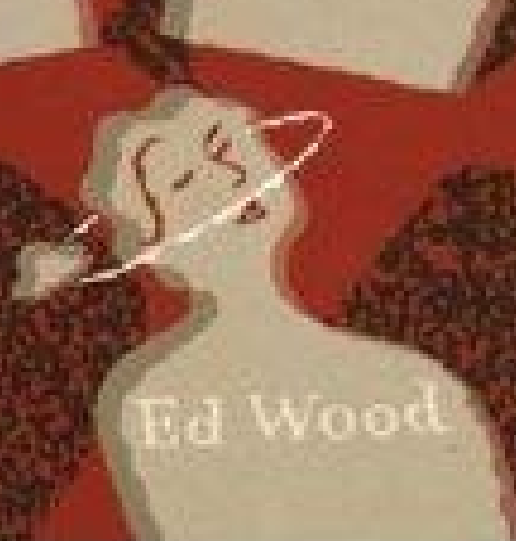
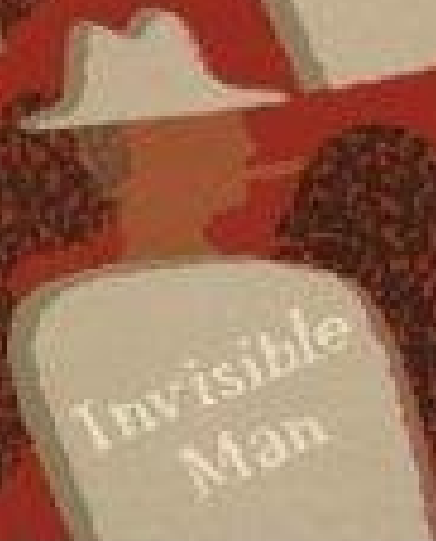
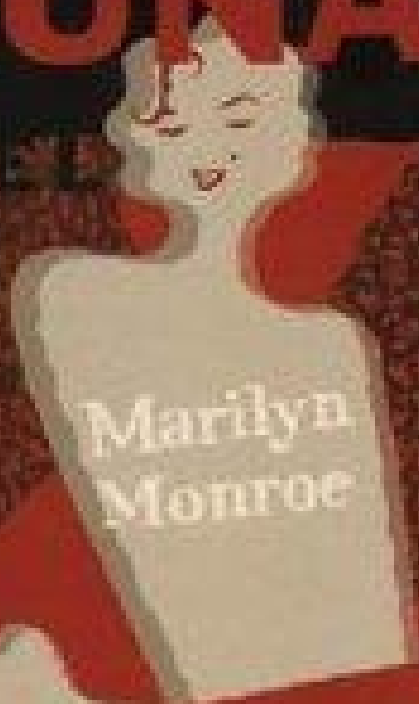
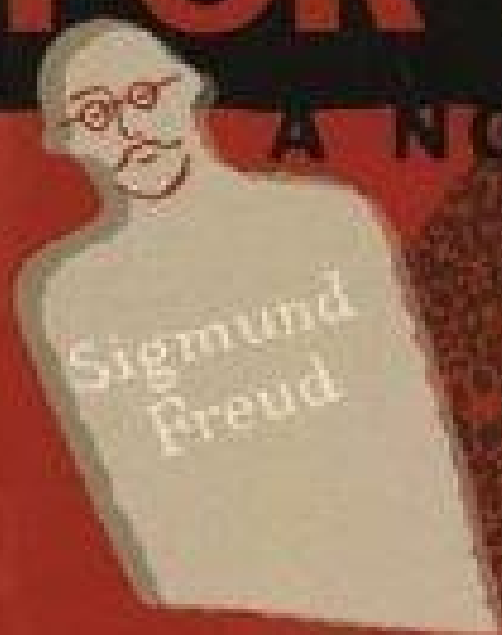


BRADBURY

A GRAVEYARD FOR LUNATICS

A NOVEL



"AN ALL-AMERICAN FIREWORKS SHOW OF RICHLY
INTERMINGLED MYTHS AND MEMORIES." —*Playboy*

A Graveyard For Lunatics

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1

Once upon a time there were two cities within a city. One was light and one was dark. One moved restlessly all day while the other never stirred. One was warm and filled with ever-changing lights. One was cold and fixed in place by stones. And when the sun went down each afternoon on Maximus Films, the city of the living, it began to resemble Green Glades cemetery just across the way, which was the city of the dead.

As the lights went out and the motions stopped and the wind that blew around the corners of the studio buildings cooled, an incredible melancholy seemed to sweep from the front gate of the living all the way along through twilight avenues toward that high brick wall that separated the two cities within a city. And suddenly the streets were filled with something one could speak of only as remembrance. For while the people had gone away, they left behind them architectures that were haunted by the ghosts of incredible happenings.

For indeed it was the most outrageous city in the world, where anything could happen and always did. Ten thousand deaths had happened here, and when the deaths were done, the people got up, laughing, and strolled away. Whole tenement blocks were set afire and did not burn. Sirens shrieked and police cars careened around corners, only to have the officers peel off their blues, cold-cream their orange pancake makeup, and walk home to small bungalow court apartments out in that great and mostly boring world.

Dinosaurs prowled here, one moment in miniature, and the next looming fifty feet tall above half-clad virgins who screamed on key. From here various Crusades departed to peg their armor and stash their spears at Western Costume down the road. From here Henry the Eighth let drop some heads. From here Dracula wandered as flesh to return as dust. Here also were the Stations of the Cross and a trail of ever-replenished blood as screenwriters groaned by to Calvary carrying a backbreaking load of revisions, pursued by directors with scourges and film cutters with razor-sharp knives. It was from these towers that the Muslim faithful were called to worship each day at sunset as the limousines whispered out with faceless powers behind each window, and peasants averted their gaze, fearing to be struck blind.

This being true, all the more reason to believe that when the sun vanished the old haunts rose up, so that the warm city cooled and began to resemble the marbled orchardways across the wall. By midnight, in that strange peace caused by temperature and wind and the voice of some far church clock, the two cities were at last one. And the night watchman was the only motion prowling along from India to France to prairie Kansas to brownstone New York to Piccadilly to the Spanish Steps, covering twenty thousand miles of territorial incredibility in twenty brief minutes. Even as his counterpart across the wall punched the time clocks around among the monuments, flashed his light on various Arctic angels,

read names like credits on tombstones, and sat to have his midnight tea with all that was left of some Keystone Kop. At four in the morning, the watchmen asleep, the two cities, folded and kept, waited for the sun to rise over withered flowers, eroded tombs, and elephant India ripe for overpopulation should God the Director decree and Central Casting deliver.

And so it was on All Hallows Eve, 1954.

Halloween.

My favorite night in all the year.

If it hadn't been, I would not have run off to start this new Tale of Two Cities.

How could I resist when a cold chisel hammered out an invitation?

How could I not kneel, take a deep breath, and blow away the marble dust?

A Graveyard For Lunatics

2

The first to arrive...

I had come into the studio at seven o'clock that Halloween morning.

The last to leave...

It was almost ten o'clock and I was making my final walk-around of the night, drinking in the simple but incredible fact that at last I worked in a place where everything was clearly defined. Here there were absolutely sharp beginnings, and ends that were neat and irreversible. Outside, beyond the stages, I did not much trust life with its dreadful surprises and ramshackle plots. Here, walking among the alleys just at dawn or twilight, I could imagine I opened the studio and shut it down. It belonged to me because I said it was so.

So I paced out a territory that was half a mile wide and a mile deep, among fourteen sound stages and ten outdoor sets, a victim of my own romance and infatuated madness over films that controlled life when it ran out of control beyond the Spanish wrought-iron front gates.

It was late, but a lot of films had fixed their schedules to end on All Hallows Eve, so that the wrap parties, the farewell binges, would coincide on various sets. From three sound stages, with their gigantic sliding doors thrown wide, came big-band music, laughter, explosions of champagne corks, and singing. Inside, mobs in film costumes greeted mobs from outside in Halloween garb.

I entered nowhere, content to smile or laugh as I passed. After all, since I imagined the studio was mine, I could linger or leave as I wished.

But even as I moved into the shadows again, I sensed a certain tremor in myself. My love of films had gone on too many years. It was like having an affair with Kong, who fell on me when I was thirteen; I had never escaped from beneath his heart-beating carcass.

The studio fell on me the same way every morning when I arrived. It took hours to fight free of its spell, breathe normally, and get my work down. At twilight, the enchantment returned; my breathing suffered. I knew that someday soon I would have to get out, run free, go and never come back, or like Kong, always falling and always landing, it would one day kill me.

I passed a final stage where a last burst of hilarity and percussive jazz shook the walls. One of the assistant camera operators biked by, his basket loaded with film on its way to an autopsy under the razor of a film editor who might save or bury it forever. Then into the theatres or banished to the shelves where dead films go, where only dust, not rot, collecteth them.

A church clock, up in the Hollywood hills, struck ten. I turned and strolled back to my cell block in the writers' building.

The invitation to be a damned fool was waiting for me in my office.

Not chiseled out on a marble slab, no, but neatly typed on high-quality note paper.

Reading it, I sank down in my office chair, my face cold, my hand tempted to clench and wad the note and throw it aside.

It said:

Green Glades Park. Halloween.

Midnight tonight.

Center rear wall.

P.S. A great revelation awaits you. Material for a best-selling novel or superb screenplay. Don't miss it!

Now, I am not a brave man. I have never learned to drive. I do not fly in planes. I feared women until I was twenty-five. I

hate high places; the Empire State is pure terror for me. Elevators make me nervous. Escalators bite. I am picky with food. I ate my first steak only at age twenty-four, subsisting through childhood on hamburgers, ham-and-pickle sandwiches, eggs, and tomato soup.

"Green Glades Park!" I said aloud.

Jesus, I thought. Midnight? Me, the guy who was mobbed by bullies down the middle of adolescence? The boy who hid under his brother's armpit the first time he saw *The Phantom of the Opera*?

That one, yes.

"Dumb!" I yelled.

And went to the graveyard.

At midnight.

A Graveyard For Lunatics

3

On the way out of the studio I veered toward the Men's, not far from the Main Gate, then veered away. It was a place I had learned to stay away from, a subterranean grotto place, with the sound of secret waters running, and a scuttling sound like crayfish backing swiftly off if you touched and started to open the door. I had learned long ago to hesitate, clear my throat, and open the door slowly. For then various interior doors of the Men's shut with thuds or very quietly or sometimes with a rifle bang, as the creatures that inhabited the grotto all day, and even now late because of the stage-set parties, panicked off in retreat, and you entered to the silence of cool porcelain and underground streams, tended to your plumbing as soon as possible and ran without washing your hands, only to hear, once outside, the sly slow reawakening of the crayfish, the doors whispering wide, and the emergence of the grotto creatures in various stages of fever and disarray.

I veered off, as I said, yelled to see if it was clear, and ducked into the Women's across the way, which was a cold, clean white ceramic place, no dark grotto, no scuttling critters, and was in and out of there in a jiffy, just in time to see a regiment of Prussian guards march by toward a Stage 10 party and their captain break ranks. A handsome man with Nordic hair and great innocent eyes, he strode unknowingly into the Men's.

He'll never be seen again, I thought, and hurried through the almost midnight streets.

My taxi, which I couldn't afford, but I was damned if I'd go near the graveyard alone, pulled up in front of the cemetery gates at three minutes before the hour.

I spent a long two minutes counting all those crypts and monuments where Green Glades Park employed some nine thousand dead folks, full time.

They have been putting in their hours there for fifty years. Ever since the real-estate builders, Sam Green and Ralph Glade, were forced into bankruptcy and leveled their shingles and planted the tombstones.

Sensing there was a great piece of luck in their names, the defaulted bungalow court builders became simply Green Glades Park, where all the skeletons in the studio closets across the way were buried.

Film folks involved with their shady real-estate scam were believed to have put up so the two gentlemen would shut up. A lot of gossip, rumor, guilt, and ramshackle crime was buried with their first interment.

And now as I sat clenching my knees and gritting my teeth, I stared at the far wall beyond which I could count six safe, warm, beautiful sound stages where the last All Hallows revelries were ending, the last wrap parties wrapping up, the musics still and the right people drifting home with the wrong.

Seeing the cars' light beams shifting on the great sound-stage walls,

imagining all the so-longs and goodnights, I suddenly wanted to be with them, wrong or right, going nowhere, but nowhere was better than this.

Inside, a graveyard clock struck midnight.

"Well?" someone said.

I felt my eyes jerk away from the far studio wall and fix to my driver's haircut.

He stared in through the iron grille and sucked the flavor off his Chiclet-sized teeth. The gate rattled in the wind, as the echoes of the great clock died.

"Who," said the driver, "is going to open the gate?"

"Me!?" I said, aghast.

"You got it," said the driver.

After a long minute, I forced myself to grapple with the gates and was surprised to find them unlocked, and swung them wide.

I led the taxi in, like an old man leading a very tired and very frightened horse. The taxi kept mumbling under its breath, which didn't help, along with the driver whispering, "Damn, damn. If anything starts running toward us, don't expect me to stay."

"No, don't expect me to stay," I said. "Come on!"

There were a lot of white shapes on each side of the graveled path. I heard a ghost sigh somewhere, but it was only my own lungs pumping like a bellows, trying to light some sort of fire in my chest.

A few drops of rain fell on my head. "God," I whispered. "And no umbrella."

What, I thought, in hell am I doing here?

Every time I had seen old horror movies, I had laughed at the guy who goes out late at night when he should stay in. Or the woman who does the same, blinking her big innocent eyes and wearing stiletto heels with which to trip over, running. Yet here I was, all because of a truly stupid promissory note.

"Okay," called the cab driver. "This is as far as I go!"

"Coward!" I cried.

"Yeah!" he said. "I'll wait right here!"

I was halfway to the back wall now and the rain fell in thin sheets that washed my face and dampened the curses in my throat.

There was enough light from the taxi's headlights to see a ladder propped up against the rear wall of the cemetery, leading over into the backlot of Maximus Films.

At the bottom of the ladder I stared up through the cold drizzle.

At the top of the ladder, a man appeared to be climbing to go over the wall.

But he was frozen there as if a bolt of lightning had taken his picture and fixed him forever in blind-white-blue emulsion: His head was thrust forward like that of a track star in full flight, and his body bent as if he might hurl himself across and down into Maximus Films.

Yet, like a grotesque statue, he remained frozen.

I started to call up when I realized why his silence, why his lack of motion.

The man up there was dying or dead.

He had come here, pursued by darkness, climbed the ladder, and frozen at

the sight of—what? Had something behind stunned him with fright? Or was there something beyond, in studio darkness, far worse?

Rain showered the white tombstones.

I gave the ladder a gentle shake.

“My God!” I yelled.

For the old man, on top of the ladder, toppled.

I fell out of the way.

He landed like a ten-ton lead meteor, between gravestones. I got to my feet and stood over him, not able to hear for the thunder in my chest, and the rain whispering on the stones and drenching him.

I stared down into the dead man’s face.

He stared back at me with oyster eyes.

Why are you looking at me? he asked, silently.

Because, I thought, I know you!

His face was a white stone.

James Charles Arbuthnot, former head of Maximus Films, I thought.

Yes, he whispered.

But, but, I cried silently, the last time I saw you, I was thirteen years old on my roller skates in front of Maximus Films, the week you were killed, twenty years ago, and for days there were dozens of photos of two cars slammed against a telephone pole, the terrible wreckage, the bloody pavement, the crumpled bodies, and for another two days hundreds of photos of the thousand mourners at your funeral and the million flowers and, weeping real tears, the New York studio heads, and the wet eyes behind two hundred sets of dark glasses as the actors came out, with no smiles. You were really missed. And some final pictures of the wrecked cars on Santa Monica Boulevard, and it took weeks for the newspapers to forget, and for the radios to stop their praise and forgive the king for being forever dead. All that, James Charles Arbuthnot, was you.

Can’t be! Impossible, I almost yelled. You’re here tonight up on the wall? Who put you there? You can’t be killed all over again, can you?

Lightning struck. Thunder fell like the slam of a great door. Rain showered the dead man’s face to make tears in his eyes. Water filled his gaping mouth,

I spun, yelled, and fled.

When I reached the taxi I knew I had left my heart back with the body.

It ran after me now. It struck me like a rifle shot midriff, and knocked me against the cab.

The driver stared at the gravel drive beyond me, pounded by rain.

“Anyone there?!” I yelled.

“No!”

“Thank God. Get out of here!”

The engine died.

We both moaned with despair.

The engine started again, obedient to fright.

It is not easy to back up at sixty miles an hour.

We did.

A Graveyard For Lunatics

4

I sat up half the night looking around at my ordinary living room with ordinary furniture in a small safe bungalow house on a normal street in a quiet part of the city. I drank three cups of hot cocoa but stayed cold as I threw images on the walls, shivering.

People can't die twice! I thought. That couldn't have been James Charles Arbuthnot on that ladder, clawing the night wind. Bodies decay. Bodies vanish.

I remembered a day in 1934 when J. C. Arbuthnot had got out of his limousine in front of the studio as I skated up, tripped, and fell into his arms. Laughing, he had balanced me, signed my book, pinched my cheek, and gone inside.

And, now, Sweet Jesus, that man, long lost in time, high in a cold rain, had fallen in the graveyard grass.

I heard voices and saw headlines:

J. C. ARBUTHNOT DEAD BUT RESURRECTED.

"No!" I said to the white ceiling where the rain whispered, and the man fell. "It wasn't him. It's a lie!" Wait until dawn, a voice said.

A Graveyard For Lunatics

5

Dawn was no help.

The radio and TV news found no dead bodies.

The newspaper was full of car crashes and dope raids. But no J. C. Arbuthnot.

I wandered out of my house, back to my garage, full of toys, old science and invention magazines, no automobile, and my secondhand bike.

I biked halfway to the studio before I realized I could not recall any intersection I had blindly sailed through. Stunned, I fell off the bike, trembling.

A fiery red open-top roadster burned rubber and stopped parallel to me.

The man at the wheel, wearing a cap put backward, gunned the throttle. He stared through the windshield, one eye bright blue and uncovered, the other masked by a monocle that had been hammered in place and gave off bursts of sun fire.

"Hello, you stupid goddamn son of a bitch," he cried, with a voice that lingered over German vowels.

My bike almost fell from my grip. I had seen that profile stamped on some old coins when I was twelve. The man was either a resurrected Caesar or the German high pontiff of the Holy Roman Empire. My heart banged all of the air out of my lungs.

"What?" shouted the driver. "Speak up!"

"Hello," I heard myself say, "you stupid goddamn son-of-a-bitch you. You're Fritz Wong, aren't you? Born in Shanghai of a Chinese father and an Austrian mother, raised in Hong Kong, Bombay, London, and a dozen towns in Germany. Errand boy, then cutter then writer then cinematographer at UFA then director across the world. Fritz Wong, the magnificent director who made the great silent film *The Cavalcanti Incantation*. The guy who ruled Hollywood films from 1925 to 1927 and got thrown out for a scene in a film where you directed yourself as a Prussian general inhaling Gerta Froelich's underwear. The international director who ran back to and then got out of Berlin ahead of Hitler, the director of *Mad Love*, *Delirium*, *To the Moon and Back*—"

With each pronouncement, his head had turned a quarter of an inch, at the same time as his mouth had creased into a Punch-and-Judy smile. His monocle flashed a Morse code.

Behind the monocle was the faintest lurking of an Orient eye. I imagined the left eye was Peking, the right Berlin, but no. It was the monocle's magnification that focused the Orient. His brow and cheeks were a fortress of Teutonic arrogance, built to last two thousand years or until his contract was canceled.

"What did you call me?" he asked, with immense politeness.

"What you called me," I said, faintly. "A stupid," I whispered, "goddamn son-of-a-bitch."

He nodded. He smiled. He banged the car door wide.

“Get in!”

“But you don’t—”

“—know you? Do you think I run around giving lifts to just any dumb-ass bike rider? You think I haven’t seen you ducking around corners at the studio, pretending to be the White Rabbit at the commissary. You’re that”—he snapped his fingers— “bastard son of Edgar Rice Burroughs and The Warlord of Mars—the illegitimate offspring of H. G. Wells, out of Jules Verne. Stow your bike. We’re late!”

I tossed my bike in the back and was in the car only in time as it revved up to fifty.

“Who can say?” shouted Fritz Wong, above the exhaust. “We are both insane, working where we work. But you are lucky, you still love it.”

“Don’t you?” I asked.

“Christ help me,” he muttered. “Yes!”

I could not take my eyes off Fritz Wong as he leaned over the steering wheel to let the wind plow his face.

“You are the stupidest goddamn thing I ever saw!” he cried. “You want to get yourself killed? What’s wrong, you never learned to drive a car? What kind of bike is that? Is this your first screen job? How come you write that crap? Why not read Thomas Mann, Goethe!”

“Thomas Mann and Goethe,” I said, quietly, “couldn’t write a screenplay worth a damn. Death in Venice, sure. Faust? you betcha. But a good screenplay? or a short story like one of mine, landing on the Moon and making you believe it? Hell, no. How come you drive with that monocle?”

“None of your damn business! It’s better to be blind. If you look too closely at the driver ahead, you want to ram his ass! Let me see your face. You approve of me?”

“I think you’re funny!”

“Jesus! You are supposed to take everything that Wong the magnificent says as gospel. How come you don’t drive?”

We were both yelling against the wind that battered our eyes and mouths.

“Writers can’t afford cars! And I saw five people killed, torn apart, when I was fifteen. A car hit a telephone pole.”

Fritz glanced over at my pale look of remembrance.

“It was like a war, yes? You’re not so dumb. I hear you’ve been given a new project with Roy Holdstrom? Special effects? Brilliant. I hate to admit.”

“We’ve been friends since high school. I used to watch him build his miniature dinosaurs in his garage. We promised to grow old and make monsters together.”

“No,” shouted Fritz Wong against the wind, “you are working for monsters. Manny Leiber? The Gila monster’s dream of a spider. Watch out! There’s the menagerie!”

He nodded at the autograph collectors on the sidewalk across the street from the studio gates.

I glanced over. Instantly, my soul flashed out of my body and ran back. It

was 1934 and I was mulched in among the ravening crowd, waving pads and pens, rushing about at premiere nights under the klieg lights or pursuing Marlene Dietrich into her hairdresser's or running after Gary Grant at the Friday-night Legion Stadium boxing matches, waiting outside restaurants for Jean Harlow to have one more three-hour lunch or Claudette Colbert to come laughing out at midnight.

My eyes touched over the crazy mob there and I saw once again the bulldog, Pekingese, pale, myopic faces of nameless friends lost in the past, waiting outside the great Spanish Prado Museum facade of Maximus where the thirty-foot-high intricately scrolled iron gates opened and clanged shut on the impossibly famous. I saw myself lost in that nest of gape-mouthed hungry birds waiting to be fed on brief encounters, flash photographs, ink-signed pads. And as the sun vanished and the moon rose in memory, I saw myself roller-skating nine miles home on the empty sidewalks, dreaming I would someday be the world's greatest author or a hack writer at Fly by Night Pictures.

"The menagerie?" I murmured. "Is that what you call them?"

"And here," said Fritz Wong, "is their zoo!"

And we jounced in the studio entrance down alleys full of arriving people, extras and executives. Fritz Wong rammed his car into a NO PARKING zone.

I got out and said, "What's the difference between a menagerie and a zoo?"

"In here, the zoo, we are kept behind bars by money. Out there, those menagerie goofs are locked in silly dreams."

"I was one of them once, and dreamed of coming over the studio wall."

"Stupid. Now you'll never escape."

"Yes, I will. I've finished another book of stories, and a play. My name will be remembered!"

Fritz's monocle glinted. "You shouldn't tell this to me. I might lose my contempt."

"If I know Fritz Wong, it'll be back in about thirty seconds."

Fritz watched as I lifted my bike from the car.

"You are almost German, I think."

I climbed on my bike. "I'm insulted."

"Do you speak to all people this way?"

"No, only to Frederick the Great, whose manners I deplore but whose films I love."

Fritz Wong unscrewed the monocle from his eye and dropped it in his shirt pocket. It was as if he had let a coin fall to start some inner machine.

"I've been watching you for some days," he intoned. "In fits of insanity, I read your stories. You are not lacking talent, which I could polish. I am working, God help me, on a hopeless film about Christ, Herod Antipas, and all those knucklehead saints. The film started nine million dollars back with a dipso director who couldn't handle kindergarten traffic. I have been elected to bury the corpse. What kind of Christian are you?"

"Fallen away."

"Good! Don't be surprised if I get you fired from your dumb dinosaur epic. If you could help me embalm this Christ horror film, it's a step up for you. The

Lazarus principle! If you work on a dead turkey and pry it out of the film vaults, you earn points. Let me watch and read you a few more days. Appear at the commissary at one sharp today. Eat what I eat, speak when spoken to, yes? you talented little bastard.”

“Yes, Unterseeboot Kapitan, you big bastard, sir.”

As I biked off, he gave me a shove. But it was not a shove to hurt, only the quietist old philosopher’s push, to help me go.

I did not look back.

I feared to see him looking back.

A Graveyard For Lunatics

6

“Good God!” I said. “He made me forget!”

Last night. The cold rain. The high wall. The body.

I parked my bike outside Stage 13.

A studio policeman, passing, said, “You got a permit to park there? That’s Sam Shoenbroder’s slot. Call the front office.”

“Permit!” I yelled. “Holy Jumping Jesus! For a bike?”

I slammed the bike through the big double airlock door into darkness.

“Roy?!” I shouted. Silence.

I looked around in the fine darkness at Roy Holdstrom’s toy junkyard.

I had one just like it, smaller, in my garage.

Strewn across Stage 13 were toys from Roy’s third year, books from his fifth, magic sets from when he was eight, electrical experiment chemistry sets from when he was nine and ten, comic collections from Sunday cartoon strips when he was eleven, and duplicate models of Kong when he turned thirteen in 1933 and saw the great ape fifty times in two weeks.

My paws itched. Here were dime-store magnetos, gyroscopes, tin trains, magic sets that caused kids to grind their teeth and dream of shoplifting. My own face lay there, a life mask cast when Roy Vaselined my face and smothered me with plaster of paris. And all about, a dozen castings of Roy’s own great hawk profile, plus skulls and full-dress skeletons tossed in corners or seated in lawn chairs; anything to make Roy feel at home in a stage so big you could have shoved the Titanic through the spaceport doors with room left over for Old Ironsides.

Across one entire wall Roy had pasted billboard-sized ads and posters from The Lost World, Kong, and Son of Kong, as well as Dracula and Frankenstein. In orange crates at the center of this Woolworth dime-store garage sale were sculptures of Karloff and Lugosi. On his desk were three original ball-and-socket dinosaurs, given as gifts by the makers of The Lost World, the rubber flesh of the ancient beasts long melted to drop off the metal bones.

Stage 13 was, then, a toy shop, a magic chest, a sorcerer’s trunk, a trick manufactory, and an aerial hangar of dreams at the center of which Roy stood each day, waving his long piano fingers at mythic beasts to stir them, whispering, in their ten-billion-year slumbers.

It was into this junkyard, this trash heap of mechanical avarice, greed for toys, and love for great ravening monsters, guillotined heads, and unraveled tarbaby King Tut bodies, that I picked my way.

Everywhere were vast low-lying tents of plastic covering creations that only in time would Roy reveal. I didn’t dare look.

Out in the middle of it all a barebone skeleton held a note, frozen, on the air. It read:

CARL DENHAM!

That was the name of the producer of King Kong.

THE CITIES OF THE WORLD, FRESHLY CREATED, LIE HERE UNDER TARPAULINS WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED. DO NOT TOUCH. COME FIND ME.

THOMAS WOLFE WAS WRONG. YOU CAN GO HOME AGAIN. TURN LEFT AT CARPENTERS'SHEDS, SECOND OUTDOOR SET ON THE RIGHT. YOUR GRANDPARENTS ARE WAITING THERE! COME SEE! ROY.

I looked around at the tarpaulins. The unveiling! Yes!

I ran, thinking: What does he mean? My grandparents? Waiting? I slowed down. I began to breathe deeply of a fresh air that smelled of oaks and elms and maples.

For Roy was right.

You can go home again.

A sign at the front of outdoor set number two read: FOREST PLAINS, but it was Green Town, where I was born and raised on bread that yeasted behind the potbellied stove all winter, and wine that fermented in the same place in late summer, and clinkers that fell in that same stove, like iron teeth, long before spring.

I did not walk on the sidewalks, I walked the lawns, glad for a friend like Roy who knew my old dream and called me to see.

I passed three white houses where my friends had lived in 1931, turned a corner, and stopped in shock.

My dad's old 1929 Buick was parked in the dust on the brick street, waiting to head west in 1933. It stood, rusting quietly, its headlights dented, its radiator cap flaked, its radiator honeycomb-papered over with trapped moths and blue and yellow butterfly wings, a mosaic caught from a flow of lost summers.

I leaned in to stroke my hand, trembling, over the prickly nap of the back-seat cushions, where my brother and I had knocked elbows and yelled at each other as we traveled across Missouri and Kansas and Oklahoma and...

It wasn't my dad's car. But it was.

I let my eyes drift up to find the ninth greatest wonder of the world:

My grandma and grandpa's house, with its porch and its porch swing and geraniums in pink pots along the rail, and ferns like green sprinkler fountains all around, and a vast lawn like the fur of a green cat, with clover and dandelions studding it in such profusion that you longed to tear off your shoes and run the whole damned tapestry barefoot. And—

A high cupola window where I had slept to wake and look out over a green land and a green world.

In the summer porch swing, sailing back and forth, gently, his long-fingered hands in his lap, was my dearest friend...

Roy Holdstrom.

He glided quietly, lost as I was lost in some midsummer a long time back.

Roy saw me and lifted his long cranelike arms to gesture right and left, to the lawn, the trees, to himself, to me.

“My God,” he called, “aren’t we—lucky?”

A Graveyard For Lunatics

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Roy Holdstrom had built dinosaurs in his garage since he was twelve. The dinosaurs chased his father around the yard, on 8-millimeter film, and ate him up. Later, when Roy was twenty, he moved his dinosaurs into small fly-by-night studios and began to make on-the-cheap lost-world films that made him famous. His dinosaurs so much filled his life that his friends worried and tried to find him a nice girl who would put up with his Beasts. They were still searching.

I walked up the porch steps remembering one special night when Roy had taken me to a performance of Siegfried at the Shrine Auditorium. “Who’s singing?” I had asked. “To hell with singing!” cried Roy. “We go for the Dragon!” Well, the music was a triumph. But the Dragon? Kill the tenor. Douse the lights.

Our seats were so far over that—oh God!—I could see only the Dragon Fafner’s left nostril! Roy saw nothing but the great flame-thrown smokes that jetted from the unseen beast’s nose to scorch Siegfried.

“Damn!” whispered Roy.

And Fafner was dead, the magic sword deep in his heart. Siegfried yelled in triumph. Roy leaped to his feet, cursing the stage, and ran out.

I found him in the lobby muttering to himself.

“Some Fafner! Christ! My God! Did you see?!”

As we stormed out into the night, Siegfried was still screaming about life, love, and butchery.

“Poor bastards, that audience,” said Roy. “Trapped for two more hours with no Fafner!”

And here he was now, swinging quietly in a glider swing on a front porch lost in time but brought back up through the years.

“Hey!” he called, happily. “What’d I tell you? My grandparents’ house!”

“No, mine!”

“Both!”

Roy laughed, truly happy, and held out a big fat copy of *You Can’t Go Home Again*.

“He was wrong,” said Roy, quietly.

“Yes,” I said, “here we are, by God!”

I stopped. For just beyond this meadowland of sets, I saw the high graveyard/studio wall. The ghost of a body on a ladder was there, but I wasn’t ready to mention it yet. Instead, I said: “How you doing with your Beast? You found him yet?”

“Heck, where’s your Beast?”

That’s the way it had been for many days now.

Roy and I had been called in to blueprint and build beasts, to make meteors fall from outer space and humanoid critters rise from dark lagoons, dripping

cliches of tar from dime-store teeth.

They had hired Roy first, because he was technically advanced. His pterodactyls truly flew across the primordial skies. His bron-tosaurs were mountains on their way to Mahomet.

And then someone had read twenty or thirty of my Weird Tales, stories I had been writing since I was twelve and selling to the pulp magazines since I was twenty-one, and hired me to “write up a drama” for Roy’s beasts, all of which hyperventilated me, for I had paid my way or snuck into some nine thousand movies and had been waiting half a lifetime for someone to fire a starter’s gun to run me amok in film.

“I want something never seen before!” said Manny Leiber that first day. “In three dimensions we fire something down to Earth. A meteor drops—”

“Out near Meteor Crater in Arizona—” I put in. “Been there a million years. What a place for a new meteor to strike and...”

“Out comes our new horror,” cried Manny.

“Do we actually see it?” I asked.

“Whatta you mean? We got to see it!”

“Sure, but look at a film like The Leopard Man! The scare comes from night shadows, things unseen. How about Isle of the Dead when the dead woman, a catatonic, wakes to find herself trapped in a tomb?”

“Radio shows!!” cried Manny Leiber. “Dammit, people want to see what scares them—”

“I don’t want to argue—”

“Don’t!” Manny glared. “Give me ten pages to scare me gutless! You—” pointing at Roy—“whatever he writes you glue together with dinosaur droppings! Now, scram! Go make faces in the mirror at three in the morning!”

“Sir!” we cried.

The door slammed.

Outside in the sunlight, Roy and I blinked at each other.

“Another fine mess you got us in, Stanley!”

Still yelling with laughter, we went to work.

I wrote ten pages, leaving room for monsters. Roy slapped thirty pounds of wet clay on a table and danced around it, hitting and shaping, hoping for the monster to rise up like a bubble in a prehistoric pool to collapse in a hiss of sulfurous steam and let the true horror out.

Roy read my pages.

“Where’s your Beast?” he cried.

I glanced at his hands, empty but covered with blood-red clay.

“Where’s yours?” I said.

And now here it was, three weeks later.

“Hey,” said Roy, “how come you’re just standing down there looking at me? Come grab a doughnut, sit, speak.” I went up, took the doughnut he offered me, and sat in the porch swing, moving alternately forward into the future and back into the past. Forward—rockets and Mars. Backward—dinosaurs and tarpits.

And faceless Beasts all around.

“For someone who usually talks ninety miles a minute,” said Roy