



Cauldron

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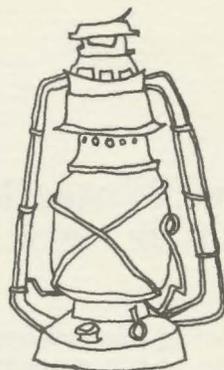
Cauldron

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Cover design by *Jane Hustoles*



Ten Minutes' Time

by LUCINDA NELSON

My head fell forward as we stopped; my forehead touched the cold, yellow-tinted plate glass window. I opened my eyes to the fuzzy grayness, and he was the first thing I saw. He was standing on the high bumper of an old red truck, leaning over into the motor with both of his arms buried to the elbows and his face hidden by the radiator. His baggy gray pants were rolled up in eight-inch cuffs; his greasy gray jacket hung loose. In back of him there was a grove of slender oak trees; back farther and to the left on the flat land was a grass-fronted Standard station at the other end of a broad paved space.

I covered a wide yawn with a cupped hand and stretched my legs as far as is possible in a bus seat. There was some rustling behind me, and I turned to watch as a man stood up in the aisle, smoothed the folds from the jacket of his wrinkle-resistant green suit with its three buttons buttoned, removed the natty little narrow brimmed hat which had been perched on his round head and threw it with self-conscious nonchalance at the luggage shelf. It hit on the edge and fell. He caught it on the rim at waist level, with one finger, but fumbled; the side of his hand flattened the crown against his leg with a panicked slap. His hands began to shake just a little as he pushed out its shape again and brushed the dents. He carefully placed it on the shelf, smoothed his jacket, straightened his tie, gingerly got down a paper and lowered himself back into his seat. He took three deep breaths.

The back of my seat was still down, so I could see the paper as he spread it out in his lap. It was a tabloid, and he had turned to the two-page "Hollywood News," which was liberally scattered with pictures of starlettes in second-skin dresses. He curled up the sides of it so that all anyone else could see was the front page with its huge headline: ATOMIC TESTS KNOCK OUT TELSTAR. He had to be a small-time salesman.

I sat up, yawning again, and looked around to see where the girl who had been sitting next to me had gone. She was sitting across the aisle now, facing the college man whose deep tan stood out against his white shirt, which was open at the neck, of course, with the long sleeves rolled up to the elbow. What was she saying?

"We can't communicate, none of us can," she said in a deep, almost tremulous voice with an Eastern accent as her misty dark eyes looked straight ahead, "It's

like . . . like . . . like we're each inside a transparent bubble. We float through life, and sometimes the bubbles touch, but *we* never do," and her eyes became dry and warm when she caught the strength of her simile.

His expression did not change as she spoke; his head was tipped up slightly, and he was watching her perfectly symmetrical, thin face through half-opened eyes. He brought the short cigarette he held between thumb and forefinger to his mouth, inhaled deeply, and breathed out the smoke slowly to the side, but his eyes never left her face.

"What a discussion to wake up in the middle of," I muttered as I pulled the back of my seat up and turned away. But it was no surprise. I'd had the feeling she was the "understand me" type since she had said, with uplifted eyes, when I had asked, that her destination was "the United States, as far as money and poetry will take me," which I could see from her ticket meant Cleveland.

I hadn't even commented on such a magnificent opening line. I was too tired, since I'd had two hour's sleep in two full days on account of exams and a last minute term paper. I could hardly make myself believe that she was really being serious.

Our driver was making his way back through the narrow aisle. Our perfect driver, he was: broad-bodied, middle aged, with razor-sharp creases in his uniform's slacks and a faultlessly straight edge to his conservative, gray-streaked mustache. He swung around the door into the washroom with great authority. Then I finally figured out why we were stopped. There was a numbing draft coming from the washroom, the window must have been open there; and he couldn't close it. I could hear the inconclusive "thwump, thwump," and still felt the breeze. He swung out the washroom door and moved toward the front of the bus.

Somewhere down front a voice wavering with age said: "I guess you just have the magic touch."

"Huh?" he said flatly.

"I said, I guess you just have the magic touch."

"Nope, lady, I haven't got it shut yet," and at that instant I saw him step onto the pavement and stride toward the station without a glance at the sky or the grown fields, or the kid on the truck bumper.

The kid straightened up slowly, and turned to look toward us. His face was expressionless. His pale skin was patterned with a network of red splotches, with tight squint wrinkles around his small eyes and short, crooked nose, because of the icy-watering wind. But his hair was the real tag of his identity; it was thick, curly and dirty blond — combed flat on top with one oily corkscrew hanging down over his too-broad forehead and moving slightly in the wind.

At that moment it began to snow. Hard little white pellets were being forced down on our driver as he came striding across the pavement again, stopped by the

kid, and acted out a pantomime of cold-stiffened gestures and pointing toward the bus. The kid squinted at him, then nodded. He turned on his heel and started back. The kid jumped down uncertainly and arched his back defensively by thrusting his hands into his pants pockets as he followed.

The kid stood outside, I guess, though I couldn't see him. I could only faintly hear our driver call out the washroom window: "Can you reach it?"

His voice was caught and carried away on the same gust of wind that sucked the washroom door closed, so I didn't hear the kid's answer.

"Slam it" and "thwump" sounded very far away.

"Harder," our driver's voice was enveloped by the hissing of the waves of driven snow pellets that were being cut by the cement pedestal of the Standard sign.

There was the sound of a latch catching.

The driver swung out of the washroom and down the aisle, while I watched the kid slowly circle around. He just stood there on the pavement looking our way as the bus began to vibrate again, lurched forward and gradually started rolling. He turned on his heel, grimacing as the wind hit him, and pushed his hands deep into his pockets. The window frame erased him.

I leaned back against my upright seat, intending to watch for awhile, but the motion had become steady; the telephone lines began flowing by, sag-up-pole, sag-up-pole. My eyelids were getting heavy. Why fight it? I eased the seat back through three quiet clicks and settled down in it. Sleep through to Cleveland. To Philadelphia; if I could, to New York.

But recollections often catch me off guard in those last lucid, drowsy moments, and this one came coupled with the effects of two nights on No-Doz. I felt a hilarious bubble rising.

"We can't communicate, none of us can," she had said, and thought herself understood, but he could only watch her full, pale lips as they formed the words.

I burst into giggles and tried not to show them, so my eyes began to fill. I turned to the wall and let my head slide down against the cold metal bar. In a moment my stomach muscles were too exhausted to go on, but I couldn't stop.

The brilliant conceit: "Good thick bubbles make good neighbors," had just occurred to me, and was good for another outburst. "What possible reason could there be for stripping away the bubble when 'ten minutes' time could grind . . ."

About then I raised my head and saw that my tears had washed a spot on the gold-flecked formica wall, and made it as white as it was supposed to be. I suddenly sobered. I quickly took out a Kleenex and wiped my eyes, then blurred the spot on the wall. I couldn't let anyone think I'd been crying.

I leaned back in the seat as I should. I woke up, very stiff and sore, in Philadelphia.

*Between the visions
illusions
Between the nothing inside my chest
the place where my heart twitches
hanging in a thick vacuum
Between the creature — bird, or is it rat
who picks and claws my gut,
Between these and the words, the trembling of lips,
Twisted and colliding, are found
cries, echoing hoarse,
resounding in the viscera
and darting out into the night,
tears, shed and lying sticky,
more — clotted inside.*

*And we
who could not quite force the moment
who wanted to split open our heads
vomit it up
anything to get it out,*

*But instead
shuddered
fought
made no mistakes
except with what mattered,*

Yet still feared the creak of a door.

The moment lay sterile.

C. K.

Notes from a Box Lid

by MARY KLEPSEK

INSTRUCTIONS for playing the new Starker Game,

"ABSURDITY"

— a game for all ages, geared to the excruciating exigencies
of existentialist existence.

1. Any number can play "ABSURDITY".
2. BEFORE THE GAME BEGINS, one player is elected as "Godot." It will be his duty to hand out cards from the "Circumstance Deck" as they are needed in the course of play.
3. As soon as he is elected, "Godot" will draw a card from "Godot's Deck," WITHOUT LETTING THE OTHER PLAYERS SEE IT. This card will indicate whether, for the duration of the game, he is to dole out "Circumstance Cards" as an indifferent agent of blind chance or as a prejudiced deity who stacks the deck. The other players, of course, will never know for sure which role he is playing.
4. You will notice that the playing pieces are already arranged on your "ABSURDITY" board, and that they are marked with various names — Dumaine, Meursault, Sisyphus, and so forth. (See complete alphabetical listing in Ledger on "Rue Laguenise" square of playing board.) "Godot" arranges the players alphabetically by last names and then pairs off the players with the alphabetically listed pieces. NOW THE GAME IS READY TO BEGIN.
5. The players take turns throwing the dice. As each player makes his cast, the others must shout in unison, "Les jeux sont faits!" The numbers thrown determine the number of spaces the player must advance his piece.
6. As soon as a player has moved his piece, he becomes "*Engage.*" This means that he MUST KEEP ON MOVING HIS PIECE FORWARD EACH TIME HIS TURN COMES: he may not move it backward, vertically, or off the board, nor may he drop out of the game permanently.

7. When his piece comes to rest on a square marked "Circumstance," a player must apply to "Godot" for a card from the "Circumstance Deck." "Godot" then PICKS UP THE ENTIRE PACK of "Circumstance Cards" and TAKES THEM INTO THE NEXT ROOM. There (according to his role; see No. 3) he either takes a card from the top of the deck, or shuffles through all the cards until he finds one sufficiently beneficent or cruel, depending upon his feelings toward the player who has applied for it. (NOTE: Since it is VERY IMPORTANT that the other players NOT be able to guess WHICH ROLE "Godot" is playing by the length of time it takes him to produce a "Circumstance Card," he should remain out of sight for AT LEAST HALF AN HOUR each time, while the others wait for him. Several French novels are provided with each "ABSURDITY" game to provide diversion during these waits.)

8. One of the squares on your "ABSURDITY" board is designated as the "Transformation" square. In the event that a player's piece comes to rest on this square, it MUST BE EXCHANGED for a "Rhinoceros" piece from the box which is included with your "ABSURDITY" game. "Rhinoceros" pieces follow the same rules as regular pieces, except that they must move in the opposite direction around the board, and can therefore collide with the regular pieces.

9. IF A PLAYER'S PIECE COLLIDES WITH ANOTHER PLAYER'S PIECE, nothing whatsoever happens. There is no interaction possible between playing pieces.

10. You will notice that the playing board consists of a CIRCULAR TRACK which has NO FINISH LINE. This is a unique feature which makes "ABSURDITY" different from other board games, in which the object is to reach "Finish" first. The pieces continue to be moved forward on the circular track, as long as they are "Engage." Included in the "Circumstance Deck," however, is one DEATH CARD. When a player is dealt this card, he is automatically put out of the game, and is no longer "Engage." "Godot" distributes this card as he distributes all the others — by chance or design, according to his role (see No. 3). NOTE: Since there is only one DEATH CARD in the thousand-card deck, the probability of its occurrence is not very high. "Godot" should therefore be quite careful, if he is CHOOSING the "Circumstance Cards," not to arouse the players' suspicion of this fact by killing them off too frequently, especially if they request that he do so.

11. Eventually all but one of the players will have been dealt the DEATH CARD and therefore will have ceased to be "Engage." The "Lone Survivor" is not neces-

sarily the winner, as he must keep on playing alone until "Godot" deals him the DEATH CARD.

12. In the event that a "Lone Survivor" lands on the "Transformation" square, the usual penalty does not apply: instead of exchanging his playing piece for a "Rhinoceros" piece, he must exchange it for the "Berenger" piece, which may be distinguished easily from the "Rhinoceros" pieces in the box by the fact that its appearance is human and therefore ugly. NOTE: The "Berenger" piece, unlike the "Rhinoceros" pieces, MUST NOT REVERSE ITS DIRECTION. This is very important.

13. Disregard No. 12 if the "Lone Survivor" is already a Rhinoceros.

14. Players who have ceased to be "*Engage*" MAY NOT LEAVE until the game has ended. Although they can no longer take an active part in the movement of pieces, they must remain around the playing board to shout "Les jeux sont faits" whenever the dice are thrown.

15. It will be noted, after several hours of play, that the DEATH CARD lends an important sense of meaning and reality to the game. In the event that this card is lost, replacements may be ordered from:

Starker Brothers, Inc.
Salem, Massachusetts

The limit is one to a customer.

Elegia a un Monsardon Azul

Sí, yo te asesiné estúpidamente. Me molestaba tu zumbido mientras escribía un hermoso, un dulce soneto de amor. Y era un consonante en *-úcar*, para rimar con *azúcar*, lo que me faltaba. *Mais, qui dira les torts de la rime?*

Luego sentí congoja
y me acerqué hasta ti: eras muy bello.
Grandes ojos oblicuos
te coronan la frente,
como un turbante de oriental monarca.
Ojos inmensos, bellos ojos pardos,
por donde entró la lanza del deseo,
el bullir, los meneos de la hembra,
su gran proximidad abrasadora,
bajo la luz del mundo.
Tan grandes son tus ojos, que tu alma
era quizá como un enorme incendio,
cual era lumbrarada de colores,
como un fanal de faro. Así, en la siesta,
el alto miradero de cristales,
diáfano y desnudo, sobre el mar,
en mi casa de niño.

Cuando yo te maté,
mirabas hacia fuera,
a mi jardín. Este diciembre claro
me empuja los colores y la luz,
como bloques de mármol brutalmente,
cual si el cristal del aire se me hundiera,
astillándome el alma sus aristas.

Eso que viste desde mi ventana,
eso es el mundo.
Siempre se agolpa igual: luces y formas,
árbol, arbusto, flor, colina, cielo

Elegy to a Bluebottle

Yes, I was stupid to kill you.
Your buzzing bothered me
while I was writing a fresh and beautiful
love sonnet. I needed a word in *-úcar*
to rhyme with *azúcar*. *Mais,*
qui dira les torts de la rime?

Then I felt a pang of remorse and
I went over towards you: you were very beautiful.
Large slanting eyes crowned your forehead,
like the turban of an Oriental monarch.
Immense eyes, dark beautiful eyes,
through which entered the arrow of desire,
the sensuous wriggling of the female,
her provocative nearness,
in the dazzling light.
So huge are your eyes that your soul
was perhaps an enormous fire,
flashing with color like the beacon of a lighthouse,
like the lofty, crystal-paned dome,
sunlit and bare, on hot afternoons
at my childhood home.

When I killed you,
you were looking out
into my garden. The color and light
of that bright December bombarded me
like blocks of marble,
as if the crystal air was shooting into me,
its splinters shattering my soul.

What you saw through my window
is the world.
It's always crowded together like that: lights and shapes,
a tree, a bush, a flower, a hill, the sky

con nubes o sin nubes,
y, ya rojos, ya grises, los tejados
del hombre. Nada mas: siempre es lo mismo.
Es una granazón, una abundancia,
es el tierno pujar de jugos hondos,
que levanta el amor y Dios ordena
en nódulos y en haces,
un dulce hervir no más.

Oh sí, me alegro
de que fuera lo último
que vieras tú, la imagen de color
que sordamente billirá en tu nada.
Este paisaje, esas
rosas, esas moreras ya desnudas,
ese tímido almendro que aún ofrece
sus tiernas hojas vivas al invierno,
ese verde cerrillo
que en lenta curva corta mi ventana,
y esa ciudad al fondo,
serán también una presencia oscura
en mi nada, en mi noche.
Oh pobre ser, igual, igual tú y yo!

En tu noble cabeza
que ahora un hilo blancuzco
apenas une al tronco,
tu enorme trompa
se ha quedado estendida.
Qué zumos o qué azúcares
voluptuosamente
aspirabas, qué aroma tentador
te estaba dando
esos tirones sordos
que hacen que el caminante siga y siga
(aun a pesar del frío del crepúsculo,
aun a pesar del sueño),
esos dulces clamores,
esa necesidad de ser futuros
que llamamos la vida,
en aquel mismo instante
en que súbitamente el mundo se te hundió

with or without clouds,
and, sometimes red, sometimes grey, the rooftops of man.
Nothing more: it's always the same.
It's a seeding, an abundance,
the tender surging up of primal sap
which love arouses and which God arranges
in nodules and bundles,
just a gentle seething.

Ah, yes, I'm glad
that the last thing you saw was that image of color
which will bubble silently
in your oblivion.
This landscape, those
roses, those denuded mulberry trees,
that frail almond tree that even yet exposes
its tender living leaves to the winter's cold,
that low green hill
which dissects my window with its gentle contour,
and that city in the background
will also be an obscure presence
in *my* nothingness, in *my* night.
Oh, poor creature, you and I – alike!

From your noble head,
now joined to your thorax
by only a whitish thread,
your enormous proboscis
still protrudes.
What juices or what nectars
were you inhaling
voluptuously,
what tempting aroma was giving you
those silent urges
which make the traveler go on and on
(despite the chills of nightfall,
despite all drowsiness),
those gentle clamors,
that instinct for survival
that we call Life,
during that split second
in which your world suddenly sank

como un gran trasatlántico
que illo de delicias y colores
choca contra los hielos y se esfuma
en la sombra, en la nada?

Viste quizá por último
mis tres rosas postreras?

Un zarpaso
brutal, una terrible llama roja,
brasa que en un relámpago violeta
se condensaba. Y frío. Frío!: un hielo
como al fin del otoño
cuando la nube del granizo
con brusco alón de sombra nos emplomiza el aire.
No viste ya. Y cesaron
los delicados vientos
de enhebrar los estigmas de tu elegante abdomen
(como una góndola,
como una guzla del azul más puro)
y el corazón elemental cesó
de latir. De costado
caíste. Dos, tres veces
un obstinado artejo
trembló en el aire, cual si condensara
en cifra los latidos
del mundo, su mensaje
final.

Y fuiste cosa: un muerto.
Sólo ya cosa, sólo ya materia
orgánica, que en un torrente oscuro
volverá al mundo mineral. Oh Dios,
oh misterioso Dios,
para emperzar de nuevo por enésima vez
tu enorme rueda.

Estabas en mi casa,
mirabas mi jardín, eras muy bello.
Yo te maté.
Oh si puidiera ahora
darte otra viz la vida,
yo que te di la muerte!

— Dámaso Alonso

like a huge ocean liner,
filled with gaiety and color,
which crashes into an iceberg and plunges
into blackness, into oblivion?

Did your last glance fall perhaps
on my three late roses?

A brutal blow,
a terrible red flash, a glow
in which a violet spark
condensed. And cold. Cold!: a late autumn
frost when the hail cloud
suddenly darkens the sky
with a shadowy wingsweep.
You could see no longer.
And the gentle breezes
no longer stirred the markings of your elegant abdomen
(delicately curved like a gondola,
like a lyre of purest blue),
and your primitive heart ceased
throbbing. You fell
on your side. Twice, three times
an obstinate muscle
twitched in the air as if it wanted to compress
into one signal the heartbeats of the world
— its final message.

And you became inanimate: a corpse.
Now no more than a thing, now but organic matter,
which, in an obscure torrent,
will flow back into the mineral world. Oh, God,
oh, mysterious God!
to begin again for the umpteenth time
your enormous cycle.

You were in my house,
you were looking at my garden, you were very beautiful.
I killed you.
Oh, if I could only give you back your life,
I who gave you death!

Translated by Linda Andersen

Notes on an Impressionistic Pig

(an Armory star, 1913 and 1963)

*It is a sunny barnyard,
Monet would have loved it,
Sat at his easel enraptured amidst all the misty
Cow-dung
And the half-dozen paintings he was working on
So that each hour he could change about.
This canvas would have been entitled "L'Heure de Dejeuner,"
As is shown by the haunting smile on the subject's
Snout.*

*Note how the artist has managed to capture on this small canvas
Every delicate nuance of the flesh-tones of pigskin.
And here is what most visitors see and remark on first:
All the subtly shifting play and sparkle of sunbeams
On the minute surfaces of all the sublime and unforgettable
Bristles.
Es ist mir Wurst.*

M.K.

The Sound of Grapes

by PETER HILL

I

Tony Compton stood in a room which now looked strangely bare. The dresser and desk top were clear, and the closet was half empty and there were large empty places in the bookcase. The suitcases were already down in the car. Now Tony was putting some final items in a cardboard box.

"Do you think I should take along this paper?" He was holding a stack of "300 Sheets - 79¢" paper in his hand.

"I think you'll be able to buy enough paper there," said his mother.

"Yeah, I guess you're right." He put the paper aside and threw a handful of pencils into the box. After that went a coffee stained paperback Thesaurus and a copy of *The Elements of Style*. He looked around the room once more.

"Come on, we're going to have to get started to make it by two." his mother shouted from down stairs.

"All right, I'm coming." Tony put the paper in the box and started to carry it down. "Damn." He put the box back on the bed and went to his desk and took out the spare bottle of ink he had bought. He wedged it in the box so it would not break and took the stuff down to the car.

II

The campus shimmered in the harsh light of early autumn when Tony arrived. He felt happy and excited in the hot glare from the sparkling buildings and the confusion of checking in. At last one of the big moments in his life was occurring, and as he hung his clothes in the closet of his new room the excitement made his hand tremble. His education was now going to begin in earnest. He became more and more exhilarated as he thought of the fascinating people he was going to meet and the important ideas he was going to talk about and the stimulating professors he was going to learn from.

Tony finished hanging up his suits, pushed some still full suitcases in the corner and went out on the bright quad to the freshman tea to begin his education.

III

The odor of stale cigarette smoke still hung over the room as Tony and his roommate prepared for bed. The desk they shared was still littered with books, pencils, and open notebooks from the evening's studying. Tony snapped off the light and got into bed; his roommate was already lying down.

Tony lay back and stared at the ceiling for a long while in the silence. He could hear the ticking of the clock and the sound of the blowing snow hitting the window. He sat up and propped his pillow against the wall and lit a cigarette; in the light from the match he could see that his roommate was still awake. "You know, it's just like the sound of grapes."

His roommate rustled in bed. "What did you say?"

"I said, it's just like the sound of grapes. The snow, and the wind. You know, like the grapes in the fall. Everything's brown and dying then comes the first frost, bang, and the grapes are sweet and alive."

"What in the hell are you talking about?"

Tony was silent for a while and the cigarette glowed in the darkness. "You know it must have been a miracle, really crazy. Did I ever tell you about the birds?"

"What?"

"The birds my mother. She tried to commit suicide once and the birds saved her. Crazy. Did I tell you?"

"I guess I never heard about it."

"My mother, really crazy. You know she has a psychiatrist she goes to; both my parents do. When she was young she tried to commit suicide. She told me about it once when I was real depressed. She was about nineteen and used to get upset all the time. She was out at a lake and had just had a fight with her folks over something. She said that she stood by the lake for a long time looking in and was all set to throw herself in. She was just standing there and about to jump in and drown herself, and then all of a sudden she heard the birds. They were singing in the trees and she said they sounded just like life. She turned around and walked away from the lake. It was a real miracle."

His roommate was embarrassed and they didn't say anything for a while.

"Just turned around and walked away when she heard the birds?"

"Yeah, it was real crazy. A miracle."

The cigarette was out now. Tony put the ashtray carefully on the floor and pulled the covers up around him. The snow was still blowing on the window. He went to sleep.

IV

It was very well defined. When he walked into the lobby he was immediately struck by its symmetry. The room was cube-shaped and brown. The walls were panelled with a brown wood which had been given a flat finish. The paneling separated the walls into obvious divisions. At the top of the walls where they joined the ceiling the paneling gave way to a fretwork which marched regularly around the room.

Immediately before him was a girl dressed in brown, standing behind a waist-high semi-circular desk. The top of the desk had two or three brown wooden boxes on it, and they were divided into compartments for library cards. On the left of the desk in a rack was a row of rubber stamps. A pile of books, like so many units of thought, was on the right side of the desk. A calendar hung on the wall behind the girl; it was large and from an insurance company. Above the calendar a large old-fashioned clock with "Western Union" printed on the face ticked loudly and regularly, defining each piece of time.

The whole room was permeated by the steady buzzing of overhead fluorescent lights. In the background he could hear someone typing; the bell rang at the end of each line. Off to the left a girl tap-tap-tapped down a flight of stairs. He heard a "Chunk, Chunk," and turned back to the desk to see the girl rubber stamping dates on books.

He turned and quickly walked out the door. The cold wind felt pleasantly random on his face.

V

Through the open door Tony could see his roommate talking on the phone. He was tapping a pencil on a piece of paper and sounded angry.

"Yes, that's right, it was last week. It was for a General Electric alarm clock. Will you be able to . . . well do you think it'll be in by . . . are you going to be able to get it? All right then, please call me as soon as it comes in." He hung up the phone and came into the room.

"What was that all about?"

"The crystal."

"What crystal?"

"For my alarm clock. Remember, I knocked it on the floor one morning last week. The crystal fell out and it won't stay in right. It keeps coming off."

"Well, can't you glue it back in?"

"I don't think so, besides it was a new clock and the guarantee is still good. I called the place and had them order a new one, but I don't think they want to get it for me."

"It runs fine as it is. It's more trouble than it's worth to go down there and get the thing when the clock runs fine anyhow."

"I can't use the clock without a crystal."

"Why not? You've been doing it all week."

"A clock is supposed to have a crystal on it."

VI

Tony walked into his room, put his books on the desk, and sat down heavily on the bed. He looked over at his roommate who was engaged in taking notes from a comparative anatomy text.

"It's been a rough day. That lit test was a real killer. I don't see how anyone can ask so many obscure questions about such simple pieces of writing."

His roommate looked up. "How do you think you did?"

"Oh, I don't know. All right I guess. What's really bothering me is that I don't seem to have time for anything but studying."

"What did you expect when you got to college? You've got to get the grades for grad school."

"I suppose you're right, but I thought there would be more time for ideas and . . ."

"And what?"

"Oh, I don't know, I thought . . . watch it, my ink!"

"God damn it! The bottle broke."

"Well, you shouldn't have propped your book up with it. The stuff is splattered all over the floor."

VII

The headlights kept coming at him in the dark and then disappearing red down the road. When the truck driver from Chicago picked him up he was cold through. He said he was going to see his girl and the truck driver talked about sex for two hours while he thawed and the road went by. They stopped and had coffee and the driver said it sure would be nice to get in bed with the waitress. In the morning when he got out the country was more open and the people were different.

VIII

The man on the radio said the temperature was going to stay between five and ten above all day, and Tony believed it. From where he stood at the side of the road with his thumb out he could see the dorm where he had spent the night. It had been nice to see his friend, and the town in the middle of Ohio was a convenient place to stop, but now he was going south into what he hoped would be warmer weather. Already his fingers were becoming numb and he had only stood there about five minutes.

The cars came by sporadically, and as he waited for a ride he glanced once more at the dorm. For the first time since he left school he felt a little uneasy and a bit silly. It was okay last night when he was coming here, but now he was just heading south. More cars passed him and he got colder. He adjusted the sign he was holding so his hand was more out of the way. It said "Cincinnati," and was supposed to help him get a ride. He was going to head for Cincinnati and then go south into Kentucky.

More cars came, and then a large truck; they all went on by. Tony looked up towards the school again. It would be warm up there. He could go back and spend the day and head back for school, or wait till tomorrow when maybe the weather would be warmer. Tony considered the problem. It was not a good day for hitch-hiking. Maybe it would be better to stay where it was warm and where he knew someone. Besides, it was a little silly just taking off for the South.

A car went past him and then slowed to a stop at the side of the road. Tony picked up his bag and ran to the car. "Going south on 42?"

"About forty miles, as far as Xenia."

Tony got in. He was happy and excited again now that he was moving.

IX

Tony's last ride let him off within sight of the college. He had been traveling all night, sometimes waiting an hour or more for rides, and now the mid-morning sun felt good and he opened his jacket to let it warm him.

He walked towards the college and thought again of the buildings set regularly around the quad. The thought of returning was depressing.

He reached a flight of cement steps which led up the hillside to the group of men's dorms and began to ascend. He reached about the halfway point and then stopped, transfixed. Around him he could hear music. From the half opened windows of the dorms came the sound of rock-and-roll and folk music from radio and hi-fi's. Students walked past on the walk above. Tony stood and listened for perhaps two minutes, without being noticed. Then he turned around and walked back towards the highway.

Hunger

*Tangled and wind-tossed,
The March trees turn their roots skyward
But find no food in the cold and sterile air.
Their leaves are starving in black sunlight underground;
Worms and grubs perch there like ghastly birds,
Frozen and motionless in the mud.*

*And they have known only silence,
With no song, no joy,
The long winter through. S.B.*

Mark Twain's Kingdom of Dreams and Shadows

by MARY KLEPSEK

Among the previously unpublished Mark Twain manuscripts included by Bernard DeVoto in *Letters from the Earth* is an account of the dream-adventures of a Mr. Henry Edwards, who, after making a microscopic examination of a drop of water, falls asleep and dreams that he is on a whaling voyage in it. His wife, who accompanies him on this excursion, insists that their shipboard life is reality, and that the land scenes he describes to her (from the world he knew before he fell asleep) are something he must have dreamed. Soon he is driven to total confusion: "Damnation! I said to myself, are we real creatures in a real world, all of a sudden, and have we been feeding on dreams in an imaginary one since nobody knows when — or how is it? My head was swimming."¹

In his notes on this manuscript, which he calls "The Great Dark," DeVoto cites as what he considers one of the three principal ideas running through it "the confusion of dream and reality."² He refers to an unfinished story entitled "Which Was the Dream?", mentioned by Twain in a letter to Howells (August 16, 1898), as a possible source for "The Great Dark," but adds that

... though no manuscript called "Which Was the Dream?" is among the Mark Twain Papers, there is a note (to be dated only by conjecture) which indicates that there was once such a story or at least a well worked-out plan for it — and the story described in that note is radically different from "The Great Dark" and has only a slight relationship to it.

Over a year before the letter to Howells Mark wrote in a notebook, "May 23, 1897. Wrote first chapter of above story today." In his *Biography* (pages 1041-1042) Mr. Paine says that the "above story" was about a man who dozes for a moment and is led, by the smell of his burning cigarette, to dream of the destruction of his family and "a long period of years following. Wakening a few seconds later, and confronted by his wife and children, he refuses to believe in their reality, maintaining that this condition, and not the other, is the dream."³

DeVoto goes on with conjectures about whether or not this story was consciously incorporated by Twain into "The Great Dark," but he makes no mention of the fact that the central idea had been present in Mark Twain's writings long before either of these pieces germinated. Indeed, there is evidence that the confusion of dream and reality was a major concern of Twain's, and appears in much of his work.⁴

As early as 1889, for example, Twain wrote a different version of "Which Was

the Dream?" in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*: the Yankee, after being struck on the head with a crowbar, finds himself in medieval Camelot, and concludes at first that he is dreaming. Eventually he comes to accept the Arthurian world as real; but he still longs for the nineteenth-century world, which now has become the one to which he escapes in his dreams. Upon actually returning to the modern world, though, he refuses to believe that the nineteenth century is not a dream, and on his deathbed he thinks that he has returned to his sixth-century reality.

Even in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, published twenty-one years before the 1898 notebook speculation, Twain was exploring the relation of dream and reality. All the events in this book can be resolved into two strands of action: there are the adventures in Tom's highly romanticized dream-fantasy of piracy, love, and treasure-hunting; and there is the adult world, which the author and the reader consider reality, and which they use as a standard for ridiculing Tom's dream realm. What is unsettling about this duality, however, is that the childish fantasies exert so much influence over what happens in the supposedly real world. The pirate expedition throws the town into mourning at the loss of the boys, who are presumed drowned. Huck and Tom, going to the cemetery at midnight for an encounter with devils, become witnesses to real evil in the murder of Dr. Robertson! and Tom's testimony saves Muff Potter from being unjustly convicted of this murder. The boys search for buried treasure, and the reader is allowed to smile at the childish faith with which they question their own techniques of hunting, but never doubt the existence of the treasure itself — yet, as it turns out, there really is a hidden treasure. And the Welshman chuckles at the boys for their interest in a wheelbarrow full of "old metal" — which is actually a fortune in gold. The final resolution of the duality is not the "putting away of childish things" which might be expected; rather, after his encounter with the "real thing," Tom returns to his fantasy world of robbers, and seems less excited about finding real treasure than about having a cave to serve as hideout for his gang.

At least two other scenes in *Tom Sawyer* deserve mention as precursors of the confusion theme in "The Great Dark." In relating what he saw on his Wednesday night visit to his home, Tom convinces his aunt that he dreamed the entire episode. And, after encountering the robbers in the "haunted house," Tom awakes the next morning not sure whether the whole adventure really happened or was a dream. In this case, he is very hopeful that he has been dreaming; he and Huck both are appalled when they find that their "dreams" have become realities.

In *The Prince and the Pauper*, Twain presents another case of a "dream come true." The pauper, Tom Canty, has constructed a dream-world from the stories he had heard; he acts the role of prince among the other boys of Offal Court, in much the manner of a sixteenth-century Tom Sawyer. And his sleep is filled with dreams of splendor:

All night long the glories of his royal estate shone upon him; he moved among great lords and ladies, in a blaze of light, breathing perfumes, drinking in delicious music, and answering the reverent obeisances of the glittering throng as it parted to make way for him, with here a smile, and there a nod of his princely head.

And when he awoke in the morning and looked upon the wretchedness about him, his dream had had its usual effect — it had intensified the sordidness of his surroundings a thousandfold. Then came bitterness, and heartbreak, and tears.⁵

When his dream becomes an actuality, however, he is disappointed at first; "his old dreams had been so pleasant; but this reality was so dreary!"⁶ Prince Edward, waking on his first morning in Offal Court, calls to Sir William Herbert to "list to the strangest dream that ever . . . Man, I did think me changed to a pauper."⁷

Both boys, in their changed roles, maintain a knowledge of their real identity, and speak nothing but the truth: the supposed Prince of Wales (and later, King of England) insists that he is only a pauper, and the Offal Court ragamuffin professes to be Edward of England. Significantly, both are considered insane. Even Miles Hendon, who humors the unrecognized king's claims of royalty because, as he says, "this thing which is so substanceless to me is *real* to him," is amused by the small megalomaniac. His first reflections after being dubbed knight by the ragged but real Edward are "And so I am become a knight of the Kingdom of Dreams and Shadows!"⁸

His words, of course, are highly ironic; and later, when he enters the real king's presence, he finds dream and reality completely confounded:

"Lo, the lord of the Kingdom of Dreams and Shadows on his throne!"

He muttered some broken sentences, still gazing and marveling; then turned his eyes around and about, scanning the gorgeous throng and the splendid saloon, murmuring "But these are *real* — verily these are *real* — surely it is not a dream!"

He stared at the king again — and thought, "*Is it a dream? . . . or is he the veritable sovereign of England, and not the friendless poor Tom o' Bedlam I took him for — who shall solve me this riddle?*"⁹

This motif of the truth-speaking alien, such as Tom Cauty of Edward, among a group somehow out of touch with truth or reality, recurs in various forms in several other of Twain's works, and has relevance to the central question about the nature of reality.¹⁰

Huckleberry Finn, for example, is in a way like Prince Edward among the thieves — or like the Connecticut Yankee in medieval Camelot. His whole series of adventures consists of deception upon deception, including the highly significant incident in which he persuades Jim that their search for each other in the fog was only a dream. But although he is not above deceiving others, and although the sham world does deceive him occasionally (as it does at the circus), Huck never deceives himself; he knows what truth and reality are. And, since no one around him knows even this, he is in a sense a sane person dwelling among madmen. Even Jim, in whom Huck comes to recognize genuine human feelings, clings to irrational superstitions such as his unshakeable faith in a hairball oracle

which, though omniscient in matters of prophecy, can be duped with a counterfeit nickel. Compared with Huck's observations and adventures, everything around him — including the mock gentility and hypocritical religion of the Grangerfords, the sham royalty of the King and the Duke, and the childish dream-fantasies of Tom Sawyer — seems shabby and ridiculous.

Part of Huck's objectivity may arise from the fact that, as far as the town is concerned, he is dead. Like his counterpart and his friends in *Tom Sawyer*, he has watched loaves of bread being set afloat on the river to search for his drowned body. And, like the *Tom Sawyer* gang, he enjoys this opportunity to "die temporarily." A temporary death, after all, is the only means of ascertaining reality: the world is "real" only if it can exist independently of oneself, only if one can watch it functioning when (or as if) one does not exist. The persistence in at least two of Twain's early works of this wish for a temporary death seems to indicate that Twain was even at that time entertaining some troubled doubts about the existence of the "real world."

It is against a background of thought such as this, then, that Twain produced "The Great Dark," with its dream world in which reality itself is a dream. And a few years later, in late 1903 or early 1904, he reversed the situation of the Edwardses, who castle-build reality in their dream world, and wrote a story ("The \$30,000 Bequest") in which a couple in the real world create for themselves an elaborate fantasy based on what turns out to be an nonexistent inheritance. This story contains one of Twain's most forthright statements about the confusion of dream and reality:

The castle-building habit, the day-dreaming habit — how it grows! what a luxury it becomes; how we fly to its enchantments at every idle moment, how we reveal in them, steep our souls in them, intoxicate ourselves with their beguiling fantasies — oh yes, and how soon and how easily our dream-life and our material life become so intermingled and so fused together that we can't quite tell which is which, any more.¹¹

Finally, in *The Mysterious Stranger*, Twain carries the idea to a terrifying extreme. The Austrian village of Eseldorf (which, in translation, provides a cynical comment on the whole human race) is a microcosm of the world, dreaming in its sleep of belief. "It drowns in peace in the deep privacy of a hilly and woody solitude where news from the world hardly ever came to disturb its dreams, and was infinitely content."¹² The tale is yet another retelling of the adventures of a supposedly sane and truthful alien among the insane, but with a new twist: the story is told not by the alien this time, but by one of the mad natives. And this point of view throws even Satan's reality into doubt. The alias which he assumes in the village is "Traum," and the villagers agree that the name suits him. He tells the boys, "My flesh is not real, although it would seem firm to your touch; my clothes are not real; I am a spirit."¹³ And, indeed, his most beneficent acts consist of destroying what the villagers think of as reality: ending lives that would have been spent in misery, depriving Father Peter of his senses so that he may live in a

fool's paradise and fancy himself Emperor, and finally destroying Theodor's entire world by telling him:

" . . . Nothing exists save empty space — and you!"

"I!"

"And you are not you — you have no body, no blood, no bones, you are but a thought. I myself have no existence; I am but a dream — your dream, creature of your imagination. In a moment you will have realized this, then you will banish me from your visions and I shall dissolve into the nothingness out of which you made me . . .

"I am perishing already — I am fading — I am passing away. In a little while you will be alone in shoreless space, to wander its limitless solitudes, without friend or comrade forever — for you will remain a *thought*, the only existent thought, and by your nature inextinguishable, indestructible. But I, your poor servant, have revealed you to yourself and set you free. Dream other dreams, and better!"

"It is true, that which I have revealed to you; there is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream — a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but you. And you are but a *thought* — a vagrant thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities!"¹⁴

There is, says Twain, no reality at all; everything is dream; what we consider reality is just the particular dream to which we happen to give credence. Small wonder, then, that what are called dreams seem as real as "reality."

Of course, one must not draw overly general conclusions about Twain's resolution of this complex problem. These observations on a few of his works can do little more than point out what seems to have been a dominant concern of his; they do, however, indicate that a more intensive and extensive study of dream and reality in his works is in order, and that it might provide a unified and workable method of approaching a body of writing which by present standards may appear erratic and inconsistent.

NOTES

- ¹Clemens, Samuel, *Letters from the Earth*, ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York, 1962), pp. 263-264.
- ²*Letters from the Earth*, p. 293.
- ³*Letters from the Earth*, pp. 293-294.
- ⁴About a year before the 1898 date that DeVoto proposes for the writing of "The Great Dark," Twain entered in his notebook a lengthy speculation about the existence of a "spiritualized self" which detaches itself from the sleeping physical body and participates in the actions which are called dreams. See *Mark Twain's Notebook*, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1935), pp. 348-352.
- ⁵Clemens, Samuel, *The Prince and the Pauper* (New York, 1921), pp. 8-9.
- ⁶*The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 33.
- ⁷*The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 64.
- ⁸*The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 90.
- ⁹*The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 267.
- ¹⁰On the same day that Twain made the first note for *The Prince and the Pauper*, he wrote the following:
- A man sent to superintend a private madhouse takes charge of a sane household by mistake. It is in England and when they call him the "keeper" they do so because they think he is the new gamekeeper, who by mistake is now in charge of the maniacs in the other house, and vastly perplexed too.
- Dion Boucicault, the dramatist, gave me this idea and told me to use it. (*Notebook*, p. 129.)
- And in the summer of 1898, he made the following notebook entry (p. 345): "When we remember that we are all mad, the mysteries disappear and life stands revealed."
- ¹¹Clemens, Samuel, *The \$30,000 Bequest and Other Stories* (New York, Author's National Edition, 1907-1918), pp. 20-21.
- ¹²Clemens, Samuel, *The Portable Mark Twain*, ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York, 1946), p. 631.
- ¹³*The Portable Mark Twain*, p. 647.
- ¹⁴*The Portable Mark Twain*, pp. 742-744.

Brash and stalwart stampings in the young man. Why? I love her. Why doesn't she believe? She must be very young and innocent. Loving all in the same clouded way. She must not have known love, intense love, for single people very often. Well hell, she'll just have to learn.

I think I'll take her to the art museum on Wednesday. We'll go just about eight. I'll ask her to bring a pencil and silly white tablet of fresh paper. She'll learn a lot. At first we'll just sort of roam around, until she finds an exhibit she likes. Then I'll let her sit down and get comfortable. She can stare it all in sitting down, or she can get up and really look at all the lines. The nipples and arms, and the wild, young flowers. Maybe then her eyes will fill up with happiness, and she'll want to draw her own pictures. Fitting all the lines together until they express. Or maybe she'll be so quiet that I'll know she just wants to go home, be alone, and think. Fitting all the pieces together in her mind. All the lines and fine print. I love her. Will she want to explore the hill with me? We'll look at all the colors of houses and their frames clinging to the roads, pitching off into darkness and the river. Maybe she should meet Quinto and Allie, or maybe older, wiser Madonna. God — the canoe on an early Sunday morning. Just floating down the river. Will she love it as much as Pete, and throw herself in, or just lie back waiting for night and the stars to come shooting down almost into our hands?

Chains, the Cathedral. Will she want that? Mass at midnight. Most everyone turned out. Watching, witnessing, believing, needing. Who is she? I must find out. Will she love me? Tomorrow . . . S.M.

The Departure

*I am the chimney under the sky,
Black clouds drift over me, while I
Stand on the roof at the edge of the world;
For I have seen Your Life pass by.*

*The world of men awaits my return,
But I shall never this new life spurn,
Nor descend from the roof for the life now gone by;
I am the chimney and look in the sky. B.J.*





*I lose a little
bit of pain's pleasure
when I refuse to think
and instead try
very hard to
pretend:*

"I am happy"

*and complete as any other
when it isn't true —*

*when I will never be the river
or the lake or newness*

*but always and
forever just the
shallows — mainly tiny
pebbles and sallow sand
feeling a light burden*

but not, not ever, sustaining it. S.M.

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