

**EPIISODES·OF·THE**

**ARGO.**

***r.a.lafferty***





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No true reader who has read as much as a single story by Raphael Aloysius Lafferty needs to be told that he is our most original writer. In fact, he may be not just ours, but the most original in the history of literature.

Not least in this: that while the rest of us strive (often unsuccessfully) for originality, Lafferty struggles to suppress it. To a commercial publisher, a desirable --which is to say, a highly profitable-- writer is one who sees exactly what the mass of book buyers see, and not a whit more clearly than they, but is able to enunciate his vision (if it may be called that) in a way that they cannot. Thus we have hundreds, if not thousands, of turgid novels about wealthy families who are not in the least like actual wealthy families but are instead what people lacking both experience and insight imagine such families to be. These books, and many other kinds by writers of the same sort, may be said in both senses to constitute the base of popular literature for adults.

Over them are the books of writers who see the same things that others do, but see them more clearly; these are the books for which true readers search, for the most part. For instance, I (for I count myself a true reader as well as you) has never, even after Proust and dozens of lesser authors, understood what it was like to be a genuine aristocrat, with a title the passing centuries had left meaningless, and arms dating to 1351, and a ruined castle crowning some inaccessible crag. I did not truly understand, that is, until I read "Isak Dinesen", who was born Karen Dinesen and was entitled, thanks to an unhappy marriage, to call herself the Baroness Blixen. I had seen people of that kind, most clearly perhaps in the seven novels of Proust; but I had seen them from without. Dinesen had not only seen them through their own eyes, and was able to make me see them too.

Lafferty is not like that.

Lafferty sees what we do not see, and because we do not see it, we frequently think that it does not exist. The words every writer dreads most are "I didn't understand." And any writer of any merit at all must hear them often. It is impossible to write intelligently about anything even marginally worth writing about, without writing too obscurely for a great many readers, and particularly for those who refuse as a matter of principle to read with care and to consider what they have read. I have had them tell me (for example) that they were completely baffled when a scene they had read was described differently, later in the story, by one of the characters who took part in it; because I had not told them, "This man's lying," it had never occurred to them that he might be. I have had them complain to me that they thought nothing of it when they were told that morning-glories could be glimpsed through the open back



door of Ben Free's house when there was ice on the front steps. That did not strike them as odd -- nor did half a dozen other abnormalities.

Think then of the wall of incomprehension a writer such as Lafferty faces, a wall as blank, as ugly, and as unyielding as concrete. Small wonder that he labors at times to shut an eye. Less wonder, even, that too often only small presses like this one will publish him when he has refused.

For he has refused in writing "Episodes of the Argo", the novella you're about to read. It's fun to be sure. Just about everything Lafferty writes is fun, is witty, is entertaining and playful. But it is not easy, for it is a mingling of allegory with myth, and of both with something more. Furthermore, it was intended as the final chapter of a book, More Than Melchisedech, and that book was intended as the final volume of a trilogy, of which the first two parts are The Devil Is Dead and Archipelago. "We all wake up on a battlefield," said G.K. Chesterton, talking of life, "but it often takes us a long time to realize what the fight is about or even who is fighting whom." Lafferty's books are always good practice for life, but never more so than here.

Life is hard enough already. Why should we practice?

That is the question (or so it seems to me) at the heart of "Episodes of the Argo". It is sketched for us in brief in the episode of the Neanderthal Eve and treated in more detail in the story of Melchisedech Duffey. And doubtless it is dealt with in greater detail still in the book called More Than Melchisedech, which I haven't read -- and which no one, perhaps, will ever read. But it is encapsulated neatly in Melchisedech's song, which you will hear at the very beginning of the story: "It's great to be young and in danger."

Lafferty, who is old as human life is mundanely measured, would be the very first to tell you that it is better -- to be twenty-three than seventy-three. But that is not what is meant in Melchisedech's song; and Lafferty himself is young in Melchisedech's sense. Nor, I should add, does Lafferty (or Melchisedech) really think it grand to fall off of a glacier. Even our youthful friend Kim Stanley Robinson, who climbs such things for the comfort of it, is not eager to fall off them.

But Lafferty is young in the unusual sense, the sense that matters far more; which is to say that he finds joy and wonder in what are called ordinary things, because he is young enough still to see that they are extraordinary things. Have you ever watched a baby discovering its feet? It is pleased and amused, delighted and astonished, all at once. Years ago I knew a man who had "earned his wings" -- that is to say that he had just completed the Air Force training that made him a pilot. And he was not prouder or happier with those wings (which he glanced down at when he thought I wasn't looking and admired in every mirror we passed) than a baby is with its feet when it has found them new. To be young as Lafferty is young is to realize that the baby is correct, as babies nearly always are. If my friend the pilot's wings had been a part of him (like the wings of angels), and if he had been able to fly with them with no need of a plane, they would not have been more wonderful than the baby's feet.



Nor would they have been any less inclined to take him into danger, along the edges of cliffs and glaciers, reefs and shoals of all kinds, metaphorical as well as literal. That, you see, is their business -- the business of feet as it is the business of fighter pilot's wings, and of the sails of every ship, very much including the Argo, whether it is Jason's or Melchisedech Duffey's. "I wish to have no Connection with any Ship that does not sail fast, for I intend to go in harms way." So said John Paul Jones. It is not the business of ships to be wrecked; but it is not their business, either, to remain safe in harbor. No sane sailor wishes to dare the hurricane; but every sane sailor knows that his business will take him where it blows, again and again, voyage after voyage.

We need to practice, then, because we may be hurt and hurt badly if we slip, if we fail to weather the gale or run aground. And because we will ultimately be hurt as badly if we will not climb or sail at all.

Physical dangers, I should add, are only the most obvious of those we face. There are moral dangers as well. We will do things that we'll regret for the remainder of our lives, and it is best to do as few as possible, and to counter them with such positive good as we can contrive. We may be damned at last, by God or our consciences; and though I've met a good many people who profess to credit no God, I've never met one who believed he had no conscience -- this though he could no more produce it for my inspection than I could point out the God he demanded to see.

Most subtle and most dangerous are the storms and shoals of the intellect, of which the very first is believing that we must be Presidents or professors before the mistakes we make can harm others. Hitler was a paperhanger once, and Marx a newspaperman. No one who reads their works objectively can fail to find good in Hitler's quite genuine patriotism and Marx's real concern for the downtrodden; but their mistakes have dyed most of the twentieth century with innocent blood.

There's a good old Irish song whose chorus goes: "So it's goodbye, Mick an' goodbye, Pat/An' goodbye, Kate an' Mary!/The anchor's weighed 'n the gangway's up,/I'm leavin' Tipperary!/An' now the steam is risin' up, I've got no more to say./I'm bound for New York City, boys, three thousand miles away!" That time arrives for you and I, reader. We are about to embark in Lafferty's paper boat, both of us young and at risk, thank God!

For we, too, have business upon the sea. If you can bear just one quotation more, let it be from that great sailor Joseph Conrad. "The ship, a fragment detached from the earth, went on lonely and swift like a small planet."

Gene Wolfe,  
Barrington, Illinois







Sine Patre, neque Finem,  
Tu Melchisedech ordinum,  
Panem Proferens et vinum.

Without Father, without Ending,  
Thou of the order of Melchisedech,  
Setting out Bread and Wine.

Letters After I Am Dead

- Bascom Bagby

**H**e, whoever he was, stirred out of a fitful sleep into a frozen and apprehensive fear of falling. He supposed that he was a man of the human sort, as he usually was when he woke up in such a turmoil.

His stirring had caused him to slip another notch and to dislodge something more of whatever was holding him up. And whatever had woke him up was the whistling of a frozen substance falling, through the frozen air, to a very great distance down. He felt insecure, and he realized that most of what he had been lying on had now vanished into space.

He was in a shallow notch of the very high reaches of an ice-coated cliff, and that cliff was slick. There was a gale blowing, and the ice was falling in glops of many tons, falling and falling for a mile or more. He seemed to be in a sleeping-bag that threatened to spill him out upside down. His ice support was eroding and breaking away under him, and the bottom of the cliff was out of sight in the darkness. Whenever he shifted to get into a more safe position, he dislodged more of his support.

"Kaloosh!" came the noise when the largest portion of the dislodged snow-ice finally hit below. He had changed position three times while it fell. It was a thousand meters or more straight down. His head was out over the abyss and he gawked down into the white darkness. White darkness? Yes, such frosty surroundings do provide a white darkness at night.

"If I am a man, I can reason," he spoke, and his voice dislodged still more of his icy support. Now he was tilting downward on the disappearing ice ledge at an angle of more than sixty degrees. "If I am a man I can reason," he repeated, but soundlessly this time, careful not to make more disturbance with the vibrations of his voice. "If I can reason, I need not be afraid. If I am afraid of such a little thing as death by falling, then it will not matter whether I fall: what falls will be worthless. (Who is singing that damned song?) If I were afraid, it would not be my own heroic self that fell. Somewhere there is a voice that says to me that I can tell bodily death 'I will go with you, only not yet.' But this is a nervous situation. And somebody is still singing that damned song."

"I'm stuck in peril most extreme - HI HO!

Oh morning danger is the theme - HI HO!

My enemies will soon prevail.

Oh where's the bailiff with my bail?



The wind is blowing quite a gale.  
 My fall will leave me plain un-hale.  
 I'll bust my head and bust my tail.

HI HO! The gollie wol."

Aw it was himself singing that stuff. It was the gale wind that gave it its strident tone. So he went with another bit:

"Oh, it's great to be young and in danger,  
 HI HO!

It's great to be young and in danger."

Then he saw that he was not in a sleeping-bag at all, but was wrapped only in half a dozen very long and very warm threads. He recognized them as a few combings from the Original Great Fleece of Colchis. So then, wrapped in no matter how few threads of the great Fleece, he could not freeze, and he could not fall, and he could not die. Aye, he had been hung on the cliff in an impossible position by an almost fatal fall. And he had been left there until the next section of his adventure should begin. This was a sky-high adventure serial drama he was in, and it was at the same time as real as Ragnarok.

He slipped completely then, and slipped clear off the precarious ledge. Then he was dangling by one single golden thread out over the abyss, and he knew that he was perfectly safe. He turned a fragment of the Fleece outward to show its glint, and this quickly brought an answering glint from the still unrisen sun, the Fleece and the sun being brothers. Now the sun arose, a little bit early, being wakened by the greeting.

Then the man saw his ship very far below, frozen solid in blue ice, and three monkey-like creatures were romping on the tall and ice-sheeted rigging and rejoicing in the dawn. There were solidly frozen birds hanging motionless in the high-air, spread-winged and asleep. People, it was cold!

The man flung gold threads of the great Fleece upward, and climbed up them towards the top of the ice cliffs. Oh, there hadn't been anything wrong at all. It was just that Argonauts, from the hectic life that they lead, do often wake up scrambled and with lost bearings. The man whistled sharply, and the three monkey-like creatures came off the rigging of the ship and boiled up the slick and frozen cliffs like inverted cascades. They were wraiths, or at least of a lighter flesh, and they could climb like ascending lightning. They brought ice-axes with them, and were cheerful and ready for any assignment.

Reaching the top of the cliff, the man took a work order from the breast of his chlamys and read it. He looked around for what should be there. The three monkey-like seamen had already discovered it and were attacking it with their ice-axes. It was a woman frozen in a solid pillar of ice.

"No job too big, no job too small," the man laughed. "Oh, this is in the nature of a vacation, to be allowed to spend a night on the high cliffs that I love and to carry over the rescue into the bright morning. We appreciate these little leisures when they come to us."

The woman was ivory-fair, and her veins as shown through her flesh and the ice were sky-blue. The lids of her closed eyes were also of this gentle and ghostly blue, as was the web-like flesh between her toes. The man



attacked the enclosing pillar of ice, as the monkey creatures were also doing. They hacked and split great hunks out of the pillar and quickly sculpted it down almost to the woman.

She woke up, and her blue eyes darted here and there, following the bladed axes. She grinned with her eyes at the Magus (the man had already remembered that he was a Magus, and he was quite near to remembering his own name). And the woman grinned with her eyes at the monkey-like creatures, and they echoed the grin back at her. She cringed with mock horror when the axes came too near to her. The woman was probably beautiful and was wrapped in the blonde pelt of a female cave-bear.

"How did you know where I was?" she talked out of a crack in the ice. She spoke with human sound but not yet with usual words. It was the vocalized thought-speaking that primordial persons use so easily and understand so universally. She was nice looking, but behind her face she was toothed more massively than most of the people you know.

"I had a work order to come and wake you up," the man said. "What a way to run a hotel! Someone leaves an order with the desk clerk (as it were) to be wakened in forty thousand years, and it might not be even the same desk clerk on duty when the time rolls around. Why couldn't you use an alarm clock like anybody else?"

"Oh poor you!" the woman communicated, and a lot of her was already out of the ice. She used words at random, but her messages were clear enough. "I almost feel sorry for you," she was saying. "but I know you can't really be cold with those golden combings on you. We knew about them, but we never could find them. Oh poor monkey-faces too! But you don't mind having to come and get me, not when we are such good friends as we already are."

"When I'm running the Argo (that's the name of my ship frozen in the ice down there) I have quite a few of these work orders to fill. But I like to understand my missions. Who are you?" the man said.

"Ewaglouwshkoul," said the fair woman. "Who else could I be? I suppose you'd call me the Neanderthal Eve, using your own words. But I'm not the first woman of my tribe. I may be the last. Finally there was only myself, and I under-aged, and thirteen of our fellows left, and it was going badly with us. Every day we went out to fight and every day we got whipped. Then our ghostly mentor suggested that some of us should go into cold storage for a while. I decided to go into freeze, and the thirteen fellows all took their own course, two of them going into freeze like myself, I believe. And some other of them may have survived somewhere. If not, it's a real loss. We have so much to give. But I'm sure there's a lot of my half-blood kindred around. Since I am returned and refreshed and awake, I'll immediately set about the business of having children. They're needed."

"Don't look at me," the man said. "I'm a Holy Magus."

"No, it'll have to be one of the real ones if possible. But how will I go about it? I'm of an unfallen nature, and besides I'm pretty naive. Do you know where there are any more of my kind?"

"Not exactly," the Magus said. "But I think I know where there are some half-bloods. And I know where there's some Groll's Trolls and they're pretty much the same thing."



"Does your work order say what to do with me, Magus?"

"Just to release you from the ice and wake you up, and take you to any sea-port in the world you designate. I'm to pick up a man who's been waiting thirty years for this ship to come. He's patient though. Besides, he's one of our group. He's a Master of this ship himself. I'll just pick him up in his port a third of the way around the world, and then he'll travel with me on a tour of duty. He's an accomplished seaman, as I am."

"Which sea-port is it, Magus?"

"Biloxi, Mississippi."

"Those names sound a little bit like our kind of talk. Take me there too. If it's a cosmopolitan place, then seamen of every sort will come there. I'll pick me out one who's closest to my blood. I'll get me a saloon or hotel where everybody passes, and finally one near enough to me will come."

They went down the great ice cliff. They blasted the ship out of the ice, and they blasted a passage for it. They killed some blonde cave-bears to get bear-grease to make supple their frozen lines, and to get a new bear cloak for Little Eva. The old one was shedding after forty thousand years in the ice. They weighed anchor. They sailed to Biloxi.

"I will no more believe that there is a do-good ship sailing under the flag of the Kingdom of Colchis, under Patent of Divine Intervention, crewed by ancient Argonauts, than I will believe in Divine Intervention itself. Both the Ship and the Divine Intervention are conceits of Melchisedech Duffey the mountbank. But belief in the ship Argo seems to have become the cult belief of the month."

Edwin K. Elkheart, Secretary-General of WSMAASRITM

The Magus had by now attained such clarity that he remembered his own name. He was Melchisedech Duffey Himself, the King of Salem, ship-pilot extraordinary, art dealer and life expert, adventurer into futures, righter of wrongs. He considered the three monkey-like or wraith-like creatures who served him. He had never known what they were or where they came from. "I think that God sent them to me when He was in especially good humor one day," Melchisedech said.

Melchisedech had never completely understood his ship either, though it was flesh of his flesh and ghost of his ghost. He had sailed on her dozens of times but he still got lost on her. Melchisedech would sometimes come into fascinating and memorable rooms and wardrooms and passages on the Argo, and he would not be able to find the same places again. The Bible gives this ship dimensions of one sort in the Vulgate and of another sort in the Septuagint, and perhaps a third sort in the Hebrew. There was the intimate 'Bread and Wine Room' on the Argo. Very meaningful gatherings were sometimes held there. But, as to the present Argo, she was surely much smaller than she once had been. And yet it carried all the relics and identifications of the Great Ship. There was a piece of the 'Talking Oak' set into the ship's wheel, and it would give the history of the ship when questioned. Mostly it was the Argo, but it



had been the Navicula Petri or Peter Ship once. It had been the Anthony Ship at Actium and had been shamed there. It had been the flag ship of the great Abd-Aliah of the Sea, and the famous daughter of Abd-Aliah had ridden on her. (Who does not love the description of Abd-Aliah's beautiful daughter "She had a face round as the moon, and long and heavy hips, and black-edged eyes and a slender waist, but she had a tail"). Abd-Aliah of the Sea sold the ship to Sinbad of El-Basrah.

There was still the stunning Sinbad Lounge or drinking bar on the Argo, to be in which was like being down underneath sun-drenched water with the air filled with fishes, and with sands like gold. And yet these decorations and appointments were much later than Sinbad's own ownership. The magnificent and oceanic paintings in the lounge were, in fact, painted by Count Finnegan in his youth. That was at the time when the ship was named the Brunhilde and was owned by evil men. The Holy Argo had the strumpet habit of coming into the ownership of infidels.

The Argo, at different times in it's sun-drenched and sea-drenched history, had carried such passengers as the Traitor Judas (and he was not the most hellish passenger ever to travel on her), and Saint Brandon, and King Richard of England, and Dana Cosquin, and Mark Twain.

What other ship had sailed all the seas, the Timor, the Savu, the Arafura. She had even sailed the Mare Nectaris which is on the moon. And what other ship had visited all the shores of that most mysterious of seas, the Sea of the Seven Lost Years?

There had been one very early morning in Melchisedech's youth, in his fifth or sixth youth really, when he had walked out on to the river shore in St. Louis, just below the Eads Bridge, and walked right on to a low-lying boat. And it had been the tall Argo in disguise. Melchisedech still encountered many stray days from his Seven Lost Years, and today may have been one of them.

No, no, there was nothing at all notable going on aboard the Argo that morning, except a lot of loud hornpipe music and some carousing and laughter; and Eva and some other girls discovered on the Argo were having lots of fun with fellows of uncertain origin. And there was the feeling of expectancy as they came to their designated port. Sea Islands, Mains, Promontories, Waterfronts. There were some great waterfront places there. Remember the Fanged Fish, and the Benevolent Shark? The Drowned Whale, Costerman's Whaler's Inn, Octopus Joe's, the Rusty Harpoon, O'Brien's Polynesian Palace, Ching Ling Charlie's Doss House, the Barbary Ape, the Sulu Ritz, the Sand Flea, Kate's Neanderthal Bar, the -

"I wonder whether Kate's Neanderthal Bar is for sale?" Little Eva asked suddenly.

"I believe that Kate's Neanderthal Bar is almost always for sale," Melchisedech said. "But what would you do with it?"

"I'd name it Little Eva's Neanderthal Bar, and I'd run it. Come and see me there. Where can I get some business cards printed?"

"There's a little print shop on the Argo here somewhere."

"I think I know where it is. I can find anything," Eva said.



Ashore in Biloxi, Melchisedech Duffey sat and talked with Biloxi Brannagan in Brannagan's private beer garden that afternoon. Biloxi's wife Gertrude kept the pitchers filled and various plates heaped up to show that she cared.

"Biloxi's been sitting in the same chair, waiting for the Ship to come, for thirty years," Gertrude Brannagan said. "He says that after you are three thousand years old, thirty years is hardly any time at all. The only time he ever gets up is to go to the bathroom which he does on the fifteenth and thirtieth of every month. I've told him that he may have missed the ship, that it may have come in and out of port while he was sleeping. But he says he never sleeps, and possibly he doesn't. Oh well, he's never what you'd call very wide awake either. I've told him that he had not perhaps left a call for the ship, or that it was forgotten. But he insists that he did leave a call, and that calls for that ship are never forgotten."

"Aye, he left a call," Duffey said, "but it was marked 'no hurry'".

"And thirty years is certainly no hurry," Gertrude agreed. "Well, I've enjoyed having him all these years. I don't know a more pleasant man anywhere than Biloxi Brannagan. Wherever did you get that beautiful Neanderthal girl, Duffey? I never saw so fine a complexion. I wonder where she got it?"

"From the ice," said Duffey. "She was frozen in a pillar of ice. We chipped her out of it this morning, but she didn't have to thaw. She is one of those naturally warm persons. She says she didn't feel the cold at all."

And just at that moment, Eva, the beautiful and archaic neo-Neanderthal lady, came to them with a lop-sided proposition.

"Does either of you two gentlemen have fourteen thousand dollars that you don't need right now?" she asked. "I can make a solid down payment on the Neanderthal Bar for fourteen thousand dollars cash on the barrelhead. What does that mean anyhow? I can buy Kate's Neanderthal Bar just the way it is, and I'm sure I can make a go of it. And if I can get a mate out of it, we'll settle here and give Biloxi a more old fashioned flavor than it's ever had before. Consider it as a civic investment and as a broadening of the base of things."

Melchisedech Duffey rubbed his two hands together, and two hundred and eighty of the old fifty dollar gold pieces cascaded on to the table with fine old music.

"There is something so boyish about all you sorcerers," Gertrude commented.

"Isn't there though!" Eva agreed. "But it's going to look fishy me bringing in two hundred and eighty of these fifty dollar goldies. People already think there's something a little bit peculiar about me. Don't either of you have any green stuff?"

Biloxi Brannagan rubbed his hands together, and one hundred and forty of the good old one hundred dollar bills thumped on to the table in a bundle banded together with rubber bands. Eva undid the bundle and examined the bills with her flying fingers and sparkling blue eyes.

"These are good," she said, "but people may challenge



them as fakes if I push this many of them all at one time. They all have the same serial number. Can you make them with a hundred and forty non-consecutive serial numbers?"

"It's a hundred and forty times as hard that way, Eva," Brannagan said, "and when we manufacture something by mind-power alone, well, there's a limit to mind power. It would take me about a week to do it that way, Eva. I'd have to rest in between times."

"Well, what will I do?" Eva wailed. "What if Kate sells the Neanderthal to some simpleton while we're fooling around here? I need the Neanderthal. It's the best place ever for meeting some of my own kind and getting things going again."

"Don't fret, Eva," Gertrude said. "We'll just have to work around these damned sorcerers if we're going to get anything done. We'll take care of it ourselves. Just wait till I go into my room and get my checkbook."

**M**elchisedech Duffey and Biloxi Brannagan slid out of Biloxi harbor very early next morning, before the stars had dimmed. Nevertheless Little Eva and her band of revelers were at dock-side to see them off. They had had a high old time of it all night at the Neanderthal-under-new-management Bar and Hotel, and little Eva pointed out to Duffey three unshaven salt-water characters who did have a touch of the Neanderthal about them.

"But which will I marry?" Little Eva asked Melchisedech. "None of them is as close as I'd like, but any of them is close enough. I have to decide."

"You don't have to decide today, do you?" Brannagan asked.

"Sure I have to decide today if I'm going to have a kid in six and a half months."

"It takes nine months, Little Eva," Melchisedech told her.

"Not for us it doesn't. We're faster about everything than you latter-day races are." Little Eva was talking pretty well in latter-day English by now, though she had been able to communicate well from the first without the almost words that she threw together making much sense.

And then it was out on the briny seas again for Melchisedech and Biloxi and various other persons and quasi-persons who were on the Argo. Long before mid-morning they chanced upon a little cafe bobbling in the middle of the ocean, such a thing as the Argo is always chancing on. It was operated by three brackish water persons named Leonard Archive, Oliver Greenflag and Harry A. Kincaid. Harry A. was a handsome lady and the other two were ruddy gentlemen.

"We have everything that you salty travellers might need or name," Leonard Archive said.

"Bring me a nine pound gar," Biloxi ordered thoughtfully. "Then flense about three pounds off the tender flanks of it and grill it."

"I'll have a fourteen pound blopper fish," Melchisedech said.

Honeybucket Archive set certain dials for voltage and frequency and threw the power. He also made slight adjustments to the under-water electrodes, but that was just because he loved to fiddle with them.



The green channels of ocean were galvanized with life. Shadows of gar were sliding in at every level, but they were selective shadows. Allowing for perspective and distance all those gar were the same size. All the nine pound gar for a mile around had quickly arrived. Out of perhaps three thousand of them, Honeybucket selected three and lifted them out of the water. Of these, he selected, just one for it's fine color and proportion, and threw the other two back. He put the one choice gar into the eviscerator, and the perhaps three thousand other gar in near ocean swam away.

Honeybucket let the roiling waters set for about ten seconds. One does not mix fish ways too closely. Then he set the dials anew. There was a new turmoil and arriving, of differently shaped shadows and differently foaming wakes. And there was a great assembly of fourteen pound blopper fish. Honeybucket selected the best one of them and dismissed the others. Both the gar and the blopper fish would soon be table ready.

"For salad I'll have globerina glace," Duffey said. "For fruit you might make me a chlamydomonas with kelp syrup. I'll have pond scum bread, and sea lice soup. And a Hashed-Ectocarpus Collins for cocktail."

"I'll have desmid salad with ulotyrix," said Biloxi. "For fruit you might fix me a volvox colonial. Spirogyra bean, I suppose, and hydrodictyon soup. And a Foraminifera Julip for drink."

It was a good second breakfast. Both Biloxi and Melchisedech believed in eating well and drinking well in accordance with their Magus-and-Magician station.

Then they resumed their voyaging, back and forth in time, here and there in space. The great triumphs of the Argonauts, by their very nature, must remain unknown. Bless all the work and adventure of Holy Argo and her crew.

The Argo was, beyond everything else, a Quest Ship. In earlier tomes of the Ship's log is the account of finding the Great Golden Fleece of Colchis, and indeed that was one of the brightest findings of the ship. But there were several more important findings than that of the Fleece, and dozens that were equally important. The Argo and the Argo Masters had recovered the Holy Cross exactly one hundred years after Salaadin had galloped away into the desert dragging it as his horse's tail. There was the recovery of the Lord's Table which had been in the Cenaculum in Jerusalem, and now it was in the Bread and Wine room on the Argo. There was the recovery of the Sancgreal, which grail had been stolen from Glastonbury just a hundred years earlier. And there had been the findings of the Ring of the Nebelungs and of the Philosopher's Stone. Ah, the findings, the findings!

There'd been the discoveries of the Northwest Passage, Roland's Horn, Alarac's Sword, Aaron's Rod, and the Baptist's Head (it is still in good flesh, and the growing hair and beard have not been cut; each is now more than one hundred feet long.) They'd found the Magic Flute, the Great Mogul Diamond, the Iron Crown of Charlemagne, the Lost Dutchman Mine. All of the findings had been incidental to the real aim of the Heroic Voyages.

The latest and most contrary of the findings was that of the Sword and Scabbard of Saint Secaire. And this was an exception of the prizes in that it wasn't found by the Argo



Masters, and they didn't want it to be found; they wanted it to remain lost. It was an anti-prize, a peril to the world.

In times past, the Argo Masters had on purpose lost the Sword and Scabbard three times. At it's last losing, they had filled the space between the sword and scabbard with iron, lead, brimstone and babbet-metal, all boiling hot, and this had welded the sword to the scabbard as the filler solidified and made it impossible for anyone to draw the sword out easily or accidentally. Then they had lost it in a place in the ocean named Nine Mile Depth. In the floor of the depth they had lost it a hundred meters deep in mud and lime ooze. And they had memorialized the ocean and its creatures around and about that the Sword and the Scabbard must remain lost. And so it did remain lost for four hundred years.

Then two Frenchmen, the brothers Cyril and Cyrus Dimbeau, went down into the Nine Mile Depth in a bathysphere. They took core specimens for a hundred feet deep in the sea floor there then. And they struck something harder than mud and lime-ooze. So they brought it into their bathysphere with grapples. And then they brought it up to the surface of the Ocean and set it on the platform of their attending boat. It was the Sword and Scabbard of Saint Secaire. This was on that first morning when Melchisedech and Biloxi Brannagan had taken to sea together on Journey as Argo Masters.

And of course these two Argo Masters came to that mid-Pacific place immediately. They brought the Argo alongside, and they boiled onto the platform of the attending ship.

"What two extinct sea-creatures are these?" Cyril Dimbeau asked with French irony. "Sure, I think they are already rotting as they stand there, they are so old and extinct. We'll just have all the blood out of them and pump them full of preservatives. They'll do to show for novelties when we get home with them."

This is the sort of jibing that Frenchmen of a certain sort sometimes indulge in, but it must be understood that both Melchisedech and Biloxi were both remarkably handsome men and were splendidly arrayed.

"Do not on any account draw that sword from that scabbard," Melchisedech spoke as one having authority.

"And what happens if we do?" Cyrus Dimbeau asked.

"If you draw it but an inch, two-thirds of the people in the world will fall into a deep sleep," Melchisedech stated. "And they will die in their deep sleep if they are not rescued from it quickly. The only means of saving them is to put the sword back full-way into the scabbard."

"Fair enough," said Cyril Dimbeau. "We'll make try of the affair." There was one other scientist there with the two brothers, and there were ten strong workmen and laboratory assistants there. These ten assistants grabbed Biloxi and Melchisedech and put them under tight restraint. And the three scientist were melting the flux out from between the Sword and its sheath.

"It will move now," Cyrus Dimbeau said. "I believe it will move just about one inch." And Cyrus drew the Sword just one inch out of its scabbard. The ten assistants fell down in deep sleep and rolled around on the platform.

"You were right. It worked," Cyril Dimbeau said. "The



ten assistants have fallen into deep sleep. The other five of us, we three scientists and you two sea spooks, are still awake. That is two thirds of those in this miniature world who are so stricken, and I assume that it applies to the maxi-world also. And if I pull the Sword out the rest of the way?"

"The World will come to its end," Melchisedech said.

"Fair enough," said Cyril. "I always wanted to be there when the World ended, but I didn't know quite how to manage it. Pull the Sword out, brother."

But when the ten assistants had fallen down into deep sleep, they had of necessity released Duffey and Biloxi from their tight grip. And while Duffey had been parlaying with the scientists, Biloxi had retrieved the still melting flux that had been poured out from between the Sword and Scabbard. Now he poured it back in, and it sized the Sword and Scabbard together once more so that they would not separate easily.

"How clumsy of me!" Biloxi Brannagan apologized. "I stumbled with the bucket of flux and I spilled it. Now you will have that little melting task to do all over again."

"Damned oafs!" Cyril Dimbeau hissed. "Get back into the Ocean whence you came."

"Let me have it," Duffey said. "I know a way to melt the flux out of it again in an instant. Then you can go ahead and pull the Sword all the way out and destroy the World if you're so minded."

"Well, hurry it up!" Cyril Dimbeau barked.

Duffey took the Sword and Scabbard, now tightly welded together again. But, with an incredible clumsiness, he dropped the thing off of the platform, and it went down, down, down, nine miles deep in the ocean, and then it began to bore its way one hundred meters deep into the mud and lime ooze to find its old place again.

"Oops, oops, oops, I dropped it, fellows. I wouldn't have had that happen for anything."

"Oafs, oafs," Cyrus cried in hot anger. "Now we'll have to go all the way down to get it again."

"Get what?" Brannagan asked them. Brannagan had cannily spread the Forgetfulness Mesh over them and they couldn't remember the episode at all. The ten assistants, now rescued from their deep sleep, stood waiting for orders. And no orders came.

"Well, it was a pleasant visit," Cyril Dimbeau said finally. "I'm glad you couldn't stay longer."

Duffey and Biloxi sailed away then, and left the bathysphere people there, taking samples of ocean fleas at middle depths. But they could not remember at all about the Sword and the Scabbard.

"We are going to have to find a way to lose that thing a little more securely," Melchisedech Duffey said. "In four hundred years someone is likely to stumble on it again."

But it is good to have suspense-and-fun adventures every day well before noon.

A bit later in the day, at Gdansk on the Baltic, near the mouth of the Vistula, a stranger came to the Argo, he having the air of not being a stranger at all. Now it was the plain case that any Argo man should always recognize any other Argo man, anywhere, at any time. The only slight



exception is that a man fallen from Grace may not be completely recognized at once.

Well, neither Brannagan nor Duffey recognized this man immediately. They should have seen through every disguise. The land they were in had been in the hands of the New Infidels for some years, and it may be that caution was called for.

"You bring the Brotherhood itself into danger if you fail to recognize me," this stranger said. "It is by this one thing only that the Brotherhood may be broken. Do not fail it! Know me now!"

Well, this stranger was a mixture of disguises. He had a black hat on his head, and ear-locks, like an old Jew. But he had a wide and treeless face, like a Polish landscape; for the faces of Poles are always like the constantly changing and always lop-sided map of Poland. But this man also had the blue eyes of Scandinavia and the square hands of Holland.

"The Ship will know me," the man said. "The piece of Talking Oak in the Ship's wheel will know me and speak." And the piece of Talking Oak in the Ship's wheel did speak, and it said "I know him." But Duffey and Brannagan still looked at each other, and at the man.

"We will all lay our identifications out here," Melchisedech Duffey said. "We will see who are Men of the Argo." Duffey rubbed his hands together and produced a large gold coin with the King's Crown of Salem on one side and with the Bread and the Wine on the other. It bore as superscript the magic name of 'Melchisedech', and as subscript the words 'Thou Art Forever'. Melchisedech set the big coin on the steerman's sideboard there in the cabin. He had identified himself, though he had not been questioned.

Biloxi Brannagan rubbed his hands together and produced an even larger coin of the reddish gold of Ireland. It had the Celtic cross of Christ on one side of it, and a Coracle Boat on the other side. It bore the Holy name 'Naomh Brandon' of Saint Brandon on it. Brannagan had also identified himself, though this swift lion of the sea had not been questioned. Oh certainly Biloxi Brannagan was Saint Brandon, always and forever.

The stranger then rubbed his own two hands together. This formed a shower of sparks from which was formed a large and living two-headed eagle, but no coin or medallion. The stranger had a lot of style in these things however, and Duffey and Brannagan began to recognize him by his florid style. The man grinned and grimaced in a stagey manner. Yes, he was a real magician. All the real ones have this staginess about them. From his own mouth he took one thin half of a coin, and from one of the mouths of the living two-headed eagle he took another thin half of a coin. He put the two halves together and there was a small clap of thunder. That was good show. On one side of the thus produced coin there was the same two-headed Eagle of Poland. On the other side of the coin was an ornate Crock or Pot or Night Charley. But there was no name on the coin yet.

The man then pulled the name 'Kasmir Gorshok' from the other mouth of the two-headed eagle, and he fastened it on to the coin. He set the coin beside the other two on the steersman's sideboard and the other two did not reject it.



This man was Kasmir Gorshok, the Casey of the Crock of the low middle ages. He was Casey Szymansky of Chicago, the Casey of the Zodiac. And he was a true Argo Master.

Kasmir (Casey) waved the two-headed eagle to fly away, and it flew away into the interior of the country. "That will bring their numbers up to nine," Casey said. The two-headed eagles of Poland had been an endangered species for a long while, and whenever their number fell below nine it was feared that their extermination was near.

So Melchisedech Duffey and Biloxi Brannagan sailed with this stranger-no-more, an old companion in magic and grace, on further adventures on the kaleidoscopic voyages of the Argo. But it was very mysterious that they had not recognized him at once. How had he changed?

"But something has gone wrong with things," Melchisedech said that same day as they wrangled around in shallow seas and treacherous estuaries. "There is a treason smell about our Holy Ship. It's as if Judas himself were aboard."

"As you know, we transport Judas only one night a year," Casey explained to Melchisedech as to a child. "And then we carry him across one narrow water only, and we are done with him in an hour. Then we use the herb Rosemary to remove the treason smell. So there can be none now. And this is not even that day or night of the year."

It is true that the Argo did transport Judas on the short voyage to Hell one night a year. But there were theological implications in the fact that he must be so carried once every year. It was almost as though his transporting to Hell were not permanent or irrevocable; at least some cultists believed that.

"There's a saying that one of the Masters of Holy Argo Herself will turn traitor," Melchisedech said darkly.

"And the second part of that saying declares that it will be an affair between that Argo Master and God Himself alone," Kasmir said. "What is it to thee?"

**A**t Karl-Marx-Stadt, near the upper waters of the Mulde, the Argo Masters destroyed a new incursion into logic that carried the tentative title 'I Wake Up Forgetting'. Possible effects of this queer logic had been spilling out into various presents, and they were not good.

There was hardly enough water to float the Argo at Karl-Marx-Stadt, and there was scarce enough draught-way for that incursion into logic either. But the logic piece was baneful even as it attempted to launch itself off the sand bars and float free.

Duffey and Brannagan and Casey Gorshok burst in on a young man in ragged underwear and sobbing with excitement as he scribbled furiously on tattered pieces of paper. The young man was named Ralph Rolfe and he was English on his father's side.

"Oh bother me not, ghosts, burglars, poli spies, followers of static philosophy," Ralph begged miserably as the three Argonauts burst into his room. "I must get it all down on paper before I forget it! Paper, paper, are there no more pieces of you here? For the love of Logica Perversa herself, give me good paper to write upon!"

Casey Gorshok gave pieces of paper to the distraught young man, and he gathered them in from that nervous person



again when they were full written. And pretty soon the young man ceased his frantic writing and half-collapsed upon himself.

"That isn't all of it, that isn't near all of it," the young man jittered, "but it is the vital keys to it. It is all gone out of my mind completely now, but there should be enough mind jogs and memory hooks down on the pieces of paper for me to recreate the great and crooked system by. And this I will do when I am more clear in my mind. Have I pants somewhere? Do I not ordinarily wear pants? Have I coffee here? Do I not ordinarily drink coffee?"

Brannagan found the pants for the excited young man, and Duffey made coffee for him. And by and by he was more composed.

"It is a completely new system of perverse logic that I have discovered," the young man said, "or a completely new system that has discovered me and employed me as its medium. It will drive out all the other systems of logic as a shrew drives out mice. It has come to me in my sleep a dozen times and I have always forgotten it as I wakened. I knew that if I could get certain key words and symbols written down, I would be able to put it together from them when I was in a clarified and wakened state. For a long time I have slept with a candle lit and with writing materials beside me to jot down the key words when I wakened, and for a long time something has gone wrong every morning. This morning, after I had received the great and crooked message once more, I was told in a sad voice 'This is the last time that it will be given to you. Get it down this morning or lose it forever.' Well, I would get it down this time, for there was not anything else that could have gone wrong with my precautions and procedures that had not previously gone wrong. I had allowed for everything.

"I was mistaken in my supposition. While I slept mice came in and ate most of the writing paper that I had by my bedside, and they left only small ragged pieces that they had gnawed around the edges. But I had to get the great system written down. I filled up even the smallest piece of paper that the mice had left. Oh, kind gentlemen, you do have all the pieces, do you not? And you have them all in order as I wrote them?"

"I have them all in order, yes," Casey said.

"And they will be destroyed in the same order that you wrote them, in the same order that Casey has them," Melchisedech said. "Destroyed they must be."

"No, no, no!" the young man jittered in a broken voice. "I have the system in my mind no longer. I spilled all the treacherous things out of my mind and down on the paper. It is an entirely new thing. It will turn the world awry and set it by the ears."

"New and awry things usually do set the world by its ears," Melchisedech said sadly. "But the world can hardly stand a new and crooked and entirely harmful system of logic at this time. Believe me, we are not narrow minded or arbitrary about this. It is a bad and slippery thing that you have almost introduced, young man. It has come close to being born many times. Again and again and again it has come close. But now we will luckily be rid of it this time also."

"Give me those pieces of paper or I will shoot you



all," the feverish young man cried. "Have I a gun here to shoot you all with? Do I not usually have a gun here?"

Brannagan found the gun and gave it to the young man. Duffey found the bullets for it and gave them to him. The young man put the gun to the right temple of Casey Gorshok and fired it with a loud explosion. But he was a fraction of an instant too late. Duffey and Brannagan and Casey had already retreated out of that time and place. The exquisite sense of timing that all Argo Masters have is one thing that never leaves them.

This 'Sudden Withdrawal' was a device they used often. They had carried out their mission and prevented a tricky thing from being born. It wasn't an ordinary tricky thing or it wouldn't have been assigned to Argonauts. There was something absolutely new in trickery in the devilishness of it.

But, if their mission in this had been carried out perfectly and completely, the adventure could not even have been told about. The adventure and all memory of it would have been wiped out with the thing itself. And the adventure is told about. It is only the loose end adventures with something left over that can be remembered and told.

"I shudder to think of what would have happened if it had taken effect," Duffey speculated. "The last such thing that took effect put mankind into a twist for four hundred years, and this one could have been much twistier. Casey Gorshok, just to be doubly sure of this matter, I did not hear the sound of the pieces of paper being destroyed. Let us hear that sound now."

"Ah, I just thought that I might read a bit of them, Duff."

"No, Casey, no! Destroy them at once!" Brannagan insisted. "No one of even ourselves could be immune to their effect. You especially would not be immune. Destroy the little pieces of the logic system, Casey, and let there not be division among us."

Casey destroyed some pieces of paper.

"Is that all of them, Casey?" Duffey insisted.

"All but three of them. Shoal water ahead! Watch the steering!"

"I see no shoal water ahead, Casey!" Brannagan spoke with a voice full of menace. "Destroy them, Casey, all of them."

Casey destroyed three of them. "One, two, three," he counted. But had there been more than three left? Had there been others that Casey did not destroy?

"Destroy the fourth one, Casey!" Melchisedech ordered.

"I destroyed all three of them. Reefs ahead!" Casey bawled. "Shorten sail! Beat to the wind! Do various nautical things! All hands aloft! Awk, I see that one last little piece of paper did flutter over the side undestroyed, but the ocean depths have it now, so no harm done," Casey stated.

"What if a devil-fish should find it and save it?" Melchisedech asked. "Our mission is not perfect until that one piece is destroyed. Do you not have a particular devil-fish who is mascot to you, Casey Gorshok? Have I not noticed it following us in these very waters? What if we should -"



"I can't hear you, Duffey, with this violent wind blowing."

"There is no wind. But here it is that we enter new waters. Destroy that paper when thy devil-fish brings it to thee, Casey. I will not remember to remind you of this again. Sometimes the amnesia works for us and sometimes against us."

At Weinsburg on the Nechar River, the Argo Masters cured a young man of stuttering. This was a brilliant man with a mind like a burning sphere and the will to move worlds. And there was a red fury about everything that he did, and this caused him to be a great overturner. He had all excellent abilities and talents, and the stuttering had been the only defeating and frustrating ailing that he had.

The Argo Masters broke in on this brilliant man suddenly.

"How how how d-d-did y-y-you g--" the young man began to question their intrusion.

"Ephthatha," said Melchisedech Duffey, "be thou opened." The young man's lips and tongue were loosened and he stuttered no more. The young man looked at them in that burnished way that all very brilliant persons have, and he seemed a little bit disturbed.

"Have I asked to be cured?" he challenged them then.

"In a way you did ask to be cured of your stuttering," Melchisedech said. "You have complained angrily of your affliction to High Heaven. You have sworn that the clear river of your thoughts was roiled by the stuttering obstruction of your lips and tongue. You have sworn that you would move worlds if only you were free of this misfortune."

"You did not answer my question," the brilliant man said. "Of course I complained. This complaint was a part of my stock and trade. It was a means I used to work myself into a wrath. Of course I was furious against my affliction. It was a stepping stone to my being furious against other things. How else could I have been furious so constantly and so easily? No, I did not ask to be cured. Afflict me again and restore me as I was."

"This I will not do," Melchisedech told him. "I have said 'be thou opened', and you are opened. One would have to be perverse to object to being cured."

"Of course I'm perverse," the man said. "That's the whole idea. I can move worlds whether I am bound or loosened, but I can move them in a crooked way only when I am bound. I want to be furious and frustrated! That is part of my mission. If I have not this goad of fury, I will be a cheerful man. And if I am a cheerful man, the destruction that I have sworn to do will not be done."

"Be cheerful. Be opened. Stutter no more," Melchisedech said. "And destroy no more. This turns you from an evil genius to a good genius, or at least a complacent genius. Out of here, companions, out of here!"

Duffey and Brannagan were instantly out of there, out of that time and out of that town. They were already reading the work order for their next mission. And Casey Gorshok Szymanski, where was he? Oh, he would be along in a moment. Sometimes he loitered a bit as he dawdled over the curiosities of the world. Sometimes he seemed completely



unable to keep his hands off of this thing or that thing. But he would be along in a moment. Likely enough if some Argo Master gave the brilliant man his stuttering back, he would be frustrated all over again, and his powerful mind would be slanted towards evil or awry things. But why did Casey Gorshok the Sorcerer and Argo Master lag so far behind the other two Masters that day?

When Casey did join them, he had a new, sly look about him. Take that not to heart. Casey always had a new, sly look about him. But one Argonaut surely would not slip back and undo the work of another.

At Milano, on the Po (or nearly so), they took Mr. X on board the Argo. This X was not a true master of the Argo, however much he wished that he were. He was not really one of the long-lived persons, and his present manifestation was likely to be the only one that he would have. He was not a Sorcerer, but he swore that he could reproduce any trick of any sorcerer if he saw it twice. He was acquainted with all three Masters who were presently on the Argo. He was good and amusing company. There was no reason why he should not have ridden on the ship. But easily tendered accommodations are not appreciated as much as those that are more hardly given.

"I do not know you, man," Biloxi Brannagan said, "and our sublime destination can hardly be yours. Nor are you able to riddle our riddles."

"I do not know you, man," Melchisedech Duffey said. There was always fun to be had with X.

"I do not know you, man," said that piece of the Talking Oak that was set into the ship's wheel. "I believe that it is the nature of X to be unknown. Are you in Scripture? Are you in Inscription? Nobody comes onto the Argo who is not to be found in one place or the other."

"I am in Inscription," X maintained. "In the Attic Ephebic Inscriptions, X equals 'Xenoi'. No, I am not otherwise in Scripture or in Inscription, but I ask you to take me into your Company. All of you do know me."

"'Xenoi' means 'Strangers'," the piece of the Talking Oak said. And then it fell silent, for that was much more than it usually talked.

"Oh, I suppose that we halfway know you, X" Brannagan conceded, for he had a kind heart under his ruddy hide, "and you have always been good on the conversation and the news. Set your golden medallion there on the steersmen's sideboard, and we will accept it as your identity."

X rubbed his hands together in the professional manner. He had seen real sorcerers do this trick more than twice, so he could do it also. And he did produce a big gold coin, according to first appearance. It had his coat of arms on it. It had half of all the fancy things he wished to put on it.

"There it is," he said. "Was there ever such a coin as that!"

"But, X, it is only a one sided coin," Casey chided him. "That makes it a very one sided and deficient identification. Are we not allowed to see the contra against you, the reverse of your own coin?"

X turned the coin over and it disappeared. There



wasn't any reverse to it. X had just crossed magic with real magicians, and the real magicians had won.

The coin is still there, on the steersmen's sideboard in the cabin of the Argo. It is a curiosity the way it seems perfect and valid and will then disappear when it is turned over.

"Yes, X, you may sail with us," Melchisedech said. "But you do not sail as a Master of the Argo. You are talented, sure. And you are always all over the place. But, with you, it is always the question of not being able to see the water for the fish. You will receive half shares only of whatever prizes we win. Most underlings receive only quarter shares."

"That is all right," said X, "and you do need me. Some of your latest exploits have been worse than just 'bad show'. Gentlemen, they have been bush."

So X sailed with them. And, really, they were glad to have him.

At Our'yev, at the east mouth of the river Ural in Tartary, Melchisedech Duffey lost his life. Oh, there was no question about it. He was killed dead, deader than a mackerel. Dead, and quickly stripped of the flesh off his bones, and that flesh cremated to ashes. A man will not walk away from such a thing as that. This is the background of losing his life:

The Gold Ship or the King's Ship or the Shimmering Ship, it is an almost universal boy's dream. And all of the almost-universal dreams have strong basis in fact. The almost-universal dreams (but not ordinary dreams) are really sub-surfaces or simultaneous happenings which parallel the surface happenings and are often the stronger and more valid. Almost all boys realize that they have this valid dimension of other happenings and other life. But many of them, not being intelligent enough to keep up, forget about it as they grow older.

The other world of oceans and ships and adventures is really there. It is the other side of the coin. It is often the clearest and most decorative side of that coin.

The Argo is not the only one of the preternatural Gold Ships or King's Ships or Shimmering Ships. There are a dozen or so of them. But the Argo is one of the most noble of them, and also it is the one with the raciest adventures.

These Shimmering Ships with their ever young crewmen of very great age have all the excitement and blood and thunder of Pirate Ships or Devil Ships, but they have the advantage of being on the side of Light and Glory.

But every boy reveling in their companionship by day and by night, knows that their victories are not either easy nor inevitable, that some of the greatest contests will be lost, that some of the great Ship Masters will be slain and skinned by their adversaries, that some of their adversaries are very strong.

These adversaries are persons of stunning impact, of massive mystery, of overpowering personality, or unmatched courage. Give them all of that. So it is in the group understanding, and so it is in reality.

Among the most shattering of the Adversaries is that group known as the Evil Prince, the Purple Prince, the Mocking Prince, the Laughing Prince. The most powerful and the trickiest of all these Adversaries may well be the Laughing Prince of Tartary.



Except for a very short interlude at Wien, all the Argonauts had always been able to tell right from wrong very clearly, and they had always supported the right. They were commando experts of a sort, in a battle against evil things, and all of them served tours of duty at this heroic labour. They ransacked minds and seas to realize their efforts, and they brought strength of character and lively imagination to bear.

(But the popular sympathies of the world were often against them, and with the Purple Princes and Ambiguous Adventurers. It doesn't seem fair, but that is the fact of the matter.)

The Argo did, very often, sail clear outside the Cosmos, and it did also sail on the insides of minds and persons, and it learned of the dangerous reefs and promontories that are within. If the Argonauts ever became confused as to 'where' or 'what' or 'on which side', there was an Instruction in the chart-room of the Argo to set them right. Even when, several times, the Argo had been in evil hands and ownership, the chart-room and the Instruction were not disturbed.

All of the worlds were sights of long-drawn-out and never quite finished battles between order and disorder (or what is sometimes called 'between good and evil'), and there was no one anywhere who could really stand aside from it.

Except the Laughing Prince of Tartary.

There had been reports of this Laughing Prince for the recent while, that he was the Prince of the Third Way. He was not claimed by either God or Devil. He was neither hot nor cold, so he had been vomited out of their mouths.

"But he will rue the day when He vomited me out of his mouth," the Laughing Prince had said, and it was reported that he was not laughing when he said it. "He is the enemy of my enemy, but he is no friend of mine. And the enemy vomited me out of his mouth also, and he too will rue the day. I am hot as fire and cold as ice, and they were wrong to eject me. I hold this third place and I will not successfully be invaded here. My land is a scorcher when I want it to scorch, and my spring is the only cooling spring in the country. Whoever comes into my land will have to come down to my spring to drink. My way is sweet and my burden light, and my spring is poisoned to those of the other two lineages."

It was reported that the Prince was a vile creature out of the 'dialectic pit'. It was also reported that he was not so no-sided as he pretended to be, that he really did sometimes adhere to one side or the other, and that the truth was not in him.

So the Argo had a work order to check out this Laughing Prince. Tartary, like so many realms, had been under the dominion of the New Infidels for several generations. Tartary was not even its official name any more.

The Argo went to the area by rapid but difficult voyage. Even getting a ship the size of the Argo onto an inland sea (the Caspian) was tricky. But the Argo Masters did come to Tartary, and nobody there had ever heard of the Laughing Prince. They had, they said, no Prince except the First Secretary of the Oblast. So each of the Argo Masters, and the half-master X, searched as best they could.



Mr. X did the things he could do best. He talked to important people, or to people who he fictionized as somehow being important. He obtained bits and snippets of information that he thought might be meaningful. If it hadn't been for the information that he garnered, he wouldn't have been able to identify Duffey's ashes and bones later.

And Kasimir Gorshok, the Casey of the Zodiac and the Casey of Chicago, did the things that he did best. As Sorcerer, he sorcered up a pavilion that was like a pleasure palace. He sorcered aides into being. He gave lavish entertainments for such local officials as might be of value. He met the Laughing Prince in a seance and was told that one of the coffins on the Argo would soon have its designated bones in it. There were always a few unoccupied (and some occupied) coffins on the Argo to take care of eventualities. But Casey was not able to persuade the Laughing Prince to mend his evil or ambivalent ways, or even to admit that his ways were evil or ambivalent. "No, no, fuzz-face," the Prince told Casey, "my ways are beyond good and evil." Casey was never able to meet the Prince in the flesh, but only through mediums.

Biloxi Brannagan did what he did best. He took the Argo and he ransacked all the shores of that Sea to make them give up their answers. It was a mocking bunch of answers he got, and yet they were not outright false. Brannagan was the finest seaman ever. There was nobody like him for ransacking a shore.

Melchisedech Duffey went upland into the boondock interiors, but the interiors are never well done in treacherous Tartary. (Is Tartary ultimately the same place as Tartarus?) There was an emptiness and incompleteness about the interiors of those boondocks. It was because of this that they were so susceptible to having other ambients superimposed on them. And there was the strong feeling that things were not as they should be.

The industrial-agricultural country sometimes had a desert superimposed on it, a desert that in reality had been driven away by the big dams and deep wells years before this. There were many skeletons of people lying around on the sands, but few of animals. "Animals are harder to do," said Duffey. The rocks were not right and the plants were not. But suddenly the desert was gone and Duffey entered a medium-sized town that was full of bustle. He ate a good meal at a restaurant "Rosa Ivanova's Kofeinik, You know it's the best, All the truck drivers stop here". There was hearty food, and Duffey drank eleven glasses of water. He had a premonition of coming thirst. But nobody in the place had ever heard of the Laughing Prince. "There is one place in every town where they will know something of every phenomenon, even if they have it all wrong," Duffey said. He went out of the restaurant and started for the newspaper office two blocks up the street where he would -

- but then he was back in the desert again, and the town was gone. Duffey was tortured by instant thirst, and there were shocking hallucinations of the Laughing Prince, but that person remained one step removed from being there in the flesh. And there were glimpses of three crooked persons with slanted faces who had pursued him in his childhood and had tried to kill him. Later these SFM or



slant faced men had become cartoon characters and stereotypes and comic book persons.

"You have to come down to my spring to drink," the Prince was speaking like an old record on a record player. Duffey knew that in reality he had drunk eleven glasses of water in the last half hour. But he also knew that in unreality he was dying of thirst and would have to drink at the sparkling gurgling spring.

He drank.

He could see things with great clarity after he had drunk from the spring, but it was all wrong stuff that he saw so clearly. Its unreality defeated him. This unreality is the greatest of enemies.

The three slant faced killers slunk up. They were badly dated. They were caricatures. But they were henchmen of the Laughing Prince of Tartary. The slant faced killers cut off all the flesh from Duffey's bones. That's what killed him. The slant faces burned all the sinew and viscera and flesh of Melchisedech Duffey until they were nothing but hot ashes. They would always be hot and ready to burst into flame. And they put these ashes, still smoking, into a cigar canister that had once belonged to the King of Spain. Then the mortal remains of Melchisedech Duffey were in the middle of an unbusy street in Our'yev, a town near the east mouth of the Ural River in Tartary.

X and Kasmir Gorshok came on them there in a matter of seconds. The minor official already at the scene was glad to be rid of the whole business.

"I just don't know how I would have written up a report of this," the minor official said. "People keep arriving out of that 'nowhere desert', dead and disfigured. And our superiors always believe that we have been drinking wine when we report such things. Take them away and say nothing about them. And I will not."

"I will be the custodian of Melchisedech's ashes," X said. "I have a strong premonition that I will meet him alive again, and then I will give them back to him. Few men have such amusing keepsakes of themselves."

X kept the ashes in their canister. X and Casey Gorshok carried the bones down to dockside, keeping to the sidestreets from some kind of embarrassment. Biloxi Brannagan was just bringing the Argo back into port, knowing that the search for the Laughing Prince had ended in disaster.

They put the bones of Melchisedech Duffey into one of the caskets on the Argo. Brannagan, in his true person as Saint Brandon, said the 'Mass of the Holy Precursor Melchisedech' for him (It was the Mass of April 30th when the old calendar prevailed). And Brannagan and Casey Gorshok and X half believed that they had done all that they could do for Melchisedech.

And Melchisedech lay in his coffin, and he lay there, and he lay there. "I thought there would be more to it than this," Melchisedech said.

The Argo Masters, Brannagan and Casey Gorshok, and the half-master X, took the Argo on further adventures and rectifications, but it just wasn't the same thing without Duffey booming in the midst of them. The bones of their companion just lying there spooked them and gave an incomplete air to all their doings.



And so it went for three days. Then God Himself came onto the Argo in the uncounted hours of a night. And directly he went to the coffin of Melchisedech.

"Have you been relieved of your duties as Master of the Argo?" God asked those bones, and they leapt with joy at the sound of His voice.

"No, I have not," the bones of Melchisedech spoke boldly. "But I am dead and stripped of my flesh. I waited here in my coffin where I knew that you would find me. I did not have any further instructions. I did not know whether I was wanted as Pilot and Master any longer."

"The articles of the voyage do not require that you be a fleshed Pilot and Master," God said. "And you are always wanted. You, and you others, see to the details among yourselves."

Well, it would be awkward, but it could be done. There would be a sort of joyful awkwardness in finding ways to go about it. Melchisedech still had all his facilities, his movements, his merriments. His old seaman's clothes still fit him, though a little bit scarecrowishly. Casey Gorshok made for Duffey a golden mask to go over his boney skull, a golden scarf to go around his neck, and golden gauntlets for his hands and wrists. All of these things were made from combings from the Golden Fleece of Colchis.

Melchisedech could have made these things himself, but Casey wanted to make them for him as a sign of their friendship, which was indeed in need of repair. Melchisedech could no longer speak properly because of having no throat box. But he could communicate, and one did not always notice that his communication was not in ordinary speech.

And so it was that, with the bones of a dead man at the helm, the Argo sailed on some of her highest adventures. She became the talk of the sea.

And Melchisedech, though he had no face, had frequent reminders of what his face had looked like. Somebody else on the Argo was wearing Melchisedech's face, a correct though rather weary version of his face.

\* \* \* \* \*

"There is an aerodynamic requirement that every winged device or creature must also have a tail for balance. This requirement applies also to angels. An angel without a tail would have its splendid beauty grotesquely reduced. Someday some artist will have the courage to paint an angel with a tail, and he will startle the art world with the beautiful effect."

#### THE BACK DOOR OF HISTORY, Arpad Arutinov

**T**he images of persons, whether Doppelganger or Angel or Fetch, are much more common than one would admit. The psychologist Jung implied that the Doppelganger of a person is only one of the splinters from the Unconscious of the person, which splinter, sometimes the ego, sometimes the id, sometimes the shadow, is made audible and visible in moments of queer stress or confrontation. And mostly these Doppels are heard and seen only by their primary, though sometimes also by a person who is emotionally very close to the primary person. And in all this there is some doubt whether



the appearances are entirely subjective or partly objective also. But in another place Jung implies (and almost writes it outright) that there might be a life-long association between a person and his Doppelganger reflection. And it had been a life-long, though never very important, association between Melchisedech Duffey and his Doppel.

The face that they shared, or had shared until Melchisedech's death and defacing, was a good one, a handsome face, a rather tall face on a rather broad body. One may see that face in Ruben's painting THE MEETING OF ABRAHAM AND MELCHISEDECH. One may perhaps see it better in the statue group on the porch of the northern Transept of Chartres Cathedral. Melchisedech is leftmost of the three carven figures, then we have Abraham and Moses.

Oh, but those were representations of the Original Melchisedech, someone might say. And they were only artists' ideas of what the Holy and Puzzling person may have looked like.

Get one thing clear! Melchisedech Duffey was the Original Melchisedech, the Thou-Art-Forever Melchisedech. And the anonymous sculptor of the Chartres figures as well as Rubens, did the figures from life (as it were) with splendid grace and insight and intuition.

The more contemporary Melchisedech had modified the look of his face slightly by wearing a shorter and more squarish beard, but it was still a face that seen once would be remembered forever.

"Who are you anyhow?" Melchisedech asked his Doppel one day soon after he was reactivated as masked and muffled Argo Master and Pilot.

There are some who would say that I am only an aspect of yourself," the Double spoke in the rolling voice of Melchisedech himself, but not with quite such a vigorous roll.

"But I do not say that and I do not believe that you say that," Melchisedech argued. "All my life I have been seeing you a dozen times a day or more, and I have never given you much thought. What is your name?"

"Sometimes I am called Pseudo-Zorokothora," said the double.

"But Zorokothora is only the mythic equivalent of myself Melchisedech. The same legends are told of us both. But you cannot really be named Pseudo-Melchisedech. I'll not accept that."

"Sometimes I am said to be one of the Grigori or Watchers. Sometimes I am said to be a Zophiel which is a 'God's spy'. We are close but impossible parallels, and yet we are almost universal. Everybody starts life with one of me, and there is usually a separation near the end of childhood. But you are a child forever, and you have me yet. You and all of your species are descendants of Noah and his race. I and all of my species are descendants of Nir, the brother of Noah, about whom you are not permitted to know very much. You look at me now as you seldom bothered to look at me before, because you have lost your face and you believe that you see it on me. But it is I who have lost my face. For I cannot see it anywhere now, not in you, not anywhere."

"You can see it in any mirror, dolt."

"No, I cannot. No mirror will reflect me. I do not



exist as far as mirrors are concerned. Melchisedech, my task is always to warn you of things you do not want to notice. You are now in the latter part of your Seventh Voyage that is called the Voyage of the Lost Years. You have lived seven lively lives on such eerie voyages, and you have died seven deadly deaths. And in the case of three of those deaths you were judged and damned to hell. Does that not worry you?"

"Yes, a little bit. But it seems that I'm ahead of the game. I was not judged and damned to hell in the case of four of my deaths. How much longer till the end of this Seventh Voyage of the Lost Years?"

"There is One only who sets that time. He is not you and He is not I. What are you looking for? What are you trying to see?"

"I'm trying to see whether you have a tail, Pseudo-Zorokothora."

"Oh, you have read the humorous history of Arpad Arutinov. Whether I have one or not, you will not be able to know."

After his very real death (all seven of his deaths had been very real) Melchisedech Duffey could still come and go in time and space, but he could go on with his activities only a very few years into the futures. And some of his incursions on the Argo were beyond those few years. As a stubbornly dead and resolutely bony man, he accomplished things that another man could hardly do. There was an ambivalence about him (he said that he had a tibia in each of the worlds), but there was an awkwardness and an unaccountability also. The future is wraithy in any case, and one may excuse a certain wraithiness there. But as to present time, however constrained that present scene might be, what was the case of Melchisedech in it?

If an Argo adventure was more nearly in the present time, if it impinged less far into the future than did the Adventure of The Laughing Prince and the Seventh Death of Melchisedech, then Melchisedech became almost a normal man again, with flesh on his bones and a voice in his voice box. In that case he used the same bones he'd been using, and he used the same flesh that he used to use. But were not the ashes in the cigar canister that had once belonged to the King of Spain the residue of that same flesh? The ashes in the cigar canister did not disappear at those times, though they smoked uncommonly and seemed a bit more hot. This was the 'Ambiguity of the Flesh' that would be with him for many years, coming and going, all through his married life, all through the New Orleans days and nights, all through his less spectral adventures. But his flesh was no less valid for suffering this 'ambiguity'.

Prince Kasmir Gorshok (Casey of Chicago) left the Argo and returned to it very many times. He became quite irregular as an active Master of the Argo. "I have other Ships to sail that you wot not of," he told them with an air of mystery.

Henceforth (and preforth) Melchisedech had the feeling that the 'Present Time' was a sort of living in the past. Melchisedech had been quite a young boy-man when he first (and last, and always) set his person onto the circumstance



named 'The Sea of the Lost Years', the Sea and the Years in which so many of the Argo adventures were enacted. And that sea could be left or reentered at any of its shores.

"And I must remind you that you can leave the Argo at any of the shores, at the age twenty-four or at that of eighty-four," X told Duffey. "And if you leave it at an early age, then you will always have your long life ahead of you yet."

"What are you saying, X?" Melchisedech asked him. "You do not understand the situation. I can leave it only once more, at the unraveling of this my seventh voyage on the 'Sea of the Lost Years'. And then I will have not but reality ahead of me to cope with as well as I can."

"Leave the Argo? Why should I want to leave the Argo?" Melchisedech Duffey, however, seemed (to himself and to those who knew him best) a not-quite-real person on his every return to 'present places and times'.

The Chicago years, from this unmoored viewpoint, would have a strong tone of *deja vecu*. By that, Melchisedech seemed more to remember his wife than to live with her in any present time, much as he loved her. The New Orleans years were always a sort of living in the past also. There was nothing wrong with this. It gave depth to those times and experiences. But Melchisedech Duffey really was a bundle of anomalies in the decades when he ran the Walk-In Art Bijou in New Orleans, when he kept his own smoking and aromatic ashes in a cigar canister on a table there, when he paraded such incredible knowledge, and often such incredible ignorance and simplicity. The unreality of Duffey would be to everybody the most striking thing about him. It wasn't that he was destined to die in a fairly near future; everybody is so destined. It was that he had already died in the near future and had the ashes of his cremated flesh to prove it. And yet it seemed that he was a little bit ahead of everyone else. "For all the lives that he's lived, he hasn't died nearly enough deaths," Absalom Stein said of him once. But there was never anybody who was such good company, never anybody that it was such a joy to be with as Melchisedech.

But what role did Stein play in these anomalies, or Count Finnegan, or Teresa Stranahan. Probably hers was an animating role just as Melchisedech's was a creative role. They are not quite the same. What role did Biloxi Brannagan really play, or Henry Salvatore?

Whenever the Argo came to a land to refit or to take on provisions or sea-stores, it came to one of the chancy places or times in a present day context. And some of the sea-stores and ship-stores that the Argo took on were, though absolutely necessary, intangible.

It took on electric life from Teresa and Margret Stone and from Henry. It took on sea-biscuit from Hans and Marie Schultz, and Jew-bread from Absalom Stein, and Purgatorial Loaf from Bascom Bagby.

It was of such delightful anomalies that an early Master of the Argo, Saint Augustine of Africa, wrote "And these were the dishes wherein to me, hunger-starved for thee, they served the sun and moon." Don't knock it who have never been served the Sun and the Moon in a dish. It isn't the great thing itself, but it's in the direction of it.



And another early Argo Master wrote in Scripture "Oh my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and I will bring you back to your land."

And as Margaret Stone said in that exciting present that she always carried with her "I can procure it that no one I have ever known will be lost. I have this as a promise, and I do not know of anyone else in the whole world who has received this same promise."

"Margaret, Margaret," Melchisedech chided her when he heard her expound this. "You went to see and heckle the Devil himself when he once spoke in this city. And later you drank coffee with him and talked with him privately. Is he then covered by the promise which you received that no one you have ever known will be lost?"

"He is covered by that promise and he will not be lost," Margaret said. "Even now, he may have already broken with that thing. But he is a devil, not the Great Devil Himself. Him I have not known."

"Yes, he is the Great Devil Himself, and he once spoke in this city and he once drank coffee and talked long with you. There are several of us who know the signs by which he may be recognized."

"Listen, you tattered Masters," Margaret pealed. "How do you know that your salt hasn't lost its savor? How are you sure?"

"You and yours make me sure," Melchisedech told her. "If our salt has lost its savor, then we will get new salt from some of you here. See to the stowing of a few hundred weight of savory salt, favorite urchin. We sail again within the half-year, and we will fly a new pennant proclaiming 'This Holy Ship is salted by Blessed Margaret Stone Herself'."

Margaret would always be "The fire which saith not 'It is enough'." The shape of the world would have been different, and more ungainly, without her.

Melchisedech Duffey sometimes sailed a hundred different adventures on the Argo in the interval of no more than a single day that he would be absent from his Establishment in Chicago or his Walk-In Art Bijou in New Orleans.

**I**t was in the 'Third Year of the Bells' that Count Finnegan came on board the Argo with two companions, all of them in such sort of disguises as any sharp eyed mariner could see through. The point about these three men, Count Finnegan Himself, and Gilberto Levine-and-O'Brien, and Herman Hercules, was that they were acting as doubles or stalking horses for Three Princes of the Ecclesia (that central institution on earth than which none can be higher). Or else they were the Three Princes disguised as their own doubles.

The assignment of Count Finnegan and his companions was to get themselves killed in place of the Three Princes. And they had failed in their assignment. The Three Princes had all been murdered, and these their three doubles still lived and travelled the lands and the seas.

There was one musical sound noticed shortly after the three doubles came on board the Argo. It was produced by Coryphaeba-fish rising with their heads above the waves and blowing horns (shell horns, but they had bright brass stops



and frets, really), blowing them loudly and clearly. This always happened whenever a present or future Pope was riding on the Argo. It had happened a dozen times in the Argo's history, and it was a fact beyond question that this music of such unusual origin served as a continuing salute to the Personage.

One other person came on to the Argo at the same moment as came Finnegan and Gilberto and Herman Hercules. This other person did not come on to the Argo openly. He came over the poop, and he hid, except from Melchisedech. No one could hide from Melchisedech when he was in his state of fleshlessness. The person who was acting so peculiar (not so peculiar for him, though) was X.

But was not X already on the Argo? No, he had left the Argo openly three ports back, for service of another sort, he had said, and now he returned secretly. Secretly, but brightly, for he was now in red robes and a red piped cape. And now he was Monsignor X.

He brought a sly wrapped package with him. He always brought something such whenever he came. He showed it to Melchisedech in one of those unaccountable hours of the night. It was the oddly marked, flayed skin of Cardinal Artemis.

"Yes, this is the holy flayed skin itself," Monsignor X told Melchisedech, "the skin of the murdered Cardinal, and it is marked in a very peculiar manner. And so is the skin of one of the men who is now sleeping in a berth on the Argo here, one of the men who came on board with Count Finnegan. The Cardinal's flayed skin here, and the living skin of that sleeping man, have almost identical markings. This man on board now is supposed to be the double of the Cardinal, but how can we tell which is which for certain now?"

"Ah, flay the sleeping man, I suppose, X," Melchisedech said, "and then run both of the skins through our computer. That should tell us which is the false skin and which the true, which is the double and which is the primary. But only Count Finnegan and the man Gilberto know of the marks, you say?"

Duffey at first thought that a most peculiar fog was rising in the night. Then he saw that it was a special shimmering. That meant that the events happening now and henceforth, though of high probability, were not absolutely happening. That was really a sort of relief to Duffey.

"But the flayed skin that I hold in my hands, to which man does it belong?" X asked. "The skin of the dead Cardinal Artemis was marked and mottled naturally. And the skin of Gilberto who would play his double was marked by Gilberto himself with a tattoo needle, and it had all the marks of the Cardinal's skin. But Gilberto put on certain of his own characteristic marks also, 'So that I will know my own skin if I ever see it again,' he said. But which skin is it now? Are there too many marks on it or too few? Of which man is this the skin? And which man is sleeping on this ship right now?"

"I don't know, X," said the bones-only Melchisedech Duffey.

"I find it significant that you, Great Melchisedech, a certified sorcerer and magus, do not know such a simple thing," Monsignor X said. "Let's find out."



They did find out. They found out what man was wearing what skin now, and what man had died in that skin. And they all seemed to be astonished by the finding. But it was Monsignor X, with a sudden resurgence of good sense, who suggested that this information must be classified. They all agreed to that. And classified it remains.

Yes, it was possible that Casey Gorshok Szymansky, of the Zodiac and of Chicago, was somewhat chilly to Count Finnegan and his companions when they came on to the Argo, during that 'Third Year of the Bells'. But both Casey and Finnegan were Masters of the Argo, so a chilliness between them would not have been becoming. There had to be some explanation of the apparent frostiness of Casey to Finnegan and his companions, since it could not be real.

Then there was an event of great importance in the history of art. Count Finnegan, in that short time he was on the Argo in this instance, painted thirteen really stunning pictures. This was the 'Deaths of the Cardinals' series. They are beyond all price. They are also almost beyond all access, for they are painted on the very bulkheads of the 'Bread and Wine' room of the Argo, and the Argo does not come to the call of random persons.

The series shows the thirteen executions or murders of the thirteen very great men. All of them were wonderful in their power and majesty, but the 'Hanging of Cardinal Gabrailovitch', the 'Beheading of Cardinal Ti', the 'Flaying of Cardinal Artemis', and the 'Impaling Upside-Down of Cardinal Hedayat', ah, these were surpassing! For the record, the thirteen paintings represented the deaths of Cardinals Ti, Brokebolt, Merry de Val, Leviathon, Artemis, Lloyd-Spencer, Salvatore, Gregorio, Runosake, Doki, Gabrailovitch, Erculo, and Hedayat, all very great men, some of them saints. And one of them, Salvatore, was an Argo Master.

"We are going to the 'Belling Shoals', to the 'Ringing Rocks', to the hewn cave in the heart of the 'Mooring Stone'," Count Finnegan said to them all. "Ours is a very short trip with you this time. And I may never again set foot on the Argo till I sail on her on the Four Waters of Paradise. We are going to the Haven in the Shoals because that is the last refuge on Earth for us. We are assembling there now, by various conveyance, thirteen shadow-men, thirteen doubles of dead princes, because we will play a trick on the Judas world by going there. Of the thirteen of us, one at least will not be a shadow man. One of us at least will not be the double of a dead holy man. One of us will be, pardon me, a dead holy man who is still alive. And by that we will effect it that the line is not broken. We will assure it that the world will not be lost before the last battle begins at least. You will know that we have not let the line be broken by the fact that on your very next adventure you will have the transporting of the Antichrist. Were we extinguished now, the Evil would already be done, and there would be no need for him to appear in person. But our line will still be unbroken when Armageddon Morning dawns red. One of us will be reigning when this very ship, the Holy Argo, carries the Antichrist to the Plains of Megiddo."



"The Antichrist will never travel on the Argo," Biloxi Brannagan stated firmly.

"He has done so," said Gilberto Levine-and-O'Brien, the double of the Holy Artemis.

"He is doing so," said Herman Hercules, the double of Holy Hercule.

"He will do so," said Count Finnegan, the double of Holy Hedayat.

When Count Finnegan and his two companions left the Argo, the Coryphaeba-fish, with their ringing brass-fretted shell-horns, stayed by that shore of the 'Ringing Rocks' where the Three had landed, and they did not follow the Argo further.

Melchisedech Duffey and Biloxi Brannagan and Kasmir Gorshok, the three Masters then assail on the Argo, declared themselves in perpetual session to guard against the coming of the Antichrist onto the Argo.

"Prophecies are made for man and not man for prophecies," Melchisedech swore. "If a prophecy is bad for man, or if it signifies the end of man, then we will contravene it. Myself, I cannot recall a prophecy that Antichrist will sail on the Argo to Meggido."

"I believe that it is somehow combined with the Judas Prophecy," Casey said.

"And it may be necessary that it should happen," Biloxi Brannagan gave the worried opinion. "It may be needful that this Evil Person of Mystery shall go to Armageddon, as scripture calls today's Meggido. Scripture tells us that this, along with other related things must happen."

"It is necessary that it happens, but woe to him by whom it happens," that is what God-In-Scripture said," Melchisedech maintained. "My own prayer is 'Let this misfortune happen if it must. Only not yet!' Let this woe, which will be eternal, not fall on us. Not on myself, not on thee Biloxi, not on thee either Kasmir, and not on Holy Argo itself. Somewhere there are experts at detection and scrutiny who could set up conditions so that this 'Person of Mystery' could no way come onto the Argo. Who are these experts? Where will we find them?"

Finnegan and his companions had left the ship by then, and the Argo was on further adventures.

"Oh, the highest experts are to be found in their graves," Kasmir said, "or we'll find them still struggling in the World Militant, or we'll find them still unborn. Or in fiction. Damn this flitting fog!"

"Bless rather than damn this flitting fog," Melchisedech said. "It means that some of the most direful things are not of absolute finality at this time. We will find the experts at once, wherever they are, and we will procure their services. See to it, Gorshok! See to it, Brannagan! See to it, myself!"

Well, they got such as they could of the experts in scrutiny and detection. Some of these were indeed fictitious, and they were routed out of their fictional graves. Some of them were authentic persons behind fictional disguises, and these were plucked either out of their lives or out of their deaths. All the better ones insisted on anonymity before they would give advice: so these will appear under code names. So it happens that they will all be called by the names of famous detectives,



whether these are their code names or their real names. They are here called Philo Vance, Father Brown, Doctor Thorndyke, Max Carrados, and Professor Augustus S.F.X. Van Dusen. And thus they advised how to keep a person from entering:

"Fireplaces are often the key to situations like this," Professor Augustus S.F.X. Van Dusen, also known as the 'Thinking Machine', said. "I always regretted that I could not use a fireplace in my justly famous 'The Problem of Cell 13', but fireplaces are seldom found in standard jail cells. When one considers a room or a building or a ship, one says 'This is a cube, however much it is distorted. We still have the problem of entering or leaving a cube. And a cube is made up of four sides, distorted maybe, and a top and a bottom: or four bulheads and an overhead and a deck if it is a ship. Something coming into this cube must come in through one of the four sides, or through the top or the bottom. Aha yes, that is the classic statement. But then comes the classic exception that is so often forgotten: 'Have you remembered the fireplace?' More people have gone wrong by not remembering the fireplace than by any other thing. The fireplace is not really a wall, it is not really a ceiling. But what is it? Are there any fireplaces on the Argo?"

"There are a few," Kasmir Gorshok said. "I suspect that many of them are state-of-mind or subjective fireplaces. Every study, every den, every wardroom, on ship or off, has to have a fireplace. There is no satisfaction in such a place without one. But a fireplace need not have an exit to the outside world. A Sorcerer in particular should have a fireplace. He uses the shapes that appear in its fires for the assembly and selecting of his thoughts and figures. He will also use it as a Sorcerer's Furnace or an Alchemist's Retort. He will use it for conjuring, or just because a sorcerer would be lost without a fireplace and a fire. There are a number of Sorcerers affiliated with the Argo, so there are a number of fireplaces on her. But, as I say, they need not have outlets to the exterior world. They may be subjective fireplaces, blind fireplaces."

"Blind spirits may enter by blind fireplaces," the Professor said, "and I believe that we are dealing with such here. And once they are inside they can turn themselves into almost anything. Do you Sorcerers or Masters have access to or command of any Firedrakes?"

"Oh, certainly," Kasmir said. "We can command all the Firedrakes, all the fire-dragons we wish, and they will come."

"Then set a Firedrake to guard each fireplace," the Professor said. "And take ordinary precautions about all other entrances. Watch all these things, and the code-named 'Man of Mystery' will not be able to come on to the Argo."

"The thing to keep track of is who goes out and who comes in," said the person using the name of 'Max Carrados the Blind Detective'. "Do not trust anyone. If more persons come in then go out, then there are additions to the people here. Sound every alarm then, for you have an illegal entry. Break down the security into sections. Make it check out for every person, even for yourself, most especially for yourself. And the person who has more



entries than exits is himself the guilty one. I have a suspicion that one of you present here is the 'Man of Mystery' and that he does not yet know that he is. Watch particularly whether you do not sometimes wear a disguise when you come in or come aboard. Sawed-off shotguns, strategically placed, are a good solution to this problem. They will blast and kill anyone who has an entry that is not balanced by a previous exit."

"One of the answers is to be found in the eleventh movement of Andreyev's Zauberkonzert," said the expert who was code named Philo Vance. "Or the answer may be found in the eleventh movement of anything at all, but not so clearly. If you have any feeling for African Violets, you will clearly understand the answer. I would recommend however that African Violets be felt for themselves alone. See my justly celebrated monogram 'The Inutility of African Violets'. A consummate cribbage boardsman will know the answer instantly, as will a master of the Around-The-Mountain maneuver at American checkers."

"I dispute you there, Mr. Vance," said Melchisedech Duffey. "I am the Master of the Around-The-Mountain trick at checkers, but I do not know the answer to the problem of keeping the person code-named 'The Man of Mystery' off the Argo. Myself, when I really know the answer to something, I can usually state it in three words."

"Oh certainly, I can do that also," Philo Vance said.

"Well, what are your three words, Philo?" Melchisedech asked.

"Get a dog," said Philo Vance, the Master of Detection.

"The hardest man to throw out of a place is the man who is already outside," said the man code-named Father Brown. "And the hardest man to prevent entering a place is the man who is already in. Well, it's been a pleasure, gentlemen. And since Philo and the others have already solved the problem for you, I bid you all goodday. Remind me not to walk directly off the ship until a plank or a ladder or some such device is provided. I'm absent minded about these things, and sometimes I get a good drenching that way. You know that the original meaning of 'drench' in Old English is 'To Drown', but I don't want to apply this meaning to myself."

"But has the problem been solved?" Brannagan asked.

"Do we know how to deal with the Man of Mystery and keep him off the Argo ship? What, after all, has Philo told us?"

"Perhaps an English Bulldog would be the best sort of dog in this case," code-named Father Brown said. The English Bulldog will quickly realize it when something familiar turns into something strange and wrong. Deal with it quickly when that moment arrives."

"I'll do it!" Melchisedech cried with delight. "I'll get an English Bulldog. I know one I can trust." And the Argo Masters sent all the code-named Detectives and Scrutinizers back to their stations, whether in life or out of it.

"Not Gunboat Smith," Kasmir Gorshok spoke with a touch of worry after the detectives had gone.

"Yes, Gunboat Smith," Melchisedech insisted. "That is one English Bulldog that I trust all the way."



"But Gunboat never liked me," Kasmir spoke with perhaps a touch of fear. "We just don't get along together well enough to be on the same ship."

"Gunboat Smith it will be," Melchisedech spoke with heavy finality. And it was but a short adventure to pick up Gunboat Smith where he was Old-English Bulldog-in-Residence at the Old Wooden Ship bar and grill in Galveston, Texas.

There was a lot of growling on the Argo for the next several days. The English Bulldog Gunboat Smith growled at Kasmir Gorshok, and Kasmir Gorshok growled at Gunboat Smith. This was surprising conduct on the part of Gunboat Smith. He had always been accounted a very friendly and intelligent Bulldog, probably more intelligent than the average patron of the Old Wooden Ship. And his ability to sense a wrong person from a right person was extraordinary.

Equally surprising was the close friendship that sprang up between Gunboat Smith and Pseudo-Zorokothora, which is to say the Pseudo-Melchisedech.

"Sure, and their tails are about the same length," Melchisedech grumbled, "little nubs and not much more. I fail to see how either of them would give much aerodynamic balance. But I trust the instincts of each creature. If they like each other then they are both well recommended."

Otherwise the ship was in good shape. Closed circuit burglar alarms were installed at every passage and rat-line of the Argo, and the Firedrakes were on constant patrol. It would seem that no person could enter the Argo uninvited, either by land or air or sea, or from under the sea.

But phenomena of every sort were infiltrating and surrounding the ship in their multitudes. Something of a still poorly formed aggregation was trying to board the Argo, or was already paying homage to somebody on the Argo. This was the beginning of something familiar turning strange and wrong. Gunboat Smith let them know about it as well as he could, and they all felt it.

"Has he come already?" Biloxi asked, "and has he been given authority over the World?"

The Argo was picking up an entourage of boats and ships, large and small, and some of them were of unrecognizable flag and registry. There were musical sounds from the Sea, but these were of a greatly different music from that which had accompanied the Argo when it carried Count Finnegan and Gilberto and Herman Hercules. The Sea itself was something that was turning wrong and strange. There was a new magnetic wind blowing. Strangeness isn't to be classified too quickly.

The musical sound (or anti-musical sound) that accompanied them now was possessed of a different magnetism. It was as if consensus and polarity had been abrogated. The ears of Duffey and Brannagan and Gunboat bled a lot in those hours. New and dazzling things were happening to smell and vision, and even to tactile feeling. There was a pleasant clamminess in the air. Can there be a pleasant clamminess? Something new in excitement and fascination was creating itself.

The Ship Argo was following a course of her own selection, or perhaps She had been instructed by persons unknown to follow this course. She was moving eastward at a fair speed, but not at Argo speed. She was not (as she usually was) moving against the wind and the waves. Now she



was carried along by the wind and the waves that had obviously been tampered with). And those wind and waves were paying open homage to the Argo, or to someone on board the Argo.

"Morning sickness! Me, morning sickness!" Melchisedech moaned one morning. And he was sicklied all over with a new dullness.

"I've got it too, Duffey," Brannagan said. "I'm like a landsman on his first rough sea. Have you noticed the sea though? It's different. It's of a different texture and aim and intent. Duff, it's paying homage to a different thing. I had a discussion with some fellows once. What, we considered, if the materialists and the secularists were right? What if there were no things beyond? What would the Sea be like then? These were all fellows who knew the many faces of the sea well.

"The Sea would be glassy," they said. There was consensus on that. It would swell and it would trough, but it would still be of an opaque and dull glass. It would heave, perhaps, but it would not crest. They had all seen such Seas for very short seconds. But the Sea, by ordinary, pays true homage, pays brilliant homage. And it is not of that opaque glassiness. We see a wrong ocean now."

"And I will heave, perhaps in a moment," Melchisedech Duffey muttered, "but I will not crest. Yes, what homage the Sea is paying this morning is to a different thing. I know too what the world would look like if it were secular. I've seen quick snatches and pieces of such a world: places where, in autumn, the leaves turn from green to dull brown with no brilliant interval; steppe land where it goes to deep snow and deep freeze with neither rime frost nor hoar frost coming first; tropical trash lands where it does not lighten nor thunder at all; swamps too dismal to have swamp-lights or fox-fire or St. Elmo's Fire. Ah, I do feel queasy this morning, Brannagan, and I do think queasy. In my black little heart it seems that I welcome all the brilliant things going out. But my heart isn't usually that black.

"It bothers me that I don't respond against it," Duffey said. "I'm less a man than I was yesterday, and it doesn't bug me out. Have you heard what rot that piece of Talking Oak in the Ship's wheel has been talking lately? It's all other seas and other plaudits now. Why does it bother us so little?

"The Talking Oak in the wheel, it says that it has been baptized in the Spirit and is speaking in tongues now. There's more than a thousand craft following us and surrounding us, Brannagan. What is the big attraction? Above all the other atmospheric changes, it's becoming more shimmery now, which means that we are even further and more uncertainly into the future. It may break at any time and send us back into one of the presents, or cast us up on one of the shores of the 'Sea of the Lost Years'. If it's going to happen, I hope it happens before the Argo and ourselves disgrace ourselves. Do you believe that these things may, by their numbers and their confusion around us, succeed in getting the code-named 'Man of Mystery' onto the Argo?"

"Is it going to be a slow and uneventful event, this taking us over?" Brannagan asked.

No, it wasn't completely uneventful. Just after



sundown that night, events began to happen. An effigy seaman (a what?) came and said that the compass in the binnacle was awry. The needle deformed itself and kept pointing to something on the Ship itself, something below decks.

"It is the magnetism," the effigy seaman said (what had happened to all the real seamen?). "It is a personal magnetism that deforms needles."

There was a series of sharp explosions on the Argo. Exploration revealed that every mirror on the ship was shattered, but not a piece of glass had fallen from any of them. One looked in the glass now and saw himself in a thousand aspects, a different reflection in each shattered fragment. This was cubism come into the world as actuality. Then when one looked away from the mirror, one saw the whole world as shattered and cubistic.

"It's the only way to see the world," another effigy seaman yiped. "This is the new depth and dimension, the freedom from integrity. Praise it, praise it!"

"Oh shut up!" Melchisedech growled.

Very many people were on the Argo now. Gunboat Smith had very nearly bitten the legs off of many of them, and still they came. They were coming over the sides of the ship. They were coming up from the depths of it. There would be no way to keep out the 'Man of Mystery' with so many unidentified people coming in.

People cried out in tongues, and talking dogs interpreted what they said. Gunboat Smith was not able to come to any of the talking dogs, though he railed furiously against them. The world had changed, or it had been given over to a queer power.

And there was a real attraction to the power. The Argo was going at a greater rate towards the East, though there was no longer any way to verify directions. And the smell of a hot and rocky land was near. This was the Abomination of Desolation that is spoken of by the prophets, and it was entirely too attractive an abomination.

A crooked peace settled over everything. All breathing stopped. Then the Great One appeared, out of the bowels of the Argo.

"We've just gone a little further into the future than we should have," Brannagan said. "But how do we go back?"

"I think we can go back simply by refusing it," Melchisedech said, "but all these poor people cannot go back. They live in this time and they are deluded in this time. And now I understand that the Holy Argo cannot go back until she brings her mysterious passenger to land."

The Apparition, the Man of Mystery, the Mystery of Evil, the Master of the World for a Time, the 'He who must come first', stood there in his glory, but that glory was made out of tampered with light. He was Peleus, he was Kasimir Gorshok, he was Casey Szymansky of Chicago and of the Zodiac, he was Antichristus. There was worldwide adoration on the spherical sphere, on the apparitionsphere.

The Argo landed at Habonim where the hilly 'Plains of Meggido' began (It's called Armageddon in Scripture). From here the great Kasimir would rule for a while. Then he would destroy the world, or be destroyed in the Great Battle.

But Melchisedech Duffey was solidly back into his own flesh now. No longer was he a bones-only man.



There were surely a million people waiting on that shore, and most of them were the high notables of the world. There were very few of the five billion people of the world who didn't accept it. Every compass needle in the world pointed to the Plains of Meggido now. And what sort of an Elect was it that remained undeceived, though shaken by its influence? In the immediate neighborhood that Elect was composed of only three persons, and one of them was a dog.

"I wonder why Casey didn't sweep us in too?" Brannagan questioned. "I didn't know he had such power. We're lucky to be able to escape him here, and to escape out of here."

"A false prophet is not without honor save on his own ship," Melchisedech mumbled in his beard.

"But Duffey, I can't believe that Casey is really the Man of Mystery, the Antichristus. I believe that he is only one of the flamboyant and high ranking partisans of the Man of Mystery, like, well like the Laughing Prince of sad memory. For one thing, it has been said that nobody has ever seen the face of the Man of Mystery, and we have seen the face of Casey many times."

"I'm not sure that we have," Melchisedech argued. "We have seen a dozen of his faces, always remarkably handsome, and always looking something like each other, as cousins will resemble each other. But have we ever seen his real face?"

"Casey is the Antichristus!" the dog Gunboat Smith argued with the stubbornness of opinion that all English Bulldogs have.

"Quiet, Dog," Melchisedech ordered. "Whether he is or not, we will never admit that he is. There is stark madness rife in the world this morning. Let us not add to it."

A million people on that shore? There were a billion or more people on that shore, and occupying hill after hill turning them black with humanity.

"We want to be where the blood runs deepest!" black people shouted across roiling water to the persons on the Argo. "This is to be the Armageddon, and the blood will run in rivers bridle deep on the horses."

"No, that happens only in tall stories," Duffey spoke.

"You ask for a sign," came the clear voice of Casey Gorshok of the Zodiac and Chicago across the miles, "and I will give you a small and easy sign. See the ship Argo shining in the sun, and it's name 'Holy Argo' written in brightness? I will rewrite that golden name in blood."

And the new name 'Ship of Fools' was written in flame and blood on the ship that had been the Holy Argo.

"It's fading out from us. We're leaving it behind,"

Gunboat Smith spoke in his deep English Bulldog throat.

"What, the Argo has disappeared also while we gazed at those noddies on the shore!"

"We'll find her again someday," Melchisedech averred with only a little bit of doubt. "I seem to see myself rediscovering her, in disguise and in the hands of a sly hull-dealer in New Orleans many years from now. There, or somewhere else we'll find her. Till then, my friends."

"We go back," Gunboat growled. "We couldn't stop it. Maybe we'll stop it the next time."

"Gunboat, Gunboat," Brannagan chided him. "From the unholy talking dogs who had caught the false spirit, you have picked up the unholy habit of talking. Give up the



evil and unseemly thing. Possibly we failed to stop it many times, and we are not even sure there is another chance. Well, we go back, one way or another, and we fade out -"

Biloxi Brannagan faded out first. Gunboat Smith, after a deep and comprehending growl to indicate that he would never again indulge in unholy dog talk, faded out next. The entire surroundings and ambient were gone -

And Duffey himself was fading out of there, and fading in somewhere else, in another time and place. Duffey was swimming in doubtful water, and perhaps he was drowning in it. Then the ocean became a little more cheerful, a little more self assured as it were. "If I'm drowning I may as well drown cheerfully," Duffey said in an aside to himself. No, the whole of his life did not flash before his eyes in those fragments or seconds, but significant pieces of his early life did flash before him.

There were the times when he had been the Boy King of Salem and had done magic. And he'd had black giants to serve him. He had made birds out of clay and flung them into the air and they flew.

A couple of millenia later in his boyhood, in Iowa and in other places, he had been the Boy King in disguise. There also he had had black giants to command, but they were invisible to all except himself. There were early years where he was shuffled from one set of false kindred to other sets of false kindred. There was the forever-blessed boarding school where a few persons, Sebastian Hilton, John Rattigan, Lily Kock, understood that he really was a king in disguise. There was Charley Murray who did magic tricks while Duffey did real magic. But Charley, his best friend, had a better line of patter, and was more applauded than was Melchisedech.

The sky and the water had become younger now, and it was foolish to fear that one might die by drowning. There was the exuberance of youth on everything.

There had been the meteoric gold-touched business venture in St. Louis. There was the foster brother Bagby. There was the Rounder's Club, as fine a club as any in the world. There was Sister Mary Louise. There was Olga Sanchez of the torchy shoulders, Helen Platner of the Bavarian Club, Papa Piccone of the Star and Garter Club, Beth Keegan who was an ivory statuette.

And following that, Melchisedech, then probably being in his seventeenth year, in a very early morning, had walked out on the river shore in St. Louis, just below the Eads Bridge, and he had walked right onto a low-lying boat that had been the Argo in disguise. Oh happy water, he was very near that place again.

"I had forgotten how wonderful it was to be not quite seventeen," he chuckled to himself. Then he quoted "I shall arrive. What time, what circuit first, I ask not." What a time to be quoting Browning. A new joy, even a glee, had taken over everything. It was a young ocean now and a young sky over it. There were youthful sea creatures and river creatures, possibly not entirely authentic, cavorting around him with happy noises. They looked a little bit like creatures in certain comic paintings that Finnegan had done long ago. Long ago from when? Just how old was Finnegan now?



It was the year 1923 and Duffey was quite a young man. Finnegan (John Solli) had been born June 1, 1919 so he was about four years old and hadn't done any significant painting yet. Now it was the year 1923 and Melchisedech Duffey swam at the same time out of the 'Sea of Lost Years' and out of the young and joyously muddy Mississippi River. He climbed onto the shore just below the Eads Bridge in St. Louis, Mo. He has never been so happy in any of his lives. He was twenty-three years old and no age is happier than that.

"Oh, I see by your face how young and handsome I am," he cried in joy to Pseudo-Melchisedech who was standing before him there looking very young-mannish and very sad. "It isn't permitted to be sad, not when you're so happy," Melchisedech told the creature.

"You have now lived through the lost years of your life seven times," the young and sad creature told Melchisedech, "and you've died seven deaths. These lives and these deaths have been widely different. You know that, don't you?"

"Not consciously, but, yes, I've known it," said Happy Duffey.

"You've known that each set of your lost years were pretty sketchy, haven't you? That you've lived only selections of those world years?"

"Absolutely no!" Duffey declared. "What I have lived, I've lived fully. There's been nothing sketchy about it."

"Have you any idea why this has happened to you?"

"Because I am a Magician, a Magus," Melchisedech spoke out of his youthful joy. "And also because (I hate to say this about so great an entity) because God doesn't quite know how to end the World Affair. He's started many things, but he's never ended anything yet. And the endings are the hardest. I think he's using myself and various other of his Magicians to explore various endings."

"Do you really think so? Oh, no, no, you laughing Judas! That wouldn't be possible. You do know that after three of your deaths you were damned to Hell."

"And after the other four of them I wasn't," Melchisedech spoke happily. "So I'm ahead of the game. And I know that the rehearsals are over with, or that they were an illusion. Now I must play my happy role in the last five or six decades of the world. And this time we will do it without the Instructions that were given us during the rehearsals. I do not understand it at all, and I'm happy that I don't. Some of those who have other roles may understand it. But I'm twenty-three years old, probably for the last time, and the world is my oyster."

"Do you know what I am?" the strange and boyish double of Melchisedech Duffey asked him.

"I know that you are an Angel," Melchisedech said.

"But there are two sorts of them. Are you an Angel of God or of the Devil?"

"Of God," said the creature. "Yes, I'm quite certain of that."

"Look, pale reflection of myself," Melchisedech crowed, "I've just had a seven part day-dream or hallucination. And whether each part of it lasted one minute or seventy years is no matter. It seems now that the whole thing was no more than one minute."



"The world is a kaleidoscope, ever changing, ever enchanting, did you know that, My Reflection? And one best strides happily laughing and singing through it. And the fact that one is striding through the hot ashes of Hell every step of the way is no reason to be less merry. If one looks down and sees that he is no more than ankle-deep in Hell, let him continue with a happy heart. But if he sees that he is more than knee-deep in Hell, then he must, then he must, what must he do then, pale reflection of me?"

"I don't know," said the creature with its paler face of Duffey.

"Maybe that's when he should leave the land for a while and walk on the water," Melchisedech declared. "Remember, Reflection, that man in his original nature was able to walk on water. He is still able to do it, but sometimes he forgets that he is." Then Melchisedech Duffey turned and ran to the city singing happily.

"I lied to him and I lied to myself," said the unhappy Angel who wore Duffey's face. "No, no, I'm not certain at all which one of them I serve. I'm afraid to be certain or even to think about it. Is it God or the Devil that I serve in my confusion and darkness?"

But Melchisedech Duffey, singing happily, was into the city in the bright morning. And he didn't hear the creature at all.

\* \* \*







# THE CASEY MACHINE

There's a way, my companion, my bacon my bean,  
No matter at bottom it isn't too clean:  
The way is the way of the Casey Machine.  
- Promontory Goats

A top electronics repairman and designer like myself, Newton Prescott, has the opportunity of knowing more of what is going on in the world than any other person. He not only has his finger on the world's pulse: he designs that pulse, and he redesigns it every day. And ninety-eight percent of that pulse is subliminal and deep-flowing.

I am writing this journal as therapy. I have a compulsion to forget some things (neither I nor my doctor understands this compulsion) and at the same time something jogs my memory back to them. I am advised to write them out in this journal and then burn the journal. If that doesn't work, I will have to have brain surgery. Something is bugging me in a small area of my brain.

A while back, every coin parlor on Kasmir Street had at least one of the Casey Machines. That was an electronic device of such scope as you don't see every day. Most of the Tea Rooms on Hubbard Street had them; and the more modish and vital bars on North Durkheim Street. The Casey Machines were Achronological Eaves-Dropping Machines.

"They were unspeakably vile," Mrs. Duckhunter said. "I don't want either of you to have anything more to do with them even if they come back."

"They were gold mines," Mr. Duckhunter said, "and you, Prescott," (he said to me) "were as good a shovel-and-crib man as was ever around a primitive gold mine. There was a million dollars here, or ten million, for the right hook-up. Sure it was vile, at first. But if you can't stop a thing from being vile, you can at least make money out of it. It's an idea whose time was overdue. The need was there. I don't remember it very well now, but we did make money out of it, and we're still doing it, beneath the surface. None of it is as clear as it was, but we're still making millions and millions and millions out of something."

"I wish we weren't," Mrs. Duckhunter said. "We aren't bad people. We aren't really vile. Why isn't there some way we can shut off the money and be poor and honest again?"

"We weren't ever poor, Crissie," her husband George Duckhunter said, "and we weren't ever honest, for that matter. And I don't know any way to shut off the money. We're being paid as high priced guardians, or some such. I



just don't remember the circumstances as well as I might. I don't believe that either you or Prescott does either. We can't exactly keep our memories of those wonderful and event-filled days when we were so rich. We have to settle for remaining so rich."

There had been quite a bit of discussion about that strange device, the Casey Machine, that so many persons (including its purported inventor) insisted did not exist at all. And much of the discussion was on the theological level.

"Will everybody know everything, or will only the people who are 'saved' know everything?" a soggy sinner asked his pastor. "After the Judgement, whether the General or the Particular, will all of us know everything that ever happened? Will all of us know all the dirt, all the thoughts and acts of every person who ever lived? Will we be roomy enough for all this knowledge? Will we have the scope to possess it in vivid detail? Will we be able to revel in all the acts of our neighbors forever?"

"All persons will know everything, yes," the pastor said. "Whether it is after the Particular or the General Judgement that we receive full knowledge is uncertain: but that may not matter, and there may not be any great interval between the two. When we die we enter eternity, and there is no time differential there. The 'Saved' will have edification and joy from their total knowledge, and the damned will have fiery regret and deepest suffering. But as to the reveling in the shameful thoughts and actions of other persons, no, the 'Saved' would never do that."

"The 'Saved' will miss all the fun then," the soggy sinner said. "But there will be recompenses to being damned. Ah, will there ever be recompenses! And we can have that revel-and-glow show for times without end. There is no way we can lose."

"You can lose your eternal souls!"

"So to speak, pastor, so to speak. But they will still be eternal, and we can still be doing what we like best to do anyhow. We will have the time beyond time, and all the time there is. And we will have the dirt beyond dirt and all the dirt that has ever been, or is, or will be. Oh, it will be a wallow- and- revel- and- gloat experience forever, and there will be no limit to it. The Casey Machine is a foretaste of the glory that is to come. And the 'lost' souls will have a lot more fun out of it than will the 'found' or 'saved' souls."

"But you will suffer forever the discomforts of the damned, Lorenzo -" the pastor protested in fear and amazement.

"Discomfort forever will be worth it!" the sinner said resoundingly. "There are priorities in every condition, and I give first priority to prowling all that secret knowledge in a pulsating glow. And until I cross the bar and come to the untrammelled thing, I will use the Casey Machine for all it's worth."

"The better sort of people are not having much to do with the Casey Machine," the pastor said.

"So much the worst for the better sort of people!" the soggy sinner gave the decision.



And there was a conversation between a daughter and her mother.

"It is not right that we should seek out and revel in the dirt of each other," the daughter said. "It is more the case that we should share the total lives of each other, in pathos and in hilarity, in love and in fascination. With everything to select from, we will naturally select the best."

"Nah, no such thing," the mother answered. "That's not for me. It's not for hardly any one. For most of us, we will want the outright filth and the outrageous dirt. There will be some humor in it, yes, very dirty humor. And there will also be cannibalism and sadism and satanism. But the main jolt will always be the dirt, and the scandal, and the sedition and slander and blackmailing knowledge. Not money blackmail: personal ruination blackmail. And the dirt, the dirt, the dirt."

I am about the only one left who can go back and pick up such private conversations from the recent past.

Why do we, in swift moments, remember when we could fly or do other wonderful things? Because, in swift moments, at some time or other, we really could fly and do other wonderful things. And because it is not good that we should be above our heads for too long, those swift moments were brief ones and were quickly forgotten.

"Oh salving hatred, Oh revivifying derision, Oh nourishing slander!" Josephine McSorely crowed in the Underground Eagle. It is significant that my own copy of it seems to be the only copy still left in existence, even though the Underground Eagle always had a large press run.

"The secret is out," Josephine wrote, "and it can never be penned in again. It was at a small and informal meeting tonight that the make-ups and premises of the world were changed. We held a Particular Judgement, and the Casey Machine was born from that judgement. It is here, right now, and forever. We all know everything now. The power and the knowledge came over the small group of us, and we can perhaps pass it on to other groups for a fee.

"In times before this, several other organizations of illuminated persons have known everything. They knew everything, before their own deaths, by making a Particular Judgement in their own lives. But we become masters of our own judgement in a way the earlier ones could not, because we live in an age of electronic amplification and switching and data control. We are able to project it all, and to repeat it. Yes, and we are able to sell it.

"Casey, with his peculiar mind-set, was the activator of this. He himself denies that the Casey Machine has been invented. Well, it was invented, by the ideologs and experts among us. And it is known as the Casey Machine. And the world is not the same as it seemed to be before we invented it. (Casey himself never was the same as he seemed to be.) This is the big night. This is the night that slimy and rotten enjoyment came into the world as a maneuverable thing.

"Casey had a passion for knowing everything about everyone, even and especially the most sordid things. He had this passion so strongly that he was able to modify and change the way of the world with it.



"This is all nonsense," Casey said. "What is the matter with the bunch of you anyhow?" "Supposing that it is nonsense," that electronics man Newton Prescott said. "Nonsense is more often amplified than is sense. It is stronger in its accumulation, and it is less subject to blocking out and monitoring out. You have provided the impetus, Casey, one strong enough to affect the world and turn death into a trifle. It can ride on any carrier, and I believe the carrier of the world magnetism will be the best. It will not be the strangest thing riding that power. Yes, Casey, the Casey Machine has been invented, by you and by me and by others of us here."

"Where is it then?" Casey asked. "I can't see it. Can you?" "Yes," Newton Prescott said, "in my mind I see it, and it will operate mostly inside minds. It is a wireless machine as of now. And it has no physical components yet. But we will give it components and materiality." "If I gave impetus to such a thing, then I withdraw that impetus," Casey said. "You can't," Prescott told him. "This wind has blown from you, and there is no way you can make it not to have blown. By the way, I have an interesting idea for one component of the Casey Machine. There is an electrical discharge from dead persons that is generally overlooked for the reason that it occurs about thirty minutes after clinical death. But we have trapped more than two hundred instances of this discharge into condensers, and we have studied the data. It is very intricate. (We have lately discovered that electricity, like magnetism, is made up of a variety of unaccountable foreign material; there is no such thing as pure electricity: it has to be made out of something.) This post-death discharge data is of a two-way effect: part of it comes from the other side of death and was never in the living person. I am certain that this is a real kick-back from what used to be called the 'other shore'. I intend to use one such 'dead-man' charge in every Casey Machine that is made."

"Then Newton Prescott said several other things too weird to print even in the Underground Eagle. And Casey washed his hands and conscience of the whole affair, again and again. 'Casey, you are a hypocrite,' said Januarius O'Higgins who was present. 'I predict that you yourself will buy a Casey Machine, probably through a middle-man, as soon as they are available.' 'May I go to Hell if I do,' Casey swore. 'Oh, all of us will go to Hell,' said Evelyn Apostolo. 'We'll ultimately get more out of the machine, and out of the phenomenon of which it is the forerunner, by going to Hell. We have made that choice: it was the choice embodied in the Particular Judgement that we gave and received this evening, the Judgement that created the Casey Machine as a side effect.'

- Josephine McSorely, with her Underground News in the Underground Eagle

Is it not most peculiar that I own the only known copy of this issue of the Underground Eagle? Isn't it funny that nobody else remembers the piece at all, not even Josephine McSorely who wrote it? And my copy is falling apart. In fact, the date of the issue has flaked off of every single sheet of this issue.



Ah, we did make a lot of money out of the Casey Machines! It was as easy as stealing immortal souls from little kids. We were making a million dollars every - well, there is just no time interval to express how often we were making a million dollars. The Casey Machine was an achronological (non-time-bound) device, and the harvest from it was in one huge continuing minute. We were continually making a million, and millions. A dozen of us became Instant Big Rich.

We did not really make all that many of the actual and material Casey Machines. But people came to us with wads of money and said they had been receiving vivid life broadcasts from our machines, and they wanted at all costs to continue to receive them. Well, maybe our machines were broadcasting, if people said that they were; but they weren't designed to broadcast. And people were paying us large sums for franchises. "We don't want to be cut off," they would say. And others would approach us with "We don't want the machine, but we want the name and the power of the machine. We want to call ours the Casey Machine also, though they will be raunchier than your originals." And Casey Machine Clubs paid us area fees. The money came in variously. Well, it was part of the mechanism that it should make a lot of money for us; and it did, even before we went federal.

The machines weren't designed to broadcast. They weren't designed at all. They grew out of the immaterial components of Casey's passionate and invading curiosity of the thoughts and acts of other people. They grew out of my own discovery of the double-world kick-back electrical discharge mechanism which did indeed serve as a door and valve between worlds. And it grew out of the verve and opportunism of Josephine McSorely, Januarius O'Higgins, Evelyn Apostolo, George and Crissie Duckhunter, and others who promoted the idea which convinces people that they did indeed want something that they already knew that they wanted furiously. It isn't difficult to lead thirst-maddened horses to water. And all of these colleagues had good ideas.

"Give us a classy chassis like a next-year's Ford Alexandrine." "Invent new colors for it, new reds and flesh colors and blacks, lurid colors. Luridity is the thing." "Shoot it full of intensity and ur-lust. Make it primordial." I received such advice from them, and it was all good. "Use grabby motifs, grabby!"

Yeah, one grabby motif I used was the eyes. I was already using a dead-man delayed electrical discharge quantum in every machine. It wasn't necessary. I could have used a dozen other methods; but this was effective, available, quite easy to employ; and it gave an aura of authenticity to the whole thing. Now I also put a set of dead-man's eyes on every machine. It's even easier to procure eyes than delayed electrical discharges, and there was a good-for-business spookiness in having the customers hooked up so that they could look through authentic dead-man's eyes into the revelations.

And the mania took over.

It would seem that persons could simply suicide and have the same effect all at once without the expense. But



there was something too final about that for many persons. They would do that the last thing, and it didn't matter that they paid out all their substance on the Casey Machines first. "This is to have the best of all three worlds," one enthusiast said.

The matter of the Casey Machines was raunchy, and some of those of our licensed competitors were stronger than those we made ourselves. This was the primordial lust of mind and body and soul, and of all the under-minds and over-minds. This was the 'enjoyable degradation', the 'polite rottenness', the 'healthy prurience'. There was almost endless variety in it. Persons rose to high performance on it when they knew that they were on show, even persons dead for thousands of years. There were probably a million of these very conspicuous 'show boats' of the past and the present who were zeroed in on. Their names and identifications spread by word of mind, for they were really top performers. People under the Casey Influence had an other world power and scope of keeping millions of individual persons in their mind and of enjoying billions and billions and billions of details.

I myself was not so entirely fascinated by all the things that the people did as I was fascinated by the electronic manner of their doing. I had recently discovered that there were three categories of being and action, the rational, the irrational, and the electronic; and that the electronic was the most powerful and the most varied. The material world was almost entirely electronic, and it was made up of alien particles and forces and fields. The most familiar and accepted thing, when broken down, was found to be an electronic weave of strands that were neither familiar nor accepted, but were foreign and strange.

Because of group feedback I was thinking better than I ever had in my life. Merely as fall-out from the titanic loutishness and lust and sedition and gluttony and slander of the people, this had become breakthrough day in the idea area. There was a new and steeper mentality paralleling the new incredible coarseness. All of us top electronics experts could now read each others' minds. There was some anger and jealousy about this, but really it was to the advantage of all of us.

Infact, every person in the world could now read the mind of every other person in the world, or they would be able to do so as soon as they realized what new-power field they were in. This was not exactly as a result of the Casey Machine. It was part of the misnamed 'Casey Condition' which had now imposed itself on the world.

Many of us revelled in knowledge, as many more were revelling in the pornea of lust and soul-nakedness and everted bodies and minds. The Casey Condition was very big. Every person could read the mind and body, and the deepest unconsciousness and memory and subliminal areas, of all persons living and dead: aye, and also of all persons still unborn and unconceived and un-thought of; for all time was now simultaneous to us in our new condition. And we were all the same animal. This power of total reading had been available all along. It was just that for several of the recent millenia we had forgotten to use it.

The earth magnetism is not self contained, I



discovered. That is, we of the higher electronic community of minds discovered it. It represents a bond between the Earth and something else not yet identified, something more than our solar system and something more than generalized space. But the strands of this braided force are helices of buried memories and buried mysteries. They are the remnants of what must have been really stupendous moments and historical movements subsumed into the Earth's magnetism: and into its thermo-dynamic balance, and into its isostasis, and into its gravity which is itself a large collection of forces.

"Old dogs, lying in the sun, are one form of history," Pomodorus wrote.

Old residual magnetism, lying in the Earth, is another form.

\* \* \* \* \*

Question 382: In what state will the bodies of the just arise?

The bodies of the just will rise glorious and immortal.

Glorious means? Our body will be shining like the sun, swift as thought, as capable of penetrating matter, be most beautiful, and be without pain or change.

Immortal means? Our bodies will never die after the resurrection.

Question 383: Will the bodies of the damned also rise?

The bodies of the damned will also rise, but they will be condemned to eternal punishment.

-the Baltimore Catechism.

I have become fascinated by all aspects of bodies, our own undead bodies, our own dead bodies, our own resurrected bodies. Just as a special mental power has been available to us all along, had we not forgotten to use it, so a special body splendor is ours whenever we require it in order to make splendid moves. How did we ever happen to forget how wonderful we are?

Yes, in our own great and shining moment, our bodies shine as with a sun within them. They are as swift as thought, for they are the bright depositories of all swift thought. Our bodies can penetrate matter as thought does. They can be most beautiful. Whether they can be so splendid and superior all the time I don't know; but apparently they can penetrate all time from their eternal moment.

Still quite early in this moment there had been a change of emphasis. Or should I say 'Still quite early in this day there has been a change of emphasis!?' I suppose that I use 'day' as Scripture sometimes uses it. There are the days that go by, and there is the Day that abides. Many days go by, but the whole 'Casey Condition' occurs in a single day, in a single moment really.

Still quite early in this moment there had been a change of emphasis. In my own murky heart, I had assumed, along with the soggy sinner in one of the dialogues I have given, that the 'lost' souls could have more fun out of it than could the 'found' or 'saved' souls, that the main jolt would be the dirt and the scandal and the sedition and the slander, and the black-mailing knowledge; and that these things would sell the Machines and set the Conditions.



(The 'Machines' were porno shrines: they weren't really needed, except for the true believers in holy porn.)

But quite early in the day this prevailing view was disputed.

"We will take our chances in this world, and in every world! Let the grace flow! Write down our names! We enter the lists!" some hundreds of persons spoke for some millions. "There will be more Good Will than Bad Will, else has the world been in vain. And it has not been in vain."

Now here was a real apple-knocker that nobody in my crowd had forseen! There were alternatives to the 'enjoyable degradation', to the 'polite rottenness', to the 'healthy prurience'. There was a live possibility of things that were outside of the wallow-and-revel-and-gloat experience and goal. When everyone knew all about everyone, not everyone chortled and gluttonized and fed on the worst.

Some persons found that the more fully they knew other people the more they liked them.

There was something suspect to me about the Moment. I did not suspect its power or scope. I suspected its permanence.

Oh yes, the moment would last forever, as every true Moment must. But we would not stand in the Moment forever. We would probably stand out of it, and in it, and out of it again several times. I had the feeling that we would stand out of it again, for a while, in the very near future.

I saw the fiery message in the bush.

I saw the sign in the sky.

I saw the handwriting on the wall, in rather archaic Babylonian or Chaldee.

So I took two precautions against the coming time when we would stand out of the moment again.

I went to see about Continuous-Flow Federal Funding.

And I had a 'Remember It' memory jog capsule inset into my own brain. The capsule was tuned to retain the whole idea of the Casey Machine. But why did I believe that was necessary? Who could possibly forget the Casey Machine?

Oh, I'd made a study of this business of forgetting eleven-day wonders. I can recognize the accumulations of forgotten fossils of such fads, but I can seldom interpret those fossils. A minority of the vanished eleven-day wonders is still in popular memory with a nostalgic or humorous handle on them; but even these which are so enshrined in toy shrines are mostly misremembered and misunderstood. And others of the chronic occurrences, and among them there may be some of the most massive and influential, are forgotten completely. A few of the deeply forgotten ones we can pick up with the Casey Machine or the Casey Condition, but we must have at least some slight whisper of an idea of what we want to pick up.

I wanted to remember the Casey Machine and the Casey Condition. I had no reason to believe that they would be forgotten, but I had an intuition and apprehension that they might be.

So I went to see about Continuous-Flow Federal Funding, about Compensatory Counter-Flow Payments, about Impacted Entertainment Area Federal Funding. The argument was that the Casey Machine, since payment was required for its use, was more available to the rich than to the poor. This



situation should be corrected by Counterpart Funds of both the Current and the Future Contingency sort. I also got the concession that the site of every Casey Machine should be declared a shrine, with Perpetual Care to be provided by means of Perpetual Guardian Payments to be made to a responsible group - our own.

And we got the guarantees, in several sorts of payments, to be in perpetuity. And several of them were real whoppers. It's all in knowing how to ask for things, and in striking while the Casey Machine is hot.

And I had the 'Remember It' memory jog installed in my brain. In the extreme case of specific and directed amnesia, I might forget the Casey Machine along with every one else. But I'd still come closer to remembering it than anyone else would.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I want to know when it was last on the house.  
I want to know which has the heart of a louse.  
I want to know who has been milking my cowse.  
- Promontory Goats.

The Wiper comes by and wipes out part of the memories. Then he comes by again and wipes out more of them. And who is the Wiper?

He is a cloud-high giant. He comes with a rag and wipes out part of a cloud. And when he does that, he wipes out part of a thing in people's heads too. A little boy told me that today, and I'm sure he had a good intuitive understanding of the Wiper-Person.

And since the boy told me that, I have seen several good pictures of the Wiper drawn on walls and sidewalks.

Oh sure, it worked.

Only to the superficial is it irrational that we should know much more after we are dead than we do while we are alive; or that we should know much more when we are in a moment than when we are not in it. I will only say that every Casey Machine had somehow the essence of a dead person in it. In this great increase of knowledge, a lifetime of preparation is translated and traded for a moment of intense possession; and, by the technicality of it being on the far side of time, that moment of possession is forever. But we set it up on the near side of time. We set up the links, and it worked.

What possibilities that does open out, if only they were explored!

Oh, they were explored all right. And now those possibilities and explorations are on the bone-yard with other obsolete eleven day wonders.

Oh sure, it busted.

What busted?

The strained case of an achronological device applied to working chronicity. That busted. It's been gone for a while now. No use crying over spilled temporalities.

I fail to see how even the worst storms on Venus can be held responsible for it. Sunspots could have done it, of course. But if you blame everything on sunspots, that's like one person playing a four handed game by himself.



The mania hadn't taken up much real time. That is why it was so easily erased and forgotten. It moved into the abiding moment. Then it moved out of it again, and it was gathered to its fathers. Its fathers were the earth forces, magnetism and isostases and geo-thermal accretions that make up the matrix into which all eleven day wonders are subsumed.

The earth-forces are made up of very many such gatherings-in or subsumptions, and of very little other basic flux. I believe that worlds that have not subsumed such emotional content or happening will have very little magnetism or corona or foinse.

The Casey Machine, being an achronological device, may indeed have happened. Only not yet.

The what machine being a what?

There is a feeling that things had been rather underdone for a while. Death had become (or may become) so minor an event that no one paid much attention to it. And then the condition moved. It did not move to take the place and importance that it had held before the bothering. It moved to another and different place and importance.

Something was subsumed into the earth forces. That is like one more limey and crunchy marine skeleton being subsumed into the floor of the ocean.

Item: I bet I went to that well longer than anyone else did. I bet I still go sometimes.

Item: I still have more money flowing in than any one else has. And I partly remember what it's for.

I have had a small electro-mechanical device removed from my brain. I don't know how it got there or what it was for.

This is a strange journal that I have started to write in again as part of my therapy. But the words in most of it are utterly incomprehensible to me.

I have a feeling of many strangers whom I once knew very well, and who once knew me very well. And sometimes they approach me.

"I miss you and Regina so much," a dumpy lady said to me only this morning. "I enjoyed it a lot, the way I had the feel of you and everything you'd do. I'd catch you sometimes just before I got up in the morning." Strange!

And a man said to me, just last week, or just this week: "There was never a mind I enjoyed so much as yours. At night sometimes I used to light my pipe and take off my shoes and just listen to the things you were thinking. It was a pleasure." Strange, most strange!

Certain standing moments of realization are interposed through history. And then they are forgotten by fiat. But the buried memory of them sustains us and fills us with promise.

I like as much as I can remember of it. And something similar will move into the moment again in another aeon or so.

I still go to that well a lot. But the bucket I dip with is different from the one I used to use. And there are still the Federal Funds forever.



*Apocryphal Passage of the Last Night  
Of Count Finnegan On Galveston Island  
(Unaccountably Omitted from the Standard  
Version of The Devil Is Dead)*

X made his own escape from the immediate threat. After all, in his vaudeville days he had been the Great X-Capo. And Doll and Finnegan moved over the graves and down the alleys towards the gaudy beach. They moved with a sudden lithe speed that was not the human way of moving, and Finnegan knew Doll then though she was never to know herself. She also was one of them, but she never suspected it; and do not tell her now.

They were down to the shimmering beach and into the heady crowd for all the daylight and the dusk. This was the bright surface world and the deep middle world mingled in the happy vitality of people having fun. They were in the middle of them; it was important to be in the middle of them!

There were the happy drinks and beers that might be the last forever. Remember the Congo? Remember Cracker's, and The Idle Hour? Remember The Brass Rail, The Little Room, The Capri? They aren't there any more, or their names have changed. Remember Murdock's Pavilion? (This was before Hurricane Carla had scattered that great wooden structure for fifty miles.) But do not try to track these places. They are of the older days.

They were into the water for an hour at Murdock's. There was a high surf lashing in and it was fun to swim through it and beyond it. That Doll could swim; and there was never such a swimmer as Finnegan.

They were out of the Gulf after that and to supper; this was at the Golden Greek's or at the Sea-Side or at some other place along the bright and shining Boulevard. It was late already. Had X yet returned to begin to dig at the grave? And how would Saxon Seaworthy watch both X and Finnegan? Meanwhile, Finnegan was making himself conspicuous with his loud talk and his loud doings.

Later, they danced on the upper deck of Murdock's, that went far out over the water. Finnegan and Doll had revelled on hard juice and shrimp and crab-meat and they were glowing wonderfully. And the music was made for them, literally. Especially the piano. Somebody on the piano was reading their minds and divining their moods. The piano took over, and Doll and Finnegan took over. It was rich and wild and intoxicating. It was rowdy. It was the best thing like that ever done; so were they. And there was no way to dance with Doll except rowdy. The music came to a halt with a roguish explosion, but Finnegan and Doll still danced to its echo.



Dotty Peison was coming across the floor to the two of them with compassionate laughter. She took Finnegan up in her arms.

You do not know Dotty well: only that she was one of the Company of Fifty who sometimes inhabited the Old Wooden Ship, only that she was the foremost Galveston-style piano player in the world. You do not know how she was when a deep black mood had just left her and she had begun to sparkle. And that lack of knowledge shall be remedied at another time. But Dotty was one racey little girl, and to be up in her arms was like dynamite and roses.

Then Finnegan and Dotty and Doll were all in one bear-hug, loving each other with an end-of-the-episode passion. Somebody was calling Dotty to come back. She was the piano player there, and it was time for her to play again.

"Finnegan, you are going to kill a man tonight," Dotty said. "Can I help?"

"How do you know that, Dotty?" Doll was curious. She didn't know Dotty.

"I know everything. But he'll put a trail on you, Finnegan. And he'll kill you with it after he's dead. Well, you've had fun along the way, haven't you, Finn?"

"I have had fun, Doll and Dotty," Finnegan said, "dark fun and light fun. Now I will move. That boy coming across the floor has a note for me."

The boy coming across the floor did have a note for Finnegan. And the note, when unfolded, read: 'Finnegan, come to the West corner of Tremont across the Boulevard. Your life is required of you now.'

"I leave you girls," Finnegan told them. "Don't take any wooden Indians." Then he went over the far railing of the pavilion, moving with a sudden speed that was not quite the human way of moving.

He swung in under the floor, dropped twenty feet to the first cross member, then went down one of the huge tarred pilings, and was into the churning water of the Gulf in the dark. Shucking off only his shoes, he swam outward swiftly and with the tireless sudden strength that came to him in the moments of his transport.

These were the waters that were under the world. There were lights above and beyond; but here, at first, it was blinding dark. "This may be almost what he expected me to do," Finnegan told himself as he swam with fishy power. "He can read me like a rune. He knew that I was not about to cross the Boulevard to the Tremont corner. But what more opposite way could I go than this? How will he have me here?"

There had been a row of shrimp boats about a mile off beach at dusk, but Seaworthy had nothing to do with shrimp boats. One of them, at least, was still there with engines loafing, but nobody picks up a swimmer in a mile of water even with a spot-light, not a swimmer who doesn't want to be picked up.

Finnegan went out some five hundred yards, far beyond the reaches of the lights of the pavilion or the Boulevard. Then he turned and gave himself to the cross-currents, swimming easily. He would come ashore on that narrow beach



beneath the cliff at old Fort Crockett, the only cliff, the only hill of any kind on the Island. He would return to the town from there; or from another approach if that one seemed spooked. He was still on the hunt for the Devil Fox, but the timing and the surprise and the advantage must be his own.

Did he give the old fox too much credit? Likely the Finnegan ambush had been set up on the first beach and not in deep water; somewhere on the beach below the sea-wall among the granite boulder breakwaters. Likely Seaworthy had expected Finnegan to go down one of the interior stairways or ladders that the bathers used, and to strike up-beach below the wall. That also would be in a direction opposite the way down the Concourse and across the Boulevard to Tremont corner.

Finnegan had company in the water. He now had the companionship of a low-floating, ocean-gnarled tree.

"You are the tree named Lagrume," Finnegan said, "the tree named Log. You also are a person in the legend, and you have drifted all the way from Haiti." Things did drift that long course, and they ended up exactly where Finnegan intended to end up.

"You are good company," Finnegan said, and he slowed his speed to that of the low-floating tree log. "Besides, you will be a diversion, or a ram, should an enemy improbably wait for me on the water. I will lead you but only for a little. I will lead you by five counts."

There were only the dim lights of the Boulevard a half a mile to the right. There was only the light of the stars in all the rest of the world. The piano music of Dotty could still be heard, either in reality or in imagination. It was still rich and wild and intoxicating and rowdy, but now there was an additional low beat in the very cellar of its sound: heavy footsteps, menacing, inexorable footsteps that seemed to move with an inexplicable splashing sound.

Finnegan sighted on a star cluster riding medium-low ahead of him in the coal sack of the night. They looked as the Lyra group and Vega should look, and Finnegan called them that in his mind. They stood before him except when he was in the deepest troughs between the waves. Finnegan swam a leisurely mile on his course.

Then Vega went out!

The tree named Lagrume, understanding the situation quicker than Finnegan did, ducked its head and floated completely under water; but it still followed Finnegan at the five interval.

Vega had been blocked out by a low, floating form; and at the same time Finnegan's hand touched the gunwale of something almost too small to be called a boat.

One Count!

There was a match-head sized gleam of phosphorus six inches from Finnegan's eyes. It was the front sight of a rifle. And behind was the faint fire grey of the eyes of Saxon Seaworthy.

Two count!

"It's the end, Finnegan," the fire-fox Seaworthy said.

Three count!

"Not without a quip, Saxon," Finnegan taunted, knowing the old fox's love of the theatrical, and fighting for time.

Four count!



"This, the quip, Finnegan," Saxon said, and he fired (simultaneous to another happening).

Five count!

The shot and the other happening had been at five count exactly. For also, with the shot at five count, the tree named Lagrume, low floating in the water, rammed the micro-boat. Finnegan was scratched of nose and shattered of jaw, but the shot did not explode inside his head. It furrowed its way out with gore and bone splinters, but it was too low to cause his death.

Finnegan had the barrel of the rifle in his hands. Then he had Saxon Seaworthy in his hands, far under water in a turmoil. Saxon did not die easily or willingly. To lull the grip he went limp as though already gone. Then, thirty seconds later, he erupted with violent writhing so as to break away. It was not easy to throttle a man with so sinewy a neck that was also protected by the pherea, the throat protuberances of an old satyr: and to choke off the air of a man already under water is of little effect.

When Finnegan was able to hold Seaworthy with one hand, he raked down into a side pocket for his clasp knife and went to work on throat, under-ear gap behind the jaw-bone, and the intercostal slots into the thorax. He opened half a dozen fountains that gushed under water, and he sealed it when he had the heart itself in his hands.

Saxon Seaworthy did not have a proper grave, and it was not at all sure that he would remain buried. But he would remain dead.

Finnegan came to the surface breathing horribly through mauled nose and shatter-jawed mouth. He swam wearily for the beach. The very small boat was filled and turning under and sinking somewhere near. The tree named Lagrume had drifted on without waiting for Finnegan. Though it had saved the life of Finnegan by bumping the small craft at calculated five count, yet it had done it almost unknowingly: a mere instrument, and yet it was a person in the legend.

There was no noise at all except the silken whisper of the water not quite ready to form into breakers, and the tired and now uneven stroking of Finnegan, and the foot-steps. But the Lyra group was in the sky again, and Vega (if it were they); and the cross-currents helped the tired Finnegan on his way.

Sometimes there sounded a car horn from the Boulevard a half mile away; sometimes there boomed the shock of a very high breaker reaching the Sea Wall; sometimes there was a distant boat horn. There was the clucking of the near waters, and Finnegan's own sounds of tortured breathing and stroking, and the foot-steps.

There really should not be foot-steps out here in the water, surely not the foot-steps of a left-footed stalking man, a club-footed man who strode more heavily on that left club. There shouldn't be that inexplicable splashing sound to the foot-steps as though they were going through water no more than ankle deep.

"He will follow me for the rest of my short life," Finnegan groaned. "He is monomaniac. He will believe that Saxon Seaworthy is still alive and sending him instructions:



and he will receive those instructions. After a while, I will believe it also. Dotty said that Saxon would put a trail on me and kill me with it after he was dead: X said the same thing. Well then, he will kill me with his stalker, but he will not kill me tonight."

Finnegan was over the hump now and free. Except for the foot-steps, except for the foot-steps. Except for the foot-steps even on the water.

\* The "Apocryphal Passage" was intended by the author to have been included as the ending to Devil Is Dead. This piece, as well as an explanatory letter in the hand of the character Absalom Stein that was to have been inserted between chapters ten and eleven of that book, arrived at the publishers (Avon books) too late for inclusion. This is the work's first appearance. -ed.



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