

Becoming One

The Story of What Men
and Women Really Want

A Wreckage of a Novel

by

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Dedicated to the bipolar constellation
Gemini, and its inconsolable star Pollux,
who carries his dead brother Castor
through the spiral of dripping cosmic teats,
searching for the perfect succubus to suck.



You hide your boat in the ravine
and your fish net in the swamp and
tell yourself that they will be safe.

But in the middle of the night, a strong
man carries them off and in your
stupidity you don't know why it
happened. You think you do right to hide
little things inside big things, and yet they
get away from you.

But if you were to hide the world inside
the world, so that nothing could get
away, this would be the final reality of the
constancy of things.

-- Chuang Tzu

PROPOSITION ONE
The Exacerbated Dwarf
or
An Opening Motif

It all began when Mr. Banff declined to leave the waiter a tip. His motive, ever buttressed by trenchant logic, was as follows:

His Worcestershire Special arrived with bland aplomb. A garnish of fluffed parsley tufted the plate of broasted cow gore. It was, however, accidentally accompanied by the placement of the chef's recently-clipped thumbnail in a delicate crescent, the cusp of which faced the sautéed beef, a burlesque, in Mr. Banff's mind, of the cow jumping over the Moon.

Mr. Banff's disgust at the human artifact accenting his meal was unexpectedly muted by the thought of the bovine adage, giving him pause as he mused upon the idiotic nursery rhymes of his youth. So stupefied was Mr. Banff by this reverie that by the time he had satisfied the inexplicable cravings of his unconscious mind for reflection, indeed, his Worcestershire Special had become stone cold.

Snapping out of it, he eyed the sheen of coagulated grease now oozing from his steak with rank approbation.

No, no. No, this simply would not do.

He lifted a fork, and loudly tapped his water glass.

Ping ping ping, went the glass.

Contrary to all expectations, a waiter did not summarily appear.

Mr. Banff was nonplused.

He added to the pinging a vocal request for service. This was, perforce, a vocalization nothing short of bellowing.

Every eye in the restaurant turned to Mr. Banff.

Being the sudden focus of attention served to elongate and stiffen Mr. Banff's manhood beneath the crotch of his corduroy, an unexpected and vaguely cheery byproduct of this otherwise dismal scenario. Still no waiter appeared.

Therefore, in brash gesticulation (for now he had an audience), Mr. Banff rose from the table, subtly displaying, for those with eyes to see, the bulge of his knicker-knocker throbbing within the rippled wedge of his pleated pasternacs, and stomped across the room, in Anglo-Saxon attitudes, to the abandoned head-waiter's station.

Upon the crest of the head-waiter's podium, which was presently devoid of head-waiter, was a little bell. Mr. Banff jabbed it with the ball of his hand.

Bing, bing, bing, went the little bell.

The head-waiter, an extremely short, bald, dark-skinned man, emerged from the cloak room. Unexpectedly, his red forehead and face was obscured by a tear-stained handkerchief. As the cloak room door swung open, Mr. Banff could see the receiver from the pay phone within dangling earthward, swinging as if flung down seconds ago by a caller rife with rage.

The head-waiter, in fact, was weeping.

At the sight of his tears, Mr. Banff froze in mid-finger-point. The cord of his argument, which had been growing linearly to curl like a noose about his cerebellum, was instantly severed by an emotion which the

feeling-oriented observer might call compassion, and which the thought-oriented might call sentimentality.

Mr. Banff gently inquired of the headwaiter what exactly was wrong.

The head-waiter, still lost in a private zone of anguish, to all appearances precipitated by words only moments ago exchanged via the telephone, now abandoned any pretense of decorum, suddenly extricating his bill-fold from the beveled pocket of his silk-lined, head-waiter's uniform, removing a snapshot from the opaque crinkling cellophane sheaves and, indicating the photo, spat out the words, Him, him, him! With this the headwaiter ripped the photo in two furious strokes into four asymmetrical squares and dashed them, with the bill-fold, to the floor. Then, dropping his head into his arms, the headwaiter unabashedly wept upon the reservation podium, his tears coincidentally staining the homely entry Banff, Party of One.

Picking up the photographic shreds at his feet, Mr. Banff placed them together to depict, ad hoc, the cubist face of an earringed, dark skinned man wearing a beret.

Since the headwaiter's perceptive organs were glutted into his tear-stained arms, Mr. Banff watched indecisively for a beat, grunted, then stomped back to his table.

Eyeing his untouched steak, he recalculated the mathematics of his dissatisfaction. His meal was ruined and no service was forthcoming.

Thus, had it not been for the weeping, Banff would have flung his soiled napkin to the floor, ground his plate containing the frozen Worcestershire Special nattily into the headwaiter's face, and departed in a Constantine fury.

But now, as it was, confused and incensed by his compassion or sentimentality, as determined by the sensibilities of the delicate Reader, Mr. Banff reluctantly decided to leave at his table the price of the steak and accoutrements.

Concerning the matter of the tip, however, Mr. Banff's eyes narrowed upon the empty tip plate, and slid it to the center of the table, conspicuously, humiliatingly barren. He marched forcefully past the other diners and out into the open air, shuddering as he divested himself, like a dog shaking free from flotsam and filth, of the wan divestments which comprise the opening motif of this book.

This, then, in a neat little nutshell, was the matter of Mr. Banff, the declined tip and the exacerbated dwarf.



PROPOSITION TWO
The Chiaros Curo of Nyloned Legs
or
A Preface to Raw Sexuality

Mr. Banff deeply inhaled the urban atmosphere as he stiffly made his way down the street. He passed a doorway lushly perfumed with the acrid odor of urine. One half of Mr. Banff's brain, which, he had long inferred, was the housing of his seemingly ghostly essence, valiantly tried to convince the other half that he had not sampled any of the wafting odors. He had to address the problem of the location of his central self upon the occasion of mental division, and wondered withal if he was deluded in ascribing his fundamental being as trapped within his skull.

But this was neither here nor there for Mr. Banff, concerning the odors which attacked his sensibilities of harmony and decorum. He thought of the serenity of his spotless home, the tinge of scrubbing ammonia in the air, the Picasso print he so cherished, the quietude, and squeezed out any acknowledgment of the excretal whiffs which made his nostrils twitch and expand.

It was while he was on the subway that these remnants of the foul odor formed a hard crust of mucous upon the upper edge of the inside of his left nostril. This crust, as it grew, began to dig cuttingly against the tender interior of his nose, causing Mr. Banff great discomfort and irritation. Yet it was out of the question, in Mr. Banff's view, to insert a

digital into the left nostril for the purpose of removing the detestable crust, for this, unfortunately, was a public place.

As it was a late car, only one other human filled the jolting, careening vessel. This person, Mr. Banff noted with distinct distaste programmed since childhood, was a Portuguese Negroid, possessing a bulbous tuft of orange hair, smooth brown skin, a flat nose, and large, sensual lips. Although Mr. Banff understood the principles of brotherhood, he had been subtly programmed, as previously mentioned, that all foreign races were inferior and distinctly undesirable. Therefore, when the woman in question sat in the seat next to his, he averted his eyes.

Prostitute.

The word formed lamely in the center of his brain, driving out all other words. The Portuguese Negress asked Mr. Banff what his name was. Mr. Banff did not reply.

Prostitute, prostitute.

The Portuguese Negress shifted in the seat opposite Mr. Banff, revealing long, brown legs against the background of a white, slitted skirt. Mr. Banff's averted pupils began to dilate by their own accord. The chiaroscuro of the nyloned legs against the slitted skirt appealed to his aesthetic bent, and via this unsuspecting channel of neuron synapses, this sexually-charged image crept into his subconscious. He tried to usher out the single word from his skull, but it sat there immobile with implacable finality.

After staring at him for a beat with carnivorous eroticism, the Portuguese Negress inquired in sultry tones if Mr. Banff would like to have an enjoyable experience.

The pause which followed this question was the most uncomfortable moment of the evening, for Mr. Banff. He did not feel disinclined towards mating with a receptive female, particularly one he considered to be animalistic; yet many unsavory images were inextricably linked to the persistent word burned into the core of his brain. He closed his eyes, for example, and found himself picturing legions of tiny parasitic disease-carrying lice marching, soldier-like, amid her orange torso hair.

At this point, the Portuguese Negroes intuitively realized that Mr. Banff was teetering at the breaking point of possible conciliation, and decided therefore to clearly and distinctly state the gist of her argument. Thus, she took Mr. Banff's clammy hand and placed it firmly against one of her large, prominently-tipped breasts, and recommended breathily that they journey onward to a local flophouse.

It was at this point that Mr. Banff could not avoid looking into her eyes. For the first time that evening, he gazed through the twin portals to her essence, so to speak.

Something strange happened to Mr. Banff in that brief span. It was as if his soul, as we may here refer to it, had opened up in a burst of color, not unlike the exposed entrails of a ravenous dog, after mindlessly swallowing a small bomb, and exploding in a rainbow of gore.

Mr. Banff inferred that this was love.

Something strange happened to Mr. Banff in that brief spasm. All the elements necessary to constitute a genuine mystical experience, as propounded by William James, were fulfilled but one. That missing particular was that the feeling of oneness was not with the universe, but rather with the beloved.

It should be noted that this inner experience, although triggered by association with a seemingly tawdry pinhead, was far from trivial. It was, indeed, profound. Mr. Banff penetrated the deepest realms of his being, or so it seemed, traveling through the seven states of consciousness (?), his essence dangling on the brilliant strand of perception which connected his soul, so to speak, to the soul of his beloved. It was the way of the world beckoning to Mr. Banff from the depths of a bottomless crevasse, into which he must fall, headlong, an innocent victim of subtle and irresistible forces.

Fixed in an unblinking gaze upon the face before him, Mr. Banff, as has already been made clear, yet bears repeating, felt an ineffable surge. It was the garland of love blooming from his eyes.

Yet Mr. Banff was not bereft of objectivity. In spite of the electric intensity that riddled his being, he was not so far gone that he could not perceive the sorry flaws in her physical form. For example, he noted that her eyes were caked with slimy blue paint, and that the eyebrows had been tweezed out, hair by hair, to allow an expression of perpetual sexual interest to be penciled onto the forehead, and that the lashes had been elongated, by the gluing on of stiff, black hairs, which Mr. Banff surmised to have once adorned the rump of a horse.

But thusfar in Mr. Banff's experience, the grotesqueries of the emotions ever reigned over the subtleties of the intellect, and thus, he was lost in a wonder of love, of inexorable desire.

It appears that it will not be long before we see Mr. Banff being led through the winding corridors of the flophouse, like a rat through it maze, after a moldy scrap of cheese. But a peculiar and striking circumstance, in fact, occurred: just as Mr. Banff's dry hand encompassed her teat in one

mincing heap, the shuddering train passed through a section of tunnel which was pervaded by the sulfurous stench of sewage, caused (?) by a rupture in an excrement-filled cistern directly above the subterranean channel. This wretched odor made both Mr. Banff and the Portuguese Negress stiffen, for each thought that the other had surreptitiously emitted a foul flatulence. Their hands froze upon each other's organs in secret revulsion.

It was a moment for introspection and reflection.

Mr. Banff was summoned from his heights of spiritual and sexual ecstasy to the mundane and therefore detestable physical plane. His thoughts turned to the ungainly reality of bodily functions, and he pictured against his will the incremental accumulation of waste material in the labyrinthine bowels directly below the squashed pap upon which his hand now reluctantly rested. He was reminded of a moment's insight while reading an encyclopedic tome as an obnoxious child: a picture of the rubbery pulp of the bowels strongly resembled a picture on the same page of the rubbery pulp of the brain. It was an organic simile written by the nonexistent (?) Creator of matter in a complexly metered poem of flesh. As to the matter at hand, so to speak, his mind teemed with inner recommendations. For a time, he pensively advanced various assertions and negations in a quagmire of internal debate.

The Portuguese Negress, in turn, entertained thoughts parallel to those entertained by Mr. Banff, despite her seeming mental simplicity, for the concept of inadvertent flatulence complicating unfulfilled sexual desire is a stock human commodity. She, too, it may be added, envisioned the shiny ripeness of Mr. Banff's intestinal tract, and weighed her desire for monetary gain against the malaise of contact with undesirable flesh.

Thus the two of them sat in contemplation, their hands affixed to the other's appropriate appendages.

The train halted with a jolt. The doors opened. Mr. Banff, like a sleeper awakened, awkwardly extricated himself from the Portuguese Negress, for a growing stiffness had grown manifest in all musculature of his bodice. With a curt nod, avoiding her eyes, he stood up and strode out of the car, clearly intending to crap-out on the probability of their relationship.

Yet this was not to be so. For the Portuguese Negress hurriedly followed him out of the car, onto the platform, interlocking her arm with his, making cooing remarks into his ear. This was a turn of events Mr. Banff had not considered. Was he to lounge that evening in a flophouse? Although his eyes gazed fixedly forward, he listened carefully to her overture. He had initially resisted her tugs at his arm, but now he laxed his guard. The wall of fear he had hastily erected to protect his wavering emotions began to crumble and dissolve by a force much more potent and pervasive than lust. It was the force of love-- the same principle symbolically governing gravity, magnetism, and all manifestations of the parts' desire to become whole-- that vaporized with a flip of the wrist his flimsy wall of defense, his stronghold of habitual separateness. Although he was now in the figurative hands of love, this was soon to be literal, for the flophouse is but a page away.

What, then, was Mr. Banff to think of himself?
But this was not the time for candid reflection.

This was the time for Mr. Banff to follow the course of least resistance, in a bee-line to the first of our many obligatory sexual adventures, which will be described in prim detail, at roughly thirty page

intervals, throughout this carefully crafted, although anomalistic, biographical record.



PROPOSITION THREE
Cleaving the Doors
or
The Undulating Buttocks

Into the pit of the page they go, going, as they go, indeed, gone, as they go. Through the nameless city they scrounged in elliptical arcs, in an ever-widening gyre, betwixt a crumbling hodgepodge of labyrinthine alleys, at the center of which lay the Minotaurean flophouse.

He followed her in a daze, aware that, alack, this was a peregrination of potential perdition, to contrive in alliterative discourse. But in one sense Banff was blameless, for the real culprit was the deft energy called love, beaming like an etheric rope from his eyes, twining about her heart and, vis-a-vis, dragging him along like a flopping Howdy Doody through the serried swath of streets.

Anon they came to the flophouse. Stepping over a bad-smelling obstacle course of sour-wine-stupored indigents, they entered through a filthy glass door, bedecked with a gay, expressionistic design of mauve spittle and chartreuse phlegm, and approached the front desk inhabited by the next person on our roster of introductions, the hotel clerk, soon to be described, in the adjacent paragraph.

The clerk in question, by a happenstance, was a bald, dark-skinned dwarf, whose facial aspect upon seeing Mr. Banff creased into deep suspicion; this, in tandem and combination with his normal facial aspect

which, it may be baldly stated, was grotesque to the nth degree, created upon the angular face of the mulatto dwarf a fleshy cubism comparable, if not superlative, to the ugliest of Picasso's *Three Musicians*.

At the desk, the whore indicated that Mr. Banff should pay the clerk ten dollars as a tip. She then explained that she would go up to her room and request that her roommate, of whom nothing is known in this book, other than the implication that she, too, is a professional scrotum-massager, vacate the premises for one hour. To this end, the Portuguese Negress requested of Mr. Banff another ten dollars to appease her roommate's sensitivity to her encroaching physical displacement. These duties Mr. Banff faithfully discharged, whereupon she assured him that she would return shortly, pecked him dryly upon the cheek, and swaggered, her buttocks undulating rhythmically to an imaginary snare drum and hissing high-hat, into the fetid, splooge-splattered elevator.

Mr. Banff was left alone with the fuming cretin in miniature. The midget humanette was disproportionate not only in structure, but also in emotive expression. Thus he glared at Mr. Banff in scrying postures of extreme judgmentalism, shifting restlessly from one club foot to the other, scrunching his tiny features into a paradigm of sneers.

Mr. Banff, therefore, avoided his burning gaze, and affected drumming his finely-filed fingernails upon the grimy counter in an attempt to counterfeit a *savoir faire* attitude of careless panache.

This lack of attention on the part of Mr. Banff, towards one so accustomed to being a formidable magnet of stares, served to drive the bombastically-inclined cretin out of his already questionable stability of mind. In response to Mr. Banff's voided gaze, the angry dwarf slapped his stubby outstretched hands on the outer edge of the counter and, like a

homunculus gymnast, lifted himself by his arms, inch by inch, inclining his sneer up, up, towards Mr. Banff's torpid features, until the midget's ghastly breath beat upon the receptive pores of Mr. Banff's nape, and reflexively shut them up like ten thousand tiny trap doors.

Mr. Banff reluctantly turned his head forward towards the offending halitotic breeze, and distastefully lowered his gaze to meet, eye to yellowed eye, with the sneering, furious stump of flesh.

In the first draft of this biographical record, it was at this point that Mr. Banff, flustered and taken aback, attempted an obviously puerile parlay to dispel the psychic tension inflicted upon him by the gymnastically-inclined freak's antagonistic impudence in positioning his flesh at such close proximity to that of Mr. Banff; in this, the final draft, however, the brief and boring conversation precipitated by Mr. Banff's inane query has been omitted, due to a lack of space, and, chiefly, interest.

It was here, upon this page of Mr. Banff's linearly structured recording of his life's work, his alphabetical magnum opus, namely, the integral wholeness of his life itself, as distilled here dryly on the page, when he is verily eye to eye with the mincing midget, that another profound insight flared and supernovaed in his skull-cavity. This insight was, indeed, as profound as that experienced when he first interconnected his gaze with that of his newly-found beloved, the whore, save that in this second experience, the expansion of awareness was mental, not emotional. For here, within the sudden encounter of light-sphincter to light-sphincter, Mr. Banff was deeply overcome by the intimacy of the moment, in that of all the human essences (often recalcitrantly termed souls) which had graced or polluted the wobbling gyroscope of the earth, out of these unnumbered trillions, perhaps, here was Mr. Banff in momentary

communion with a specific one-out-of-a-trillion; and the materially unexplained intuitive faculties holographically enmeshed in Mr. Banff's mind made it plain to him that such a selective intimacy was not a chance operation, but rather it felt to Mr. Banff that the cretin in effect symbolized a portion, or reflection, of his own consciousness; and although he could not prove it, certainly not with the kindergarten crayons of logical analysis, he felt, in the innermost point of his being, that in looking into the eyes of the tiny, deformed creature, he was looking into the eyes of a portion of himself. This was not something he could prove; rather, it was something he knew.

This ingenuous intuitive perception ricocheted with lightning through the recesses of his subconscious like a manic pinball through a pinging machine, and although his conscious assimilation of this insight appeared, the light of his later adventures, to be minimal, still his subconscious assimilation, so to speak, was as vast as his being itself, rippling as a stone's radiating waves through a crystal pond, subtly permeating his every subsequent encounter, imbuing them, great and small, with a profound significance, in the oceanic expanse of his hidden existence.

Perhaps his interesting insight would have been more apparent upon the skein of his personality, if the link of eyes with eyes had not been interrupted by the homely opening of the elevator door, and causally-related (?) appearance of the Portuguese Negress approaching him and brashly informing him that, indeed, the spatial rectification concerning the occupancy of her room had been completed, as a preface to raw sexuality.

This new, although expected, information soon served to propel Mr. Banff in an incongruous mode of motion, namely, his body moving

straight up into the air at a uniform rate, by means of the elevator mechanism, which appeared in Mr. Banff's mind, suddenly, as the evolutionary modification of the primitive structure of stairs, which he dully surmised cumulatively occupied tens of thousands of square miles, across the face of the earth, if laid side by side, or stair to stair, as in a mental paradigm, not unlike imagining rows and rows of pairs of tits, of the girls one has laid or potentially laid, in matter or in imagination, splayed out geometrically in cubic grids of tits, large and small, firm and sagging, those volcanoing milk and those barren, those hairy and those devoid of hair, square acres of tittage mathematically carpeting the crystalline surface of the universe, like self-replicating cellular automata, ultimately making all of infinite space itself nothing but tits, tits, tits, tits, tits, tits and tits.

This boring thought concerning tits, in Mr. Banff's brief hiatus from reason, was gladly interrupted by the shuddering halt of the elevator in its ascent and the whirring opening of the cleaving doors, a glimpse, in Mr. Banff's mind, of the future evolution of the primitive structure of doors, although, it must be noted, that the cleaving of the doors, as it were, also reminded Mr. Banff of tits.

He nervously shuffled behind the measured slither of her previously described protruding buttocks as she reached her room, inserted a symbolic key into the room's tiny secret opening, and bade Mr. Banff enter.



PROPOSITION FOUR
The Bruised Tattooed Bodice
or
A Fist Through the Glass

Now enclosed within the confines of the whore's lair, Mr. Banff must abandon, it appears, his passive, self-effacing conservatism, and contrive to enthusiastically mount her in the manner of a rapacious young bull.

Yet, this configuration was not to be. For as the Portugese Negress stripped her layers of petroleum-based garments from her dark flesh with mechanical rapidity, the polyester blouse and skirt going hweeesssh-hweeesssh like a toreador's cape flourished towards a horned beast, Mr. Banff stood at the foot of the bed watching her, silent, still and motionless.

Trained in her years of anything-goes coupling, the circumspect Negress, in observing Mr. Banff's complacency, did not pause to ponder its significance, but rather exhibited a long-practiced facial expression indicating insatiable sexual hunger, for the purpose of arousing the sagging, bovine-like Mr. Banff to rigid and turgid attention.

Yet Mr. Banff stared at her, motionless.

The whore, a professional sexual psychologist, inquired whether or not Mr. Banff would like to insert the appendage of his manhood into the sluicing hollow of her feminine mystique.

There was the usual long pause, as long pauses are wont to crop up in Mr. Banff's papery life, with exponential frequency, as he wafts through these linear corridors of assimilated time and space, a professional waftee, as it were, searching for promotion to immortality through the non-linear portals of literary death.

The empty interlude having run its course, Mr. Banff decided to boldly speak his mind; he would forgo attempting to rationalize his feelings, and alternatively allow his words to simply spill forth, going where they will, whence he knew not, only that they issued forth. By this medium. then, he emptied his heart thus:

But to quote the speech of Mr. Banff at this juncture in time would be a cruel invasion of privacy, for are not the words of love, intuitively rushing from the lips to the air, viewed at a more reserved moment in time, when they may lie naked as frozen words on the page, seen as foolish homely splutterings; instead of the sacred truth from a realm in the heart too real to be borne by words alone? Are not the words on paper akin to dry desert bones which once housed the vital immediacy of living flesh?

But these were not the thoughts of Mr. Banff; rather, these are the wordy expostulations of his anal biographer, and should be duly ignored. What Mr. Banff, standing, staggering, baring his soul at the foot of the whore's bed, expressed in words that could not fully contain his meaning, was that he loved the naked, besprawled prostitute, loved her with such profundity of feeling that he pledged, then and there, vaguely in the manner of a knight of the middle ages, to dedicate his life to loving her. Furthermore, he expressed the novel and exhilarating realization that his love for her was entirely nonsexual, that perhaps (given time and assimilation) he could eventually consummate their love via the symbolic

act of sexual congress, but that his feelings were so intense that he wanted only to vow his undying love and adoration, to spend quiet evenings with her in intimate, atmospheric, overpriced restaurants, to travel the world with her in First Class, where you could order them to cook the asparagus more fully, so that the stalks are not so raw and stringy, to fully experience all of the joy, wonder, pain, disillusionment and puerile meaninglessness that human life has to sweetly offer, with her and her alone, to hold her perfect, tattooed bodice tenderly in his arms, and then--

At this point in his idiosyncratic speech, the Portuguese Negress pointedly interrupted him by shrilly shrieking a single caustic word, beginning with the sixth letter in the alphabet.

This served to shut Mr. Banff up quite nicely, and he stood, stunned, watching her angrily throw her clothes back on, while casting him the vilest of looks, accompanied by loathsome epithets of disdain. For of all the noxious, ancient sympathies and humors to which the whore had been resignedly subjected in her Career of Careers, the most noxious to her personal temperament was the jejune client who, at the moment of truth, preached the heresy of Platonic Love.

Mr. Banff was crushed by her bald negativity. As she reclaimed her scattered rayon sheaves from the gritty sheets while muttering fiercely as to Mr. Banff's masculine and mental lackings, Mr. Banff courageously summoned up his presence of mind to desperately remonstrate as to his sincerity and, indeed, his intention to be joined in holy matrimony with her, once his present marriage was duly renounced and adjudicated.

This proposal of marriage, however, instead of attracting the whore to his emotional sphere, served to repel her even more violently than before. She jumped down off the bed, screaming ancestral Portuguese

invective, her otherwise beautiful face, now blackly caricatured by crevasses of skin tensely bunched together over her eyes, inches from that of Mr. Banff, punctuated her furious remarks with jabs of her sharp, cleft chin toward Mr. Banff's heart.

Gathering his courage, he valiantly attempted to reinforce and elaborate on his argument. But there was barely a moment for Mr. Banff to insert a single word, for the whore was rife with sluicing rhetoric which foully and rapidly emitted machine gun-like from her huge and classically chiseled Eolithic lips.

Thus was our unfortunate Mr. Banff dolefully rebuffed in his quest for romance.

As he steadfastly refused to depart without further restating his case to his beloved, in rebuttal, she extracted a zip blade from her purse and viciously sliced the air in front of Mr. Banff's nose.

Mr. Banff backed out through the door in fear of obtaining an unnecessary skin graft by an obviously untrained surgeon, who at this very moment on the page hisses towards him, her blade hissing through the air and her breath hissing through hatefully clenched teeth.

Backed out, out, into the cheap decor of the hall, Mr. Banff observed the door loudly slamming in his pallid face. He stood there hearing the whore's still-ejaculating lips scream bitter diatribes at his memory. Truly, he did not know what, at this juncture in time, would be the prescribed action most suitable to his rather crusty circumstances; for here, here, in this distinctly urine-besotted hallway, he stands bereft of all objects of his desire, psychologically castrated of the accouterments of true manhood. For no, he would not storm the gates of her chambers, for a number of ethical reasons; this, for example, would not be indicative of the air of

supreme self-confidence with which he usually, in his day-to-day activity, bore his personality via the proud steps of his feet across his beautiful, chemically-cleaned carpet.

True, he loved the Portuguese Negress more than life itself, but not more than his need to maintain absolute decorum.

Remember that this is Mr. Banff we are talking about, not some random flesh-pot of rank breeding. There will be time later for Mr. Banff to lose the need to save face, to surrender his personality, the last bastion and stronghold of all seemingly individual humans, against the great emphatic, gentle (?) unity of All That Is.

Mr. Banff, however, was firmly resolved to ultimately win over the beautiful Negress whom he unconditionally adored. But for the duration, he must reluctantly leave, and allow her to become used to the idea of being loved.

Yes. That was the plan.

He presumed within his now broiling brain-pan that her profession had through the years made her skeptical of even the existence of true love such as his. He imagined her thinking thusly: How could one such as Mr. Banff, the Comptroller of the world's largest tapioca factory, the visionary Creator and Prime Mover of the finest Joke Shop in town, fall in love with one such as I, a professional dildo-operator? These were Mr. Banff's simulacrum of the whore's homely thoughts as he entered the evolutionary machine previously described and traveled downward in a simple-minded symbolic descent that we need not waste paper on, not even about tits, for let us keep this in perspective: a living tree was slaughtered so that we may, in fine, describe Mr. Banff thus, being drolly rebuffed by a whore.

But returning to the matter at hand, suffice it to say, Mr. Banff exited the electronic portal and passed again by the demented dwarf, whose former arrogance had vanished utterly. For now, to Mr. Banff's surprise, the dwarf was weeping on the front desk, weeping soulfully, his oversized head buried in his under-sized arms. Behind him, the telephone receiver was dangling, as if thrown in mid-sentence by a caller rife with rage.

Not perceiving Mr. Banff perceiving him, nor the Reader perceiving Mr. Banff perceiving the dwarf, nor an omnipotent and obviously insane Creator perceiving the Reader perceiving Mr. Banff, the tear-stained imp screamed in anguish, grabbed a framed photograph from his desk, and furiously smashed his fist through the glass, ripping asunder the photo, a tatter of which wafted leaf-like, amid shattered glass and shreds of cardboard, to Mr. Banff's feet.

Mr. Banff stooped over and retrieved the photographic shard, and noted that it depicted what appeared to be an earringed, dark-skinned man wearing a beret.

Mr. Banff relinquished his hold on the trashed photo, which fluttered to the floor. He gingerly departed, thinking to himself, since he could think to no one else (?), that the familiar circumstance concerning the photo, recurring like a refrain, had it not actually happened to him (?), would have seemed, in the literary sense, forced and contrived to the extreme. But as it has just actually happened to him, within the parameters of this, his wordy linear existence, Mr. Banff has no recourse but to accept this coincidence at face value, and dream of a better, brighter day.

But let us not become bogged down with literary criticism from the central character himself in the midst of his travails, for now, even as he carefully steps between the artistically-arranged tableau of sleeping winos cradled in the flophouse doorway, we must faithfully contrive to get Mr. Banff back, back to his apartment, wherein his dedicated wife innocently sleeps.



PROPOSITION FIVE

The Interval Between the Tick and the Tock

or

The Primary Döppelganger

In serpentine attitudes, Mr. Banff crept into his apartment. Upon arriving home, late at night, for fear of waking his wife, it is a fact that Mr. Banff became reptilian in character. He snaked across the carpet, his diaphragm oozing a hiss, making him a human anaconda. Into the bedroom he wafted, his ears pricked to the distinct sonority of his wife as she slumbered; he carefully corresponded his slithering steps in cadence to her caterwauling, trumpeting snores.

He sat beside her on the bed. The night's fitful events had left him profoundly fatigued, yet upon viewing his wife's pillow-flattened face, he became introspective, philosophical, reflective. As he gazed upon her features, her hair sloshed akimbo about her ears, he suddenly thought that there was some thought in the back of his mind struggling to get out, something revelatory. At that moment, his wife's snoring face somehow set aflame a hidden instinct for feeling in a moment the secret analogies or parallelisms that connect things else apparently remote.

She turned her head unconsciously towards him, smacking her lips as if palletizing an unsavory dream meal.

This new perspective unexpectedly triggered in Mr. Banff a burst of perceptual enlightenment. For the thought in the back of his brain dislodged, and he was overcome with emotion at the following discovery:

The face of his wife, although white, was otherwise an exact duplicate of the black face of the Portuguese Negress, with whom he had fallen in love.

It was a realization comparable, in Mr. Banff's reality, to his first perspective-expanding understanding and feeling of universal relativity. He fell in love with the whore because he had fallen in love with that same countenance many years before, in the visage of his wife, his first beautiful experience of intense, molecular attraction.

He sat there for one hour, counting the seconds which delicately ticked forth from his Hawser-Finch Deluxe Imperial Bedroom Clock. The painstaking act of counting each alternating tick and tock afforded him the luxury of forestalling the inevitable thought of leaving his wife in favor of the whore.

The moments at which the clock ticked or tocked were not difficult. It was the interval in between, which seemed longer and longer until, at length, time seemed to stop. In this psychological purgatory, only one image filled his mind, that of the Portuguese Negress. He quickly stood up from the bed and walked stolidly away, brainwashed by the force of the interval between the tick and the tock.

He passed the card table by the door. Laid out upon it was a jig-saw puzzle of a photo of Elvis Presley in an army uniform. It was Mr. Banff's wife's only obsession, one which he tolerated with distaste, although in one respect, perhaps, he was secretly grateful that she possessed a pedestrian quirk to which he could justifiably feel superior. As he departed, never to return, he noted that the puzzle had been completed save for a single missing piece, depicting the upper right portion of Elvis' sneer.

PROPOSITION SIX
The Iambic Indigent
or,
A Stack of Constabulary Corpses

Songs of love, befitting the finest 15th century Neapolitan courtier, rang vibrantly forth from every cell in Mr. Banff's body, as he traversed the darkness to his beloved's flophouse, as if billions of sweet little church bells constituted his body chemistry, peeling forth harmonics of idyllic romance through the fetid alley brine. Indeed, the combined energy of these myriad inner bells inspired his vocal chords to automatically begin warbling love songs unsurpassed in the alley's acoustic akasha of a century of drunken belching and retching.

Besotted half-humans lurking amid the trash cans were awakened by his fucking terrible singing, and invoked unintelligible sarcasm at his passing, notably utilizing combinatorial improvisations on the words fuck, prick and bastard, in reference to Mr. Banff's bum-disturbing promenade. One awakened wino, however, Mr. Banff noted by the light of an eerie, violet street lamp, was either moved to tears by Mr. Banff's lusty, off-key crooning, or else had just ingested a tear-stimulating aperitif, such as Woolite mixed with left-over Lysol Bathroom Cleaner, prior to serenely napping in his garbage receptacle.

Mr. Banff turned the corner. Before him, blocking the flophouse entrance, were two police cars, their lights flashing in a nightmarish cadence against the brickwork graffiti. Four short, swarthy policeman

were hunched behind their cars, peeking up at the flophouse entrance, One was calling for reinforcements on his car radio.

Mr. Banff found himself standing next to another onlooker, a small, burnish-faced, alley slough, a night creature whose mailing address was the end side row seat in an all-night pornographic movie theater. But more remarkably, it so happened that this zit-happy bum was also one of those rare, plebeian savants one occasionally meets who unconsciously speaks exclusively in quatrains roughly of iambic pentameter. Mr. Banff made the error of asking him, with a tremor in his voice (for he was concerned for the safety of his beloved) what the hell was going on. For an entire minute, the iambic bum prefaced his reply by clearing his Parodi-bespattered throat, thereby swallowing or spitting up quanta of multicolored phlegm, and finally replying in a sweet, sincere, but disgustingly frog-like voice:

"Wal, I was walkin' past dis fleabag
 When bullets started flyin' t'rough de windows.
 I ducks into de booth an' calls de cops
 An' de next t'ing I know, dere dey was."

A bullet came zinging out through the shattered flophouse window. Mr. Banff, the iambic bum, and the swarthy cops all ducked in a graceful bell curve. The bullet, however, ricocheted to the tune of the physical laws (?) from building to building, caromed off a lamp post and unexpectedly buried itself, in a luscious manifestation of existential meaninglessness, into the heart of the crouched, slough-like, iambic balladeer. Slammed by

the bullet, he reeled dizzily on his haunches, fell back in Mr. Banff's arms, and wheezed a terrible death rattle:

"Wal, I guess dis is it, pal.
It's funny, but I don't feel no pain.
I'm just afraid I'll die an' go to hell,
'Cause my life's been pretty shitty."

With this concluding internal rhyming couplet, the frog-voiced poet, rife with pathos, burst into a heart-rending ejaculation of tears. Clutching his chest spasmodically, he heaved a last, spittle-plumed, hacking breath of renunciation, and --

Mr. Banff watched the fusty relic's eyes pop open. The bum's hands seemed to regain new life as they frantically searched his chest for the gaping, mortal wound. Instead of finding a gory slit, his hands, from within the folds of his mottled greatcoat, removed a pornographic paperback novel, pragmatically entitled Fuck My Asshole, from his chest pocket.

The bullet was visible, conspicuously imbedded in the cover artwork, which featured a heavily-made-up, unattractive female bent over to proudly display her pimple- and bruise-crazy buttocks to a prospective book-buyer. More specifically, the bullet was thrust symmetrically into the exact rectal center of the nymph-impersonator's gymnastically-spread limbs. The perverse projectile, Mr. Banff mentally noted, which was frozen in what he considered the degenerate act of buggery, however inadvertently, had saved the cretinous poetaster's life.

"Oh! God! Yes!" the vulgarian cried in joy, subconsciously reproducing dialogue from the book itself; for here was a profound rarity -- pure pragmatism inextricably meshed with pure symbolism -- which, in occult combination, too statistically homely to be misconstrued as chance, provided a deeply religious justification for the filthy onanist's wang-yanking pastime. For here was poetic proof, to the slough's porno-mystic turn of mind, that God, in His Perfect Wisdom, indeed, divinely sanctioned his imaginary ass fucking.

A ripple of gunfire crackled from the flophouse doorway, spitting splinters of wood and glass.

Mr. Banff raised his eyes to the Seventh Floor, the abode of the embodiment of his love.

The small, swarthy cops fired back a deft volley of bullets, exploding windows with smoke and fire.

More gunshots ripped through the air and screamed towards them. The police returned fire with gusto, ricocheting rows of deadly sparks across the brickwork like demons exchanging witticisms, to contrive a simile.

Mr. Banff, his eyes affixed to the seventh floor, was of one mind. He must -- above all, against all odds -- save his beloved.

He pictured himself mountaineering the flophouse monolith, climbing hand over fist to her window, grabbing her up in his arms in a supermanic pose, silhouetted by stars, their light gleaming gloriously down upon him from the soul of the galaxy. This was his moment of destiny, his opportunity to win the whore's reluctant affection, if not her undying love.

Imagining a fanfare of trumpets, he set his jaw, dashed through the shadows to the far side of the flophouse, and disappeared into the black depth of the alley.

There he found three dead policemen, all small and swarthy, presumably shot while they were covering the alley exit. Ever a utilitarian, Mr. Banff stacked their bodies one on top of the other and climbed them in order to reach the fire-escape high above. Performing a powerful leap atop the corpses, he managed to grasp, with one hand, the hanging, rusty fire-escape. With gut-grinding ferocity, he lifted himself up onto the iron platform and, breathing rapidly, began pounding his peds up the black metal steps through the alley darkness, his eyes glued skyward toward his beloved's floor.

At Floor Number Five, however, the world as he knew it began to disassociate, to somehow shift, to slightly twist, to subtly and oddly transform into -- what?

He could not put his finger on what was happening. Somehow his footing in the deep darkness became surreal; the stairs he continued climbing seemed to strangely level out; in the blackness, he seemed to be traveling horizontally, as opposed to vertically. And then, even more peculiarly, he felt that he was simultaneously ascending the stairs structurally, and yet descending the stairs spatially.

He surmised that this was a psychological illusion due to the near total darkness and the dizzying heights to which he had boldly ascended. But no. To maintain his balance, he now had to pound his feet up, up, upwards against the edge of the stairs with all his might, in order to merely stay level.

And now, the reality beneath him shifted yet again; he was now climbing structurally upwards, up across the undersides of the metal stairs, yet still he was descending spatially downwards, down in a misty, paradoxical netherworld of directionlessness. It was as if space itself had stretched out into a new direction, a fourth dimension, at right angles to the other three, as he attempted to bee-line to his beloved's floor, which slowly waned in the distance.

Mr. Banff stopped in confusion, the universe of space seeming to buzz around his head like a tornado of bees. What on earth, or elsewhere, indeed, was happening to Mr. Banff?

A sudden shaft of red light from a blinking Texaco sign, a homely symbol if ever there was one, served to literally illuminate the situation. He saw that the bolts attaching the top of the fire escape to the side of the flophouse had in the main rotted away. A single pivoting bolt, near the middle of the stairs, held the stairs against the brickwork, and for a time in the blackness he had been slowly spinning around and around like a circus performer, climbing down and yet climbing up, climbing up and yet climbing down.

Sweat poured across the red blinking face of Mr. Banff; his flesh and smocks alternately glistened with a scarlet Texacoan aura. Feverish from his White Queen-like exertion, he counted the floors and noted with renewed determination that his destination was still three levels above. Gritting his teeth, he pounced onto the naked brickwork itself, clung flush to it and, in a burst of savage determination, began scaling the tawny precipice, inching higher and higher towards the seventh level.

As he reached the Sixth Floor, a blinding law enforcement-type spotlight splashed across his face from below and a voice croaked, frog-like, in the distance:

"No, don't nobody shoot! It's de guy
What helped me up when I got hit!
Listen to me! He is not de killer!
He just flipped his lid is all!"

Nevertheless, gunshots began hissing around him, crumbling the bricks at his feet into powdery explosions. To his left he espied a partially open Sixth Floor window. Twisting around, he pried it open and brashly jumped through.



PROPOSITION SEVEN
The Queer Swashbuckler
or,
A Triangle of Strangulation

Inside the hotel room, he felt as if he had been transported to another world.

There was the lush, doughy aroma of pizza pie. The soundtrack album of *The Music Man* was quietly and good-naturedly piping its polymelodic choral track, "Goodnight Ladies". Mr. Banff noted with distaste the empty pizza boxes and empty bottles of beer and wine which littered the bed and floor. Within the depths of the king-size bed lay three short, dark-skinned men gently sleeping, naked, baby-like, entangled in each other's arms.

The three bedfellows were similar in appearance, save that the Central Man was earringed and sported a beret.

As Mr. Banff had deftly landed like an acrobat at the foot of the bed, the Central Man's eyes immediately wrenched open and fixed upon Mr. Banff. The man's intense stare, plumbing the inner recesses of Mr. Banff's nervous system via his eyes, spoke volumes. Mr. Banff did not recognize the short, dark, earringed Central Man with the beret (should he?), but rather apologized for intruding and tersely informed him of the sensational and terrible dangers occurring below.

At the news, the dark-skinned man immediately jumped out of bed, his beret sustaining its perfect 45 degree tilt upon his cranium, as if assiduously affixed via glue.

The other two sleepers obliviously flopped towards the center of the bed, hugging each other drunkenly, dreaming happy-sappy dreams.

The dark-skinned man with the tilted beret threw on his clothes urgently, then eyed Mr. Banff in earnest, and whispered in tones of deepest intensity:

"I am a wanted man. Wanted by those who cannot have me."

The man said nothing more, but rather, emphatically opened a can of beer and rapidly gulped down its contents. Mr. Banff, nonplused, asked him as a favor to impart any further information in a less oblique manner. The short, dark-skinned homosapian with the beret wiped his mouth and complied:

Many jealous men (he said) desired him, including the dwarf hotel clerk and the swarthy Chief of Police, who undoubtedly was outside barking orders at his men in a suppressed rage of jealousy.

Before continuing further, an additional note should be interjected to inform the interested, or bored, Reader that Mr. Banff considered male homosexuality to be base, degenerate and utterly detestable, because he feared that such dicky-licky activity was a fundamental threat to his personal sexuality. (It is psychologically interesting to note, however, that Mr. Banff felt secretly ambivalent towards female homosexuality, depictions of which excited in him powerful glandular secretions -- because such cunny-titty activity was not a threat to his sexual identity, or so, at least, it seemed, to Mr. Banff.)

Keeping the above in mind, Mr. Banff, then, was surprised to find himself admiring the forceful and manly manner in which the beret- and earring-fancier rushed to open the door and urged Mr. Banff, in Zorro-like gestures, follow.

"You must help me subdue him. He has the brain-fever of lust," the dark-skinned dink whispered fiercely.

Mr. Banff indicated that he would meet him in the lobby momentarily.

The Zorro analogy continues as the charismatic, heroic shrimp, whom Mr. Banff now perceived to have donned black pants and a lush, black, silk cape, saluted Mr. Banff and, with a hweesh of black silk against silk, vanished down the hallway, an attractive, mysterious, swash-buckling, lurid creature, in Mr. Banff's considered opinion.

As to the matter of what the hell was going on, the implication was, in Mr. Banff's mesh of mind, that the hotel-clerk-dwarf, in love with the beret-fancier, had gone into a jealous rage, and was responsible for the distant, hysterical screams, the weeping, the rampant random gunfire.

But this was neither here nor there, to Mr. Banff. He rushed down the hall in the opposite direction, climbed the stairs to the seventh floor, and scrambled to the whore's room.

The door was ajar. Inside, he found the room empty and in disarray. She had departed hastily and, it appeared, for good.

The only trace of his beloved was on the night table. A phonebook had been thrown open and a number had been scribbled down.

More gunshots blazed in the distance. Mr. Banff ripped the page from the book, stuffed it in his coat pocket, ran into the hall and bounded antelope-like down the stairs, hearing eerie sounds of violence below echoed and amplified through the stairwell as if through a giant Victrola speaker.

Bursting through the lobby door, he froze as he observed the dark-skinned man with the beret and the dwarf hotel clerk standing in the center of the

carpet engaged in mortal combat. They were wrestling to the death, fighting for possession of the dwarf's gun.

In a lobby chair next to them sat the tiny head waiter who had caused a scene at Mr. Banff's restaurant. His hands and feet had been tied with a phone cord and he watched the battle red-faced, struggling to free himself from telephonic bondage.

The dwarf, it was now apparent, had gone completely and scintillatingly insane, and had, for reasons unknown, embarked on a highly successful, high-profile kidnapping and shooting spree.

The two short, dark-skinned men grappled violently over the gun. Their bloodless knuckles twisted, pushed and pulled, until the weapon perversely boomeranged, pinwheeling through the air, and landed in a potted plant by the restrooms.

At this point, the head waiter ripped his arms and legs free of the curly phone cord and dove into the deadly fracas. The three short men began a triptych of punching and pummeling each other across the lobby with tiny, furious fists.

Mr. Banff grabbed the gun from the potted dirt, and, in a strange, mindless reflex inspired by an innate revulsion towards weaponry, rushed into the restroom, and illogically attempted to flush the weapon down the toilet.

Unfortunately, the toilet was out of service; for upon his pulling of the handle, the porcelain dragon monstrously gurgled, vocally prefacing a new horror: an ungainly backwash of unspeakable, earthy muck, regurgitated from the plutonian depths of the bowl, rapidly swelling and overflowing in a disgusting, effluvial stench across the entire lobby floor.

This was the last straw for Mr. Banff's presence of mind. Intense emotional strain, sexual temptation, loss of love, scaling deadly heights, ducking automatic weaponry-- none of these perturbed Mr. Banff's presence of mind as did this, being face to face with the rank repulsiveness of execrable, sulfurous duty, in combination with the untimely malfunction of that which was assigned to control and contain this malignant flow. In fine, this sudden confrontation with his crapulous *bête noir* drove Mr. Banff over the edge of mental endurance. His sanity, to speak plainly for once, briefly left him. He shrieked an unholy invective to the gods (?) and went careening at full speed, his arms flailing like a mechanical ape, through the lobby. Screaming kamikaze invective, he dove Superman-like through a closed window, smashing headlong through the glass and falling into a filthy dumpster in the alley below. His overloaded nervous system short-circuited his brain, and he limply and pathetically passed out in the heap of trash.

As the three short, dark-skinned fighters were at the time engaged in geometrically choking each other to death in a triangle of strangulation, they did not notice Mr. Banff's quaint departure.

For the time being, then, we shall leave Mr. Banff lying peacefully, alone and undetected, under rain-sodden and rotting cardboard boxes, fruit rinds, newspapers, broken glass, excrement-filled diapers, used prophylactics, assorted fly larvae and coffee grinds, to his own devices, to dream, perhaps, of other dim, distant worlds wherein he may again espy the gentle orb of his angelic Negress' face, in yet another exotic illusion of form within form, in yet another poem, in yet another book.

PROPOSITION EIGHT
The Prize-Winning Shriek
or
The Terror of Regret

Quantum packets of light, or so-called photons, berated Mr. Banff's fruit-fly covered cheeks, in approximate analogy to the formula $e = hv$, wherein e , the energy content of a quantum of radiation, is equal to v , the frequency of that radiation, times h , Planck's beloved constant, that is, unless quantum theory is an elegant mathematical stack of incomplete fucking yak shit. Be that as it may, the dawn of a glorious new quantized day awakened Mr. Banff in his dumpster motel. Whatever had happened to the dwarf sniper, the kidnapped head waiter, the earringed dark-skinned beret-fancier, the poesy-infected street-urchin, he knew not, he cared not. His mind was smoking with single, burning directive, that he must call the number scribbled on the Portuguese Negress' phone book, and call it immediately. This numerical code through a labyrinthine length of wire, was his Thesean thread leading him through the mythological maze of space-time to his beloved.

Mr. Banff disrobed from his multicolored garments of trash.

Baptized by dark, evocative dreams, featuring forty days and nights of torrential rains of sluicing fire, he had opened his eyes with pleasure to the surrounding scum. Now, like a grateful Noah, he disembarked from his cast-iron ark and bade fond farewell to its genesis of organisms: fetid chicken bones, piles of dismembered dog and cat carcasses from

delightful, grant-money-producing and utterly worthless all-American university vivisection experiments, inedible cattle organs, such as brains, bullocks, hooves and hairy scrotal sacs, and many other fine species of New Age wildlife. But why dwell upon these wayward particulars, when Mr. Banff must pediculate to a telephone booth post-haste?

Here he is, then, in a beautiful Bell Telephone cheap plastic halfshell--designed, like all corporate design/function priorities, to insure that posh customer comfort appeared, on the surface, to rank above posh corporate greed-- therein leans Mr. Banff, unfolding the yellow paper, and dialing the number with a trembling digit.

An operator clicked on, informing him that this was an 800 coded vendor line and requesting his credit card number. Nonplused, yet resigned to his fate, Mr. Banff complied. He was then connected to a tape recording of a raspy-voiced man who told Mr. Banff that he must be over eighteen years of age, and that he would be connected to the Live Playmate Partyline in just one moment.

After a pause, the line clicked again, and Mr. Banff was stricken with terror as he now heard a gaggle of men remonstrating an enthusiastic female interlocutor to perform imaginary ancillary reproductive behavior upon their penile, scrotal and rectal cavities, or vice versa. It was not that Mr. Banff was stricken with a terror of revulsion due to the bankruptcy of human dignity inherent in the very nature of the Live Playmate Partyline, for it must be said that Mr. Banff secretly found these clichéd, simple-minded conversations of greatest interest, relative to his general lack of interest in clichéd, simpleminded conversations; and, indeed, Mr. Banff, a severe individual, despite his feathered Scottish hat, at any rate considered bankruptcy as inherent in the very nature of human dignity. Rather, Mr.

Banff was stricken with a terror of regret, due to the fact that he instantly recognized the Playmate's husky, sensual, soporific voice.

It was, unmistakably, the distinct palaver of his beloved Portuguese Negress.

He listened intently for thirty seconds, trying to suppress this terror of regret, trying to collect his thoughts so that he may address his beloved with more effective rhetoric than during their unsatisfactory exchange in the dwarf-sniper's hotel. He had to think quickly; his three minute call was almost up. Impulsively, he tried to feebly interrupt the college of wang-whackers, but his uncertain mumblings were understandably ignored. He knew that he must act decisively and immediately. He formulated an improvised plan, and immediately opened his mouth to speak:

But to quote the speech of Mr. Banff at this juncture in time would be a cruel invasion of privacy. For are not Words of Love, intuitively rushing forth from the lips to the air, viewed at a more reserved moment in time, when they may lie naked as frozen words upon the page, seen as foolish homely splutterings, instead of the sacred truths from a realm in the etc?

This biographer's role is not to stand in judgment upon this vital question; rather it is his role to deftly record Mr. Banff's solution to this delicate problem. For what Mr. Banff-standing, staggering, baring his soul before the legal change-refusing scam-machine, the comfortably-designed, cracked, spittle-spewed-upon, Bell Telephone half-shell--expressed to the gaggle of wheezing chicken-chokers, was a sudden and piercing scream, a pragmatic scream of long duration, which served to effectively silence his lonely telephone companions, momentarily rattling their very hearts and souls, and therein causing many a source of smegmatic emission to seize

up like quaking automotive engines devoid of fuel and oil on a desolate road under a cold, orbless night.

The deafening scream thus concluded, there ensued a crackling, hissing, partyline silence as all involved listened intently, twenty hands frozen upon twenty pulsating members. At length, the Portuguese Negress broke the silence by tentatively venturing, rather sweetly, to ask if someone on the line was perhaps ill, or experiencing a heretofore unheard-of cock-embolism.

A few of the salami-squeezers, safe from reproach in their private Ejaculatoriums, giggled nervously in the background. Mr. Banff, having caught his breath after the prize-winning shriek, forced himself to speak, loudly and quickly, to his beloved at the other end of the line. He identified himself-- rapidly so that she could not interrupt before he had had his say and proceeded to express his happiness at having found her and reiterated his overture of True Love.

But the word love had not for a googol of a second left his lips before the Portuguese Negress, her voice shifting dramatically from her former sensual whisper to the first-gear grinding of a backhoe transmission, bitterly cursed his Very Being in foul, but imaginative, terms, which served to elicit a barrage of delighted hoots and catcalls from the reanimated jury of jack-offs. Mr. Banff, shocked at this response to his impulsive, but, he thought, well-spoken entreaty, splutteringly managed to briefly interject that he must speak to her alone, in person, to tell her --

The Playmate Partyline automatically clicked off. His three minutes were up. Desperate, he called again, imagining as he dialed the cackling, japing howls rippling in his wake among the onismic group. The line,

however, was busy. He called again. Busy again. He called again. Busy again. This went on and on monotonously, too many times to claim the Reader's indulgence. For example: he called again, busy again; he called again, busy again; he called again, busy again; he called again, busy again; he called again, busy again; he called again, busy again; he called again, still busy; he called again, busy again; he called again, busy again; he called again, busy again; he called yet again, and the line, unfortunately for Mr. Banff, whose brow was by now dotted with the dripling sweat of rejection, was busy again.

He slammed down the phone in an uncharacteristic fury and paused to concentrate. He knew that he must speak to her in person. But most importantly, he was resolved that nothing would stop him, for nothing could stop the force he felt welling up ferociously inside him, the fundamental metaphysical force analogous, as previously explained, to material attraction, magnetism, and gravity-- namely, the Force of Love, of which much has been tediously and ad nauseum scribbled elsewhere.



PROPOSITION NINE
The Prurient Legacy of Alexander Graham Bell
or
Rows of Erotic Amputees

Now we are walking with Mr. Banff as he exits the commuter railway stop to a suburban square. It is some hours later. He peers at a piece of paper in his hands, surveys the street signs, and walks briskly down the street. He reaches a dour ranch-style house, a building embarrassed by its shitty imitation brickwork. He checks the address and knocks crisply on the bruised door.

An insolent five year-old girl with a chocolate-smearred face answers. Her look is piercing and primitive. Mr. Banff feels under attack by lasers on the receiving end of the little girl's glare. Mr. Banff asks if he may talk to her Mommy. In answer, the girl, sneering like an arrogant imbecile, opens the door, and Mr. Banff strides past her, pushing her sticky flesh aside with his elbow as he spans the threshold. Children, he knew, were tortured albeit innocent creatures, obstacles to be politely but unerringly repulsed.

Inside, he enters the living room, and sees a row of seven notably unattractive women. The word notably is to be given great weight in this sentence. These notably ugly women are obviously chatting on a bank of telephones.

We now abjure the present tense narrative for the past, due to annoyance and fatigue. Thus:

Mr. Banff walked up and down the row, clearing his throat, attempting to claim the attention of one and all.

But the women ignored him, continuing their chatter, suggesting that such entries by businesslike men was not an uncommon occurrence.

For here was the harem of heuristic whores, engaged in verbal copulation with its cultic congregation of ceiling-plasterers. The Portuguese Negress, Mr. Banff wanly observed, was not among the ungainly group.

But let us paint the picture for you, Patient Reader, in greater and more colorful detail:

The row of seven Playmates proper consisted of three distinctly deformed near-bald cataleptic amputees in wheelchairs, three severely overweight, elderly, chain-smoking women with plaster-thick make-up consisting of nine hundred pounds cumulative and one hundred eighty years cumulative, and two wafer-thin ghastly pale somnambulistic teenage junkies with bruised veins and arteries evocative of lush jungle flora blooming fractal-like from their armature- and leg-joints.

One of the overweight elderly women, who had for some reason shaved off her eyebrows and then redrawn microscopically-thin new ones on with a grease pencil, finished her breathy call and flicked on a breathy tape-recorded voice in her stead. Seeming to rudely ignore Mr. Banff, she rose with surprising agility, heading for the adjacent toilet, and as she passed by Mr. Banff, she spat a brief question as to his identity. Unselfconsciously, and displaying great informality, she mounted the toilet seat without closing the bathroom door, lit another cigarette, and stared suspiciously at Mr. Banff.

Mr. Banff presumed correctly that she was the boss of the operation, and therefore, after identifying himself, he inquired as to the location of his beloved.

Puffing a cloud of smoke his way, she refused to comply and hissed for him to get out.

Mr. Banff rose, removed a crisp one hundred dollar bill from his billfold and set it atop the lavender, sweet-smelling toilet paper roll.

Grabbing the bill immediately, she paused to study Mr. Banff through slitted eyes and a haze of smoke. Then, she grinned, tossed her head back and cackled like a witch, revealing an uneven row of three, gray, tombstone-like front teeth. Laughing as she disembarked the toilet and tamped the lavender, sweet-smelling toilet paper to her leathery urinary tract, she told Mr. Banff that she had fired the Portuguese Negress only hours before because of a monetary dispute. Apparently the Portuguese Negress became unreasonably excited after receiving a psychotic call that morning while acting as Interlocutor for her Masturbatory Minstrel Show, and demanded more money for her aggravation. This request incensed her eyebrow-beautified boss to such fiery perimeters that Mr. Banff's beloved was thrown out on her cleft ear. Mr. Banff asked for his beloved's name.

At this, the fat female ogre again tossed back her head again and laughed heartily, her thick, jiggling neck vibrating like a bag full of hungry maggots. She said, There ain't no names here honey and all's I know is she called herself Tangerine and sometimes Shareena on the phone and there ain't no forwardin' address and there's the door now get the fuck out o' here pal and don't come back or I'll call the cops what are friends o' mine and don't think I won't.

Mr. Banff primly donned his Scottish hat and strode past the laser-eyed little girl and curtly departed, taking in the cool sunset breeze as the clapping music from his Italian shoes accompanied his deep, soothing breaths of the dapper night air.

Tangerine, he thought. Shareena. Cleft ear.



PROPOSITION TEN
The Unexpected Tenderness
or
The Secondary Doppelganger

Mr. Banff noted (reluctantly) that he needed assistance in seeking his beloved. A dogmatic believer in Entropy and Scarcity in a Hostile Universe, he considered that his resources as a novice seeker of whores was sorely limited and rapidly depleting.

Thus Mr. Banff purchased a daily newspaper and inspected the serried pages of classified advertisements under "Services Offered":

Abattoirs, Barristers, Cleaning Services, Dentists-- Detectives.

His gaze focused upon a neatly encapsulated block of print:

COMPLETE PRIVATE DETECTIVE SERVICES

Detc. G. Gant

20 yrs. exper.

Soldier of War

Complete Discretion

Hours later, Mr. Banff stopped before a door marked as follows: G. GANT PRIVATE DETECTIVE - KNOCK FOUR TIMES. He straightened the collar of his impeccable pin-striped suit and then knocked four times upon the word KNOCK. The grainy wood of the door unexpectedly felt sensual to the touch of his knuckles, a psychological effect, he surmised,

whereby the smooth dark texture likened, in his metaphoric mind, to his beloved's epidermis, but in actuality, it was the result of the psycho-gastric effect of his stomach at that moment digesting a curdled, fermented combination of beer, liverwurst, crackers and black bread.

After knocking, he encountered a long, considered pause. This was always a point of contention for Mr. Banff, for what temporal parameters of waiting, subsequent to knocking, constituted the conclusive reality of No Reply? What was, he quaintly mused, the nature of threshold such that an apogee in time could be scientifically counted upon? But these Zeno-like conundrums counted, in the end, not a whit to Mr. Banff, who pragmatically recognized that there was, indeed, nothing relativistic about the question, no, for one simply knocked and waited.

There was, however, it appeared, No Reply. Perturbed, Mr. Banff experimentally grasped the doorknob. Unexpectedly the door itself yielded and swung forward in a sleek, geometrically aesthetic arc upon the inner carpet, and Mr. Banff in effect became one with the door, careening in with it, until he stopped short in mid-careen, face to face with a queer, queer man looking up at him from behind a battered, coffee-stained, filth-covered desk.

Now, in saying that this gentleman was a "queer" man, one should not suppose that what is meant is that he was of a homosexual bent (although who it to say what diabolical glandular manifestations bloomed in the unspeakable garden of his youth?), but rather that his overall demeanor in eyeing Mr. Banff, who was after all an intruder, took on a quizzical, one may even say queer, arrangement of the mouth, eyelids and eyebrows which, in its totality, communicated a gestalt of Queerness.

Thus it was that Mr. Banff, flushed with self-consciousness, was instantly put upon the defensive, faced with what he perceived to be a subtly antagonistic aggressor, as a result of having challenged forcefully the detective's territorial imperative.

But, such literary flak and flotsam aside, Mr. Banff deigned to humbly excuse himself, display the newspaper advertisement, and mumble a lame, half-assed introduction.

The detective-- for, indeed, it was he-- coughed a jet-propelled, whiskey-inspired hack of virulent phlegm into a handkerchief, missing his target in part, the mucousy remainder delicately spinning through the air like a microscopic pizza and landing, in a sticky splotch of amoebic snot, upon the knee of Mr. Banff's impeccable pinstripe pants. The detective did not notice, or ignored, this small, bulbous, dayglo-green addition to Mr. Banff's attire, and Mr. Banff, for his part, found himself in a quandary as to whether he should instantly remove the detestable speck, or allow it to sit, expelling untold microscopic viral monsters, in his imagination seeping, seeping through his pants, and soaking, soaking deeply within the defenseless purity of his delicately hairy leg-pores, wherein it would he presumed germinate and unleash, Philip-Wylie-like, he surmised, yet a new generation of microscopic vipers to slowly infiltrate his bloodstream and cascade ominously into his unsuspecting brain, and so forth.

The spot of phlegm therefore forthwith became the focus and be-all of Mr. Banff's total concentration throughout the following, making it difficult for him to focus upon what, after all, were business-like banalities.

The Detective Gant asked Mr. Banff what he wanted. In response, Mr. Banff uncharacteristically hemmed and hawed, realizing to his astonishment that he was unable to clearly vocalize the simple

statement that he was in love and must find his lost beloved. This subconscious reluctance, he hypothesized, was perhaps due to the fact that, to his fixed sensibilities, his was an unmanly and thus unseemly admission, between two men.

Thus the detective, ever ready to liberate his languishing inductive skills from an oppressive slump of inactivity and boredom, asked:

"Is it a woman?"

Mr. Banff hemmed and hawed an affirmative.

"And you would like," the detective continued, "one of the following-- to have her found, or to have her followed."

Mr. Banff hemmed and hawed the former.

Champing the end of a cigar off and spitting it onto the wall --- where numerous other cigar shards were arranged in a visceral saliva collage (reminiscent of the left third of Picasso's Guernica), this done undoubtedly to impress upon Mr. Banff his expansive, artistic approach to problem-solving--- briskly rattled off his financial requirements per diem.

Money, of course, to Mr. Banff, it should be noted, was no object.

The detective then extracted from Mr. Banff the details regarding his beloved's disappearance, the chance assignation in the subway car, the adventures at the dwarf-sniper's hotel, the Playmate Partyline etc. etc., and then requested a description of the Portuguese Negress's appearance, habits and spiritual substance. As Mr. Banff did not readily reply, Det. Gant artfully used the awkward silence to light another fat cigar, and thus add to their conversation a deft combination of dramatic weight, continuity and momentum.

Mr. Banff was serene. He had but one answer to this last question, and silently handed a small, square piece of paper to the smoke-blowing detective.

Gant stared at the yellowed scrap. It was, in fact, a photo of Banff's wife, taken twenty years ago, at the height of their youngish love, a picture which was imprinted within a deep aortic recess of his heart.

The detective studied the photo with unexpected tenderness. He then studied Mr. Banff's face mysteriously, tucked the photo into his jacket, and requested his first week's payment in advance.

Mr. Banff immediately wrote out a check, ripped it carefully from his checkbook on its line of perforation, and extended it through the stale, smoke-sogged air to the detective. And here, in looking directly into the detective's eyes for the first time since his self-conscious entrance, and as their fingers touched in grasping the karma-creating check, Mr. Banff noted a very peculiar thing:

The detective, in Mr. Banff's subjective opinion, strangely resembled Mr. Banff himself, not only in appearance, but also in idiosyncratic gesture and mannerism. Before him was the face Mr. Banff had saucily shaved for forty years, the teeth he had meticulously brushed, the hair he had secretly colored, the same lustrous black eyes he had thrillingly confronted in moments of silent, uncomfortable self-examination, before an unexpected mirror.

It should be noted that Mr. Banff did not attribute any mystical connotations, as it were, to this unseemly coincidence. To him, it was simply an exceedingly striking resemblance, and since the detective, in taking the check and seeing Mr. Banff out the door, made no acknowledgment whatsoever of any such corporeal parity, neither then

did Mr. Banff who, above all, perceived himself--- despite his recent partyline shriek, his scaling of the dwarf-sniper's hotel, and his diving insanely through the plate-glass window--- to be the King of Unflappable Reserve.

Such, then, was the first meeting between Mr. Banff and the detective Gant, a meeting which sets our deft plot firmly in motion, and which now smugly concludes, secure in its subtle motif-reinforcing glory.



PROPOSITION ELEVEN

The Bouquet of Senior Citizenry Intercedes

or

The Geometrical Chimera

The Lord of Molecules, the personified essence of the crystalline structure of matter, formed a white, bubbly cake of dried salival foam at the edges of Mr. Banff's mouth as he sat at his desk and talked tensely for hour after hour on the fucking telephone.

Mr. Banff deeply despised the telephone, and would have liked nothing better, in the twisted bowels of his psyche, to see sweating men and women brutally stuffing rolls of dimes up the rectal cavity of Alexander Graham Bell's corpse.

Yet such colonic fantasies aside, Mr. Banff, above all, was a businessman. And via the telephone, he learned the shocking news that the Tapioca Factory, in point of fact, was in a state of corporate crisis. Due to an error (?) in Mr. Banff's absence, by Mr. Carstairs, the Assistant Comptroller, a new ingredient, a sulfur-based emulsifier now found in every tapioca box containing the New Improved Recipe!, already distributed nationwide in the tens of thousands, had that day been the basis of a class action suit instigated by hundreds of male Senior Citizens, who claimed that after digesting the New Improved Recipe!, they became permanently incapable of penile erection, and in its place, became permanently subject to nightly fits of prolonged gastric flatulence of such an overwhelmingly foul, sulfurous stench that there were documented cases of spouses and acquaintances who, after passing out from the

piquant bouquet, thereby sustained flatulence-related injuries, the suit documented, to the head, face, neck, back, arms, torso, legs, and feet.

The Attorney General's Office had been reluctantly forced to inform the Tapioca firm that they must immediately recall all products containing the emulsifier, and be prepared to make creative financial settlements with the hordes of newly-graduated attorneys who instinctively flocked to the aid of the stinking, erectionless seniors in question, in order for the attorneys to make enough money to purchase vital accessory equipment for their new yachts, limousines and private planes, such as quadraphonic CD/DVD/wide-screen-HD-TV ensembles, imported burnished-baby-seal-skin furniture upholstery, leopard-fur-padded toilet seats, and other All-American, consumer-orgasmic, pieces-of-shit equivalents.

Furthermore, it was Mr. Banff and Mr. Banff alone who, despite his distinct absence at the time of Carstair's suspicious blunder--- for Carstairs, long-jealous of Mr. Banff's superiority in the Tapioca Hierarchy, quit the same day--- must as Chief Comptroller take full responsibility and do whatever possible to save the jutting flesh of his company's exposed buttocks.

This had been a dour day--- Banff reflected as he sat listening to attorney after attorney spewing endless streams of legal gibberish via his telephone--- in the life of Mr. Banff. His mind had set aside, for the nonce, his growing dissatisfaction with Detective Gant's weeks of failure in stalking his lost beloved prostitute. Gant's once-daily reports had trickled down to once a week, and had then disintegrated into an ominous silence, broken only by Mr. Banff's calls to Gant's office, which emptied meaninglessly from the phone line into the nebulous electronic quagmire

of Gant's answering machine. In storming across town to Gant's office that morning (prior to the afternoon's debacle), Mr. Banff had found a note affixed to Gant's door reading:

BANFF
NOTHING YET.
G.

These terse words burnt laser-like holes into the soul, such as it was, of Mr. Banff. But there was nothing more that he could do, save hire another detective to search in turn for Detective Gant, which conjured in Mr. Banff's mind the deadly conceit of an Infinite Regression, from which escape, via linear logic, is virtually (?) impossible, save through an annoying subset of metalogic. No, he must confront Gant directly, which would occur--- when? He knew not. All he knew with certainty was that there were more concrete matters simultaneously pressing upon his mind, for here he was, in his semi-plush office, hearing the seductive drone of lawyer after lawyer wafting through the same despised electric conduit which formerly entertained the previously-described Partyline for mock-copulation-fanciers.

There was a curious side-effect concerning the droning entourage of lawyers in Mr. Banff's defenseless ear, and this was that after a time, the endless drone became, as it were, akin to a quasi-religious, monk-like chant, which unexpectedly soothed and relieved Mr. Banff's tension-filled mind; he was, as it were, lulled by the beautifully monotonous babbling into an insightful, trance-like stupor, in which the microscopic structure and motion of the gigaplex of simultaneously-firing neurons in his brain seemed analogous to the macrocosmic structure and motion of the galaxies themselves. As one of the legal idiot-savants sang his elegant paean to

linear form, the images in Mr. Banff's mind of swirling, glistening, exploding stars and swirling, glistening, firing, neurons superimposed as One, filling his holographic brain-bag with a double-exposure of the ultimate, intimate equilibrium of the Large and the Small. Immersed in cosmic lap-dissolves, ironically catalyzed by the attorneys chanting like monks, Mr. Banff, zombie-like, hung up the phone. The phone immediately rang again. It was yet another lawyer and Mr. Banff listened again with religious vacuity, falling again into a mystic stupor and again hanging up. The phone rang again and the mundane metaphysical cycle continued.

A humid day, the chattering of garbled legalese seemed amplified in its weight and intensity by the air around him and wore on him like a soggy greatcoat. As the calls continued unabated, it was evident to Mr. Banff, even through the rigors of his stupor, that the tapioca firm's future was becoming increasingly negatively ephemeral. The barrage of erection-vs.-flatulence-oriented calls continued unceasingly, directed to Mr. Banff's desk, and tolled the bell of tapiocal doom. It was obvious to Mr. Banff that a barrage of litigation would ensue which would drain the firm's resources for eons, that consumers would cease purchasing their products, and that the enterprise, in short, would be, inevitably, in ruins.

In the middle of the present lawyer's rant, Mr. Banff had had enough. He perfunctorily slammed down the phone and stared dolefully out the window, thinking not of the firm's demise, nor of the unfortunate legions of smell-infested old men, but rather of his mysterious, missing beloved.

The phone rang again. Thankfully, it was not an attorney. Rather, it was Hermes. Hermes was the aloof, diminutive, Latin clerk who managed Mr. Banff's other business enterprise, Jinx's Joke Shop and Doggie Kennel.

The Doggie Kennel Mr. Banff had acquired by chance. What had happened was this: he had leased the Doggie Kennel with the understanding that he would throw out the doggies, so that they could be put to death elsewhere, and then transform the auspices into his life-long dream, Jinx's Joke Shop. For here we gain an insight into a hidden aspect of Mr. Banff's personality via an image that had haunted him since youth: himself, in the pride of adulthood, standing in front of a wildly colorful sign displaying a clown's grinning face and the words JINX'S JOKE SHOP curving over his head. When at last the leasing papers were signed, he had had to leave the room, where he lay on the floor and wept with joy --- his ghostly, boyhood mirage now realized in orgasmic material actuality.

But, at the last moment, a loophole appeared on the surface of his dream, an insidious catch not mentioned in the lease: namely, the kennel could not be transformed into a joke shop without first doling out vast bribes and payoffs to an entire underground civilization of patrolling parasites: inspectors, assistants to inspectors, relatives of inspectors, local police-mobsters, local asshole-politicians, friends of local asshole-politicians, and relatives of local asshole-politicians.

At the time, such an expense would have broken Mr. Banff's otherwise plush bank account to the bone. For he had already purchased all of his joke shop stock in advance and was thus left, it seemed, holding the bag. For days, Mr. Banff was ensconced in a deep depression. But, a business genius of sorts, he finally contrived a solution of compromise. He contrived to make the front of the Doggie Kennel into a smaller Jinx's Joke

Shop, keeping the Doggie Kennel in the back, filled with stray dogs, which were either placed in homes (rarely) or, after a proscribed waiting period, put to happy death by injection (usually).

Hermes, the manager for both sections of Mr. Banff's side-business, spent all of his spare time, both in the shop and at home, smoking marijuana cigarettes and constructing mathematical magic square-grids of elegantly fertile numbers which gave birth to the same sum vertically, horizontally, and diagonally. The construction of Magic Squares was Hermes' passion. He constructed grids and figures of all shapes and sizes in an attempt to realize his blazing (and rather banal) intuition, a mathematical fantasy of which he often spoke in a trembly voice to a bored and patronizing Mr. Banff.

Hermes' intuition was that $22/7$ ths, or $\frac{22}{7}$, the Divine Irrational, was not random in its interminableness, as the textbooks unanimously ejaculated, but rather represented an intricate coded pattern, that pattern being the consecutive diagonals of a specialized and interrelated series of cubic magic squares.

This geometrical chimera, in Hermes' mind, which came to him while watching TV in a profoundly vivid stupor as an adolescent, was his waking obsession, for he saw that if such were the case, then the Irrationals, which drove the Pythagoreans mad by transforming their transcendent Harmony into meaningless Chaos, would shock the brooding face of atheistic science, revealing chance operations as illusory, in that the essence of the universe perceived through the mirror of man's mind was not meaningless, but a deeper order of intelligence, the level of Chaos perceived being in direct correspondence to the level of disorganization in the perceiver's mental acumen, and that this proof

exposed, in the racking sedimentary shales of the brain presumably housing Hermes' higher consciousness, via limp-wristed logical analysis itself, that the universe could be logically considered as, in essence, a virtual Being of Infinitely Subtle Integrity and Order.

Despite the religiosity of his pseudomathematica, Hermes was a business manager of unparalleled, in Mr. Banff's opinion, worth. For many were the times when lines of customers clamored at the modest Joke Shop counter for manufactured jokes, just as Hermes was in the back supervising canine death-injections. And it tugged at Mr. Banff's heart to see the dedication with which Hermes demonstrated the various boxes of dick- and vagina-joke contraptions, while simultaneously strapping down and administering death serums to the whining and spastically twitching dogs.

For Mr. Banff would have fired Hermes long ago--- due to Mr. Banff's distaste for the clerk's blatant chain-smoking of sickly-sweet marijuana cigarettes --- if both shops had not been run so smoothly and efficiently by the otherwise spaced-out, mathematical crank. Indeed, it was Hermes who conceived of an idea which brought the most business ever into the joke-shop fold. His inspired plan was this:

When a pair of male and female dogs exhibited heat characteristics, that is, when a female exuded a musky vaginal mucous, inspiring in a male the extrusion of a delicate, pink penile gland through the folds of its scrotum (while at the same time enthusiastically humping at the bars of the cage itself), then Hermes quickly placed the pair of excited canines into the front picture window of Jinx's Joke Shop, and there the dogs would hump for hours, until they finally collapsed in a furry heap of copulatory exhaustion.

This, Hermes' sensational advertising gimmick, drew crowds of cajoling spectators, who were then inspired to enter the shop and purchase boxes of dick- and vagina-joke contraptions.

But now, back in the Present Moment of our Narrative, alone with Mr. Banff in his office, Hermes' voice on his telephone receiver trembled uncontrollably. It crossed Mr. Banff's mind that the nerdy clerk may have just cracked the Pi Code and was breathless with mathematical emotion-- but no. It was evident that something was wrong, that he was suppressing an hysterical interlude, and this was uncharacteristic of the otherwise introspective and spaced-out clerk. Hermes croaked in constrained, almost weeping tones that Mr. Banff must come down to the joke shop at once.

In the background noise of the joke shop, Mr. Banff heard something strange. Accompanying the pathetic howls of the caged dogs -- all of whom knew intuitively that they were doomed -- was the ominous sound of something loudly hissing, hissing vehemently. And all at once, in Mr. Banff's mind, popped a memory of a scene he witnessed long ago in Kansas City:

He recalled a vast audience of furious, humorless lesbians loudly hissing at the stage, whereupon a hilariously masochistic and utterly fucked Miss America pageant was stiffly plodding to its sterile, mechanical and hilariously machismo conclusion.

Mr. Banff remembered sitting in the audience, the only man in a churning sea of hissing, largely short-haired and thick-torsoed, females. And like the mystical insight he had experienced earlier that day from the erection-vs.-flatulence-oriented attorneys, the endless drone in his mind became, as it were, symbolic of the universe itself ripping open within him;

for here was the sound of the ripping: the snake, the archetypal penis, issuing forth from men-hating women, towards a line of women smiling in their underwear, enthusiastically and gratefully humiliating themselves.

It was this swirl of occult imagery that swept Mr. Banff away, away, into the roaring, threshing fissure between temporal universes, the snaking breath of creation hissing around him, through him, encapsulating him like a cocoon, from which he soon broke free (?) into nirvana, a butterfly, fluttering into the cool, clear air of a far, far better land.

Or so it seemed, to Mr. Banff.



PROPOSITION TWELVE
The Secret of the Small, Angry Corpse
or
Tyrannosaurus Attack

Much has been made in the imaginary private sectors of this book concerning Mr. Banff's peculiar mode of walking from place to place, so much so that we shall not dally upon the subject within this paragraph a moment longer.

Mr. Banff walked his peculiar walk, his abdomen (housing his lower, soap-opera chakra) clenched with apprehension, towards Jinx's Joke Shop and Doggie Kennel. He was a block away, close enough to hear the familiar muffled howls from the dogs in their cages smelling their own death, when he smelled the odor of smoldering fright-wigs, a bouquet unmistakable to those sensitive to the arcana of the joke shop industry.

He rushed, sweating, around the corner and cast frantic eyes down the block towards his shop.

A pack of yipping dogs barreled him over and disappeared around the corner. He jumped to his feet, looked towards the shop, from which more dogs were escaping willy-nilly, and stared in amazement, his flesh trembling *adagio*.

He immediately clutched his throat in shock -- an eccentric mannerism peculiar to Mr. Banff in moments of paroxysm, a mannerism newly introduced into this book, in order to more fully express the quixotic, exotic personality of Mr. Banff, often difficult to depict literally, due to the numerate impracticability of recording the hundreds of colorful, cartoon-like facial and digital expressions constantly exhibited by Mr.

Banff during the course of a single page of raw, biographical data -- and bellowed a choked, halting, broken scream, such as that emitted by various screaming comic actors as the ejaculatory, onomatopoeic, anti-aphoristic catch-phrases of their acts, or, alternatively, such as that squawked by the blue-nosed heron, during peak pubescence, or, alternatively, such as that screeched, bawled or groaned by numerous other noise-producing organisms.

For there, at the end of the block, bursting surrealistically through the splintered roof of his joke shop, was a gigantic, prehistoric tyrannosaurus. The monster's cavernous rib-cage was gorily exposed, due to the fact that the beast's stuccolike hide had been grotesquely ripped off its chest, apparently as it raised its monstrous height up through the roof of the little shop.

It was a strange instant of the impossible become real, or so it seemed to Mr. Banff. Whence came the dinosaur, and how could it exist in this time frame, circa 2000 years in western calendaric delineation, in what up until this point has been a relatively realistic (although subjectively boondoggled) literary record?

As he staggered closer, Mr. Banff saw that his second surmise, concerning the ceiling ripping through the beast's chest, was in error. For a steaming metal projectile of huge proportions, having shot through the monster, was lodged between its tattered, decimated sternum, blotched with burns and scars.

Still clutching his throat, Mr. Banff broke into an epileptic gait, and soon stood directly in front of his shop, looking up hypnotically at the vast, Dali-like image.

No-- it was not, he now saw, a dinosaur. Nor was it a dinosauric skeleton. Rather, it was the exposed wooden, rib-like beams framing his joke shop, now blasted into shattered, smoking, skeletal ruins by the steam-hissing projectile. In the back room, the dogs howled listlessly.

A small crowd had gathered, chewing gum and watching bovine-like from behind a hastily-erected police barricade made of flimsy yellow tape. The explosion, or rather implosion, had apparently occurred within the hour, for myriad little eddies of heated dust still swirled turbulently through the charred, shredded debris of the little shop, the collapsed wooden beams groaning and singing an eerie, hissing dirge to the shop's memory, as monotonously described earlier, with reference to the crowd of furious lesbians.

Hermes, the small-statured, Latin, pot-addicted symmetry-freak, was seated dazedly on the sidewalk curb, his feet languishing in the gutter. He was weeping haltingly, pathetically, through a faceful of red and white fingers. Mr. Banff decided to forgo a parlay with his mad mathematical manager, hurried past him, and forged his way through the demolished door and into his mangled shop.

Inside, Mr. Banff was stunned at the size of the black bullet lodged in the wreckage. Intensely curious, Mr. Banff's raised eyes narrowed as the identification was complete:

It seemed, in fact, to be the still-cooling, red-hot, battered nose-cone of a space ship, in appearance not unlike those fake-looking cones on strings in the early Buck Rogers reels, still playing for Mr. Banff, upon request, in the brain cell movie theater which stored his ghostly youth.

The missile had only partially penetrated to the back rooms, and Hermes had hastily opened all of the dog cages during the debacle, freeing the drooling prisoners to the wonder of the plush alleyways.

A lone policeman, short and olive-skinned, stood amid the limbo-like desolation. He was experimentally tapping the length of the nose cone with his pen and taking notes, while a voice on his belt radio howled and tweaked that reinforcements were on the way.

Mr. Banff cleared his throat. The policeman turned stiffly, pivoting towards him like a frozen ballet-dancer, or like a disturbed arctic auk. The cop glared at Mr. Banff, who identified himself, and in a voice replete with anger and amazement, Mr. Banff asked what the hell had happened. The cop stiffened, his black-and-white brain stymied on conflicting procedures and regulations, and finally warbled, through tight lips, that that information was classified. The cop ended their delightfully brief interpersonal dyad by brusquely turning away and officiously resuming his tapping on the hull.

Mr. Banff was strangely calm.

He knew the Rule of Success: to always appease saturnalian Fools and their beloved Rules, and then, with one's heart attuned to universal satire, secretly discard every fucking Rule, including the Rule of Success.

Thus, he backed circumspectly out of the cop's field of vision and, Trickster-like, tiptoed the other way around the monstrous projectile.

It was, one might say, a poetic moment, for Mr. Banff. He experienced one of those sweet lapses in consciousness in which that which we refer to as The Real Reality is seen as The Big Joke, as an arbitrary perspective of a peculiarly narrow, and whimsically stupid, focus.

Reaching the pointy bow of the huge ship, he observed that it had smashed directly into the shelves which housed his inventory of rubber novelty masks. The masks on this shelf depicted a pasty-faced caricature of the current pasty-faced, puppet-president of the delightfully-inane, peasant-raping multinational oil-electric-energy-banking conglomerate, known sarcastically as the United States, the sexy, exuberant, mondo-feudal nation, much like or better than others, of which Mr. Banff was a happy citizen.

Dozens of half-melted rubber presidential smiles stuck to the nose-cone peppering it with a Strange Attractor, transforming the tragic, scorched face of the decimated rocket into a delightful, peppy cartoon. To continue reaching for analogies, the scene subconsciously suggested a steaming, right-wing penis splashed with the remains of a melted, heat- and semen-churned prophylactic, although the symbolic one-to-one correspondence of the actual scene to right-wing coitus is, in the end, imperfect, in that extreme right-wing dicks (and, leave us not forget, extreme left-wing dicks) are always, without exception, minuscule. High above, on the blackened hull, he saw a hint of lettering. Keeping an eye on the cop still absorbed in his note-taking, Mr. Banff quietly grabbed a push broom from the wreckage, raised it to the nose cone and swept away, bit by bit, the film of charred sediment covering the letters. Gradually, an insignia appeared: a proud American flag waving stiffly above a NASA identification number.

This revelation he pondered deeply, stopping in his sweeping to allow himself a moment of obligatory amazement. He resumed his sweeping, and soon revealed a mysterious porthole above the flag, its glass reflecting and distorting the image behind him of

thousands of little spirals of joke shop smoke. But from his angle below, he could not see through the little window.

Mr. Banff tiptoed through a path in the splintered wood, retrieved a tall, smoking ladder from a corner and, keeping an eye on the cop, quietly propped it up against the ship. He ascended to the topmost, shakiest wrung, leaned forward and tried to peer through the smoke-clouded porthole.

The glass was obscured by soot. He scraped the blackness away with his sleeve, cupped his hands about his face, and squinted through the thick glass.

Mr. Banff's flesh rippled like violins in tremolo. He clutched his throat in throat-clutching astonishment. For inside was the dim outline of a tiny, inhuman creature. It wore a miniature space suit and sat motionless at a still-blinking control panel.

Stunned, Mr. Banff lit a match. The light penetrated osmosically through both the portal and the glass of the figure's helmet. Inside the helmet, Mr. Banff observed two candlelit eyes staring, wide-eyed, back at him.

He clutched his throat yet again, this time stifling a scream of abject terror.

He peered closer. The creature in the space suit stared at him. It was, Mr. Banff soon perceived, the stare of a creature stone dead. On the sleeve of its space suit was imprinted: "LITTLE SAMMY". He now identified the creature imbedded in the helmet--- it was the face of a deceased spider monkey.

Little Sammy had been, Mr. Banff surmised, an involuntary American test pilot, ripped from its Mother's jungle-scented back and

thrust into the plasma-speckled nothingness of Space. An early experimental flight, perhaps, he deduced, that had long ago gone awry.

Mr. Banff's mind envisioned the complete scenario before him: after circling the earth as an angry corpse for decades, Little Sammy had mindlessly performed a final metaphoric revenge, crashing uninvited through the roof of Jinx's Joke Shop and Doggie Kennel, freeing those poor helpless animals, and ground to a halt into the rubber faces of the rubber president. Aside from saving his innocent compatriots from death, Sammy's vengeance had transformed a myriad of homespun, presidential smiles into hateful, gargoylic sneers, and now on the twisted rubber lips, a poetically-inclined observer could read the proud, psychotic, quaternary Trade-Mark of extreme right-wing (and extreme left-wing) dementiae, as represented by the idiot president: the Fear of the subconscious, the fear of peaceful coexistence and, ultimately, the fear of unconditional love, which was symbolized by the strange, radiant, radical Christ-God, whose gentle face they hatefully adored.



[AUTHOR'S NOTE:

*This PDF constitutes Chapters 1-12,
the first half of the iridescent novel*

BECOMING ONE: What Men and Women Really Want.

*The novel in its entirety may be ordered
on the MAIL THIS TO ME AT ONCE page.]*