his body, congealing his blood, closing down over his mind. But all the time there was the feel of Mr. Bass's hand on his left shoulder and Mr. Bass's arm along his back, and he felt the faint warmth of Mr. Bass pressed close along his right side. Because they were so close he was aware of Mr. Bass drawing deep breaths, as if he were fighting — as if a fearful last-ditch fight were going on between him and the core of darkness that was hidden inside the ancient cloak.

All at once the struggle ceased. David opened his eyes and saw the black shape fleeing on, sweeping on — as if a cloud surged over the ground, and up the steps, up and up, until it reached the last Mycetan.

"My dream — it's my dream — but I woke up before it ended —"

"Then you shall see now how it ends, David."

The black shape faltered, sank, commenced to

fade. And a cry of such utter desolation and despair rang out as David would never hear again in his whole life, a long, long cry of defeat that echoed over the crags, over the fells and the green coombs before it dwindled and dwined away — and away — into silence forever.

And when the final echo was lost, there was nothing to be seen on the Roman Steps but that one little Mycetian at the very end of the procession, disappearing into the mist. But the triumphant singing still came down from where Elder Grandfather, after fourteen hundred years, had come to his own place at last.

