



## THE ELVES OF AUTUMN

By

VINCENT COLIN BURKE

### CHAPTER 1

I am a Lord in April. Some will say I'm dreaming, just because I'm old, and some will say I'm old because I dream, but I am a Lord in April now, and none can take that from me.

I live in a Home for Senior Citizens, the Inter-Faith Home in Corner Brook, built in woods where I roamed as a boy, for I dearly loved to roam the woods, and one day as I walked outside, just passing the room I share with Skipper Jim, with half a notion of some prank in mind, a memory came strong upon me, of berries and a blossom I had seen there, that should have been at my left side if the woods

had been the same as I remembered them. It would have been just a crackerberry bush, but when I was a boy these things were beautiful, and so I bent to pick a flower for my Mom, who's dead and gone these twenty-five years. The wall of the room, or, rather, of its bathroom, is where the berry bush had been, but I had forgotten that, and so I stooped, and there I was with my fingers around a crackerberry-flower stalk that wouldn't break though my hand felt wondrous strong. But it was not a big thick bush like what I remembered; it was growing alone, in a clear spot in a forest, and it really was a beautiful flower. And then a young man was stopping there, a nice, well-set-up young man, though the face on him was stern enough, and he said, "You cannot pick that flower, sir."

And I said, "No? You watch me." And I hauled on it again. But it wouldn't come. That young fellow said again, "You cannot pick that flower, sir, until it dies." I hauled on it right hard, and then I said, "I'll have en choked, sir, pretty soon."

And then he said to me, "You cannot pick that flower, sir, until it dies. That is the law."

"Laws were made to be broke," says I, "and flowers is for pickin'." But that bloody crackerberry flower wouldn't budge, hard as I hauled. Then that young

man said to me, “Peace, good man, be silent. Laws do not break in April. Follow me.”

Now I wasn’t going to follow him, because I didn’t think I was going to like where he was going. So I stayed where I was. And I figured if I started running around anywhere else in those woods, he’d find me quick enough, because it seemed to me, from the look of him, he’d know his way around them. So I stayed where I was, and backed up a step.

And there I was in the bathroom, facing the toilet, hearing the sound of someone approaching the door. I turned and softly slid the bolt, and then sat down; my legs were weak. Then I heard Skipper Jim trying the door, but I found I needed to use the toilet, so I did, with Jim cursing me for sneaking in ahead of him and staying there so long.

“I just got here, you bloody old fool,” I said to him, and his language then was awful. When he had finished the few dirty and profane phrases he had got used to over the years, he said, “Oh no, you didn’t, because Mrs. Hampton been keepin’ me talkin’ outside the door the last fifteen minutes. You had lots more time than I did.”

“I didn’t need to do it till just now,” I said. “How was I supposed to know you

were too much a gentleman to tell Mrs. Hampton you were short-taken.”

“I wasn’t short-taken. I just got to do it bad.”

“Well, hold on a minute; I won’t be long.” And I wasn’t, but when I got out, Skipper Jim started yelling again, and he was so loud that Mrs. Hampton, who is chief housekeeper here, came in from the next room and knocked on the door and asked us what was going on, and old Jim said I was always hogging the bathroom like “a durned old coot” – he reads a lot of westerns, Jim does, and he needed something derogative he could say in front of a woman – and Mrs. Hampton started her speech about consideration for others Mr. Brown. With all the goings-on, I’d had just about enough for then, so I looked at her the way I figured that stern young man had looked at me, and I said, “Peace, good girl, be silent.” And, you know, she was, so I guess I said it right. And then she suddenly left our room, shaking her head. I wondered, sometimes, afterward, what she would have done if I’d said, “Follow me,” like that young man, and sat on the bed. She’s a lovely looking piece.

After that, of course, Jim was always saying I was hogging the bathroom and he had to use someone else’s much too often to be polite. And I guess I did, a little bit. But one thing no one else can ever say is where I got that lovely crackerberry

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flower I keep on my table and never change the water on, that hasn't wilted at all these last six months. No, where I picked that flower one cold April month is more than they can say. But you forgive me, now. I am old, in spite of all their saying it, and I incline to ramble. I'll write some more another time.

## Chapter 2

I suppose some people would find strange I didn't doubt my sanity, or tell a doctor anyway, or go around telling everyone and insisting it was true. But I'm old enough by now to know the world is strange, and I'm still young enough to know there's times to keep your mouth closed. There's too many people now that's heard and not seen. Anyway, a few days after that first time I wrote about, I got my rheumatism bad. And I thought that if I could get to where I saw that flower and that young man, I wouldn't have the rheumatism; I had felt right healthy there. So I struggled down the stairs from the common room where the thought struck me – I don't know why I didn't use the elevator; I didn't know then what I know now – and headed for the bathroom in our room, and, wouldn't you know it, I got there just as Jim was getting up to go, and nipped in ahead of him,

and wasn't he surly. I got the door barred, and then I said, "All right, hold on." And it wasn't to Skipper Jim that I was speaking, though of course I meant for him to think so, for as I spoke I closed my eyes and took three steps forward, and when I didn't feel myself bumping into the toilet, I opened them, and saw myself to be in the forest, near that flower, and the young man was stopping in the act of the leaving the clearing. How I knew he'd still be there is something I still wonder about; I guess I just felt it somehow.

He turned his head and then again faced front and kept going. He'd told me to follow him and that was enough. And my rheumatism was gone again, so I easily hurried up to fall in behind him, and we went along a shady path to where a tall, straight birch was growing, with an axe resting against its trunk, and standing with ample room for the swinging of that axe if need be. But I hoped need wasn't, for it was a splendid birch, tall and grand and most amazingly alive. I never saw a thing standing still that looked so lively, as that tree did, except the other trees around when I got used to the forest.

"Your task is to fell this tree," the young man said looking down at me – and I'm not short, as Newfoundlanders go.

"I hope there's good reason," I said.

“There is the best of all reasons,” said he. “It is to be used as fuel in Winter.”

“There must be other trees would serve as well, that ain’t so fine, ain’t there?”

“This tree has been chosen. It is to die soon. It must be struck near the root as soon as it dies and cut through as quickly as may be thereafter, before its sentorilnon can return from trunk to Earth.”

“How will I know when it’s dead?” I asked him.

“How do you know it lives?” he answered me. And it was answer enough.

“Your duty is to stand with axe held high and poised to strike in the moment in which the tree shall die. It will die in an hour or less, and you must stand with axe held up until that moment.”

“I’ll try,” I said.

“Let us hope you do it,” said the young man, “or its sentorilnon will be lost and another, finer tree will have to be chosen.”

“I’d hate that,” I said. “I hate the death of this one bad enough.”

So I stood the right distance from the tree and raised the axe above my head, hands just a little bit higher than my right shoulder.

I expected to have a hard time holding that position, but I didn’t have it. It seems strange, too, that I hadn’t asked why I had been picked for the task the



young man had given me; but that came later. For now, I just stood, with my knees bent a little, holding the axe. And I never tired at all, nor grew it hard to hold the axe ready to strike from that one position. The only sensation from it was the slight pressure of the axe-helve against my right hand above the left.

Now, while I stood there ready, I began slowly to remember all the trees, each separately, I had ever cut. And there was sorrow in those memories, but not a heavy sorrow in the first ones, of those I had cut with axe and for good reason, sparing when I could a handsome tree, but when I came to memories of cutting wood with chainsaws, the memories were in company of a painful kind of sorrow. The pain grew worse and even more deeply hateful, so that I nearly put down the axe and left the tree to die as it would. And I had no idea why that pain and sorrow was so bad. But I gritted my teeth and kept my place and my position. But that pain troubled me for that most part of an hour that I waited. And it would leave, sometimes, when I thought on my waiting for the tree to die and my not grudging it that wait. But after a while, I began to question in my mind why such a wait was needed, and the pain came back, harder. And once when I wondered why I had been given an axe and not a chainsaw, which would have cut the tree more quickly and better saved whatever the thing was that the young man named,

the pain and sorrow were really bad. At least, it felt most like sorrow, though I felt no reason for it.

But suddenly the life went out of the tree and it stood dead, and then I struck, for I was ready, after all. The axe slid smoothly in, a deep cut, and I yanked it out and struck again, a more directly level cut, a little lower, that, meeting where the first went down, took out a bigger chip than any two cuts I'd ever made when young had ever yielded. But there was no time to muse on that. I had to strike real quickly and real strongly, and I did, one side and the other, and soon the tree was tottering. I hadn't thought to fell it in any particular direction, and it was trembling there, and I didn't want any loss of sentorilnon, so I gave a shove with my left hand, away from me, and as it went back I cut the last part of the trunk connecting tree with stump that was quickly made.

As the birch went falling against some nearby spruces, the young man came out of the path along the far side of the tiny clearing, the side across from the one where we'd come in, and he said, "You have done well, Son of Adam. The tree has kept much sentorilnon and will make goodly fuel in Winter. Now you must trim the trunk for sawing into firewood."

"All right," I said, and I began cutting off the limbs. And, you know, they were

really hard to cut. Even with the strength that I had there, that I could feel coming up from the ground as I had stood and as I worked, and in spite of the axe's being sharp as any I had ever held, I found the trimming to be tough work. But after a long time I was finished, though I trimmed out even the tree's tapering top, after hauling the trunk away from the spruces, so that it fell between them, not knowing whether the young man wanted the tip shortened any or kept intact. He showed up again as I finished. "You may cut off the top," he said. I did, and it was hard to do. I was tired in every muscle of my body.

"It is time for you to go home," the young man said. And looking closely at his face, I saw he wasn't really young, any more than I was. And I felt afraid. There was no telling how old he might be, I could see that.

"Why am I here?" I asked him.

"To learn wisdom," he replied. "You will return, when it is time again. But now it is time to go."

"One thing," I said. "What's so bloody wrong with using chainsaws?" And I told him of the sorrowful pain I'd felt.

"Till you gain wisdom in this matter, trees will die in April," was all he would tell me. "It is time to go." So we went back along the path and I passed the

crackerberry flower, and I found I was back in my bathroom, mine and Skipper Jim's. "Say something, dammit," Skipper Jim was saying, "or else I'll have to go for help."

"What do you need help for, getting your pants down?" I said, stepping out.

"Why didn't you talk to me? I was swearing away and getting no answer, so I was worried about you, man. I thought you fainted or had a heart attack."

"Well, I do have a heart condition, Jim." I'd never mentioned it before, and it took him by surprise now. His mouth hung open a moment, until I said, "It's in good condition. I'm not likely to have a heart attack, and I'm not the swooning sort either. I'm just not like some people, who have to shove it out both ends the same time." And that sent the hot-tempered old goat into a fine tear. I just lay down on my bed, grinning. He was music to my ears; but when he realized it, he shut up and turned peevish.

My hands were all galled, but the galls weren't rubbed open, so they weren't too painful. But the rest of my body ached all over from the exercise, unused as I was to that sort now, but it wasn't the kind of pain the rheumatism gave me, but rather a healthy kind of aching, so it was easy to take. But one thing kept nagging at me, so that next day in the common room I said to Jim, "What's wrong with

chainsaws, Jim?”

“Nothin’ wrong with ‘em, if you got the gas, and that’s easy to get,” he said.

“Why?”

“Just wondering.”

“Somebody put it into your head. You’re not doin’ new thinkin’ at your age.”

“I know, but I don’t think he’d like me talkin’ about him.”

“Only one I ever heard about would object to a chainsaw would be Gilbert Keith Chesterton, who was all the rage among Catholics when I was over to England that time before the war. I bought a few of his books, just to see what was so great about him. Silly fool. He said in one of ‘em that technology was like a conjuring trick: it showed someone was ingenious, he said, but it didn’t show whether he met the test of what it is to be human. Rubbish like that. But he wouldn’t mind you talking about him. Think he liked to be talked about, myself. Anyway, he was, a lot, among the people I was with. He wrote in the newspapers a lot, and anyone who does that wants to be talked about. I could probably get you some of those books if Johnny still has them.” Johnny Barnable is Jim’s young nephew, who reads a lot.

“That’s okay,” I said. “It’s probably the gas. I’ll give some thought to that.”

“Okay, be a mystery-man,” said Jim.

So I relaxed and wondered what was wrong with using gasoline in a saw, and after mulling it over for a while I thought I had it. It was a reason I myself should have had for objecting to them sooner, if I’d been consistent with my own ideas I’d had when I was younger, so I thought it was probably a right one, and I decided I’d go back, as soon as I’d got over the aches, to – April? Was that the name of the place? Or just the time of year there? But it had felt to me like fall.

It felt like fall when I arrived the third time, going in, when Jim was upstairs playing cards, as I had the second time, with eyes closed, from the bathroom, past the crackerberry flower, but the young man wasn’t there. I was a bit fearful of going to look for him, lest I lose the way back, but I walked along the path to where the birch tree still was lying, and past it, though I felt that I should stay till something was done about that tree, and the air was crisp and cool, and soon I met the young man coming out along the path.

“It is good that you came early,” he said. “It means that you have time for answer unto questions when today’s task is done.”

“Good,” said I. “What do you want for me to do?”

“We must carry this tree unto the sawhorse.”

“All right. Shouldn’t we cut it in two pieces, though? It’s pretty heavy.”

“I am strong. But you must take the butt end.”

He went to the tip and started lifting, and I lifted with him, moving forward along the trunk as it went up, with hands pushing it above our heads. When he stopped and let part of the trunk lie on his shoulder, I moved along under it with the butt beginning to rise from the ground, and again strength was rising up in me through my feet from the ground as it had when I was holding the axe ready, and I gave a mighty heave and it came up, resting heavily on my left shoulder and nearly causing my backbone to buckle to the side. There was great resistance, though, in the muscles just below my shoulderblade. I jolted along the path, as the young man directed, with short steps, and we went about thirty yards till we came to a handsome little house of stone, in front of which was the axe I’d used, stuck in a chopping block, and a saw of wood and steel hitched over a sturdy sawhorse that was so old it looked polished.

“Put it on the sawhorse,” the young man said. So we short-stepped kind of sideways till we were level with the sawhorse, and bent our legs and let the tree-trunk roll just above the fork-end, and the trunk dropped into the forks. The sawhorse creaked but didn’t break.

“Now we saw,” said the young man.

Saw we did. I never saw anyone could draw a saw to him through wood like that young man. Even with my April-strength I couldn't match him, but he matched his to mine, so that we pulled in rhythm. And it was hard to get going, as the trimming had been, and I couldn't help thinking how easy it would be to cut it up with chainsaws, and that painful heavy sorrow filled me again as I thought it, but I couldn't get rid of the thought and I was near crying before we finished all the sawing, and the only easing of it that I had was when we were lifting the log to further it along for more sawing.

We sawed the log into two-foot lengths, and I was glad it didn't have to be stove length, I can tell you. Then we piled the wood. “It will go where needed another time,” said the young man.

“Time for questions, is it, I hope?” I said to him, and he said, “Even so.”

“What's your name, first of all?”

“Kenturuel. Call me Ken if you prefer.”

“Kenturuel. That's a funny name.”

“I am a very funny person.”

“I didn't mean it that way.”



“I knew.”

“What place is this? Is April the place or the time?”

“It is both.”

“But April is spring and this seems more like fall. There’s no snow still leaving, but the air is cold and fresh. And the leaves are coloured fallish.”

“Autumn is the springtime of the soul, to be followed by its summer.”

“You mean this is Purgatory?”

“Nay, though a kind of purgatory may be served here. April is The Land of the Elves of Autumn.”

“Elves? The Little People?”

“Nay, we are none so little.”

“You’re an Elf? Yourself?”

“Do you believe it not?”

“I don’t know what to believe; I thought Elves were things in fairy t– stories for children.”

“It is good the children are told of us, however misleadingly it may be, but in such telling is not our sole existence. If it is easier for you, believe not that I am Elf, but rather believe Elf is what I am. For you know me to exist.”

“I guess so. Or else I’m crazy.”

“Even so. But you are not crazy.”

“What are Elves, then?”

“We are the Elder Brothers of Man. Long ago we shared your world with Men, but we have left that world and some of us live in April. We have always been held by theologians, both of Elves and of Men, to lack the supernatural Grace that dwells in the souls of baptized Men. But we are immortal within the life of the world, immune to disease, and may live forever, to the world’s end, unless we be slain. But our lives are bound up with the life of your world, for your world and April share a border. It is a border Men may cross in certain circumstances but Elves may not when April lacks a Lord. And what will happen to us when the world ends has never been told by Filduruë. It may be that we shall have natural happiness everlasting as companions of Men when the world is restored, but no one knows except Filduruë. In the meantime, we enjoy life’s goodness and endure the evil that men do, even as Filduruë endures it. April is a lovely realm, and lasting autumn is passing lovely, though there is sadness in it, the sadness of exile. For Paradise was lost to us also when Men were driven out, as it is Men who earn the fate which will be ours within the life of the world.

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“And now it is time for you to go again.” We’d been walking back toward the leaving place, and now he hurried.

“But—”

“It is time. But meseems I know what you would ask, and the answer to that is that no more trees have been chosen to die in April. There will be talk another time of what wisdom you may have gained.”

I stepped past the flower and was in the bathroom, past the toilet. I opened the door and stepped out. Jim still wasn’t in the room. That was good.

### Chapter 3

Next day, my arms and shoulders ached, and my back was stiff and my hands were a little sore, but the pain was healthy, as before, and a little less strong. And it seemed that, although the strength gained in April stayed with me only while I was in April, the good the exercise did was put to use in this world also. I was gladdened a lot by that. Anyway, I never waited again for my rheumatism to prod me; I went back to April when the soreness eased enough – enough, but not entirely – and Kenturuel (I didn't like to call him Ken, somehow) turned to the right after we were a little past the stone cottage and brought me out on the brow of a hill with a harbour sparkling beneath and slim ships moored out on it and tied up at wharves. Down the hill we went, along a stone path slanting to left across the face of it, and came out from the trees behind stores and a wharf. We went out

between stores onto the wharf, and found – I found: Ken knew it was there – a rowboat with a gull head carved on the prow, tied up to a slipway joined to the wharf. He told me to row out into the harbour, and I did, and it was good to feel oars roll on rowlocks again, as they had when I was young in Corner Brook. There was a fishing rod in the boat, made of birch sapling, and it had a reel attached, made, it seemed to me, with marvellous workmanship. It had the look of something hand made.

When we were well out on the water, I could see towers rise above the trees on the hill, further back, and as we went further I saw they rose at both ends of the north wall of a mansion set upon a secondary hill, within a long wall which also had towers at intervals. I looked at it in wonder at the shining whiteness.

“That is Lordholmë,” said Kenturuel. “We will go there when we return ashore.”

For some time I had been thinking of the times I’d gone in motorboats, and the deep and piercing sadness I’d felt when cutting wood in April had been growing back in me. It hooked deep in, right in the midriff, so that I could hardly bear to row.

“What’s this sadness I keep having here?” I asked Kenturuel.

“That is the sadness of Filduruë. It is a sadness that is at the heart of all the Elven, even in our times of greatest joy, for the misuse of Earth by Men.”

“How do you stand it – all the time?”

“We endure.”

“Who is Filduruë?”

“You will know. He knows you.”

I said nothing more, but rowed a little further, and Kenturuel said then, “Now you fish for supper. Today you’ve time enough to sup with the Elven in Lordholmë. You must catch three fish. They will be of a kind you know.” He bent down and reached under the sternseat he was using, and brought out an earthen bottle, capped with leather tied with a thong, and he passed it to me. Inside were several pieces of herring. I had noticed the sadness ceased when I stopped rowing.

I baited the hook on the rod’s line and flipped it over the side, and waited, watching the line as I reeled it out. The bait went down out of sight. Then thought came to me of my countrymen and others fishing with motorized gear, and the Sadness of Filduruë came back as bad as ever. It was hard to watch and wait with that sadness in me, harder than it had been to wait for the tree to die – for trees are beautiful and deserve sadness, but this was only waiting for supper. (That was the

way I thought in those days.) I felt as if I wanted to lie down in the boat and cry. But I waited and watched, and after about half an hour, which seemed more than half a day, I felt the line tug and I jerked the rod and felt the hook set. Then I reeled it in, and found I had a good-sized cod on the hook, and then a great joy expanded inside the sadness, though not driving it away, for this was a cod that looked more alive than any I had ever seen before. Then, suddenly the life went out of it, but I could see the body had lots of what Kenturuel called sentorilnon and would be marvellous good to eat, and the joy remained. It made the sadness less hard to bear while I waited for the next fish and the next, but I felt all the bite of the sadness, thinking of motorboats, while rowing in.

Carrying the fish in dipnets found on the wharf, I with two fish and Kenturuel with one, we turned right just before reaching the last store on the wharf, and reached the base of stairs I had seen leading up toward the mansion and we went up. Through an avenue we went at the top, then crossed a wide meadow to the front gate, and an Elf with a sword at his side stood back when Kenturuel opened the gate. There was still a long way to go to the building, which was what they call a quadrangle and looked even grander than it had from the harbour. There were lovely trees all about the land within the wall, and all were as lively-looking

as the one I cut down had looked before it died.

At the front of the house, a tall Elf-woman with mischief-making in her eyes and face took the fish from us and left as Kenturuel led me into the front hallway. There was a stair leading up, but Kenturuel led me around the end of the steps and down the hall to a door at the end. He opened it and showed me into a large room which he said was “the great hall,” and it was great indeed. An Elf so old his hair and beard, which latter was about eighteen inches long, were silver-grey, sat in a carved chair beyond a long table at the left end of the hall. I don’t know how old an Elf has to be to look like that, but that’s how old he looked.

“My grandfather, Muelonfulon,” said Kenturuel to me. “My grandfather, this is Mr. Adolphus Brown, of Corner Brook, Newfoundland, in the world of Men. I found him striving to pick a flivendilen before its time, and not easily did I dissuade him.”

“You tried to break a law of April,” said Muelonfulon, and his voice was very deep.

“Yes, sir. But I didn’t know it was a law, not when I started. But your grandson told me, and I kept at it awhile before I stopped. I guess you have to punish me for that.”



“There is punishment for it, indeed, but it is not mine to mete. And I think you will deem it none so dire.”

“What is my punishment, sir?”

“It is not for me to say. My duty is to guide your life in April until you become your own master within.”

“Within April, or within, sir?”

“I think it will be both.

“For now, just wait for supper and hear an Elven song.” He gestured to a youngish Elf who sat at his right, with a harp, and the harper began to play and then to sing. And while he sang, the sadness, mixed with joy, which I could hardly bear but did not want to stop, came back to me and settled in my midriff and slowly spread through me. He sang what seemed a long time, in words I could not understand, to music sweeter than I’d ever heard and piercing sad, and when he had finished, the chief Elf said, “It is the lament of Filduruë for the trees of April, that began to grow at April’s beginning and have never added, nor will add, to their number, but will only diminish as they die at need of Men and Elves. But few die at need of Elvenkind, for our needs for wood are largely met, and we ourselves, with regard to propagating, are as the trees of April on the morning of

His rising. And one tree has died at your need, and only one, and that is good and augurs well for you. But you may have to face Winter before your time in April ends. And I may say now no more about that.”

The harper played a merry song, without singing, while others sang, and it was good to hear the deep Elven voices in the light pleasantness, and as they sang, some set up trestle tables from behind hangings, and Elven women set the tables, first with linen tablecloths and then with plates and forks and knives, and then they brought in plates piled with pieces of fried cod and kippered herring and roast mackerel, and bowls of blue potatoes and carrot and turnip, and all the company ate and enjoyed the food, and the Elven chief thanked me for my part in providing, when he introduced me, after the meal, to the company. And all the food had much sentorilnon and was greatly nourishing. I enjoyed that plain fare as I had never enjoyed a meal before. And during the meal there was no music, but a lot of talk, much of it being mock-solemn, good-natured fun-poking I couldn't quite understand, by the Elves at one another.

When the meal was over Kenturuel took me back to the cross-over place and I came home. And I saw a funny thing then: that by my wristwatch I had been gone only fifteen minutes. For I had looked at my watch when I left. It had said

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three:twelve then, and when I came back it said three: twenty-seven, and the clock on the table said three:twenty-eight. I decided I would ask Kenturuel about it next time.

## Chapter 4

Seeing how long I had been in April the last time, and that it had taken up fifteen minutes of bathroom time, I decided that after that, I would take my trips to April when Skipper Jim was out of the room and likely to be gone for a while. There was such a chance about four days later, and I went, figuring it was time for another visit. But Kenturuel, meeting me on the path to the mansion, sent me back, telling me it would be time in three more days, and I should leave in the morning. I did as he said and he led me and three Elves into the country behind the mansion, with spears, saying we would hunt caribou. It came to me to suggest that I go back to Corner Brook and smuggle in a rifle to the Inter-Faith, but I thought I knew why I shouldn't mention it. And after a hike of about a mile, Kenturuel told me to hide behind a tall shrub with spear poised, and said the

others would drive a caribou past me and I was to drive the spear into it as it went by. I told him I'd never used a spear before and he said it didn't matter: all I had to do was stand poised the whole time, which might be an hour, and skill and strength would come to me at need, as I had been accepted by the earth of April. So I stayed steady as a rock, though it wasn't easy and the sadness hit me hard, with thinking of men hunting caribou and moose in Newfoundland with guns, though I tried to shake off the thoughts and think about the hunt and keep my mind on being ready to strike. And the sadness nearly made me powerless, trying to defeat the strength that came up from the ground, but I forgot it in my mind and heart, and when I heard a sound of something rushing along the trail I waited by, I was alert and keen, and the caribou was running by and I thrust the spear into it with one hand, which had been held back over right shoulder, and killed it quick and clean, through the heart. Then the Elves paunched and quartered it, with me helping, as I had done that before, and the Elves carried the quarters, and I the head, back to the mansion, in sacks they had brought in, and Kenturuel invited me to come back the next day for supper, when the caribou would be cooked, and I said I would come. And he said, "That is good, for you have done three deeds for April, and may now learn somewhat of your being here." And I was glad.

When it was time for me to go to April again, old Jim was out of the room. Kenturuel was waiting for me, and we went to the mansion. He took me to Muelonfulon, in the great hall, and Muelonfulon put his hand on my shoulder and said, “Let us walk together in the park.” And he and I went out of the mansion and walked about under the tall and lively trees.

“My grandson has told you what April is, but not much about it, I understand,” he began.

“That’s right, sir.”

“April was established for the redeeming of men from their misuse of Earth and its bounty,” he said. “We share in that redeeming by feeling that sorrow of Filduruë which is apart from His sorrow at the sins of Men. For He loves the world of Men, besides the Men of the world. But the sorrow of the Elves is not enough for the redemption of Men: Men themselves must learn to share that sorrow and to love the right and proper use of Earth and its riches. And for that to come about, it is sometimes needful that Elves be able to cross into your world, which may not be done while April lacks a Lord, and any Lord that April has must be a son of Adam. And no son of Adam may cross into April while it lacks a Lord, unless he is meant to be that Lord.”

That sank in, after a moment or two. “I’m not fit to be a Lord of April or anywhere,” I said.

“If you thought you were, then truly you would not be,” said Muelonfulon. “That you think not shows that you might be, though it could merely be true. Filduruë has chosen you to come to April to be its Lord, or you could not have come here. You may decline His choice, for He compels no man, and there may be fighting to be done, which may be greatly dangerous, and also horror to be faced. He will give you strength to face them, but would not have you encounter them unwarned and unchoosing.”

“I have fought before and I have faced danger and horror before, in a good cause. And He gave me the strength I needed – if He is Who I think He is? The Son of God?”

“He is. And if you decline His choice, more trees of April and more caribou will die for the next man chosen. For the animals of April are as the trees of April and may not be slain except for special use. Since the caribou has been slain, we may eat it regardless of your choice, but if you choose not the Lordship, in sorrow will be the eating, and not sorrow mixed with joy, for caribou is made for eating at the feast where a Lord of April gives us his acceptance of the Lordship. And if

you decline it, then it may be long before another fitted to be Lord is found, and the redeeming of Men from long misuse of Earth may be long delayed. I urge you to accept. Filduruë will give you grace and wisdom.”

“If you’re sure of that, I will accept,” I said.

“I am sure. It has always been His treatment of the Lords of April. But one thing more is required. A Lord of April must also be as the trees of April.”

I looked at him.

“He must be chaste as well as wise.”

I felt sorry for the men I was supposed to help, and for the Elves of Autumn. “I am not your man,” I said. I was ashamed, for I’d never talked of this outside confession, where I’d also been ashamed enough. “I have never sinned with a woman, but I have often sinned by myself. It is a foul habit I have not been able to break even in old age.”

“Old age isn’t death,” Muelonfulon said drily. “You are not necessarily lost to us, however. After all, you have been chosen. Let us talk further of this.”

I squirmed, inside. “All right.”

“Do you do this deed for pleasure only, with complete disregard of its proper context?”



“No. I’m not concerned about the pleasure itself. It’s mostly curiosity about sexual intercourse and wishing I had a woman of my own. When I’m in bed at night and the room is dark and Jim is quietly asleep... [He described here his occasionally, not often, imagining as if it were innocently some particular feminine presence only as company in bed at first, with no intention to be unchaste, which developed within a week or so into his fantasizing about, and so in some small sense “achieving,” without manipulation but not without some quiet movement, a version of what some teachers of Catholic doctrine have called “complete pleasure.” He asked me to paraphrase his account here, feeling his actual wording might be too explicit for the kind of reader to whom this narrative might most appeal, and indeed this paraphrase seems to me now in comparison somewhat prim. He also asked me later, somewhat wryly, to add, for the benefit perhaps of younger readers, what he did not say in the original, that “complete pleasure” is not necessarily always great pleasure and that it doesn’t satisfy curiosity about the truly feminine. *VCB*]

“Do you imagine different women with you?” asked Muelonfulon.

“From time to time, if I meet different women I think I might like to marry. But mostly, lately, I’ve been thinking about Mrs. Hampton, the housekeeper at the

place – it’s an institution, really – where I live. She’s a widow but she’s much too young to be attracted to an old goat like me, so I keep my feelings to myself.”

“Why have you never married? Or were you married once, without consummation?”

“I once was in love with a girl in Corner Brook, but she only wanted to be ‘good friends’ with me. She wanted me to forget about marriage to her but stay close to her, anyway, in a ‘platonic’ friendship, and I was so much in love that I tried to, till I saw her flirting with another man in my presence and winking at me as she did so, and I felt then she was making a fool of me, making me a kind of tame bachelor, and I got disgusted and left her alone after that. And I’ve felt pretty cautious about falling in love since then, and haven’t had much faith in it, so I never really let myself get close enough to another woman to ask her to marry me. I was too afraid of that kind of slavery again. It’s a bad thing really, because when I was properly in love, I never sinned alone. I wanted the girl for herself, not for sex.”

“Even so. Meseems your chief fault here is a desire to be loved. It is not necessarily a tyrant’s fault. And your desire can be fulfilled, if you will have it so, though that love may ever fail of consummation.”

“What do you mean?”

“We the Elves have not the lack of control that Men have. But there have been Half-elven among us – who now are dead from facing Winter – who have not had control. These have gained the equivalent of gifted virtue by courting Elven maids and consecrating their bodies to love of those maids and being in love with them, so that real desire overcame the attraction of the flesh and fixed itself upon its proper object, so that no more was temptation unto sin of that kind but only longing for the very beloved and delight in her existence. This desire is strong enough to be fiercely fought insofar as it is physical.

“This remedy is open to you. You may court an Elven maid and love her with all your will, and she will never flirt, if she accepts your love, but ever look on you alone with love. And her desire for you will be great as yours for her, so that ye will never really want to be securely alone together, lest ye cause each other to sin. For this love must never be consummated in April.

“I bid you court an Elven maid. Take your time and become acquainted with our ladies, and pay your court to whom you chose. None of us now is consecrated to another, though many of us may become so, for our delight in April and each other, when April has a Lord again who needs it. Our former Lords have, for the

greater part, been men of continence from early youth.”

“How does a mortal court an Elven maid, sir?”

“Ask her, after supper some day, to walk with you in the park, and talk with her of whatever comes to mind, provided your talk is not suggestive of carnal desire until she accepts you. Or you may be silent with her if you choose. But be not so too long.

“However, we must delay your receiving of the coronet until you have broken your habit of sin. I will tell the company at supper that you have accepted but will not yet receive. It is not needful that the reason be publicly told. I alone know of this qualification for the Lordship, though another must be told if ever it should happen that I need go to danger. But all know that a Lord of April may court an Elven maid if he chooses, and it is deemed a great honour to that maid.

“But now, my lord, it is time to question you of what you have learned of wisdom. What is wrong with use of mechanized saw such as has been employed in woods of Newfoundland, and elsewhere in your world?”

“It’s not the mechanizing that matters so much as the use of fuel in the chainsaw, as I see it. A man who uses a chainsaw is dependent on others to supply the force which moves the blade he uses, and he has to get money before he can

get the fuel. But a man who uses an axe or a bucksaw, when he has bought them, has paid for once and for all, and is his own man in his woodcutting. A man on his own shouldn't use them. Chainsaws are for employees of a company whose purpose is making money in the first place, which therefore has a ready supply of it. It's dependent, in that sense, already, and, in another sense, independent."

"Well spoken, within limits. It is right, then, for a company to use chainsaws for cutting trees?"

"I would say yes. Why not?"

"Would it be right for society to use criminals as executioners?"

"What?" The switch caught me a bit by surprise. I thought a bit. "I would say not. Executing a murderer is justice, and should be done by one who cares about justice, not by a criminal."

"What crime has the average tree committed?"

"None." I was surprised he asked that.

"Then why is it killed?"

"It is killed to be put to a higher use than its ordinary life as a plant, by being made useful to humans."

"Should it be killed by something higher than itself, then, or by something

lower?”

“Something higher.”

“Is the force that moves a chainsaw blade a higher form of being than the life which animates a tree?”

I thought. “It’s not alive. The fuel is made from something that used to be alive, but it hasn’t been for a long time. I’d say it’s lower.”

“Is the life with which a man wields axe, higher or lower than life of tree?”

“Higher.”

“Should a man use fuel-powered saws in cutting trees, whether on his own or for a company?”

“No. He should use only the life of his own body to move the tool he cuts with.”

“So. Today you have gained wisdom. A company, then, that cuts wood for sale, should employ men who use tools wielded by man’s strength only?”

“Well, they could use a saw powered by horses if one could be designed that way, to be practical. Horses are a higher form of life than trees.”

“You speak truly. It is permissible, then, for companies to cut wood for sale?”

“Sure. Why not?”

“I am asking.”

“Well, it’s the way of things for men to form companies to do things better.”

“And are they done better?”

“Aren’t they? Sorry. You are asking. I never thought that much about it. But it seems to me that they aren’t always done better. Craftsmanship does better work than businesses most of the time. But business works quicker and cheaper, so I guess it’s worth the loss, to most people.”

“But is it truly so? What is the loss?”

“Well, the loss is that things haven’t the same quality. And the dignity of the workers is lessened. And I suppose” – I really don’t know where this thought came from – “the maker and the buyer aren’t at their best as personal beings when they sell and buy. There isn’t the same relationship between them that there would be if a craftsman did his best and a customer honoured him by buying it because it was his best, or even maybe the best available, or perhaps the best.”

“Truly, you have gained wisdom. Filduruë is with you. Now, let us go into the hall, where will be for you a trial by twelve of the Elves of Autumn.”

“A trial?”

“A testing, let us say. But it will take a form near to what you have known to

be that of trials in courts.”

We went into the Great Hall, and found a dozen Elves with dark-grey beards seated in half-circle facing a chair to which Muelonfulon motioned me. I sat down.

The Elf farthest to my left, whose name was Duniteltas (for they all introduced themselves before Duniteltas announced they were the Judges of the Lordship of April), said to me, “Prospective Lord of April, you are accused that in the World of Men you have wasted the effort of your life. How do you plead, guilty or not guilty?”

I looked at Muelonfulon, and he gave me no sign. “Not guilty,” I said.

Duniteltas said, “What evidence do you offer in your defence?”

“What evidence is being offered against me?”

“There has been deemed no need to offer evidence against you, for such has been for many years the condition of the World of Men that anyone who survives in it through employment by another is virtually presumed by authority in April to have wasted his effort. Such presumption falls heavily on one called now to be a Lord of April. Would you prefer that you be cross-examined rather than give your defence in total? For we are accustomed to this procedure and may more quickly



elicit proof of guilt or innocence.”

“All right, then,” I said. “Cross-examine me.”

“Where and when were you born?”

“Corner Brook, Newfoundland, nineteen hundred and ten – January tenth.”

“How was your father employed when you were born?”

“He worked as a bookkeeper for a sawmill in Corner Brook.”

“What was your first regular paid employment?”

“I was a clerk in the Goodyear and House store in Corner Brook. My father had taught me the art of dealing with figures, besides my regular schooling, and John House took me into the store, saying he’d make me a good bookkeeper like my father.”

“Why did you do that instead of being a farmer, a fisherman, or a craftsman?”

“It was considered to be a better job.”

“Why so?”

“It was easier work, it was inside and comfortable, and it paid fairly well for those days.”

“So you played a minor role in the supplying of various goods. You made none of those goods yourself.”

“No.”

“What then gave you the right to a part in selling them?”

“I was paid by their temporary owner, who had bought them with his own money, to do so.”

“Why did people come to you instead of making their own goods?”

“It was more convenient.”

“Is convenience the highest natural good of men in society?”

“No.”

“What is it, then?”

I was silent, for a long time, thinking.

“Let me,” said Duniteltas, “suggest security of personal intercourse as the highest natural good procured by society.”

“That sounds well to me.” I said. And indeed, once it was suggested, I saw that that was the highest natural good. Communication that’s truly personal is man’s noblest function, and keeping that safe is society’s greatest duty.

“With that in mind, then, which is the most personal mode of co-operation: direct selling by the maker of good, or sale to a third party who sells to the same user?”

“Direct sale by the maker would be ideal.”

“And what is wrong with adhering to an ideal?”

“It isn’t always possible.”

“Why not?”

“Things aren’t always ideally arranged. Because of human nature, I suppose.”

“By ‘human nature’, do you mean ‘laziness’?”

“I guess so.”

“So your working as the servant of a third-party seller was due to laziness of yourself and others?”

“Yes, I think so now, but I didn’t see it that way at the time.”

“Why not?”

“We just didn’t think about things that way.”

“Did you set the price at which you sold goods? To people in grave need, perhaps?”

“No. That was done by the store owner, Mr. House.”

“So you lacked personal control over the essential aspects of your work?”

“Yes.”

“Did you not see that as a serious abdication of your personal nature? What we

call personity, since ‘personality’ has now a degraded meaning?”

“No. He was the owner. He had the authority. All of the people of my time had great respect for authority.”

“We Elves have great respect for authority, Mr. Brown. But first we make sure it is proper authority. Were you in the habit of questioning the sources of authority?”

“No, we just took it for granted, I’m afraid, and looked forward to being in positions of authority ourselves.”

“You were misled, then, by ambition as well as laziness.”

“Yes, but not with any corrupt intention.”

“Do you swear to that? By the sadness of Filduruë?”

“Yes. By the sadness of Filduruë.”

“How long did you work at the store?”

“Till nineteen thirty-nine, when the war broke out.”

“The Second World War, as it is called?”

“Yes.”

“You fought in that war, perhaps?”

“Yes. I was in the artillery.” Muelonfulon went over and whispered briefly to

Duniteltas.

“You were employed chiefly in using huge firearms to kill men?”

“Yes.”

“You are aware that trees must not be killed through use of forces which are of lower nature than life of plant?”

That sank in, and in.

“The men we fought were using the same kind of weapons. It was fair fighting.”

“Would you have used artillery against men employing lesser weapons?”

“In truth, we would. They fought for an evil cause.”

“Is fighting for just cause properly done with evil weapons?”

“No. I guess not. We never thought of that.”

“You are thinking of it now?”

“Yes. We did a frightful thing. But the alternative was loss of democracy.”

“Does not the democracy you saved now have as one of its purposes the wholesale slaying of unborn infants?”

“Yes.” I was ashamed.

“Was it worth saving?”

“What we fought against was even worse. But I agree, our weapons were of evil kind. But I never even started to think that way until I came to April.”

“Are you willing to make amends for killing of Men with weapons of evil form and action?”

“Yes. It was a terrible thing to do. Destroying the bodies of men by forces less in nature than the strength of men themselves is an evil way of warfare.” I cannot describe the shame and remorse and horror which spread through me as I saw that evil. It’s better to die, or even live defeated, than to use a weapon not fit for manly wielding. I saw that clearly then, and I have seen it clearly ever since. Proper authority comes from above, and no man is really above another, especially when one is fighting against another on account of causes they believe in. “I am more than willing to make amends,” I said.

“And so you shall, most probably.

“But what did you do after the war?”

“I went to Memorial College to study science, in preparation to become a doctor. I wasn’t doing really well, though I got passing marks. But then my older brother died, leaving my mother on her own, so I took a job at Bowater’s to keep her in the house we’d always lived in, instead of having her go to stay with my

married sister. I was with Bowater's until I retired in nineteen seventy-five.”

“What did you do at Bowater's? First, what is Bowater's?”

“Bowater's Newfoundland Limited operated the newsprint mill in Corner Brook. It was the main industry there.

“As for me, I started there as an accounts-payable clerk. I was in the invoice section.”

“What does that mean?”

“I was in the company's finance department, in the part that was in charge of paying out money for the goods and services the company bought.”

“What did you do, exactly?”

“I received invoices – statements of payment owed for purchases of goods and services – which we made in terms of Canadian, United States or Sterling (British) funds, and came in four copies. One copy went to Jack Tobin, the supervisor of the invoice section. I would have to sort the invoices according to the funds in which they were charged, and write them up in a register – a ledger, a large, blank book – with the name of firm that sent the invoice, the date of the invoice, the number on the invoice, and the amount charged as shown by it. I would check the purchase order to get the number listing it as a charge in the

company accounts.

“The original invoice would be stamped on the back with the date, the amount, and the invoice number.”

“Rather unclear, but incidental,” said Duniteltas.

“I would send a copy to the particular department supervisor for approval. A lot were insured, so I’d send copies of those to the insurance department.

Sometimes the department supervisor or foreman might hold the invoice for a month, because, you see, we might get the invoice a month before the goods arrived. But when the supervisor had the goods, he would approve the invoice, and it would come back to Jack Tobin to be processed. We’d have a record of when the copy was sent to the supervisor.

“After the invoice section was finished with the invoice, it would be passed on to the accounts-payable section. Norm Brake was in charge there.

“When I saw that a payment was warranted, because of approval of the invoice, I would make up a voucher authorizing the payment for the invoice, and on the strength of that voucher, the head cashier would write a cheque, or maybe the treasurer would if the payment was higher than a certain amount. Uh, you know what a cheque is?”



“We do.”

“I would type the invoice number on the cheque stub, along with the date of the invoice, the charge number, and the amount of the invoice. If a cheque to a company made payment for more than ten invoices, all these pieces of information would be listed on a form accompanying the cheque when it was sent out.

“I would list the invoices paid, and file a copy of each cheque under the firm’s name in our records.

“I would register the voucher, with the invoice number, the name of the supplier company, and the payment charged, and the department it was charged to, on the debit side of the ledger page. There were ten or fifteen departments. The amount charged would be converted to Canadian dollars – after Confederation, which happened a short time after I started the job.

“As each page of the register filled up, which would be about fifty lines, I would have to add up the payments and make sure the totals balanced, and those would be brought forward to the next page. And my totals would have to balance with the records of the departments concerned with the various payments, or I would have to find the mistake.

“About the eighth or tenth of every month, I would check all the vouchers for the month before, and add them up – for the first few years, with a manual adding machine, and after that with an electric. If those totals didn’t agree with the ones in the register, I’d have to check off all the individual vouchers and compare them with my records, and if any imbalance was due to any mistake of mine, I’d have to make up an ‘adjusting voucher’ to account for it. The charges and the payments would have to agree.”

“What part might you have played in the ordering of the goods you had so small a part in paying for?”

“None. Ordering would have been done by the purchasing department. But it wasn’t so small a part in paying. It had to be verified that payment was due. That’s important.”

“Was the payment owed by you? Or to you?”

“No, of course not. It was owed by the company. To some other company, or maybe some other person.”

“So you were constantly verifying debts for which you were neither debtor nor creditor.”

“Yes.”

“You were verifying obligations for which another would issue payment? And which had been incurred on the authority of still another?”

“Yes.”

“You were not a judge in a court of law?”

“No.”

“Was that not an unjustified distancing of means from end, and of doer from thing done, so far as the exercise of personity is concerned?”

“I never thought of that. I don’t see how else a big mill could work.”

“Why is it necessary that a big mill should work, if it separated doers from their deeds?”

“Where else would newspapers get paper?”

“What newspapers?”

“Well, the only one I know myself that got paper from Bowater’s is The Western Star in Corner Brook.”

“And did supplying The Western Star justify the whole complex subordination of person and purpose which made up the newsprint company?”

“Not alone, it wouldn’t, I suppose. But the Bowater’s newsprint went to newspapers all over the world. It was cheaper to serve a lot of them than make

newsprint for one alone. That couldn't be done."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Pretty sure. It would cost too much."

"Could paper be made by hand in western Newfoundland to serve The Western Star alone?"

"I don't know."

"Was it important to you personally that newspapers in, say England, have plenty of newsprint?"

"Not to me personally, I suppose. But newspapers are pretty important to the people who get them."

"Was it important to you that The Western Star have enough newsprint?"

"I enjoy reading the newspaper, I get the news from it. Getting The Western Star its newsprint would have been a decent way to earn a living. It was a decent way."

"If one had made and sold the paper directly, without fuel-powered machinery which separates the doer from his deed."

"I don't think you could make enough that way."

"Would it have been worth a try?"

“I suppose so. If anyone thought of it. I never thought of it.”

“If you had had all the money you needed to live comfortably, would you have worked at supplying The Western Star with newsprint?”

“If there was nobody else to supply it, and the Star continued to be a good paper, I guess I would. I wouldn’t take the job away from someone else who needed it.”

“Would you, if you had all the money you needed, work at supplying newspapers in England, if there were no one else to do it?”

“I don’t know. I was glad to retire when I did.”

“So you worked mostly for money, in helping to supply them?”

“Yes. But there was a certain satisfaction in the job, too.”

“I’m sure there was. You seem the sort of man who takes pains to have things done accurately?”

“I suppose so. But how do you know?”

“That is the sort of man who comes to April when we have no Lord.

“However. Are you aware that newspapers in North America could not operate if they depended on revenue obtained by circulation only?”

“No.”

“That is what is said by those who operate newspapers: they must have advertising to run economically at all. Can you state any implications of that proposition?”

I tried to think of what he might be getting at.

“Does it not follow,” he said, “that newspaper readers are unwilling to pay the full cost of the information they obtain from the newspapers?”

“Yes,” I said.

“If people are not willing to pay the full cost of what they buy, when doubtless they could in fact afford it if really needed, can they be said to really want it?”

“No.”

“Then you have spent your life playing a small part in supplying companies the wherewithal for selling what is really not required.”

“But people ought to want newspapers. They should be willing to pay the whole cost of them.”

“And of course it is not your fault if they do not. You have done your part – admittedly small enough – in supplying the necessary raw material. But is not the thing you say, that people in an industrial society need newspapers? Is it not the fact that travelling story-bringers and public gatherings can serve the same

purpose in societies less generally dependent on complex technology?”

“Yes.”

“So the effect of industrial life, so far, at least, as your part in it is concerned, is to reduce the will of the people to take part in the over-all life of the society that lives an industrial ‘life’? Its effect has been to make people not more personal but more selfish?”

“Yes.”

“Is that not a waste of one’s life’s effort?”

“Yes.” I bowed my head.

“Are you guilty or not guilty?”

“Guilty in fact, not by intent.”

“Filduruë is interested in facts as well as intentions, though direction of the will is what He makes His final judgement by. Are you ready to direct your will toward redemption concerned with fact?”

“Intention must always flow from fact, I think. I am ready.”

“You have learned wisdom. Be Lord of April.” And all the others stood and said, “Be Lord of April.”

“I understand my taking Lordship means accepting a kind of coronet,” I said.

“I am not ready to wear it yet, though I am most willing to be Lord of April. I will tell you when I am ready to receive it.”

Duniteltas said, “It is well. We can wait. He who is chosen knows best his own time. And now it is time to listen to the music before supper.”

It was joyous music and a splendid feast. I really enjoyed the caribou. And when Duniteltas announced, formally, after the meal, what everyone had known from its being held with me there, there settled within me a gut feeling that the use of fuel-powered machinery is wrong and that a society which depends on it is a slave society with a bias against life at its very heart, or at least in its gut. It is a feeling which has never left me since then.

When we were leaving the mansion, Muelonfulon and I, with him telling me, in answer to the question I had forgotten until now, that the magic governing April co-ordinated the times of the two worlds so that one fitted within the other and time spent in April was less than that on Earth, for a traveller from Earth, and vice versa for an Elf, so that the longest time outside one’s sphere would be an hour, a young Elven woman was making her way toward the mansion from the trees, and as she drew nearer I recognized her as the one with the mischief-making eyes who’d received the fish from me that day I’d caught them. As she approached, I



on impulse took my fate in my hands and plunged.

“Walking alone in the park, miss?”

She smiled and nodded, gravely, the mischief hidden but, I felt, still there.

“Would you like someone to walk with, another time?”

“If he or she be pleasant company, which is worth a walk for finding out of it.”

“My name is Adolphus Brown. For whom shall I ask when I look for you?”

“Ildominanë, my – Mr. Brown.”

“Good night, Il-Ildominanë.” I still have trouble with some of the long Elvish names. “I look forward to honour of your company.”

Muelonfulon and I walked on.

“Your next visits to April need only be for wooing,” said he, looking satisfied, I thought. “Your other duties do not begin until you accept the coronet.” He was carrying a lantern, and he lighted me to where the crackerberry flower grew.

When I pulled the bolt and came out, Skipper Jim, who was lying on his bed reading *Shane* for who knows the whatth time, started violently.

“Cripes,” he said. “I didn’t know you were in there. I been in ten minutes or more. What the hell were you doin’ so quiet?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?”

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“Pullin’ yourself, I suppose.”

I laughed. But that night I sinned again, in bed, by myself, thinking of Ildominanë and her graceful, rounded body. I was ashamed after, but then I always have been.

## Chapter 5

“Think I’ll go for a walk in the park,” I said to Jim two days later, while he lay reading *Posse from Hell*. “Don’t need to use the bathroom for a while, do you?” as I moved in.

“Why don’t you park in the walk,” said he. “Since you’re so full of it and so absentminded, no one would object.”

I laughed, and passed into April. When I got to the mansion, on my own this time, I asked for Ildominanë and was told she would be sought. She came down in a few minutes later, saying she had been sewing upstairs with other Elfmaids. We walked in the park, and her talk was lively and interesting, and after half an hour she teased me a little in grave and subtle manner, about mortality. I was no match for her quietly humorous wit, but only indulged my delight at it as I stumbled with

rejoinders. She asked me about the place I live in, and I described the beauty of Corner Brook the best I could, and told her of the city council's having once approved zoning for an apartment building above Margaret Bowater Park – but it had got stopped on appeal. It was to my mind one of the worst things the city had done, and she agreed that it was bad. “But there seem to be many evil things in your city,” she added.

“There's not much crime there, as North American cities go.”

“That is a good thing.”

We walked and talked about an hour and three quarters, and then she said, “I have duties in the house that I may not leave longer,” and we parted at the mansion door, she telling me, when I asked, that I could visit again four days later.

“You weren't in there all that long,” said Jim.

“I had a nice walk,” I said.

He snorted, and kept reading.

I went back as appointed, while Jim was out playing cards, timing myself to arrive two p.m., but I was a few minutes early and stopped to talk to one of the Lordholmë cats, which had been washing itself several feet from the house. I stroked it, and scratched it under the chin, and spoke caressingly, as pleases cats,

and forgot the time was passing, till the door opened. Ildominanë was there. As she began to step down from the threshold while closing the door, the cat, seeing a chance, ran up the three steps toward the door, just as her foot came down – right on the cat. The cat squalled and shifted as it was pushed sideways, and Ildominanë, to whom I was just beginning a greeting, fell forward. Quick as that cat, I was beneath and caught her in my arms, her soft firm weight coming down against my chest, her left cheek against mine, my arms around her, her hands on my shoulders. She laughed and, gracefully disengaging, stood again straight.

“For an old mortal, you have quick reflexes, I am pleased to notice,” said she, a little teasingly.

“They’ve been helped by the earth of April,” I replied, then became aware of one particular reflex that had apparently responded instantly, when I was too relieved at having caught her to have noticed that. I could feel myself blushing, too, the more since reflex action failed to dissipate under her particular kind of merry disregarding heedfulness.

“Let’s walk in the park,” I said, turning away toward it. We did, and as she talked of when that particular cat was born in April eighty-eight years before, in her presence, the stiffness eased. It appeared the cat’s name was Meadowstalker –

they played with mice but didn't hurt them – in English; I don't know how to spell it in Elvish, because it isn't polite for a mortal to use Elvish names in speaking of Elvish cats, so I've never asked. It seems cats are the only animals in April that are mortal in the sense of having a natural end to their lifespan, which means they are free to procreate twice before they die. You might know a cat would find a way to fornicate. But it isn't fornication – cats there choose their lifetime mates early in life and share affection with them all life long. They usually perform the mating act for the second time about twenty years before death, though some do it fairly early in life and enjoy the company of all their offspring until and after the offspring choose mates. But in any case, no cat performs the mating act till after his parents are dead. Cats live three hundred years in April. Meadowstalker was that rarity in Elfland, a middle-aged bachelor cat, Ildominanë told me. "Rather like yourself, I suppose."

"I'm not middle-aged, I'm old. Though I feel young when I'm in April."

"But you are a bachelor. Otherwise I may not walk with you as often as we might. It would be an insult to your wife."

"Oh yes, I'm an old bachelor."

"Rather like the Elves."

“Yes.”

We talked further, for an hour, and I got home before Jim was back. I picked up *Posse from Hell* from where he'd left it, and read awhile, till he came in.

“Good book,” I said, putting it back. “Could I borrow it when you're finished?”

“Sure. Got about thirty pages to go.” We chatted awhile and then went out to supper.

It wasn't an ordinary night for me. Memory of Ildominanë's bosom against me and our arms around each other made me flame with desire, but it wasn't the daydreaming wishfulness of desire I'd usually had, but rather a good, robust lust for a particular body, that made any thought of self-gratification irrelevant. It was a hard night, but a good one. I nearly prayed to God to give me Ildominanë right there and then, in marriage, by miracle. But I still wasn't in love with her.

When I went back again, and we walked in the park, Ildominanë, getting back to our talk about cats, asked me about the cats of our world, and when I described their natural lives to her, she laughed her silvery laugh.

“Truly, they are very pagans,” she said. “But forthright lustfulness is pardonable, even sometimes attractive, in paganism that is not to blame for its

ignorance of God. Your people must admire the warrior toms.”

“Well, I must say, I do. But most city people who own male cats, neuter them.”

“What does that mean – ‘neuter’?”

“They have them castrated.”

“Oh!”

“Otherwise they spray territory-marker, which smells foul in our world, around the house, unless you’re very vigilant, and get too many she-cats pregnant, people say.”

“But that is most unkind. And it is arrogant. And do they ‘neuter’ the queens, also?”

“Yes.”

“I knew not that your race was so arrogant.”

“We are. I’d be content to leave a race of animals to its own destiny. I like the idea of an animal doing what it wants and taking the consequences. Men should also face the consequences of what they do. But it’s wrong to destroy the natural life of a tomcat. We ought rather to keep them as they are, and admire the gutsy rascals’ will to fight for their way of life. That at least is worth imitating, though most people in my world are more inclined to follow the tomcats’ other habits.”



“At least the cats don’t use fuel-powered or mechanical weapons,” she said, laughing. “They depend on their own strength and skill.”

“I’ve always admired that in a cat. Though I never thought of carrying it over into men’s lives. But then, men are the chief animals and never should be less than animals, especially because they can think and really appreciate skill and strength.”

“We’ll make a tomcat of you yet,” she said.

“What?”

“We’ll make of you a fighting denizen of Elfland. For you know you will be called upon to fight, against one foe or another, as Lord of April. You do know that, Adolphus Brown?”

“There’s been some mention of it. Will I have to fight barehanded?”

“You will be taught to fight with sword, I think. Have your lessons not yet begun?”

“Not yet. I’m on holiday, for the time being.”

“On holiday?”

“Sort of. I’ve been given time to make friends among the Elves, before I take up the coronet.”

“How many friends must you make before then? I had not heard of this requirement. Is it a requirement?”

“One should be enough, really, if the right sort.”

“Am I the right sort? Am I not friend enough?” She smiled. “We both like cats. I love them with a passion.”

“So do I.” I smiled into her eyes, and, as we walked around, I began to tell her of the cats I’d had when I had a house, beginning with the one I woke up crying for when I was five years old and dreamed of him after he was dead of old age. He’d played with me in the playpen, I’d been told later. There was no neutering of cats in our place in those days, and he’d been a great fighter in his day. I let it all pour out, to Ildominanë’s ready sympathy, and she told me of cats she’d known, some of whom she also had lost to death. When we finished talking, there was a closeness between us that hadn’t been before, and I took her hand and kissed her fingers.

“We are friends indeed,” she said.

“Yes.” But I was hoping, for more than the sake of April’s lordship, that we were something more than friends, for now, after that close sharing, I found myself in love with her, as I had almost been for some time.

“It is good,” she said. “Let us play chess during your next visit.”

“I’ve never played it. Never saw the game being played. But if you like the game, I’d like to learn it, if it isn’t too much bother to teach a stupid mortal.”

“No bother. Not stupid. Lords of April are not stupid.”

When I was leaving, she asked me, with a little embarrassment, I thought, not to tell anyone about her clumsiness with the cat.

When I walked out of the bathroom again, Skipper Jim was startled again. He was reading *Guns from Thunder Mountain*. He must really like Clair Huffaker.

“Another walk in the park,” I said.

“Huh.”

I could have got a book on chess at the city library, but I wanted to learn from Ildominanë. Everything to do with her was a great joy, accompanied by fear that she might not be aware of that in me, or willingly giving so much. But she taught me chess, and I was quick to learn, she said, though my goal in my first few stumbling games was only to take men without losing any, as in checkers. I caught on to the real purpose, though, and chased it doggedly. But I couldn’t beat her, and I never could take her queen. I used to feel there was something flirtatious in the way she would send her queen out, to take or threaten, and then

get it out of danger fast. And after many games, after I had got used to the game itself, we got to know each other's minds fairly well. The chessmen were strangely carved, but in the shape of Elves, both white and red – for the Elves of Autumn don't use black in play. And once I saw, while she was getting the set out of a cupboard, another set of pieces in which the red were carved like gaunt, grinning, evil-looking take-offs of the Elven kindred, and I asked what those were.

“All in good time,” she said. “Learn first of Elven play.” And I realized in that evening that it wasn't only her queen she tried to safeguard. She tried to keep all her men, advancing chiefly to defend, and yielding them only to the strength of my forcible capture. And I sensed she wanted me to play that way. We did, and it was quite a challenge, and it took longer, but they were enjoyable games and taught me more of her mind than the earlier ones had. And I loved to watch her face, covertly, for seconds at a time, as she looked over the board. One evening I could contain myself no longer.

“I love you, Ildominanë, and not only as a friend but in the way of an April tom toward his queen. Will you accept such love as a mortal man can give an Elven maid in April?”

“If you want a queen, you must defeat the king. Such is the way of cats in your world. Or you must capture the queen while the king is protecting himself.” I thought she meant I’d have to fight someone, but she was setting up the board as she spoke, smiling, and then she said, giving me the white without usual choice of closed hands containing pawns, “Your move.”

That was setting me a task. But I set myself to it. But after many days of games – and a scattered quarrel with Skipper Jim – I said, “No one takes a queen against her will. I love you. I ask you for your love.”

“You have it. Can’t mortals sense that much in others, as do the Elves unless it be deliberately hidden?”

“I used to think we could, one time. I haven’t trusted that kind of sensing in a long time. Besides, I think you’ve kept it hidden.”

She laughed her merry, joyful laugh. “So I have.” We both laughed, then, and I said, “Is it your will, then, that we bind ourselves in love, through consecration of our bodies to each other?”

“It is not commonly done among the Elves that the she-Elf state her will in that matter, but that the Elf state his will and grovel and beg and plead and cajole that it be done.”

“I don’t grovel very well, but I’ll beg and plead and cajole with the best of them. Will you please, my darling lovely sweet one, condescendingly consent to bind yourself to me in consecration of the body, for which I humbly plead, beg, cajole, and beseech?”

“Sure, my son.” Gad, I had her talking like a Newfoundlander.

I stood there looking at her like a lovestruck tomcat, if a tomcat was ever struck by love instead of lust.

“It is customary...” she said, looking down into my eyes. I could see what she was thinking.

“Are you sure?” I said. “It’s sort of sexual, isn’t it?”

“Consecration is sexual, just not consummating. Kissing is perfectly legitimate, me son. As long as it is not indulged in for the sake of sexual pleasure itself, and not excessively indulged.” So I stood tall as I could and kissed her mouth, and she returned the kiss. I stiffened something awful, I couldn’t help it, it was just a reflex, and drew back. The kiss was a short one, a formality, but it thrilled me to my toes, apart from the brute sexual reflex, and seemed to seal all my desire to her inward personness for all time. The Elves are like that. But apparently she didn’t expect it to have the same effect on a mortal.

“I do not necessarily hold you to our agreement if on sober thought you think ‘twill be too much for you to abide by,” she said. “You must stay away from April for seven weeks times three, and think upon it. If you should break our covenant, once it is formally pledged, great harm might thereby come to April, and, what is worse, it would be great sin.”

“I don’t need time to think about it.”

“You must take it. Consider well, my lord, whether you are content to have none but me forever, and even then not all of me as your race does these things. If when you come back to April in weeks thrice seven, you do not repeat your question to me, I shall accept your choice of how you want to live. But if you do repeat it, we shall go before the Council of April for formal betrothal.”

“Betrothal?”

“Consecration is but a permanent betrothal.

“But now it is time for you to go.”

And so I went. I spent twenty-one weeks away from April and I did not mind it much. For Ildominanë and I were committed to each other and I had her love and was sure of it, and there was a togetherness in our waiting for each other. I was more aware during that time than I had been before of the attractiveness of other

women, and often smiled at them for it, quite openly, as I had never done before, because they were of the same sex as Ildominanë, and they smiled back, most of them, seeing my joy in their attractiveness, but to none of them was I drawn bodily, for none of them was she. So I passed the five months and a week in chastity and joyful wonder, and had no quarrels with old Jim but only dodged his questions of where I had found the youngness pills. I was like a boy again, in spirit of wonder at the world around me, and in particular the world of woman. And when the time was passed, with no sexual sin of deed or thought, I went back to April while Jim was out of the room, taking with me an engagement ring I'd bought at Faour's.

I went to the mansion on a clear day of brightest autumn, and asked for Ildominanë and asked her to walk in the park. When we were well into it, I said, "Will you please, my darling lovely sweet one, condescendingly consent to bind yourself to me in consecration of the body, for which I humbly plead, beg, cajole and beseech?"

For answer she threw her arms around me and kissed me long and well, until I pushed her away, saying, "For Heaven's sake, woman! Do you want to be raped right through your clothes?"



She laughed long; my glory, did she laugh. Then she straightened up and said,  
“I’m sorry, my Adolphus. I do believe you would have.”

“Darn right. You’re too attractive to play around like that.”

“I love you so. I had to show it. I was so afraid...”

“When do we see the council?”

“You can ask Muelonfulon today to summon them tomorrow for gathering the  
next day. What will you say to them?”

“I hadn’t thought about it. I guess I’d just say what comes to mind about being  
in love with you, and loving you, and wanting to consecrate myself to you.”

“That might be pardonable in a Lord of April. But among the Elves there is a  
set form for that request.” And she rehearsed me in that form and in the words of  
formal betrothal – in English rather than Elven, so I wouldn’t have to take  
anyone’s word for what I was saying: “I hold my body and its generative powers  
and all its manner of sexually expressing love, sacred to your honour and your  
inmost self-knowledge, in the betrothal that is more than betrothal, in the marriage  
that is less than marriage, till death shall separate us,” – so that when the time  
came for it I went through it without a fumble, and after that we walked in the  
park and exchanged, with time between them, three kisses, which is in April the

daily limit, so it seems.

When I got back from April after the betrothal, I was about to take off my good suit but remembered I had put it on in Jim's presence just before I went in, so I walked out of our room and from the Inter-Faith, and down Mount Bernard to Holy Redeemer, where I thanked God for the joy He'd given me. Then I went down to the mall and wandered around, free of rheumatism as now I always was, and I found in Coles a new paperback by Louis L'Amour that I thought Jim hadn't read yet but would like, so I bought it and went back. He was glad to get it.

Three weeks after the betrothal ceremony, Muelonfulon met me on the way to the mansion during what had become almost daily visits, and asked me if I'd been chaste since asking Ildominanë for consecration, and I told him about it. He was pleased, though seemingly not surprised, and told me the coronet would be conferred five weeks from then, at noon. Then we went in, and Ildominanë and I spent the day visiting various Elven homes outside the park. When I was leaving, with Ildominanë going with me to the crossing point, Muelonfulon stepped up to me with a scroll containing the form of the Ceremony of Acceptance of the Coronet of April. It was short and not complicated, but it was as well that I not be looking as if I didn't know what to expect.

When the day of the ceremony came, I went to April in a new wool shirt, about ten o'clock in the morning – Jim was out and about, somewhere – and when I arrived at the front door of Lordholmë, Muelonfulon met me with three members of the Council of April – Duimfulad, Minfortuel, and Olemnuolvë – bearing lit candles, and they escorted me, as the centre of a square of which each of the four walked at a corner, through the back door of the Great Hall of Lordholmë, toward the front of the hall, where the rest of the council stood, also with lit candles.

“Welcome, Lord of April,” the councillors said together, and all the Elves in the Hall repeated it, all together. Duimfulad took up from a covered table in front of Diltuelantiel, a stern-looking Elf younger than the councillors, a shield of polished birch, and brought it to me, holding it so I could easily slip my left arm into its strap and grip, and the councillors all said, “Receive the Shield of the Lordship of April.” The rest of the Elves said likewise. I said, “I take the Shield of April, for defence of Elvendom in April, for defence of Earth in April, for defence of life in April.” Then the Elves all cheered.

Muelonfulon took up a sword, a really beautiful weapon – and I am come now to be some passing judge of such – from another warrior-looking type, who held it in a silver-mounted scabbard made of birch, and he put the sword toward my right

hand, holding the scabbard himself. He said, “Receive, Lord of April, the Sword of April.”

I said, “I, Adolphus Brown, take up the Sword of April, for defence of Elvendom in April, for defence of Earth in April, for defence of Life in April.” I drew my sword from the scabbard, held it out, slanting up, to my right, then brought the hilt to my chin so that the sword was pointing upward straight, kept it there while Muelonfulon buckled its scabbard’s belt around my waist and let the scabbard hang, then I swept it out at arm’s length slanting down. While I stood with the sword point up, the Sorrow of Filduruë came down upon me, and it has never left me since. But I bore it through the ceremony and afterward. After the salute I put the sword into its scabbard a little more carefully than an Elf-warrior would have.

After the sword came the coronet. Muelonfulon took it from a cushion borne up the hall by Ildominanë, and put it in my right hand – the left still bore the shield – saying, “Receive the Coronet of the Lordship of April, for the ruling of April and for the judging of the breakers of the Laws of April.” I held it up, above my head but not directly over, and said, “May I wear it in wisdom gift of Filduruë and in honesty also gift of Him,” and I put it in Muelonfulon’s hands again, and

he placed it on my head. And with that the gut feeling I'd had about the use of fuel-powered machinery was turned to a knowing certainty, as I had poured within me by Filduruë or His angels a clear vision of the interworkingness of the Laws of April and of how they are broken in my world. With the vision of law from outside the world and mixed with the working of the world, came into me a deep and abiding sense of approval that ever since has enabled me to bear the Sorrow of Filduruë. But now the Elf-folk were cheering and clapping, and I bowed to them. And I knew the names, in Elven-speech, of those cats of April I had met, though it would still be impolite of me to say them in April.

“My Lord,” said Muelonfulon, “will it please you to set aside your weapons and feast with the Elves of April?”

“It would please me greatly,” I replied. So attendants came and took my sword and shield, and put over my head a robe wide-necked so as not to interfere with the coronet, which was woven of black and grey and shining silver cloth of some fine kind, in a splendid pattern all over, which covered the clothing I had worn from the Inter-Faith (since a Lord of April always is invested while wearing the normal clothes of his time and place of normal residence). The attendants hung the shield and scabbarded sword on the wall behind the high, carved chair of birch

which had stood empty during other feasts I'd had there, and I was led to that chair and seated in it. And we feasted royally in that hall, on flesh of killer whale hunted down and slain, with no loss of life to Elves, for the occasion, and there were Elves from villages all over April eating it in pavilions in the park. For the mansion could not hold them all. And I felt with the Elves as we feasted the sorrow and the joy of Filduruë for the good things of our world's nature. When I left April after the feast, with a kiss of Ildominanë, who'd sat on my right during the feast, I left the coronet behind me on the High Seat of Lordholmë's Great Hall, but the knowledge of the Laws of April has remained within me ever since, borne with joy and sorrow, in my heart and mind.

As I was leaving, Muelonfulon advised me to be ready to start learning swordsmanship, and for the next six months – for it seemed I had a natural aptitude for it, apart from the gifts of April – I spent my April time learning that as well as walking with my Ildominanë. I enjoyed a great deal my sessions in Lordholmë's armoury, though they were hard work, of a kind I'd hardly known since the War. When I asked Muelonfulon why I had not had this preparation before getting the Sword of April, he said a Lord of April must be prepared to fight to the best of his untaught ability, if need be when at first he becomes Lord.

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At the end of the six months, Morfintuel the Armsman of April pronounced me an able fighter and told me to practice after that with Dumostuelne, the best warrior of April, and I took up training with him, though still getting hints from Morfintuel on how to fight him.

## Chapter 6

During the second-last month of my training under Morfintuel, which was April of 1983, came my first task in judgement. The Seven Guardians brought into April a man of about thirty-five, and Muelonfulon told me, when I arrived soon after, that it was my duty to judge his case. I put on the Robe of Judgement, in an anteroom, and went to the High Seat in the Great Hall. The man was brought before me. Letundifas, one of the Guardians, was holding a lever-action Winchester .30-30.

“What's going on? Who are you? What allows you to interfere in my life? Especially at a time like this!”

“It seems you are accused of breaking laws of April,” I said to the young man. “I am Adolphus Brown, Lord of April, Judge of Breakers of Laws of April. These seven warriors are the Guardians of the Laws of April, who at the bidding of the Angels of Filduruë, Son of the Most High, bring to April for judgement merciful



and just, certain of the breakers of April's laws. You are guilty with regard to question of fact alone, or they would not have arrested you. The essential point is to show you your guiltiness and find whether you would persist in it.”

“Who gives you the right to call me lawbreaker?”

“It is my right from having the Lordship of April. It is your right to challenge that right if you choose. You can fight me with cudgels in trial by combat for judging of my right, or with swords if you want to kill as well as defeat. Do you challenge my right to judge?”

“No. Not really. You look the kind of man to be what you say. I guess it's your right to judge. Do I still have the right to fight if I consider your judgement unfair?”

“You have that right. April never denies a man the right to follow his conscience into combat.”

“Okay.”

I told him then what April is, and he took that in.

“Good. Now, what has happened for me to be called to give judgement?”

“I guess it was my being ready to fight for what's mine,” said the young man.

“I'm Joe Walters of Maine in the U.S.A. I own a farm there my father had before

me, and his father too. The state expropriated land from it to build a highway, that would have been too much; it would ruin the farm. I fought the expropriation in court, as well as I could, although they offered me money enough to buy a new farm somewhere else. I love that land. And I figured the state has no right to take a farm for any reason that's not as big as giving a farm. A highway's not as important as a farm, not now anyway. So they've no right to take it. The benefit that's got by expropriation should be as high as what's lost to the owner. The courts don't recognize that as right, but I do, and I'm willing to fight for it, and I told them so. So when a feller came with papers to throw me out, I fired a few warning shots around him, and when the police came I barricaded myself in the barn, away from the wife and kids, and got ready to shoot it out. I was just about to fire into the car that had the officer with the loud-hailer behind it when these Vulcan-looking fellers, these Elves, appeared behind me and grabbed me and the gun. They wouldn't tell me anything while we were waiting for you."

"You were using a firearm to defend your farm?"

"Yes."

After a few questions, he admitted the wrongness of using firearms, as I had in my turn, and was as horrified in his thoughts as I had been when I had had it

brought home to me.

“You mean I’ve got to lose my farm for using a rifle against men prepared to use ‘em against me?”

“Not necessarily,” I said. “You were ready to fight fairly, according to your lights, against great odds. But you did in fact break a law of April.

“There may be other laws broken also. How did you farm your land – with horse-drawn implements or with fuel-powered machinery?”

“I used a tractor to plow and a fuel-powered machine also for reaping.”

“Did you love your land as if it were alive?”

“It is alive. It grows things. Deadness can’t grow things.”

“Yet you put the force of dead things that ‘move themselves’ – in fact they’re moved by further destruction of deadnesses – between you and your land. You allowed it not the association of living horse in its provision of your food, your family’s food, and the food you sold for benefit of you and yours. You fertilized your soil by the equivalent of artificial insemination instead of having things alive address it with natural strength under your thinking guidance, didn’t you?” I was guessing there, but it was an educated guess.

“You mean that’s wrong, too?”

“Isn’t it?”

“It sounds wrong, the way you talk about it. My God!” he said with a sudden flash of inner seeing. “It is wrong. I’ll never do that again.

“If you let me go back, Lord Brown, I’ll fight for my land like a man. I’ll throw the gun outside and face them with the old bullwhip. It’s there in the barn. Let me go back. I’m sorry for what I done. But I got the right to die for my land. If I didn’t, nobody’d have the right to say I should die for my country, like I was ready to in Nam.”

“Filduruë withholds that right from you today,” I said. “He demands your land from you as penitential offering for your offences in point of fact. I condemn you to surrender yourself and your land peacefully to the authorities of your state and accept the punishment they mete for your resistance so far.”

Limundufuas, the Chief Guardian, put in: “The High Ones tell me Filduruë bids the High to seek ensure lenient treatment of Mr. Walters by his courts.”

“Don’t tell anyone you were wrong to resist,” I said. “Say you had a sudden change of heart and accepted the court order. Use well with force of living things the land you will receive in exchange, and you may come to April when you wish, as long as I am Lord, to learn the art of swordsmanship for that land’s defence if

ever you should need it. And if the time should come that you are called upon to die for that land, two Elven warriors will come to share your fight, your death.

But I think you will not be thus called.”

“Are you sure I shouldn’t use the bullwhip?” He was working to control his voice.

“I am sure. We must do the will of the Father of Filduruë.” And how I knew that will, I cannot tell you; it was there, apparently, within my knowledge of the Laws of April.

“Okay.” Walters tightened up his jaw. “Do I go now?” And the Guardians of the Laws of April escorted him toward the back of the Great Hall, towards Maine.

We heard more about him that evening, did Jim and I, on the Shellbird Cable news from Maine – Jim has cable, because he likes to keep up with news everywhere, but I don’t, but I was watching then for lack of something better to do and to keep Jim company. The newscast showed young Walters letting his gun fall out of the barn window and him coming out the door and walking out to the police, with his head up and his hands by his sides. The reporter mentioned the reasons Walters had given for refusing to surrender his land earlier, and said Walters had had no chance to stay free if he’d survived resisting, which was

unlikely.

“What do you think of that?” I asked Jim, who said, “Tell you later; watch this,” and sank himself into the next broadcast piece. I never knew another man who had so much interest in fiction and also in what, in his mind, passed for reality.

At length the news was over, and Jim said, “Think about what, in what way?”

“You think that young fellow in Maine was right to fight that expropriation? You think he should have stayed on and shot it out against all odds like a Louis L’Amour hero?”

“L’Amour heroes obey the law.”

“Do they always obey crooked lawmen?”

“What was crooked about the police went after young Walters? They were doin’ their right job, weren’t they. There was nothing crooked about that situation; the laws was clear. He was wrong and they went to bring him in.”

“You agree with expropriation, then?”

“Sometimes it got to be done. I don’t agree with city council expropriating a man’s private home to make way for a big business, like they did with Andrew Buckle and the new mall. [Captain Barnable’s memory is apparently faulty here,

or based on unreliable rumour, for the Corner Brook City Council did not expropriate in this instance but mediated in bargaining, says a councillor from the relevant term of office.] If we're goin' to have free enterprise, the little man should have his rights to get a good price, too. If that's too much for the big business, then the big business should do without its mall.

“But expropriation of the Gillam property was okay, because it was a choice between one man's private property, or a part of it, and the opening up of private lots for a lot of people.”

“You think so, Jim? Alex Gillam was making his living from his property, and the new people wanting to come into Bayview Estates were only going to reside on theirs. They weren't going to make a living from their land, like Gillam with Humber Nurseries.”

“That's the way people live nowadays. They live in one place and work somewhere else. That's modern life, me son. Sure, when we were fishermen, we lived at home and worked elsewhere.”

“Fishermen work on the sea that's open to all. Businesses in Corner Brook aren't open to all for them to own.”

“That'd be Communism. You don't want to be a Communist, do ya?”

“I think if you’re going to use all kinds of big machinery to work with, you might as well be a Communist. Making big machines means people got to work together and someone got to hire them all together to make it, so I don’t see why they shouldn’t own things together, too, instead of working for a big boss.”

“And I suppose you’d like to stop believin’ in God, would y’, like a Goddamned Commie, too?”

“No, but the monks own things all together, and you can’t say they don’t believe in God. But it works pretty good for them, so why shouldn’t it work for the whole country?”

“Listen, my son, the monks are *monks*. They got no missus wantin’ a new dress for Easter, no kids needin’ be fed the best way you can feed ‘em. The monks’re tryin’ to rise above human nature, and with God’s help they can do it, but the rest of us got t’ try to rise human nature up to heaven in tact.” (I’m not sure that was meant to be two words, though it sounded that way, and I didn’t ask.) “And it’s human nature to want things of your own.”

“Why not have your own land or shop to work from then, instead of working for someone else all the time?”

“Because God didn’t make us to live all by ourselves. He means for us to work



together toward salvation. So He made us depend on each other naturally so we'd be in close touch spiritually. And if we got to depend on each other, it don't matter if we do it personal-distinct or in lots, and workin' in groups gets us what we need and want much quicker than workin' apart or in changin' pairin'. It's human nature to want comfort.”

“Yeah, but it's human nature, and not good human nature, too, for people to take advantage of power over others when they got it. And people workin' for a company are under the power of others so much that that's a serious temptation, and a serious position to be in. When you got to work for a company you got to be under someone's thumb, and you're lucky if you know whose.”

“Well, there got to be some reform, sure, if things is to be perfect. What we needs is lots of small companies, so a man who don't get a good deal from one can go to another and know the man he's workin' for and have that man know him. A workin' company should be like a ship that way. And we needs co-operatives, so a workin' man can have a say in what he's workin' at. But we can't have everyone workin' out of their own homes – one family workin' alone can't afford expensive machinery, and that's needed. We can't go back to the Dark Ages. You can't turn your back on progress.”

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“What’s progress, besides givin’ in to laziness?”

“Don’t you read anything, man? How would we’ve beat the Indians if it wasn’t for machinery like repeating rifles and revolv’in’ pistols, and keepin’ them out of the savages’ hands? You still want North America held by heathens?”

“They might have been good Christians if they were approached right.”

“Sure, and how many priests would they burn in the meantime? They were savages, my son. They had to be civilized by force before they were converted. You don’t bring a dog in the house without housebreakin’ him.”

“You got to take him in the house to housebreak him, though.”

“*Ahhh!*”

“Just a second, Jim. Now it’s the heathen Commies, the Russians and the Chinks, that got the atomic bomb like the Christian countries. You call that progress, too?”

“The Christian countries got enough bombs to keep ‘er on an even keel, my son. That’s progress. And we wouldn’t have them bombs, only the heathens would, if it wasn’t for advanced machinery bein’ approved by the Church. We’d be in the Dark Ages, and the heathens could bomb us to Hell, if our weapons depended on single families to make them.”

Burke – Autumn – 91

“If we depended on weapons a family can make, the heathens might use them, too. A good heathen might be ashamed to use bombs against swords, for example. You got to think yourself too good to die, before you do that.”

“Christians are too good to be killed by heathens. Didn’t Our Lord say to keep your light from being hidden under a bushel?”

“The holy martyrs didn’t think they were too good to be killed by heathens. That was the way they let their light shine. Or by lions, either.”

“We made progress since them days.”

And I couldn’t get Jim to argue any more that night.

## Chapter 7

I was more concerned about Jim than I let on. His attitude toward progress contradicted many laws of April, and I feared for him a long time in Purgatory, which was closer for him than for me, in the usual running out of things. So a couple of days after the argument I told about in the last chapter, as we were sitting back after the news that evening, I said, “Jim, do you really believe the Yanks were right to drop the atom bombs on the Japs?”

“Why not? It saved a lot of American lives.”

“Yeah, the lives of soldiers who were able and willing to kill in their own defence. That’s all the Japs would have killed. But Yanks killed all kinds of innocent and defenceless Japs, babies and women included. That wasn’t right, sure you don’t believe it was.”

“They belonged to a country was attackin’ innocent countries. You got to stand or fall according to your country.”

“So if any innocent, virtuous, God-fearing country, if there was one now, which there ain’t, decided to punish Canada for allowing abortions, you’d accept punishment with all the rest, although you’re against abortion yourself. Is that it?”

“No, I’d fight the other country. Countries got no business interferin’ in other countries’ affairs, and that’s the only thing a country should be punished for by another country. The rest is up to God.”

“So you don’t think the Japs would have the right to punish the Yankee generals for war crimes if by some miracle the Japs had won even with the atom bomb against them?”

“No. All’s fair in love and war. And like the fella said, that wasn’t love.”

“That’s not true. You got to fight fair in war, or it’s just murder.”

“My son, all killing is murder. It’s just that in war you’re allowed to get away with it, because you got your country behind you. Your country is the biggest thing in the world, aside the Church.”

“If you believe that, you’re outside the Church. The biggest thing in the world, aside the Church, is any human soul. That’s bigger than any country.”

“No, your soul belongs to your country, after it belongs to the Church.”

“Your soul belongs to God and then to yourself. Our Lord told Pontius Pilate

that countries have no power over us except what's given from above. So countries' power can't contradict the laws of God. And the laws of God say all men are equal before the law. So if men have an argument about the rightness or wrongness of the law, and if it can't be settled by debate and arguing and they have to fight, then they have to fight fair, to show they're equal before their principles and that it's the principles of law that's bigger than either of 'em. And the best way to fight fair is with a weapon that gets its harming force entirely from the user himself.”

“A six-gun showdown is a fair fight.”

“That only shows men naturally believe they should fight fair. Guns are really meant to give unfair advantage over a sword or a spear. And bombs are meant to give unfair advantage over guns. That's why they were invented.”

“How do you know that?”

“I know a lot of things lately. It just stands to reason, don't it?”

“No. Havin' a gun against a spear shows that you got a more civilized country behind you than the savages have. It's bein' civilized that makes a country right or wrong.”

“All the civilized countries today allow abortion.”

“That’s not civilization. That’s goin’ back to barbarizin’. But mostly the countries are civilized, and mostly they’re right about things. Civilization is the thing that gives progress.”

“So you think it’s progress for a big healthy Yankee pilot to drop a bomb that kills hundreds of little Japanese babies and their mothers too instead of facing a grown man about half his size in an airplane dogfight, just because the smaller man knows judo?”

“Those mothers were loyal to their country, weren’t they? They’d have brought them babies up to hate the Yanks if they’d won, wouldn’t they? They had to stand or fall according to their country. Their country attacked another country and it had to pay the price.”

“If I had a son and you knew my son was going to murder your nephew when he grew up, would you kill my son when he was six years old?”

“No, I wouldn’t. That’d be murder, too. I’d tell young Johnny and the police to watch the frigger like a hawk.”

“How is that different from what the Yanks did?”

“The Yanks’ country was behind them. You—”

“You got to stand or fall according to your country.”

“Now you got it right,” said Skipper Jim.

“But the Church teaches we’re all children of God. That’s more important than bein’ children of your country. If we’re all children of God, we got to deal with each other in fairness, and what our country tells us to do to each other don’t matter a bit if it goes against bein’ sons of God. I can’t see a man who really cares about his brother wantin’ to take unfair advantage if he really got to fight with him over a principle. And a man who’s in the right is fightin’ over a principle even if his enemy is just grabbin’ for more land. You can’t let go your principles just because your enemy does. You don’t know for sure your enemy really thinks it’s wrong to grab your land, and it’s not your place to say that in the first place even if he does. It’s just your job to fight him and do it right, no matter what your country wants.”

“Your country is your country. You got to stand or fall according to your country.”

“What if there was a decent God-fearing country that didn’t allow abortions and its feminists asked Canada to invade it and change the law to Canada’s. Would you fight for Canada in that war?”

“No, I’d refuse to fight, and take my medicine for it.”



Burke – Autumn – 97

“You wouldn’t help to start a civil war against the government to help the country was in the right?”

“You got to stand or fall according to your country. If your country wants your life, you got to give it, and I nearly did once, when we were torpedoed in the Merchant Marine.”

“So you think ‘twas wrong to fight Hitler for what he did to the Jews?”

“Germany was fought for attackin’ other countries. The Jews was German Jews. Germany was their country, and if it wasn’t they shouldn’t been there. God punishes bad rulers Himself. One country got no business interferin’ with another country’s business.”

“You’re a fine upstandin’ citizen, Jim. Too bad you’re not more a man on your own.”

“You got to stand or fall according to your country.”

And that was all I could get out of him that evening.

## Chapter 8

In May, when Morfintuel told me to take up practice with Dumostuelne, he also said, “It would be wise to practise swordplay in your own world. The exercise you get in April does you much good in your world, and exercise in your world would do you more good in April. You ought to be able to find a partner or two in Corner Brook, as that is your lordship’s home.”

So next morning I phoned Ray Osmond at the city recreation department and asked whether he knew of any fencers in town.

“As a matter of fact I do,” he said. “Colin Burke, the Western Star reporter, teaches a class for the Western Fencing Club at Grenfell College. The class is open to the public as well as college students, or so I understand.”

I phoned Colin Burke. He was surprised to find someone my age interested in his class, but when I told him I was already a fencer and was spry for my age, he agreed I should join the club, with kind of a laugh in his voice, I thought. He said

the sessions would be held until the end of the school year, and they lasted from six-thirty to eight o'clock Wednesday nights and from ten-thirty to noon Saturdays, in the multi-purpose room above the college pool. He had only one student that year, and the class would end late June, when the student, Billy Oates, began taking school exams. They'd meet me in the cafeteria, near the gym-hall door.

I'd seen Colin walking around Corner Brook for a number of years, and once or twice taking pictures for the *Star*, at the home, where his aunt, Elizabeth McEvoy, was a resident and often talked of him, but I'd never spoken to him. When I met him that Wednesday night at the college, outside the hall leading to the gym, he said, "So you're Mr. Brown. I've seen you before, at the Inter-Faith. I never thought you were a fencer, but come to think of it, you got the look of one." He mentioned his aunt, and I talked of how cheerful and friendly she was; he seemed to take that for granted. Billy Oates was there, a short young fellow about fourteen. We got our equipment from the "cage", as they called it, Colin carrying his, separate from the college equipment, in a long cardboard box he'd received it in from Alfred Knappe of New Brunswick in 1975, he told me later. We dressed in the change room down the hall from the cage, on the other side, and went on

down the hall and up the stairs beyond the doors at the end.

“Who do you want to fight first?” said Colin. “Billy’d probably give you a better fight; my reflexes aren’t what they used to be, if yours are.” So I fought Billy, with foils, after asking what the target area was these days, as if I’d ever known – though I’d never used foils before, the technique was pretty much what I’d learned from the Elves, though I soon saw it was a bit different – and I beat him five to one.

“What amazes me,” said Colin, “is that for such a good fencer, you hold the handle wrong.” He showed me the correct grip for the French foil handle and asked, “What handle did you learn with?”

“We didn’t have handles where I learned,” I said jokingly but in a manner showing I didn’t want to say more. “They weren’t invented when I was a boy.” He laughed and asked no more questions but showed me how to hold the fencing sabre, with which he and I were to fight next. “I suppose you know the sabre target?”

“Better gimme a short review.” He told me, and I was a bit surprised, and we fought a match and I beat him five to nothing.

“You’d be good if it wasn’t for your reflexes,” I said. “You make good moves.”

“Yeah, I took to it naturally when I started to fence in seventy-five. My reflexes were really good then, though I was a bit too introspective about technique. My first tournament, that year, the provincial three-weapon champion, Denis Dyer of St. John’s, beat me by one point in sabre and in epee. I didn’t get to fence him in foil. Other fellows did better against me, but when I had to face him I just gave myself up for lost and went at him all I had. My reflexes did all the work.”

“That’s the way you have to go,” I said.

“I wish I’d known you have to do it with everyone, no matter good or bad he is. One time in a provincial I didn’t do well at all over all, but in foil I got three points against Dave Morgan, who took first place, before he scored at all, by just lunging and trusting reflex to deceive his parry. Then I got introspective again, and he beat me – five to three, I think. Now I’m taking medication that dulls the emotions and the reflexes, and I can’t use what I know.”

“What kind of medication is that?”

“Navane. It’s a tranquilizer. I need it to keep me sane; I’m schizophrenic. I’ve been mad three times, once in seventy-seven, seventy-nine, and eighty-one. The first time was kind of spontaneous, and the others happened after I was taken off

medication. So I've got to have it.”

“Oh.”

We fenced a number of times more, and I enjoyed it, both with Colin and with Billy. I beat them both all the time, but Billy seemed to be enjoying the fighting. Colin didn't fight very well, and he didn't seem to enjoy it much, but he seemed stubborn about it. When we were on the way down the hill afterward, I said to him, “You must like fencing a lot, to come here twice a week for just one youngster.”

“I don't like it in the sense of getting fun from it, anymore; I just approve of it as the way men should fight. It's something should be preserved. I don't care if I've got one student or twenty; I'll teach it as long as someone wants to learn.”

“Why is it the way men should fight?”

“I've written an essay on that if you'd like to see it.”

“Yeah, I would.” So on Saturday he brought me a photocopy of the essay, which was written in the form of a letter from a medieval knight, a letter to an editor. The editor was somebody called the Scrutator, and the essay was Number 22 in a series by that name. It really sounded medieval, as far as I could judge, and it followed well the laws of April. After the fencing session that followed the

one where he gave it to me, I asked him, “Where did you get the idea for that essay, if you don't mind me askin’?”

“I’ve hated fuel-powered machinery for a long time now, and last year I realized what’s really wrong with it. It’s just applied metaphysics, really. I studied that when I went in for the priesthood, years ago.”

“Why didn’t you go all the way to the priesthood? Or did you leave it?”

“I couldn’t stay celibate. Got any nieces over eighteen?”

I had to laugh. Of course I’d asked a question that was none of my business.

“What’s metaphysics?”

“The study of being so far as it is being. Machines are inferior beings.

Mechanical processes are inferior to processes of life.”

“That makes sense. You got any books on metaphysics I’d be interested in?”

“Only one I’ve got’s in Latin. And you’d need a bit of grounding in philosophy to understand it. I’ve got other philosophy books in Latin, too. You read Latin?”

“Never learned much of it, except the altar boy answers off by heart.”

“You could probably get an English edition. They had them at the seminary. I used Latin because Father Moss said it was the right way to study philosophy, but I didn’t do much with it till the oral comprehensive, when I couldn’t borrow an

English copy and had to cram in the Latin. I did all right, too, I think. And I wrote half my metaphysics exam in Latin and got a good mark. But I never realized the practical implications of metaphysics until last year when I wrote that essay. I've got another one, if you liked that."

So I read the next one, and it too followed the laws of April pretty well. If metaphysics did that, I couldn't see why the laws of April weren't better known, and I said one day, without mentioning April, something like that.

"Even metaphysicians are too used to accepting machinery without thinking about it," said Colin. "I thought about it because I hate the things. Using machinery a lot means everybody got to be employed by someone else, and that's slavery. It was because I was willing to accept that slavery to protect a woman from it that I went mad the first time."

"But you're putting up with it anyway, aren't you?"

"Yeah, but now I'm puttin' up with it from choice. I don't have dependants chaining me to it. A man who has a wife and children has given hostages to those who have fortunes."

"You must hate it pretty bad, workin' for someone else."

"There were other reasons I went mad. One I can't tell you. But I think



acceptance of slavery was one of the main ones. Another was the woman didn't want to marry me, anyway, but wanted me to stay close, so I kept hoping. The strain was too much. God didn't design a normal man for 'platonic' relationships with unattached women, except maybe men meant to be priests or brothers, and God knows I'm normal. I may be eccentric, but I'm normal enough."

I laughed, and he didn't ask why. We got to be good friends after that, and I often went to his apartment on the back of West Street, in the rear of the old Humber Pharmacy building, for a cup of tea after Wednesday night fencing, which we continued during the summer, and the first time there he showed me the swords he'd got from Wilkinson Sword through British Ceremonial Imports Limited of Weston, Ontario. His replica of a thirteenth-century knight's battle sword, which he'd sharpened, was a lovely thing, with perfect balance. "If I ever had to go to war, this is what I'd use," he said. "And I'd use it to fight anyone who tried to make me use a gun."

"Good man," I said. He told me a sword like his would now cost about five hundred dollars, and I asked him to order one for me, since he was a fairly regular customer of BCI. But when I got mine, the balance wasn't quite as good, though it's still a fine weapon, though not to be compared with Elvish make.

That first visit, he also showed me his fantasy books, including a deluxe edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, which he said was a really good book.

“I had a bit of luck with this book,” he said, when he took it out. “I’d bought a copy from Dagon Books in the Millbrook and was reading it in the living room at Humber Park one day when a cat came in and jumped up on it with wet paws and shriveled the page in places. Some time later, I was looking for a certain poem in it and couldn’t find it, so I finally checked the page numbers and found eight pages were missing. So Dagon sent that copy back and got me this one.

“I found out years later that a book collector had tried to talk Steve Kelly of Dagon into selling him my copy when it came in. He told me himself, when he tried to buy it from me. He didn’t want to read it, just wanted it as a collector’s item. I wouldn’t be bothered with a book I didn’t want to read. No, that’s not true exactly; I’ve got books written by Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth that I keep because the family had them a long time.”

He lent me his paperback edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, which was the first thing of the kind that I ever read. “You might find the first eighty pages or so a bit slow going,” he said, “but it’s well worth it.” And that was the way I found it.

Before I brought the three volumes back, I took them into April and asked

Kenturuel what he thought of their imagining of the Elves, for it seemed to me to be remarkably accurate.

“Ah, you have found some of our older history,” said he. “We were pleased indeed when Tolkien came into possession of that ancient manuscript. It is a good preparation for men’s learning the Laws of April, now that the Shadow is so strong.”

“You mean he didn’t make it up? He seems to claim he did.”

“The people of your world who are most likely to follow the Laws of April are in many cases more interested in fiction than in history.”

“You think that justifies stealing?”

“The copyright expired long before copyright law as your world knows it had existed. And Tolkien has said his source was the *Red Book of Westmarch*, did he not?”

“Well, yes, but...”

Kenturuel smiled.

I didn’t tell Colin what I now believed about the books. He lent me others, too, like a few by William Morris, and C.S. Lewis’s “Perelandra trilogy” as he called it, which are instructive, in their own way, about the laws of April, and that

Christmas he gave me a boxed set of Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia, which are children's books describing life lived according to the laws of April, though there's in them no explicit mention of the Laws, in a world where four-legged animals are rational. He said he makes a point of giving that set to someone every year at Christmas. And they're good Christmas reading. Ildominanë enjoyed them a lot; there'd been no Lord in April since they were written, so no one in April had known of them or been able to bring them in.

In that fall also, Colin gave me a photocopy of his own *Merlin's Revenge*, which I enjoyed. I really took to the medieval style, which was the best thing about the *Zimiamvia* trilogy and *The Worm Ouroboros*, by Eric Eddison. I regretted having been ignorant all my life of the kind of books he introduced me to, though perhaps I wouldn't have cared much for them before my time in April, and I was glad I had finally come to them. I looked askance, however, when I saw the photocopy.

"It exists, and it's cheap and convenient," he said. "I'd rather it didn't exist and people paid to copy books by hand as they did in the Middle Ages, but I don't think there's any real harm in my taking advantage of what others are doing in good faith, as the Mennonites do. I'd rather use horses than cars, too, but I don't

see any real harm in riding in a car driven by someone who doesn't know it's wrong. Besides, photocopying would be all right if the electricity it uses were properly produced. And the Church hasn't made any declaration yet about our private principles."

"You're right, I guess," I said.

He told me Mischief, the last of his cats, had died of leukemia last Easter, and he wasn't going to get another unless he could find another longhaired female so the kittens, when she was bred to a longhaired tom, would be easy to give away. Later, he said he wouldn't bring another cat into that apartment, because there was no proper place out around for a cat to run on its own property. "It was all right for Mischief," he said. "She could look after herself anywhere. But I wouldn't bring a kitten in here." He was right.

I enjoyed helping teach Colin's fencing students, though there were few each year. Some of them are good, for kids, like Van Sheppard and the Junevicus twins, Curtis and Lucius. They laugh, though sounding a little puzzled, when I beat them. "You're a spry old dude," Van used to say. The Junevicus boys have really good reflexes, and would do even better if they'd rely less on these and more on technique and planning. I hope these boys learn the laws of April some day. Colin

tries. He lent them his *Half Elven, Wholly Human* and some other things. But the modern atmosphere of mechanical “progress” is hard to counteract.

I showed *Merlin’s Revenge* to Kenturuel, too, since there’s an Elf in it, and he surprised me again by recognising that also. “That tale’s been lost to your world for centuries,” he said. “Strange things are happening there. I thought this existed only on Tellares.” And then he told me about Tellares and Narbicana. I wasn’t really surprised, therefore, when Colin started showing me stories of Narbicana, and when I remarked, “Narbicana – that’s on Tellares, isn’t it?”, I shocked him: “How do you know that!?” But I only winked at him and said, “My spies are everywhere,” as he’d said to me once or twice. Then he brought out *The Legend of the Making*, and I realized it was a version, probably the original, of what Kenturuel had told me about Tellares. But of those things I say here nothing more, for they are Colin’s to reveal as his associate sees fit – though I probably know more about his associate than he does. But he knew that I knew more than I was saying and he respected my secrecy as I respected his secrets.

The time’s passed more or less uneventfully, with sword practice in April and at the college, and arguments with Skipper Jim about progress and the bathroom, and much joyful company-keeping with my Ildominanë in both April and the

more remote woods of Newfoundland, and judgement of men – mostly poachers and trappers from all over the world except here, who saw the light when it was pointed out and agreed to follow it, and did – brought in by the Guardians of the Laws of April. One notable case was that of an executive from a Tokyo computer manufacturer, but I won't go into detail on that, because the main point made in the case depends on a principle Colin has illustrated pretty well in his short story *Toeing the Line*, which ought to be published long before this comes to light. And even if this should be first, I wouldn't like to spoil his chance of making headway by himself against his slavery. (But it bothered the Japanese particularly when I pointed out that the making of computers is a special abdication of responsibility: a man who makes a sword or a gun or a car or a typewriter has a pretty good idea what it will be used for, but a computer can be used for many different things without the maker's having any say in the choice of purpose; and the use of computers, in replacing people, destroys also the responsibility of the people who otherwise would have a say in the carrying out of the purposes. Seen from these particular points of view, the computer is a really evil thing, as the accused in this case fervently agreed. We needn't dwell on his penance.)

There are some people in Newfoundland I'd like to have brought before me,

like Premier Peckford with his Hibernia oil mania and his rabbit snaring, but Muelonfulon said Filduruë has his own reasons for choosing. And in last April month, the crackerberry flower died after I had been waiting about forty minutes with my finger on its stem, and a stone marker was put at the crossing place, and I brought the flower into our room and put it in a glass of water and later bought a vase for it at Alteen's in the mall. It's been there a long time now. And a month ago, Muelonfulon told me it would be a good idea to write the story of my life in April and leave it with Colin, if he's still alive, when I die, which can be expected to be twelve years from now, since Lords of April usually live for seven times twice-seven years. So I've started it, and will bring it up to date from now on, as things occur that I see fit to put down.



November 21, 1986

I was lying in bed yesterday morning thinking of the fencing class at the college the night before, where I had fought with the Junevics boys while Colin taught Jean Hynes, Katie Watton, Donna Crocker, and David Vincent – making some progress, though not much, since two of the women regularly can't get to classes and are a bit behind – when I had a sudden strong feeling I should be in April. I went there, and Kenturuel and Muelonfulon told me there was judging to be done: the Guardians of Law had brought in a moose poacher from Newfoundland – at last. He was from Lark Harbour, but I won't give out his real name here but only call him James Smith, for he may be a decent man with a good reputation by the time this comes to light. Or he may be a dead man with a good reputation I'd not like to spoil on his children.

Smith looked at me insolently when I told him my name and my lordship and the reason for his being brought before me, and he said, "What right have you got to judge in my case? It's bad enough the provincial court is sposed to have the right. A man should be allowed to kill moose when his family needs food." He

declined to challenge my right with cudgels, though, saying I'd probably had lots of practice. As I did.

“It is not against the laws of April that killing of a country's animals be regulated by that country,” I said. “April has laws protecting its own animals. But it is against your use of firearm in the killing of animals that the laws of April speak most strongly. Had you used a wooden bow for your poaching, the Guardians most likely had not brought you into April. Why do you use a rifle?” For Omundifinas held a .303.

“It's the best way to kill a moose,” said Smith.

“It's the most efficient way and the easiest – aside from snaring. It is not the best way.”

“Don't accuse me of snarin', you.”

“The best way is to use a spear, setting your skill and strength against that of the animal you kill. If that is too hard for you, you may use a bow, provided it be of wood and not fibreglass or such material, for it is permissible to use power of a dead plant to reduce an animal to that status to which an animal reduces plants, for food. But it is wrong to use a firearm, which employs force from material that is in no way nutritional or derived from life, to kill an animal.”

“Huh? Howzat?”

I explained the principles in detail, questioning him as I explained, until I could see he understood. But when he did, he said, “That stuff is bullshit. It’s what works that counts.”

“Witchcraft is held by many to *work*.” I explained further the principles behind April’s laws, drawing on comparisons of many other things to show that the richness of the world’s good things deserves respect, but all the time his only comment was, “Bullshit.”

“You still maintain your right to hunt your province’s big game, regardless of the law?”

“I do so. Gettin’ caught is the bad thing.”

“Are you willing to roam the wilderness as an outlaw, living off the land, defying the authorities and fighting the police, in defence of this right you claim, as an honest man should do?”

“Are you crazy?”

“Very well. A Guardian of the Laws of April will alert some wildlife officers to your illegal depredation in time for you to be caught redhanded. The laws of your province are harsh enough for ordinary offenders of your kind, but, buddy, I tell

you this: if you ever hunt in Newfoundland again while I am Lord of April, you'll be brought here again and I'll have you flogged ten strokes for it. Unless you decide to turn honest outlaw.

“Take him back,” I told the Guardians. “But first, take advantage of the time change to get the Wildlife near, as I told him.”

After I came back, I tried to renew an argument with Jim like the one with Smith, but he wouldn't have it. He'd said long before that a man is allowed to kill animals by any means his country makes legal, and that would include moose-snaring if that were legal. He sticks to that. And he claims a man has no right whatever to rebel against his country's game laws – or any other laws of it – even if they reserve hunting for the wealthy, even for wealthy foreigners, to promote tourism. I can't get him to see that a man is entitled to do anything he honestly believes he is, if he is willing to fight fairly to the death in defence of the right he claims to do it.

December 27, 1986

This has been a splendid Christmas, though all since I went into April have been really good. During these, I used to get out to midnight Mass, sleep a bit late, attend the eleven-thirty dinner here at the Home – Jim has always invited me to his nephew's with him, but I think you should eat your main Christmas meal where you live, with those you live with – then slip into April for the afternoon singing and games at Lordholmë and the main meal of the day at evening there. The Elves cook roast fish of various kinds in a special way at Christmas; it's always delicious.

This Christmas has been different. On the day before Christmas Eve, I went out with Elves as usual – Ildominanë was in the company – to collect the leaves which fall every week, with lots of sentorilnon in them, and are replaced during night's darkness when no one walks in the Elvish woods, though Elves enjoy moonlight more than sun and walk out when it is bright; the leaves are used for fuel in April and are the only kind of fuel there. Ripe apples and ripe wheat appear

on the trees and stalks two days after the leaves fall, and four days after the leaves there are new roots on the vegetable stalks, which never have all the roots dug up from them but always have the taken roots dug carefully from under, and the fruit and grain remain only when picked, so their sentorilnon goes back in the plants, but the Elves pick only what they need from week to week. The wheat is ground in querns. After the leaves had been gathered in sacks – made of wool; the sheep are heavy-fleeced and are lightly shorn – we went into the mansion and distributed them to kitchen and bedrooms. They have lots of sentorilnon and burn long with great heat. We had enough leaves to last a long time, as no one goes out for them on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or St. Stephen's Day, regardless of when they fall. Unless they're taken off the ground the day they fall, their sentorilnon goes back into the earth – they decay at sunlight the next morning and their substance is quickly absorbed.

“I'd like to spend part of Christmas at the Inter-Faith this year,” Ildominanë said as we were leaving the last bedroom, in which I was strongly inclined to linger with her, but she took me by the arms and almost forced me out – it wasn't a bedroom of either of us, but any bedroom looked inviting just then, while we were alone together.

“You think that’s practical politics?” I asked. I was doubtful about it.

“Why not? Since April has a Lord, Elves can go at will between the worlds. I can come out anywhere in Corner Brook and go to the Home and ask for you.

Why not? My hair covers my ears well.”

“And if anyone sees them, anyway, we’ll pretend you’re an actress done up for a Vulcan in a Star Trek play or skit or something,” I said.

“All right.”

“Only joking, my dear. But we might have to do something like that if anyone spots these ears. Which, by the way, are lovely ears.”

As it happened, no one did spot them. Ildominanë put on, about ten o’clock, a ring that would enable her to choose her entering place in Corner Brook, a ring like those generally used by the Guardians of Law, and she came out under the parking lot of the GoodHouse Building, she told me later, and walked up West Valley Road, out O’Connell Drive, and up Churchill to the Home, following one of the maps put out by Thorne’s Real Estate. Mrs. Hampton brought her down to my room, where she took off the coat I’d bought her at Eva’s, and then we went to the common room to chat before dinner. We didn’t trust ourselves (me, that is) alone in my room, and I guess it showed a bit, for when we ran into Mrs.

Hampton again on the way she smiled roguishly and asked, “Are you a relative of Mr. Brown’s or the reason he seems so young lately?”

“We’re just good friends,” Ildominanë, who was just going by “Illie” then and giving no last name, replied so primly that Mrs. Hampton blushed to the roots of her blonde hair.

“Oh, of course,” said Mrs. Hampton. “I mean, I – Well, I hope you enjoy Christmas dinner with us.”

She did, too. Ildominanë hadn’t had turkey for more than a century and would have been forgetful of the taste, except the Elves have really good memories. She made the most of the meal, eating slowly and savouring every bit. It was a pleasure just to watch her. Of course, it always is.

After dinner, we sat out in the common room chatting again with my friends who were staying in for Christmas, and about two o’clock we went down to my room again and slipped into April for the afternoon merrymaking and singing and games and riddles (I’ve only just recently begun to come close to guessing a few) at Lordholmë. We’d planned our visits that way so that Ildominanë, going back to April at a different place from the one she’d come out of, would be in a way just a visitor in April for the afternoon, and our visit would take at most, for both of us,



just a half-hour of Corner Brook time. We enjoyed the merrymaking and the dinner at Lordholmë, and left the mansion about ten at night, getting back in the Home two-thirty. I came out of the bathroom, saw no one in our room, and went back for Ildominanë. We put on our winter coats and went out for a walk, down the opposite direction from which she'd arrived, and I showed her where Bell's Hill, where I used to visit Bill Maher, was ruined to make way for the Valley Mall. She was sad about that, but over all she enjoyed looking at the city. We walked a good ways, and got back to the Inter-Faith for supper. We stayed again in the common room, "Illie" continuing charming some of the men she'd met earlier, till one of the wives was getting a bit cross (not much, but Illie was sensitive to it and changed direction a mite), and then we went down to my room when we figured Jim could be expected almost any time, as he usually came back early, so it would be fairly safe as far as temptation went, and I showed her my few Christmas gifts, which included Chesterton's *Sword of Wood* from Colin Burke. He'd been given a copy the Christmas before but hadn't shown it to me yet because he'd wanted to surprise me with my own. She read it at once – it's only twenty-six pages, which would be awful short for a hardcover not so good as that one – and exclaimed at the wisdom of the author. I saw I was going to have to ask

Colin to lend me other books by Chesterton – he was supposed to be getting more as gifts this Christmas.

“Does he live near here?” asked Ildominanë. “We should go thank him together for this gift. This is a marvellous book.”

“Not on your life we won’t go thanking him together,” I replied. “He’s too likely to know you for an Elf.”

“Oh.”

We chatted awhile, and then Jim came in, looking very jolly indeed, as he does when he’s been out with Johnny’s children.

“Hello, my dear,” said he when he saw “Illie”; “who might you be, comin’ in to cheer up poor old Dolph’s dreary Christmas? Not that he ain’t dreary all the time, Christmas is no exception.”

“I’m Illie, Captain Barnable – I suppose you are the Skipper Jim I’ve heard so much about?”

“Well, you got the advantage of me there, dear – Dolph hasn’t been sayin’ much about you. I didn’t know he had any good-lookin’ family.”

“We’re not family, Captain Barnable. I’m just Adolphus’s girlfriend.”

“Girlfriend! Mighty long cradle you been robbin’, Dolph.”

Illie laughed her silvery laugh and charmed the old bugger half to death. They got on famously. After a while, Jim asked, “So when’s the wedding, Illie? Y’ can’t afford to wait too long, y’ know.”

“Oh, we’re not planning to marry, Skipper Jim. I’m just Adolphus’s girlfriend.”

“More friend than girl, is it? I suppose poor old Dolph ain’t up to a wedding. Too nervous. Why don’t ‘ee ditch ‘im, then, and take up with me? I was married before and I ain’t nervous.”

She laughed. “Thank you, Skipper Jim. If Adolphus dies before his time, I may take you up on that.”

“Don’t ‘ee say things like that, my girl. I’ll likely kill ‘im in ‘is sleep some night.”

She kept up the talk with him so sprightly he clean forgot to ask where she was from, which was all to the good. And soon it was time to walk her back to under the GoodHouse parking lot and watch her disappear. When I got back to Jim, he said that Illie was too much girl to be more friend than girl, and I heartily agreed but said nothing at all to enlighten him. He was a trifle peeved. And that put the cap on Christmas.

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January 26, 1987

I had an unusual trial yesterday, in that it branched out into an area of law not assigned to me as Lord of April but dealing with criminality of the kind handled by courts of Earth – or, unfortunately, not handled by them often enough.

I was trying a veterinarian from Ontario, whose name I change here to Dennis Young, to avoid causing pain for his wife, on a charge of neutering cats and dogs. (It was the cats that bothered me personally.) He was puzzled, at first, at any thought of its being wrong, and he didn't seem to think it important, especially at the moment. Something else was bothering him.

“It's only preventing the killing of unwanted animals,” he said. Like all the rest, he adjusted quickly to his being brought into April; reality has the unmistakable flavour of reality.

“It is the maiming of a living animal,” I said. “What is life if not lived fully? Would you neuter a human to prevent unwanted births?”

“People do. We vasectomize and we tie Fallopian tubes. Why not?”

“Do you sterilize people in such manner as to eliminate desire?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Well, for one thing, people would never stand for it. They like sexual activity too much.”

“But they deny it to animals, who have some right to enjoy sex in mindless brute lust?”

“It sounds a bit unfair when you put it that way, all right. But sex means love as well as lust to humans.”

“Is it love which frustrates the purpose for which the beloved’s body is designed? Is the soul with which you seek contact through ‘carnal’ knowledge not really the living blueprint by which the body is made and operates? Is it not a denial of the essence of a soul to frustrate an important function of the body?” I didn’t know, as I hadn’t some previous times, where that language was coming from, but it was evidently familiar to Dr. Young.

“I haven’t heard that argument since I studied Thomism in my seminary training, and I never thought of it much since, but I guess, yes, you’re right. At least it made sense back then, and I’ve never actually consciously refuted it, though I thought, somehow, I’d outgrown it. Right. Sexual intercourse in which procreation is deliberately prevented in the name of love, is a cheat. But that’s for

humans, who are capable of love. What's wrong with eliminating lust in dogs?"

"Is it not part of the definition of an animal to say it reproduces?"

"Yes."

"When you stop an animal from breeding, by destroying its ability, do you not thereby deny an important part of its animality?"

"But you'd have to kill so many pups and kittens if you didn't."

"Is it not almost part of the definition of an animal to say that it dies?"

"Yes, but..."

"Is it not less bad to kill an animal in its wholeness than to grant it only a part of life? Is it not manlier to kill what you would not have than to maim what you would keep?"

"Depends on how you look at it."

"Look at it carefully."

He thought a long time. "Yes. You're right. But you'd have to kill so many. You'd become hardhearted; you'd have to."

"Is it better to be softheaded? And is routine castration a practice of the consciously sensitive? But if people did not live in large cities, depending on fuel-powered machines to maintain them in excessively artificial conditions, would not

the young of many pets die the natural deaths that ordinarily come to animals, especially young animals, in the wild? If men lived close to owls and hawks and foxes and weasels, in the equal state of conserving war which is the life of animals, would not many of the young among man's pets die natural deaths? It might take fortitude to permit (in a sense) and yet regret these deaths, but man without fortitude is worthless anyway. Some choices are meant in essence to be hard choices. Man in a conserving war with nature would welcome fighting companions, and if they live close to mice and rats unpoisoned and untrapped, would not many pets sustain themselves naturally?"

"That's a heavy price for man to pay for a natural life for his pets."

"Does not reason demand you pay that price or forgo the company of pets?"

"Yes."

"Which would you rather have if the choice were forced upon you? A car or a cat?"

He laughed. "There isn't much of a choice, is there? When you have to choose between a feelingless slave and a really affectionate companion?" I liked him then. Most of the people brought in for judgement are fairly likeable, anyway, but I hadn't taken to him at once.



“The choice is between a friend of yours and an enemy of you both,” I said.

“The fuel-powered machine is the Enemy’s special tool, against all living creatures.”

“That brings back memories. I read Lord Dunsany’s *The Last Revolution* once, in a small school library in western Ontario. It would be out of print long ago, I guess. I never realized there was so much truth in it. But there’s something about the air, or something, here, that concentrates the flavours of things you’ve really thought about, even once.”

“Well, now you know,” I said. “If you repent, there’ll be a penance for your trying to make the world of pets collaborate with the society the Enemy is shaping. If not—”

“I’m sorry, all right. I just never thought enough.”

“No need to flog you, then.” His eyes widened at that. “Your penance is to spend a tenth of your monthly income on upkeep, in the country, of cats and dogs people don’t want. It is a lifetime penance. Failing to perform it, you will be brought here and flogged, two strokes for every month missed. If you don’t like killing unwanted pets, you can always give their mothers abortions.” Pure sarcasm, which I thought would make him grin wryly. But he changed colour

quickly, red and white by turns.

“Animals are animals,” I said. “What matter what stage you kill them at?” I’m a bit thick-headed and one-tracked sometimes. He just stood there, his mouth struggling to keep stiff.

“Or is it a question of human abortion?” I asked.

“My wife was raped!”

“Good God! I’m sorry, man. Are you sure...?”

“It was her fertile time. We were using the Billings ovulation method to get pregnant. That was the first day of that time that she could have conceived, and we hadn’t... And she was raped. Of course we know the fetus isn’t mine. You think I’d...?”

“No, certainly. You’re certain of it. But abortion is murder. The manner of the child’s begetting doesn’t change that.”

“I know it could be murder. The ... child is physically complete, genetically. But the rational form may be absent. It may be only a sophisticated animal, really a brute’s body with a brute soul, awaiting infusion of the human form. St. Thomas believed that.”

“St. Thomas was speculating then; probably using imagination more than

deduction. If he'd had your knowledge of genetics, his speculating would likely have been different. Besides, would you kill a kitten if you knew God was waiting to infuse it with a rational soul?"

“If the kitten were begotten in my wife’s womb by a rapist?”

“If you really knew God wanted the cat to live and reason, and share His own Life forever. Would you? Can you defy God in such a matter?”

“Why would God create a rational soul for conception made through rape?”

“Why would He allow the rape? Or the Crucifixion? When He made the world He bound Himself to certain laws in its working, to which He makes exception as He sees fit, not as we do. Why does he allow any sin? Why death? He didn’t tell Job. Why would he tell you? He only claims to be mysterious, and we have to live with mystery, however painful, or reject Him. But He can bring good out of evil, and a child is always a good thing. It is a being capable of living with His Life, and it must be revered for that. What if your wife had loved another man and deliberately conceived in adultery and then repented and you forgiven her? Would that child deserve death for her offence against you and against her own soul vowed to your love? It would have been conceived of her own will and malice. But she would have no right to reject that innocent result of her own willingness,

which would be the real offence. The child she bears now was begotten in offence, but the offensiveness was not in her, and the child is more completely hers than any other child could be, because God had her conceive where her acceptance of a man was not involved. The supernatural goodness of that child's soul, when it is baptized, and its natural goodness now, if the soul was created at conception, is her gift solely, to the world and to God, and to you if you will accept it from her. The biological father has no right in the matter. It is a grim jest of God that, unless she herself breaks His law, a woman may achieve what feminists deem ideal motherhood only through the act a woman most abhors. I don't think God likes feminists much. He only loves them. But it could be that your wife fears acceptance of the child chiefly as a rejection of you. You must be strong and you must be strongly generous, with the baby and with God.

“I have no authority over those who murder human children, but if I had, I assure you, the penalty would be death. As it is, I leave you to your conscience, which ought to be formed in accordance with God's will.”

He was really pensive when he left. I've no way of knowing their decision about that matter.

Jim gave me no argument when I started discussion triggered by my advice

about that young man's grim private trouble. I'd been pretty sure he wouldn't. But, disgustingly enough, he supported the castrating of tomcats. Not wholly in sympathy with it, mind you, but he thought it only fair to neuter males as well as females. And he was all for the spaying of queens – female cats, I mean, of course.

February 21, 1987

I had better set down at once the events of the past two months and more in April, which have been only an hour in passing in Corner Brook time. I was looking for Jim, to impress on him a new point I'd just thought about, in our continuing argument, and he was nowhere to be found, so I was back to our room to wait for him to come from wherever he'd gone, and there came to me the feeling-call of April, which meant I was wanted there, either for a judgement or to talk to Ildominanë – getting lonely. I went in and to Lordholmë and found Muelonfulon and Kenturuel in the Great Hall, looking serious as only Elves can look. “Lord Adolphus, it is time for your sojourn in Winter,” said Muelonfulon. “There is in Winter a man whose soul may not survive his stay unless you succour him. We must leave soon. But we must warn you that sojourn in Winter may mean facing Winter Dragon, and for that you must have a magic sword, such as is forbidden for use against Men and Elves. It is a sword that works in such manner as the weapon Cleavescale in the old tale of Merlin's revenge, to protect the wielder from the dragon's breath and use the power of that breath against the dragon. Such a sword must be made anew each time a Lord of April goes to

Winter, and it must be made by the Lord himself upon his going into Winter.” And he gave me instructions for making the sword, and told me more about Winter and its dragon and what I’d have to do there. He said the dragon egg lies in a cave in Winter, waiting for the coldness of a chill soul to make it hatch and grow, so it can feed on the fear of men who can’t resist it. If the soul of him who dwelled now in Winter were not warmed before the dragon hatched, I would have to face and kill the dragon – if I could. If I could not kill it, I would die, but I would not necessarily lose my soul, though the soul I’d come to save would most probably be lost except for great grace of Filduruë. And he told me where the Cold Man would be found – in a cabin a short way into Winter, to which I would bring fuel for warming of the Cold Man’s body and my own while I sought the healthy warming of his soul.

When Muelonfulon had finished what he had to say, I went with Ildominanë to where the potters of Lordholmë used to gather clay – now seldom needed – and we gathered a bucketful. We brought that back to Lordholmë, and I drew the Sword of April from its sheath, and packed some clay, mixed with Wine of April (made from blueberries), all over the sword. I made a fine indentation with the point of a knife all around the edge of the level quillons and another up and down

the edges of the hilt and pommel, and then baked the clay, with sword inside unharmable by fire, in the Hearth of Lordholmë, in the great hall. When the clay was fully baked and the leaves were burnt out, I waited till it had cooled, and then lifted the clay-shelled sword gently from the hearth. Then, carefully, with a silver chisel, I broke through the indentations around the quillons and up the hilt and over pommel-edge, and lifted off the hilt-shell pieces and withdrew the Sword of April from the shell, which by the mercy of Filduruë remained unbroken. (There is great virtue in the special Wine of April, for cementing friendship and even, in special instances, physical things.) I packed the hollow clay with one long piece of yarn provided by Ildominanë and laid all three pieces of clay-shell in a long, narrow box of pine, packed with unspun wool. While I'd been making the sword-shell, Kenturuel and other Elves had been gathering the hooded cloaks, leather mitts and boots lined with wool, and other heavy clothing we'd need in Winter, and they gathered wood from the tree I'd cut years ago and they loaded it onto a cart, and we set out, I and a company of twenty-one Warrior Elves of Lordholmë, with the cart drawn by four of the large and powerful goats of April. It was painful saying goodbye to Ildominanë for what might be the last time.

Kenturuel carried the Sword of April and Muelonfulon the Shield. We travelled



inland fourteen days, on a curving road amid the wondrous trees of April, in which glorious small birds were often singing, to the Spring of April, flowing from halfway up a high cliff into a shallow pool whence flowed a gentle stream where golden trout swam, twelve inches long, and we caught one each, spearing them on sword point, and roasted them over an open fire as a change from the waybread and dried herring we had with us. Then we sat wrapped in cloaks and sang the evening praises of Filduruë until the moon rose, and by moonlight I drew a bottle of water from the stream and stoppered it and put it in my pack, which already had the pine box holding the sword-shell. And then we slept till sunrise and breakfast of bread and cheese, and went on again. And twenty-one days later we came out on barrens ended not far off in an unbroken line of snow-covered forest. As we drew nearer, I saw there was no snow beneath the trees, as Muelonfulon had told me, but only hard-frozen ground, covered with brittle needles of spruce and fir. There were no pines or birches. If any of that snow should touch my skin, the place where it touched would be numb forever. But I could use that snow.

We came to a wide path which began between two large and high trees, a spruce on the left and a fir on the right, and Kenturuel unhitched the goats from

the cart. Four Elves, warmly dressed, waited for me to get ready. I donned the necessary clothing – the cloak was woven by Ildominanë's best friend, Dolmuedinda, one of April's most magical weavers – and opened the sword-box. The sword-shell was still intact in its three pieces, and I picked up the hollow one and stepped into Winter, feeling the cold bite down into my lungs. I took the yarn from the shell, went to the fir beside the path's beginning, and then, with hand cupped cold in almost brittle mitten, I scoop-brushed snow right carefully into the shell, from branches of the fir, enough to fill six inches of it. I stepped out of Winter, tipped some Spring water into the shell, and shook the mixture gently up and down in it. I went back into Winter, took snow from the spruce, to fill six inches or so, brushing it into the shell, stepped back out and added water. Muelonfulon had told me the snow would not melt in April, but the snow and water frozen in Winter would slushify again in April, with the addition of Spring water in April's air, so I kept doing these things over again until the shell was filled. I bound the pieces of hilt-shell together with yarn taken out of the blade-shell, and filled that shell with slush also, putting in an inch of snow at a time, then put the hilt-shell atop the blade and stepped into Winter. When the joining took, I put the whole thing against the fir's trunk for ninety minutes, then against

the spruce for the same length of time. After that, I cut the yarn, removed the hilt-shells, and wrapped more yarn all round the hilt, pommel and quillons of the cruel sword I had made. I brought it into April and took off my mitts to tie the yarn.

That done, I gripped the hilt with my right hand, with mitts on again, stepped into Winter, and drew the sword from the shell, which was to serve as scabbard. The icen sword looked deadly and it was as sharp as the Sword of April. I put a little woollen bag over the hilt. I walked along the path, which went in a leftward curve, into Winter, carrying in left hand the sword in its clay shell, and the four Elves I've mentioned came behind, drawing the cart of wood. We went along the path about nine hundred yards, our heads well hooded against the snow on the branches above, though there was no wind. We stopped at a cabin built of stone with a thatched roof. I opened the door, which was latched, and saw a man wrapped in blankets (woven like my cloak) lying on a bunk, glaring at me.

“Jim!”

“What the hell is goin' on, Dolph?”

“Jim! You're the Cold Man!”

“Friggin' right I am! 'Tis bitter cold outside these blankets. If I put 'em off, I'd be one regretful brass monkey, I can tell you. But what's goin' on? What'm I doin'”

here? What are you doin' here? What's goin' on, dammit? Where is this?"

"This is Winter, Jim."

"It's been winter since December, damn it. What's goin' on?"

"This is the place called Winter, Jim, where certain Cold Men come to make their souls. You've got to make your soul now, get ready to meet the Lord. You're on the verge of death, Jim."

"Well, it had to come some time. Figured I'd be sick awhile first, though. Will I get to be anointed?"

"If you make the right final choice in time, yes. If you don't make it, anointing won't help much. Or, at least, that's what's likeliest."

"I know that. Anointing won't help if yer not repenting. But, damn it, Dolph, I've been repenting the last five years. I haven't committed a mortal sin in that time, not even thinkin' about the young things that's around sometimes."

"That might be the reason you been called to martyrdom, Jim. Because that's what it could be."

"How do you know so much about it? What are you doin' here?"

"I'm the Lord of April, Jim." And I explained to him about that, and told him how I'd got to April, and asked him if he knew how he came to be here. He was

some surprised at what I told him, and he laughed at our quarrels over the bathroom, and asked if “Illie” was an Elf, because he’d thought at the time she looked a little “spooky”, but hadn’t liked to mention it to me.

““Other-worldly”, I think, Jim, is the word you’re lookin’ for,” I said when he told me that.

“Spooky, I call it.”

Anyway, he told me what happened: “I was havin’ a nap after lunch,” he said in reply to my question at the end, “and I dreamed I was out walkin’ in the snow, snow all over, as far as you could see, all level, and I was so cold I wanted to give up walkin’ and just freeze, but I didn’t, till I got tired after a long time, and I tripped and fell, and it got so warm I wanted to stay there, but I tried to get up, but I couldn’t, and it turned cold again, almighty cold, and I knew I was dreamin’ then, and I tried to wake, but I couldn’t, and I was freezin’ cold, and then I woke and I was here in these blankets on this bunk and it was warm again. And I threw off the blankets to get up, to see where I’d been taken in my sleep, and it was freezin’ cold, and I thought I’d go numb and die, so I wrapped the blankets on me and they were warm, so I opened the door, and it was really cold no matter the blankets, so I came back to the bunk and I been here ever since, and I haven’t

even been hungry or had to crap, but it's been nearly twelve days, I'm sure, and I haven't seen a soul, and I thought maybe I'd died and gone to Purgatory, but I couldn't remember bein' judged, so I didn't know what was what at all. I just been takin' the loneliness and waitin'. And boy, was I surprised to see you. So I got to make my soul now, eh?"

"That's it, Jim. Miribdiel, He Who Rules Limbo, had you brought here in your sleep, to give you the chance to make choices over again.

"Jim, I take it you believe God loves only men, and not animals or plants, and that He made the plants and animals just for men to use? Is that right?"

"Yeah, why? Don't everybody believe that?"

"Not me, Jim. Not the Elves of April, either. The Cold Men believe it, only they, and you got to honestly come round to our way of thinkin', or you got to suffer a real cold Purgatory, cold enough to make you curse the Lord unless you really love Him a lot."

"You get to Heaven after Purgatory."

"Servin' your Purgatory in this world's different. It can be the start of Hell if your will gives way under the pain."

"I see."

“There’s something worse. There’s a horrible thing will come to kill you if you get too cold, and you’ll have to face the horror of that also, and persevere in the love of God, to save your soul. That door won’t keep it out. It will ease your pain, in a way, because its breath will numb you helpless and without physical sensation while it eats your feet and legs, and hands and arms, and then your torso from bottom up, but any sensitivity you have to being an independent, immortal soul meant for God’s friendship will be burningly alive to your being made living food for a reptile. And may God have mercy on your soul if it gets me first. This sword can kill it, and only this sword, and I’m the one to use it. But just wait a minute, Jim, till we get some heat in here.”

I lugged in the wood from the cart the Elves had left and stacked it near the fireplace, and made some shavings and lit the fire, and it warmed the whole cabin. So Jim was able to leave off the blankets and sit to the table for a meal of bread and cheese and dried fish, with water the Elves had brought. After the meal, with my pack stowed away in the loft and my sword on the table between us, glowing dully, even through the clay shell, we settled back in the two chairs there and started arguing as we had done so many times for years. I forget just how we began, but, soon after, I was saying, “Jim, suppose you and your wife, when she

was alive, had a horse and carriage instead of a motor-car, and the horse really liked the two of you and both of you loved it. Wouldn't that be better for you, and bring you closer together, than riding in a feelingless machine?"

"No, because in a car all our love is for each other. We don't care so much about the car as we would for a horse, so it don't come between us. There's no sense in caring more for what you use than for each other."

"You wouldn't care more. You wouldn't spare the horse in that case if galloping it to death was needed to get a doctor to your wife in time."

"Why should you have to choose between things you care about?"

"That's the big choice God is always giving us."

"You don't have to turn against men unless they already turn against God. I don't see why you should have to sacrifice something you care about for someone you love, when you can have it replaced in the first place by something that does the job better and that you don't have to care about so much."

"So rather than sacrifice one horse to save your wife, you've sacrificed them all to your idea of love, by never owning one."

"I don't see that."

I tried many ways to show him where he was wrong, but we always got back



to “I don’t see that.” That was the way it went on for a day and a half, eating and sleeping a few hours at a time and getting up to argue during the night. But on the second day, Jim wasn’t just stubborn but was throwing himself wholeheartedly, and warmheartedly, into the case for his side. So I faked agreement, in the way of Colin Burke’s later Scrutator-letters replying to the ones from knight and wizard, and followed his arguments where they logically went, down into the depths. But he wouldn’t go: only so far and no further, until, on the third day, an illustration suddenly came to mind – my mind, not his.

“You know what God was doing, on one level, when His Son was crucified on Earth?” I said. “He was claiming the Earth for His own, like an animal marking territory. He left something of His own upon a stake driven into the Earth, only anything really His own had to be really Himself, because He can’t be divided into parts or His attributes, because He’s infinite. But after the Crucifixion, not even a dog can piss on a tree without reminding men of God.”

Jim began to laugh, that laughing that is half admiration of boldness and half protest. Suddenly he stopped, and he started to cry instead. “My God, Dolph, I’ve been a fool. All my life, I’ve been a fool.”

“‘Tis a foolish age, Jim – a damned foolish age.”

“I’m sorry, Lord.” And he wasn’t talking to the mortal Lord of April.

“It’s not your fault, Jim.”

“I s’pose not, but it’s terrible foolish, to see things so wrong.”

“We still might have to choose between the goodness of the world and the goodness of God, Jim. But till we have to, we’re supposed to love the goodness of the world with all our hearts. And livingness is one of the great goods.”

“You s’pose they’d let me have a cat at the Inter-Faith? I s’pose not. Everybody there couldn’t have a pet. But maybe we could have one cat and one dog for everybody. Two mascots, like.

“But I’m s’posed to die soon. Right?”

“Not necessarily. Not now. We can ask Frank Colbourne about a mascot if you want, if we get back. But first I’ve got to see if Winter is over.”

I opened the door and it wasn’t over. That meant the Winter Dragon had hatched, in the middle of the third day as roughly scheduled (so far as the Elves could tell), and was on its way and growing. I took up the sword of Ice and Snow, in its shell-sheath, from the table.

“What’s wrong, Dolph?”

“The dragon’s coming, the Winter Dragon. I’ve got to kill it before we leave

here, or Winter will spread into April.”

“‘Tis comin’ for me, ain’t it?”

I didn’t answer.

“Give me the sword, Dolph. If I die fighting, I’ll be okay, and he can’t spread Winter after I’m dead, can he? I came here to make my soul, and it’s made, and I’m ready to go. I don’t know much about sword-fighting, but I accept the sword’s the weapon of the animal who thinks, and I can fight with all the fighting animals of the world inside me and alongside. Let me go out the good way, Dolph.”

“Neither of us is going out the good way yet if I can help it. You had to make the sword yourself for it to work against the Dragon for you, and I made it and I’ll use it.

“I’m the Lord of April, Jim. In the Inter-Faith, we’re friends. In here, you’re also my vassal.”

He kept quiet then, and left me to it. But as I heard something rustling through bushes off to the left of the doorway, he said, “If he gets you, Dolph, throw the sword to the door if you can? I’d hate to die fighting without a sword.”

I turned my head sideways and nodded, then stood still. For out of the bushes nine yards away poked a vicious-looking snout, all white and shining, like what

I'd imagine an albino crocodile to look. It opened wide, and I, going into crouch, whipped the Sword of Ice and Snow out in front of me as a blast of awful cold came from the maw. That sank into the blade, as expected, and the blade grew deadlier shiny, like polished pearl. The Dragon came scuttle-slither but gracefully, unbelievably gracefully, out of the bushes toward me then, its spiky-barbed tail flicking at the tip like an otherwise motionless cat's. The Dragon was six feet long from base of short neck to root of tail two-and-a-half times longer. It was unwinged as yet, though there were lumps where wings would be if it killed the Lord of April and him who had been the Cold Man.

The Dragon wriggled as it came, tail twitching at the tip. To kill it, I'd have to get within reach of that tail-barb, and I didn't like it. If the Dragon kept advancing, without using its tail, I could just hold out the sword slanting down till I was ready to thrust it down the Dragon's throat, where the held-in cold would explode through all the Dragon's body and kill it. But I had to reckon with that tail. But the Dragon could only give three long blasts in short order, before having to wait a full minute for the next. It had three quick blasts at the ready now, though, having waited a minute since the first. It was cunning, in the animal way, but not intelligent like those in *Merlin's Revenge* though its eyes had a sharp

baleful gleam of horror-making. It instinctively knew its own bodily limitations, however, but it had no way of knowing it was dealing with a foe who knew all about it without any experience of it. It felt confident, in its own cunning way, that I would have to learn by doing. I deliberately seemed to meet its horrible gaze, against which, however, Filduruë strengthened me, as if I hoped to try reading its intent therein. And I was, sort of.

The fight, like nearly all in which the fighters commit themselves to quick action from the first, was short. The Dragon, fortunately for me, couldn't blast cold and swing his tail at same time, and Muelonfulon had instructed me thoroughly. The Dragon directed one strong blast at sword and me, having no idea it was building up my power, though it realized the sword protected me, and it suddenly swept the tail-barb straight toward me, directly over its back, jumping up a bit toward me with the back legs for full effect. I whipped the sword up to parry with the flat – I didn't want all the power exploding out of the edge just to cut the Dragon's tail – and the Dragon, which had been feinting only, whipped its tail back straight real quick so it could blast. But with April-quick reflexes I swung the sword-edge down into its skull before the blast was ready, and the Sword of Ice and Snow clove open the skull, exploding power into it, though

cleaving would have been enough. I had to dodge the tail twice during the Dragon's death-throes, for the sword would no longer cut that, but I'd been warned about that also.

I was some proud. I'd killed a dragon with a sword, like great St. George. And Jim, well, he was pretty pleased himself: he gave a mighty yell when the dragon was stopped thrashing. (He'd had the door open a small crack, watching; Winter was still so cold, though he was no longer Cold Man.) That thrashing took a minute and a half, and I waited, leaning on my sword, for ninety seconds more, and then the snow on the trees began to melt and drip, but now it wouldn't numb you when it fell, and Spring was coming out of Winter.

The sword began to melt a bit, and I thrust it into the ground, hilt-deep, with an April-strength shove. Jim and I were outside, drinking in the fresh Spring air and the smell of fir and spruce reviving from the cold, when Jim said, "Dolph? Do I have to fight you now?"

"What? Why?"

"Well, I just..." But he stopped and kept quiet, an amused secretive look on the face of him. We could hear then the singing of the Elven Warriors of April as they approached the cabin, along the cart-path. They came into view, and I said,

“Captain James Barnable, late skipper of the Sarah Jane Barnable, come and meet other of my vassals, Elves of April who’ve awaited your deliverance from Cold.”

And I introduced all twenty-one of them. Each greeted him warmly, and then they all cried out together, “Hail, Captain Barnable! Hail, Skipper Jim! Friend of the friend of April!” Jim took it all in stride, but I was pleased as Punch, let me tell you. Here we were, Jim and me, in April together, and I not having to judge him. It was great.

“Let us go meet the Ingdovuni,” said Muelonfuon, and all of us went further south, after changing to cooler clothing – except for Jim, for whom the April wear he was given was warmer than his own from indoors in Corner Brook – till we came to a larger clearing in the very middle of what had been Winter, where twenty-one Ingdovuni warriors waited. I was really struck by how much they looked like the red chessmen Ildominanë had shown me years ago, which I’d almost forgotten. I suspected something in my training had been overlooked, but I found out later it hadn’t been needed yet.

“Hail, Warriors of April!” sang out the foremost of these foes of April, gathered here at break of Winter.

“Hail, Warriors of the Summer Sands,” said Muelonfulon. “Winter hath ended

for the nonce. When it begins again, cannot it still divide at midpoint our two realms?”

“All must someday be sand dunes and oases and warm comfort in the summer sun,” said the Ingdovunen. “Anyone who loves his land must needs rather die than have it not increase. Borders must not bar doors to Summer, the sweetest of all seasons and the fiercest in punishment of those who know not well her ways. Ye must not hope escape battle, which must be now by single combat of champions or stark invasion after battle now between our bands. We are content to let the ancient custom stand and send a champion to battle with your Lord. I take it I read rightly the mien of him who stands beside you, that he is Lord of April?”

“Lord Adolphus Brown of Corner Brook in Newfoundland. But he is betrothed, and a betrothed Lord may not be Champion of April.”

“Then Winter when next it comes shall take its root in Earth of April, and Summer Heat advances thereto in default!” Jeepers, but the bugger was exultant.

“Not while I can hold a sword!” The cry had come from Skipper Jim, who, smiling at me, now said, “So this is why your sword-skill came into me for sharing in, along with knowledge of the Laws of April, when you clove the



dragon's skull! I knew I'd be fighting someone. I was afraid 'twas you."

"Are you the Champion of April?" called the warrior chief.

"Who do I look like?" yelled Jim.

"Easy, Jim; warfare is courteous in April and the Summer," I said, and he apologized. Then I introduced him to the Ingdovuni, as I had to the Elves, and the chief Ingdovunen, Brazwai, introduced himself to Jim. The others had all been acquainted for centuries and tended to be a bit informal till it came to actual discussion of combat. And it did, Muelonfulon and Brazwai confirming in stately converse that Norfuaz of Summer, which they call Dilnuthaoth (literally, Summer-heat), would fight in single combat Captain James Barnable of Corner Brook and April – Jim was obliged to go back through Spring and set foot in April to establish residence, so to speak – using sword and shield, to set the bounds of Winter next. If Jim killed Norfuaz, then Winter would sit within the present border of Dilnuthaoth; if Norfuaz killed Jim, Winter would sit next within the current limit of April. The process could continue, during centuries, until one realm was overwhelmed by the other and a remaining stretch of Winter.

Jim took eagerly the Sword and Shield of April, and eagerly advanced at Norfuaz. He had come to the sword most late, and he was anxious to get use of it

even if that killed him.

Jim struck first, cutting at legs, being blocked by shield as Norfuaz cut at his arm in feint that turned, as Jim darted shield forward to shelter arm, into thrust at face, with Jim flicking head to right and bringing up shield as sword coming back slid in at neck, Jim also making then a feint at face and, forestalled by shield, turning feint into backhand cut at legs from right of Norfuaz, under his sword. Norfuaz leaped back, then forward, and cut at arm. Jim shielded. They circled, warily gauging, then closed in an exchanging flurry of feints and warding, drew back, circled, closed again, with feint and cut, all being shielded. Then Jim thrust at face but quickly withdrew from foeman's thrust at arm, which had ended fight had it caught, feigned cut at legs from foeman's left, and, swinging sword back up around the cut at arm, sent point slicing deep in shield and into Norfuaz's arm. Shield was split and arm useless, when Jim jerked his sword down and out, blocking with own shield the cut at forearm. Norfuaz dropped shield, and Jim tossed his aside, and they fought with blades only.

I wish Colin could have seen it – and Dan Stewart and Bob Young, who've presided at year-end competitions in Corner Brook that Colin isn't qualified to handle. They would have loved the bladework – if Colin could follow it.

There was a lot of what I judged to be second-intention work, and much good reflexive parrying – Norfuaz was as fast and skilled as Jim or me but rapidly weakening from bleeding arm – till Jim, with a stroke I'd often practised with Dumostuelne, sent Norfuaz's sword aspin in air and falling, and set his point at Norfuaz's throat as sword hit grass.

“Much as I'd like to see increase of April, I've got to let you live,” Jim said.  
“Winter will stay where 't's been.”

The Ingdovuni broke out applauding, and I knew Norfuaz wouldn't have spared Jim but would have stabbed in the same motion that disarmed, if he'd done that move.

So Winter stayed where it had been, and soon came freezing slowly down again, and we went back to April, where Jim was toasted in Lordholmē as the hero he is. I was toasted, too, having killed the Winter Dragon with some dispatch. And when we left Lordholmē to come back through the bathroom, the harpers were just beginning to make their songs. We're going back in three days for a feast where the songs will be sung.

And now I'm nearly late for supper. I'm in two minds about waking Jim, who's been sound asleep since we got back.

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February 26, 1987

When I woke Jim, he said, “My God, Dolph, what a wonderful dream! It was a dream, wasn't it? No, by Jupiter, it really happened! And we're goin' back, right? How soon can we go back?”

“Well, it wouldn't be polite to anticipate the formal welcome before the feast, so we'll go back then, not before. In three days. In the meantime, don't tell anyone about it.”

“You think I'm crazy, after what we went through to make me sane? Will we go there often, Dolph? Will I always feel this mixture of joy and sorrow from now on?”

“I guess you will, Jim. I feel it all the time. And I guess you'll go there a lot. I go there pretty often. I don't see why you shouldn't, with me or without. You're the Champion of April, after all.”

“Yeee-hah! And are there many like Illie there? In all the fuss, I never really noticed.”

“The Champion of April is not to be betrothed, Jim.”

“Jeehupiter, Dolph, all I want is to look! Are there more like Illie there?”

“None like Illie, Jim, but lots of lovely Elf-women.”

“Haahh! And you say it’s always fall there? I ever tell you fall’s my favourite time of year?”

“No. You too?”

“Yeah.”

“Let’s get supper.” So we went upstairs, Jim for the first time, I’d say, not using the elevator.

After supper, he said, “You got any good books about Elves, Dolph? Seems to me I’ve seen you with some?”

“Like to try ‘The King of Elfland’s Daughter’, Jim?”

“You said–”

“It’s a book. I’ve got to get it back to Colin soon, but you can read it while I got it. I’d have my own copy, but I think it’s out of print.”

So he read his first book about Elves since he was a little fellow, and he enjoyed it. Rightly so. Dunsany is a wonderful writer. Then I lent Jim my copy of *The Lord of the Rings* without telling him it’s history. I’ll tell him when he’s finished it, if he doesn’t guess.

And yesterday we went to April. We were met at the crossing place by a party of seven and we walked out along the path in formal procession, Jim ahead of me

with Kenturuel bearing the Sword of April before him, and Muelonfulon bearing the Shield before me. Horns sounded when we got to the gate of the park and kept sounding till we reached the door of Lordholmë. We were taken to an anteroom and garbed in festal robes, green for me and crimson for Jim. We were led in pomp and glory to the High Table, where I was brought to the High Seat of April with Ildominanë on my left and Jim on my right, with a space between him and the next person to allow for use of sword – a formality, that, but important when April had a champion. The Sword and Shield were hung on the wall behind us, Shield near me and Sword near Jim. We feasted on mostly fish, with a small piece of caribou on each plate. While we were eating, Meadowstalker slipped into the hall, probably the only cat at Lordholm not eating fish with a mate or parents in the goats' barn, and he came over at once to Jim, as the only stranger there. Jim smoothed him, scratched him under the chin, and took his piece of caribou up on his fork, but I caught his eye and frowned and shook my head – caribou don't die for cats, in April – and he ate it himself, then gave Meadowstalker a bit of roast cod, which was received with gratitude.

After the meal, the harpers tuned up and then sang of the conquest of Winter by the Lord of April and his friend the Champion of April. I was a bit

embarrassed, though by Elven lights I'd no call to be – except that I felt, which Elves don't have, most of them, my own gratified vanity. Ildominanë looked pretty proud, and that made me feel some honest pleasure. Old Jim revelled in it; he doesn't have my vanity any more than the Elves. It was a glorious night for the three of us, and I wished I could spend the rest of it alone with Ildominanë. But that, of course, was not to be. I think Jim knew how I felt, because I felt his gaze on me, and when I looked, he winked. The old goat.

Kenturuel and Muelonfulon came back to the crossing place with us, and when we got to the Inter-Faith it was four-twenty p.m. It had been several hours since the meal at Lordholmë, so we went upstairs for supper again.

March 29, 1987



We've spent a lot of time in April the past couple of weeks, I mostly walking with Ildominanë in the park and Jim chatting with Muelonfulon by the Great Hearth, or learning chess from him. When he's good enough at the Elven mode, he and I are to learn the Ingdovuni way – of sacrificing as many pieces as it takes to win the game as quick as possible. The Ingdovuni don't care how many warriors they lose in battle, as long as they extend Dilnuthaoth. That gives them the chance to screw and make more warriors and warrior-bearers, and they're a lustful lot. Jim and I, as Champion and Lord, are to alternate as Ingdovunen and Elf, in chess, to help each other learn the enemy style and the right one, in case we have to be generals in battle later on. That's what the red chessmen are for, I've finally been told. We're also to study military strategy in the ordinary mode, from time to time, with Dounimfinendel.

Muelonfulon is glad to have a new one to test his riddles on. From what I hear, Jim is no better at Elven riddles than I am.

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April 7, 1987

Tried a riddle of my own today with Ildominanë – first one I'd been able to come up with that sounded anywhere near Elven to me: "Why is a woman's breast like the seashore in summer?"

She thought a while, smiled, and said, "Tell me."

I said: "A woman's breast is rounded in definite shape like a beach stone but yielding yet supportive like the sea and warm and smooth as sand for lying on. At least, I think it ought to be. Let me—"

But she caught my hand and held it firmly: "No." I was sorry and ashamed, and I said so. (She mentioned a bit later, being more attuned to deep reality – I had my mind too much on sex – that I'd missed an important element of my comparison: people draw sustenance from both the things compared; and she said that feeding a baby with her body is chiefly as token of the mother's desire to nourish its soul with her own spirit, united to her husband's. So I wasn't half the poetic type I thought. Not that she pointed out that.) "I'd like to enjoy you bodily, of course," I added, "but knowing we are giving each other all we can, and not giving the same to others, makes it enough. Really."

"Really?"

“Really. Except, I really wish that we two could have children. Or at least a child.”

“Do you?”

“Yes. I’d like to have a son or daughter to raise in love of Newfoundland, or April, or both, however it worked out, under God, and to carry on the struggle for one or both after I’m gone. And to reproduce you insofar as may be done, my love.”

“I do believe it’s practical politics, Adolphus.”

“What!”

“It had to come from you, the true desire of children. I could not tell you – it is a Law of April the Lord of April never knows until he really wants a child and is given the gift of siring one. He must want children, not just bodily his beloved, and so the test is set. But yes, we can marry now and have a child.”

What a holler I let out. But then I said, “Will it mean your having to be mortal, like Arwen? I wouldn’t want to be your death, my lady.”

“Mortality means eternal life in Heaven. If we don’t marry, my mourning’s first deep sharpness at your death will last all my lifetime, added to the sorrow of Filduruë. We Elves would gladly trade our immortality of body to gain grace

supernatural, but only to Elves invited to marry mortals is that grace given. Gladly will I marry you and gladly follow you in death, or, better – except for children – die before you.”

“Will you be able to live in April?”

“If I bear a child. But my friends can visit me in your world, anyway. Let us tell Lordholmë.”

And we did, and there was great rejoicing, for it meant some Elves could marry to replace some lost in battle, and animals also, other than cats, could reproduce to a limited extent, and runners went out to the rest of April.

I asked Jim to be my best man, and Ildominanë and I started making plans. Of course, we’ll have to be married by a Catholic priest, and that is going to take a bit of doing. No date can be set till we can arrange for a priest to come to April, not to mention our attending the usual prenuptial course of instruction.

April 9, 1987

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I saw a certain priest today and explained the situation to him and got him to agree to test what I am saying by an attempt to visit April. (I've convinced him it's not just a practical joke, at least.) He's just humouring me, I'm sure, so he can persuade me to go for treatment afterward, but he's in for a surprise.

April 11, 1987

Father Jones (to hide his real name) and I went to the GoodHouse Building at dusk today and walked under the parking lot. We were there for five minutes when Ildominanë appeared, walking toward us. He was startled but game, I'll say that for him. When she took his arm, he smiled at her, and they walked away, into April, when we could see no one else was watching. He came back convinced about ten minutes later, and agreed to officiate at our wedding without the usual bother about wedding licence. "I think the Bishop would agree this is an exceptional case," he said, "though I'm not going through the formality of making absolutely sure of that." And he agreed we didn't really need all that prenuptial course stuff, either, nor did my beloved need much instruction before the baptism that will immediately precede the wedding; Ildominanë, like all the Elves of April, is learned in the lore of Christianity. He's coming into April in early June to preside at the ceremony. He'd be willing to do it earlier, but runners have to be sent out again, or riders to the farther parts, with invitations to Elves, chosen at random, from all the villages of April. Excitement, not age, is the reason my handwriting's suddenly shaky. Now Ildominanë and I have got to practice waltzing. I've never danced much with her before, because when I tried I got too

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much aroused. But now I'm under some control. Marriage!

April 20, 1987



I have managed to get fairly cheap, through a friend of Jim, an isolated piece of land we can farm, where we can also fish and be helped with supplies from April if need be, and the Elves are building a cottage there, with a temporary invasion of April into Newfoundland at the site to facilitate construction. Muelonfulon is to give Ildominanë away, as she is an orphan Elf, having lost father and mother – first of her line to volunteer for April residence – to a raiding party led by a dastardly Ingdovunen later punished by his own people even before the Elves caught up with them. I'm making arrangements to leave the Inter-Faith, telling Mr. Colbourne that other and completely suitable accommodation is available and I'm marrying Illie, whom he'd heard about, but I won't tell him or anyone where we're going. I guess the Home, or at least the government, will miss a man paying out of his own pocket apart from old-age pension. There are a lot of people here I'll want to visit, time to time, and going through April will make that easy. We never did ask about mascots. No need now, far as we ourselves are concerned. Jim is to live in April, visiting us a lot at our new home.

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June 9, 1987

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The wedding was held four days ago, in April, with much solemn gaiety and many songs and stately but lively dances after feasting, in the Great Hall, and then the wedding party, all wearing special rings like Guardians', saw us to the cottage and formally installed us in our bed with great ceremony. Father Jones, grinning like a fool, said a blessing over us before they left. The only sad aspect of the whole thing was the faces of the Elves when Communion was given to the baptized at the wedding Mass.

July 12, 1987

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Ildominanë is pregnant, she thinks likely with a son. When he is born, she can go into April again, and travel will be easier. We'll have an Elven midwife and the baby will be born at home. No hospital for Ildominanë, who's retained her immunity to disease.

January 9, 1988

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I have a son! He looks like me when I was young, except for the ears, and being himself half-Elven, despite his mother's mortality, he can live in April forever unless slain, even though he'll be baptized. Lucky little bugger, isn't he? Jim is to be godfather. Judging has been seldom since our planning to wed, but there's been the scattered one. I'd like to get hold of those rotters planning to log the pine martin forest at Grand Lake, but there it is: Filduruë makes his own choices.

January 12, 1988

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Remuentuacel, our son, was baptized today, and Muelonfulon told me that since the next Lord of April is already with us, I might as well release this diary to the world now, seeing that Lords of April henceforth will descend from me – if Remuentuacel should fall in battle – and it is just as well that those prospective human Lords who have been displaced should come to know of April as soon as may be. So I will send a copy of this diary to Colin Burke with instructions to make a decent story out of it and try to have that published.

One word more: God help those who have to be brought before me after reading this.

Adolphus Brown

Lordholmë, April

July 18, 1989

Dear Colin,

It's probably a good thing my story hasn't been published yet, because I have a bit to add to it if not too late.

Yesterday, Dumantuel, a Guardian of the Law, took an idle notion, as it seemed to him, to wander out of April into western Ontario, and he found himself in a wooded area (naturally) where Dr. Dennis Young was walking with a troubled look about him. Dennis recognized Dumantuel, though forgetting his name, and asked him to take Dennis to me in April. Dumantuel, seeing his "idle notion" then for what it was, brought him here and the two of us had a talk.

Dennis told me he'd been bothered a lot by what I'd said to him, enough to seriously doubt his wife should have an abortion, and he succeeded in getting that doubt across to her. They talked a long time, the outcome being they could keep the child and try to cherish it as compensation for the rape rather than resent it as an aggravation of the offence, but never have any more children, or just bring the child to term and give it up for adoption, then have children of their own.

They felt that if the child of rape were brought up among children of them both, they wouldn't be able to feel about it as about the others, and that wouldn't

be fair to it. And they wanted more children, hoping for at least four. So they had the child of rape adopted, by a fine couple, Dennis said. And as soon as Mrs. Young was well over the birth, they tried again to have her conceive.

They've tried enough for Dennis to be convinced that he's sterile, though he can't, because of the immoral action associated with testing, have it confirmed. Having given up for adoption a child of his wife's own body, they think it highly inappropriate to adopt others, and, anyway, they want especially the experience of growing their child in Mrs. Young's womb. They value animal experience and I'm glad they do: it's through that that Filduruë makes the world holy. Artificial insemination, which, now they're sure Dennis can't beget, they do not emotionally reject, is out of the question because intellectually they know it's adultery.

“God gave me my chance, and I blew it,” Dennis said finally. “I remember enough philosophy to realize that a thing which is really good any time is always good in itself: it isn't just our deeming makes it good. I'd do anything to have my wife's son back – except expose her to the slightest danger of another rape.

“And I thank God I didn't have her commit murder.”

“Filduruë makes his own choices, Dennis,” I told him. “Yours have enough



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accorded with His Will to gain His help in dealing with your sorrow. That sorrow will endure a long time, and you will be able to endure it. You alone need endure it, though. For you may take upon yourself the sorrow of your wife, if you will have it so.” And he accepted that burden.

I still think, Colin, you could put my story in more attractive form than I’ve done (third person, in style of *Merlin’s Revenge* or *The Kryffyr Quest?*), but if I didn’t respect your judgement in the matter, I wouldn’t have asked you to do it in the first place.

I’m sorry Filduruë keeps you out of April. But He has His own reasons – for one thing, you’d probably never leave. You’d love Meadowstalker.

Goodbye for now. I may see you in Corner Brook during the Rideout trial.

Adolphus Brown

Lord of April

January 8, 1990

Skipper Jim Barnable, Knight Champion of April, dealt with a Cold Man of his own the month before last. He lost him, so far as this life is concerned. What happened to his soul is not for us to know; Jim has a Mass said for his soul every Saturday, by priests in the missions. We're learning more about the Laws of April, now, the two of us, and it seems to be a fundamental principle that the Laws of April must divide or join firmly, sooner or later, the people who come to know those laws and the people who were their friends. Or if they don't, the people who know the laws will suffer for it, one way or another; at least, if they fail to convince at least one true friend, if they have any who disagree about the Laws. The friend of April who doesn't have at least one Cold Man fairly close to him is rare, or so I'm told. Anyway, Jim had to deal with his, and he's not over it yet. The man was an old friend of his from Port au Choix who'd been mechanical all his life; he used to be engineer on Jim's last boat, and they'd kept in touch by mail while Jim was at the Home. Jim had written to him, crowing a bit, I gather, about beating me in our arguments at the Home, and when he finally caved in and came in from the cold, he told his friend Mick Noseworthy about the arguments that convinced him, though he didn't mention the peculiar circumstances, of course.

And Mick sent back to him the answer he thought Skipper Jim should have made to me, and Jim answered that, and he wrote back again, and they were at it hot and heavy, and the next thing we knew, Muelonfulon was getting Jim ready for a sojourn in Winter, Jim being pretty downhearted and grim about it because by now he knew whom to expect and how bloody stubborn his friend was. Anyway, they argued in the Cabin in Winter till the Dragon hatched and Jim killed it pretty quick and sudden, but when he turned around, poor Mick was dead at the door, froze to death. But his face was peaceful, Jim said. His body was found later in his home by a son-in-law. Winter didn't break, and the Ingdovuni didn't show, and that may mean bad business later on, if either of us has to try to change another Cold Man.

I've decided to keep a record again from now on, because we're having a hard time getting the original diary published, and being able to lengthen it out a bit might help a little, though not much has happened in the way of a new law to illustrate, so far as trials since I sent it out have been concerned, so we may have to be content with what we've got for the public so far. I've had two trials that I found particularly interesting, but they only went over ground already covered. One of them was of a young fellow from Portugal, taken hunting rabbits. Over

there, they figure, quite rightly of course, that snaring is too cruel, so it's illegal, and they hunt by sending a ferret down the burrow to chase the rabbit out and then they blast the rabbit with a shotgun. It's almost commendable, really, except for the use of inanimate force to kill the living. I told the young fellow to use a sack to catch the rabbits when they come out, or maybe have a trained dog stand ready to make the kill, and he agreed, as his penance, to preach that message in Portugal.

Of course, what's wrong with snaring, as the young fellow said, is that it uses the animal's own action to kill it. A trap that kills cleanly by its own power springing from its being set by human action, is all right.

Another trial I found interesting, and one that allowed me to vent my feelings somewhat, though it didn't illuminate much in particular that hasn't been dealt with already, was of an abortionist from a "clinic" on the mainland. I argued my best to convince him that a soul, or animating form, capable of intellectuality, might be present in humans from conception and developing them physically to fulfill that potential already existing, and he was forced to admit it might well be so, but he said no one could prove it in a way to find him guilty, beyond reasonable doubt, after the fact, of murder, and he had a legal right to make a

living by legal means. That wasn't the point of the trial, anyway, as crimes against humans as such aren't in my jurisdiction, but only offences against the living considered strictly as being alive. I just took advantage of what was in my power to try and make him see reason, as I had done with Dennis Young. The real point the Law of April had to deal with was that he was using electric suction, a force arising from action of the inanimate, to destroy the babies he was killing. If the electricity he used had been generated by the action of a living being, we couldn't have touched him. As it was, I flogged him myself, as I will again if he repeats the offence. He was weeping with rage when I finished. Two Elves had to hold him down so Ildominanë could rub the fenuenaed into his back to heal the stripes and preserve the feeling of them until he would have healed anyway. He would have slept on his belly a good while after. Maybe he learned to do his own perverted killing instead of suborning innocent force inanimate to do murder for him. Anyway, that was six months ago, and he hasn't been here since. I'm only sorry Filduruë hasn't given me authority to do more by way of judging and punishing such. But maybe that's why not.

But here I am following not my own bent but the pattern Colin Burke uses when he covers a trial lasting more than two days, putting the "sensational" stuff

at the top and trying to develop the context further down, after getting the readers' attention.

The context has been pleasant. Remuentuacael will be a year old tomorrow, and Ildominanë and I have been taking great delight in watching him grow, and we often spend late evenings in our suite here at Lordholmë commemorating the night of his conception, me listening to Ildominanë's songs about trees taking root and rain nourishing the ground for them to grow, all very mythological and what I think they call "allusive", and most highly sharpening for ordinary human-male horniness – if you could overlook that it really concentrated the attention on the end result, who is dreaming in his cradle by the fire, which I'd be rocking. Such commemoration is the chief sex life of married Elves, between conceptions, of which an Elf-woman may (but it's rare) have seven at most. The ova develop as humans' do but aren't released unless the woman wills it, the Elves having better conscious control over bodily processes than do we. An Elf-woman is unable to experience ordinary pleasurable voluntary coitus, and her maidenhead is unbreakable, until she decides to release the first ovum, and she and her husband – or merely her lover, if she chose (but that would get them both banished to Dilnuthaoth) – have three days in which to give their fun once (it really is

something to sing about for a long time after, if you want to know, though it's really none of your business). After that, the woman is again what some narrow-minded humans would call completely frigid until the next ovum is released. But until I expressed my desire for a child by Ildominanë and received her consent, not a woman in April could have released an ovum even if she'd wanted to, though any lovers who let themselves get carried away (which would get them banished to Dilnuthaoth) could have enjoyed a large amount of thoroughly pleasurable petting (with Dilnuthaoth at the end of it – Filduruë has seen to it that in April as in our world sexual pleasure has important consequences in the physical realm as well as in the spiritual). All male Elves produce exactly twenty-one spermatozoa and can decide when to produce them and how many to produce. Releasing three when a woman is receptive is pretty much a guarantee of begetting. Releasing more than five at one time would send an Elf to Dilnuthaoth.

By now, you've probably got the idea that Dilnuthaoth is populated by banished Elves, and that's partly true. At least, that's how the Ingdovuni started, and sometimes more Elves get banished there, but I'm told it's happened only once in the past five centuries. The thing is, a banished Elf loses some of his individual vitality: it gets transferred into racial vitality, so that he or she has

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much more capacity for begetting or conceiving than the Elves do (but not as much as humans), and they start to need exercise to keep them fighting-fit, and they die eventually even if not killed in battle, though they live an awful long time. Seems they need it, too, to learn to repent. They have their own sense of savage chivalry, and are courteous, as you've seen, even when preparing for battle. There are laws, too, that govern life in Summer Heat, and an Ingdovunen that breaks any of these three times is banished again and becomes an Orc, in a land the Elves will rarely speak of. Repentance there is said to be really rare, though I don't think anyone actually knows for sure. Anyway, that's about enough for now; I started out with some idea of describing daily life in April for you, but I'm no good at painting word-pictures in general terms yet vivid – if I had to be a writer, I'd be strictly “a deeds-and-dialogue man”, as Colin calls himself – and going into detailed anecdote would involve some invasion of privacy of my Elven friends, who are very private people. So I'll just let this stand as is, for now, and write more only if something interesting on the official side arises, which seems to be getting rarer. Anyway, I've got to spend some time rehearsing the part I must take in the birthday ceremony tomorrow before leaving the party to Ildominanë and her friends who are mothers or pregnant, and to their babies born since



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Remoentucael. Anyway, it's not as formal and complicated as the ceremony that followed his baptism, to recognize him as heir to the Lordship of April. So that's it for now.

March 7, 1990

Yesterday the Guardians of the Law brought me an accountant from St. John's, whose initial excitement was overriding any fear he may have felt: "I mean," he was saying as they marched him up before me in the Great Hall, "those swords are for ceremonial duelling among yourselves, like Klingons, right? When you fight enemies, you use phasers – or like that – right?" His chatter was going nowhere; the Guardians brought him forward in silence, at least so far as themselves were concerned. "Hey! You're human, right? I guess they are friendly! I'm a good judge of human nature, and you look like a pretty good guy to me. No way you'd be a traitor to the race."

"Filduruë has shown me, in my meditations in His veiled presence, that there's no sin I'd not commit, if properly tempted, but for His restraining grace, which I might well reject," I told the young fellow. "But at the moment I am not a traitor to our race. Nor are you in danger of your life, though matters might extend to a flogging or some equivalent penance."

"Flogging! But that's barbaric! A civilization with your achievements that didn't outgrow that? How come?"

"And what are our achievements?"

“Well...space travel...I suppose – and you’ve got transporters. Haven’t you?”

“You have been brought by magic to a region of the realm men have known for centuries as Elfland, and I am the mortal lord of this region, which can give its lordship only to a mortal.”

“Oh, Christ, I’m insane.” I could see his attention turning inward. “Real fantasy is an anomaly for sure. Fantasy isn’t ever decently speculative, like really good science fiction. No transporters. Magic.” He went manically extrovert again. He started yelling: “Help! Help!”

We just looked at him and he calmed down, the air of deep reality that fills April sinking into his mind. “Oh...my...God. What have I got into?”

“You’re in April, home of the Elves of Autumn, whose chief care is the integrity of the natural order of the world. You’ve offended against that in the past ten minutes, and your soul’s destiny may be much affected by your response to having that pointed out to you. I am Adolphus Brown, Lord of April and your judge.”

“Lord liftin’! – I mean, holy jeepers! All I’ve been doing for the past twenty minutes is argue with my son over should he have a dog, and finally told him he couldn’t. Is it an essential law of the natural order that a kid should have as many

animals underfoot as he takes a whim to own?”

“No. But what reason did you give him for the final putting down of your foot in the matter? That might give us a clue, or we may need a report on the whole conversation as you remember it.”

“Oh. The last thing said before the language police showed up in the hall as I left Gerry’s room, was, ‘You don’t need a dog; you’ve got a state-of-the-art computer; I wish I’d had that when I was your age.’”

“Do you really think a computer is an adequate replacement for an animal friend?”

“‘Friend’ is a strong word, isn’t it? Humans and animals aren’t on the same level at all.”

“Aren’t animals nearer to humans, though, than computers?”

“Well, they have emotions.”

“Is that so little?”

“Isn’t it?”

“Doesn’t the sharing of emotions facilitate the bonding of companions?”

“Computers aren’t companions; they’re tools.”

“It is a law of April that the lower is to be raised from its own level by

association with the higher.”

“Hey! I can relate to that. That’s pretty generous. I never thought of that before.”

“Then your education was neglected by those responsible for your good, or carefully guided by those who would work to your harm.

“The closer the association of lower with the higher, the better the raising is done.”

“Right; right.”

“The most intimate association of the inanimate with what is above, lies in it’s being directly wielded by living action.”

“Yeah. Right.”

“Is a computer directly wielded by the living? Does the force that moves its working come from living being?”

“No.” He thought a moment. “But it could. Though I don’t know if that’d be practical, economically. But hey, human or animal generation of electricity sounds like a generous way to work. When you got to have the current.”

“So a computer as generally used is not bound to a man in the manner of a proper tool, by being wielded?”

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“No...my lord.”

“And it is not bound to a man by way of his emotions.”

“I’ve had a pretty strong affection for some computers I’ve got used to.”

“Lucky man. That is a kind of givingness that may redeem in some cases. But did the computer receive your emotion?”

“No. I see that. A dog would give and get feeling, and the bond gets stronger because of that. But you seem to be assuming that machines aren’t going to evolve enough. Couldn’t we make androids sometime in the far future, if we keep making better machines? Wouldn’t they evolve apart from feeling, into pure intellectualness? I mean, couldn’t they be programmed to think independently, without feelings?”

“If God made a thinking physical being without feelings, would that be a richer being than man, or a poorer one, all things considered? Or is feeling not a contribution to the richness of experience? Would a non-feeling thinker have any bond with the lower animals?”

“Oh. Yeah, there’s that. But thinking machines would be above man as man is above the animals, and the bond of that higher type with us lower ones – and then through us with the animals – would be the ability to understand things

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intellectually.”

“So a machine that thought independently, without feeling, would be a higher form of life than we are?”

“Wouldn’t it?”

“What is man?”

“Well, they used to tell us in high school that man is a rational animal, a spiritual soul with a material body.”

“Is not the soul that makes a human intellectual the thing which makes his body animate?”

“So we’re told. The soul and the body seem to make one being.”

“So that by which the human body exists as such is the principle that makes it live and enables it to think?”

“Yes...my lord. I guess so.”

“Wouldn’t a machine capable of independent thought have the same kind of animating actuality as a part of its composition?”

“Yeah!”

“So an intellectual ‘machine’ would really be a rational animal made of metal, unable to breed or breathe, perhaps with parts more readily replaceable than

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hearts or kidneys, but still an animal?”

“Yeah...my lord. Without a soul it couldn't really live or think, and with a soul and a body it'd have to be defined as animal. Animals aren't machines, and machines don't live; they're just parts arranged to affect one another, with no really unifying animation – that's what 'machine' means. And if only the brain of a machine really lived, the brain itself would be an animal in a machine, like a man in a car. Why don't people think of that?”

“They are guided away from such thought by those who would have them ignore the soul, whether that soul be human, animal, or plant, until too late. There are higher forms of life whose capacity for bonding with us lies in possessing intellect, and two camps of these are warring in our souls over whether living matter should really matter, or whether it should be disformed. It is up to us to choose sides between them when we become aware of that warfare. You would do well to read 'That Hideous Strength', by C.S. Lewis.”

“I guess the bad guys in that war are the mechanic-minded types, are they?”

“I think that that could truly be said,” I answered. “Those who will not aspire eventually to be servants of the Most High seem doomed to be governed only by the laws that rule the lowest. A wise man said that men should not use machines,



because, although the machines are romantic, men are mechanical. But there is the proverb ‘Lie down with dogs and you’ll get up with fleas.’ Men are subject to becoming mechanical because they are fallen sons of Adam. Unfallen men would not be subject to that tendency, but then, I think, they would have no interest at all in machinery powered by force inanimate, though their ingenuity might well rejoice in making machines that drew their motive force from action of the living, to extend that action down into the lower that is capable of being moved. For if it is to be truly romantic, technology must derive romance from man himself, who can give a thing what that thing does not itself have. A tool wielded by living action can acquire identity enough for a tool by the hand’s becoming used to it, and an animal can gain a degree of personality by having its inner workings attend to a human mind, but the workings of a fuel-powered machine are not really related to hand or mind of user. And between animals and humans, emotion is the bond. If men could develop material souls for arrangements of parts that otherwise would only be machines, they would not have improved on animals with feelings, sensitive to each other; they would merely have expended thought and knowledge and energy which could be used in their becoming intellectual matchmakers for emotional animals, to improve the breeds and vary them. And

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men who want to give rise to artificial intelligence are generally more concerned with the artificial than with the intelligent. It is not beyond the realm of conceivability that man might learn to control his own genetic make-up – though the effects of original sin would ensure that that ability gave him a choice of defects as well as of positive traits – by doing with his own conscious intellect what now his soul does in his unconsciousness. People charmed by the prospect of evolution can concentrate on that, if they want to remain human: on developing the human race through increasing sensitivity in married love. As John D. MacDonald said in his first Travis McGee book, it's sensitivity that will mean our survival as true humans. The key to future evolution is fervent involvement. And sensitivity to animals is good preparation for sensitivity to emotion flowing under thought, and for distinguishing thought from feeling when we encounter it.

“The hope of man's developing a genuine intelligence in machinery of his own device is a spurious prospect meant for encouraging men to think they are the lords of life, so as to justify their inflicting death on those whom God, the real Lord of Life, has made to live. It has caused men to follow as literal instruction, for legitimizing illegitimate ambitions, the advice of William Blake that one should ‘sooner strangle a child in its cradle than to nurse unacted desires,’ as if all

desires were worthy of being nursed to action, when the truth is that some desires should be strangled in spite of their being as dear to us as children ought to be. A real desire to give rise to intelligent life, or at least to foster it, is readily gratified through the normal love of children, though sometimes that requires self-denial. Man's hope for ease and comfort derived from dependence on fuel-powered machinery, is a child of Satan to be strangled in the cradle of the human soul."

"Wow. Yeah. But I'm an accountant and I got to use computers sometimes to be competitive, though I won't be proud of it now as I used to be. Will I be flogged for that? Anyway you can only flog me once, can't you? The decision, once made, to be left in effect, would be a single offence, unless I did change my mind and then changed back, right? I think I could take one flogging. I got a living to make, and it isn't easy. It'll be harder now."

"You won't be flogged just for using a computer, if you don't promote their use. But there is a penance. There must be a penance.

"Get your son a dog. And do your best to make them suitable companions for each other."

He laughed then. "Okay. I promise. Oh, yeah. Those higher forms at war about mechanizing the soul – they're the angels and devils, right?"

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“Right.”

“Yeah.” It came out in a long sigh, and then the Guardians took him back to his house in St. John’s.

May 6, 1990

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There's a Cold Man in Winter, the Elves have told us. As he's not a friend of mine, apparently, he's Jim's to deal with, as Champion of April. We are to set out tomorrow for his sojourn in Winter, a larger lot of us than before, because if the Cold Man doesn't convert, it will mean combat on a wider scale, to try to prevent the Ingdovuni from extending Dilnuthaoth and diminishing April, mostly so they can screw again.

June 18, 1990

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We've been waiting outside Winter for four days, and the Dragon must have hatched by now. I hope Jim killed it. I hope the Cold Man converted, or we stand to lose some friends among the Elves, or die ourselves. I hate the thought of dying more now than I had for a long time. Being married, having a child: these do make a difference to your love of life, especially when you're old.

August 1, 1990

Well, I survived, just barely. And I haven't lost a friend, either, thank God, though there've been deaths I regret. And I pray He'll give the dead that are gone the goodness of Limbo which by their own standards at least they deserve. I hope it will be my lot to convey to them in natural terms what I'll be able to see of His full Goodness, if I don't reject Him at the last.

Jim came out of Winter, which was unbroken, June 19. The Cold Man had been the father of the young accountant I wrote about March 7. He'd had cancer. He hadn't changed, though it seemed, said Jim, that he did die at peace with God after seeing the Dragon slain, that had scared him almost weightless. I hate to say it, but I almost think a Cold Man deserves that. Anyway, that meant we had to go along the edge of Winter till we came to the dascmanca field.

We got there, and the Ingdovuni arrived about the same time, on the other side of where Winter narrowed in, on both sides, to the field. That was a hundred and twelve feet on all four sides, and the permanent guards of twenty-one warriors each on a side, and the three messengers, were at their posts. The field was divided into sixty-four squares, each fourteen feet to a side, which were marked out at the corners by horizontal stone crosses with arms a foot long and two

inches wide. The ground was frozen and the grass dormant. We set to work setting up our tents and digging our latrines, and the Ingdovuni did the same. Then we had our supper. After that, I and Prince Infunnog of the Ingdovuni met in the centre of the field, each on King Four, and we said the Words of Power that brought autumn to our four rows and summer to theirs. Then we both recited in unison all the rules of dasmanca that are known to both sides. (We couldn't quite trust the Ingdovuni not to know some rules they don't share, which might be held in reserve to our disadvantage. Any warrior in dasmanca who breaks a rule vanishes straightaway to Orcdom – Aoroak-Khaish – so an unshared rule is always validated by its application's going unpunished.) Then Infunnog uttered the ritual challenge to combat on the dasmanca field, which would result in Winter's moving a league into April for every Elf or Ingdo killed, if the Ingdovuni won, or a league into Dilnuthaoth for every fighter still alive, if we won. We'd win when the Prince was killed or disabled, and they'd win if our "king" was killed or disabled. He and I were the "kings" in this game of deadly chess. Jim was my Wazir, the place occupied by the queen in chess in men's realm; and Norfuaz was the Prince's. My bishops were Mentanuel, on my right, and Findunierel; my knights Nimnothael and Umdurel; and my rooks Camfunireran,



right, and Simpunel. My “pawns” were, from left: Nabindozeel, Dromosim, Ilibidenael, Soforroes, Mimmnidaen, Omnorros, Delfeziel, and Pomoroseë. We were all introduced to the Ingdovuni dascmancans, but their names are rather outlandish and hard for me to remember. I usually think of them by the first syllable, or the first two syllables, of their full names, but it would be most discourteous to do that in outward usage. We lined up on our squares with swords in hands (this particular dascmanca was to run without shields) and saluted, then retired to our tents, except for the usual guard, for the night.

Next day, at noon, we lined up again and saluted again. Infunnog had first move.

He ordered his king pawn out to King Four, and I ordered Mimmnidaen out to face him directly in front. These, of course, wouldn't fight: pawns fight diagonally. Infunnog sent Wazir's Knight to Bishop Three, to cover his king pawn.

I sent Umdurel to Wazir's Bishop Three, to cover Mimmnidaen. I made Omnorros move out one space, though he pleaded with his gaze that I not do it. But I had made a decision dangerous to me and to April. I wasn't sure my fear of leaving Ildominanë and Remuentucael wouldn't cause me to sacrifice good

warriors needlessly to my own safety – though, incidentally, also to April's expansion – and that prompted me to take as much of the combat on myself as possible. It wasn't fair to the Warrior Elves of April, I learned later, but that is what I did. King's Bishop Red moved immediately to the square Omnorros had left, and saluted me. The choice being mine, in king's first encounter, we fought on his space, and I disarmed him. It wasn't easy, because he was going for a double kill and certainty of Limbo – if that was what it took to get me and win two leagues off the edge of April; more than they'd got in centuries – but he was a little too eager to die, and that betrayed him. Was he ever mortified when he had to leave the field, not only alive but unwounded. Jim and I had honed our skill so well I doubt there's a fencer in men's realm could take either of us, even in a double hit at epee, though there were still quite a number of Elves we had to acknowledge our betters.

Anyway, it was my move. I sent Mentanuel out to Wazir's Bishop Four. Infunnog sent Wazir Norfuaz down to Red King's Rook Five, to threaten me. I grinned like a silly savage and sent Mentanuel to Red King's Bishop Two, where he quickly disabled the occupying pawn. Norfuaz saluted and moved up to my space. I indulged in no nonsense about disarming him, I can tell you. Only a

quick, awkward tip of the head to one side after I was committed to the final lunge in a two-minute fight, prevented him from gaining a double kill through the middle of my face. As it was, he nicked my left ear. Cheers went up from the noncombatants on our side, though my warriors seemed a little surly.

It was our move again. I sent Mentanuel not against Infunnog, but against the knight who was alternative target, and Mentanuel took him out, confident and stylish, with a second-intention thrust to the forearm and a strong cut at the blade before the knight could change hands. Then the rook took him on and was severely wounded but didn't die before the dascmanca ended, so the Ingdovuni patched him up when it was over. Then Mentanuel stepped off the field, at my command – a little surly, too – and watched from among the Ingdovuni noncombatants. (Better him than me, though most Ingdovuni are gallant enough in their own way.) I was trying for king-to-king combat, and everyone knew that by now.

I walked to King's Knight Three. Infunnog had Wazir's Pawn Red advance one space. I moved one square to the side: King's Rook Four. Infunnog moved his wazir's bishop to Wazir Two. I walked to King's Knight Five. Infunnog castled, and his rook's eyes gleamed thoroughly nasty. Trap. Okay. I had Umdurel move to

White Wazir Five. Red Rook moved to Red King's Bishop One. I walked, mouth dry, into the space to my left, into check, since it seemed unlikely I could avoid him without others' blood being shed. He saluted and moved up. He was the deadliest swordsman I've ever faced outside of practice, though I sensed a touch of desperation in him, and he started forcing me through a series of actions superficially dissimilar but eerily akin to those I'd done with Norfuaz, leading, I feared with fey intuition, to much the same end, except I was never going to flick my head fast enough to avoid him. But I was ready. I feigned the final thrust and parried prime, thrusting to the heart in the same motion. *Suckered!* He deceived that parry (going over it, of course) and went for my solar plexus, in an angulated attack with his own wrist in prime, performed with consummate skill and a high degree of grace, even as my sword went home. My mind had been taken by surprise entirely, but thank God for a Newf's reflexes and Elvish training: my unarmed hand took a bad cutting to divert his sword off to my right. But not entirely far enough. The point went deep between my ribs and I went down coughing blood.

Jim told me about the rest. There's a rule we hadn't told the Ingdovuni about: if a king is down but not dead, and his assailant is dead, any dasmancon of the

king who had made it off the field through the back row before his side had made more than seven moves, can take the king's place. That's a rule, and it was validated by non-punishment for its application. Mentanuel was a swordsman both Jim and I were proud to acknowledge as our master. The bishop attacked him and was neatly disarmed. Infunnog moved his knight back to Red Wazir's Knight One, from Red Wazir's Bishop Three. Mentanuel moved to Red King Two. The knight moved to Wazir Two. Mentanuel disabled the knight, on the attack, then saluted Infunnog. Infunnog, having nowhere to go, attacked. Jim recounted the fight in detail, and I could appreciate thus the sheer finesse involved. It ended with a thrust to the prince's forearm and a twist too quick for even him to change to his left. Game over. And the border of April was going to move outward for thirty leagues. Some Ingdovuni would have to duel for land to live on. But that was not our fault; it was built into the ancient magic governing our realms and the relations between them, and the militarism of the Ingdovuni. The only one really at fault was I, for my handling of the battle. An Ingdovunen named Ungforikugol (him I do remember), who wanted to rub that in, told me before all the formalities were over, that Dunowmugukan, the rook I killed, had had a personal failing likely to lead soon (as Ingdovuni reckon) to Aoroak-Khaish, and he'd been indeed

desperate for Limbo in a way that few could understand. Lucky me.

Anyway, when I went down with the sword through my right lung, Milfuendil, an Elvish surgeon standing ready, grabbed a hollow probe from among the instruments on the table before him and ran onto my square, removed the sword, pushed the probe through the hole in my chest and into the wound in my lung, and squeezed the bulb at the other end of the probe, containing a fluid of his own mixing. That healed the lung at once, completely, and he lifted me off the field, Mentanuel taking my place, and into the nearest hospital tent, where two more probes were used to flood the wound between the ribs with a disinfectant and a coagulant, before bandaging me up and giving attention to my cut on my hand. That was six weeks ago, and the final dressing, meant to do away scarring, is to come off tomorrow. The Elves perform essential artificial healing quickly in emergencies, but they prefer to leave as much as possible to nature. I was able to

accept the congratulations of Infunnog before the Ingdovuni crossed back into Dilnuthaoth to try to beat Winter (a point of honour with them) to the new border. They made it, too.

Muelonfulon told me when I was feeling relatively well, that the Elves were much concerned about my handling of their honour as their “shepherd of glory” in dascanca, a role in which the Lord of April is given no instruction but expected instinctively to behave well. When I told him I’d feared my own cowardice, he was much relieved – self-doubt is a trait the Elves rather like in humans – but said I would be required to swear to that confession in full and formal Council. It was that serious. So when I was well enough to stand and raise a sword, on the way back to Lordholmë mostly by stretcher, I gave my apology and oath first to the warriors who accompanied me, and was astonished by the roar of approval that resulted. There was the same applause when I did it formally in Council. All things considered, it was a decent game, though not one which connoisseurs of Elvish play would dwell upon for centuries in savouring appreciation.

I’ll be glad when the dressing comes off tomorrow. Ildominanë has been hinting it’s time Remuentuacael had a sister.

July 20, 2011

“There can be joy of great defiance in doing what is right, because it is right, Remuentuacael,” quoth my father Adolphus Brown, and that joy shone, as he spoke, in his eyes and face. He needed say it but once, such is keen memory of half-Elven kind, but indeed he told me some truths more than once, having perhaps forgotten former tellings. “One ought ordinarily to be inclined to defy commands for which one does not see a reason that follows from the primary principle that persons deserve their deeds’ effects, and no one ought to give a command he cannot support by drawing upon such reasoning; persons sufficiently shrewd can trace all traditional standards of good conduct back to that first principle of natural justice, and we ought to defy all manner of ‘reasoning’ which may run counter thereto.

“One might have motives one might deem one’s very own, that one ought finally be glad defy, for doing wrong,” said my Dad, “so that a few are almost certain to press upon your soul. There are even real reasons, though less common than mere motives, for doing wrong. I came late to the joy I mean, but one can find it in the self-command that is really what some desire in supposing personal identity might someday be transferable to ‘superior’ technological contrivances.



There may be defiance enough in doing right to gladden the fiercest of proud souls, and God knows I have been proud, though I was proud only amid great defect at first, from boyhood.

“It is good that boys should read admiring tales of Robin Hood and Hereward and Alfred and others resisting tyranny, but if the parents of such a boy, from assuming God himself is mostly managerial, labour at controlling conduct but neglect to guide his mind, that may breed a resentful desire to disobey which he will indulge when secrecy is feasible.” And he taught me more about attitudes I might unconsciously have derived from him, that might affect my own teaching of offspring I might have.

“The joy of doing right must be wed to the joy of teaching what is right to children,” I remember Dad telling me quite young. “If that joy is not manifest in the teacher’s mood, he ought at least to ask pardon from the child for his not at the moment sharing it. What is most right for men is that we share God’s life by generating progeny and making other things and guiding the generating of lesser beings than ourselves, for that is ‘mostly what God himself does.’ These deeds are most right also for men who don’t know God, for they illustrate the self-evident

principles of natural justice and their implications, and human generation allows for matter's continuing to serve justice so far as mindful matter may perceive. Since justice makes our lives to mean what meaning they may have, therefore our lives are due to justice, so that we may well conclude that justice itself made us for its service. This is confirmed by the Christian doctrine that God himself is Justice: that persons deserve their deeds' effects, may well derive from the Father's "deserving to be his own existence" by generating his Son and their Spirit's deserving to proceed from them. God's purpose in making men and Elves, so far as reason can discover naturally, is that the intelligent things he makes out of something else should delight in deserving what they deserve by what they do, and that lesser things likewise material should afford us delight through our doing deeds with them. That is why it is not enough merely to purvey a source of energy, as, for instance, by pouring gasoline into a motorcar's tank, but rather the living ought to be in some sense at least, the actual source of what energy the living use; doing, and not a lifeless substitute for doing, should supply life's needs even if the doing only gives energy into batteries to 'run' a motorcar for amusement or in emergency. (That alone might afford profitable self-employment

for many a ‘fitness enthusiast.’) Meanwhile, that a motorcar may thus be ‘run,’ might perhaps excuse many who now use motorcars, since the motorcar therefore is not in principle ignoble means to worthy ends, any more than a computer using electricity so supplied, or a stove thus heating, must be unworthy of the living’s using it.

“Your chiefest loyalty, then, after fidelity to God himself, must be to the duty, and noble privilege, of manifesting in matter the principle that persons deserve their deeds’ effects. That is the proper basis of loyalty to other persons, and even of love in marriage – which when it is thus grounded can indeed flow mostly from initially ‘being in love.’” And he went on to show me much of how the primary principle can establish all the essentials of ethics, but suggested I not write much upon that when the time for my own writing of his end would come, for he “had a notion” that developing such thought among modern mortals might be a task Filduruë had in mind for Colin (Vincent Colin, perhaps I should say) Burke. The Elvish aspects of my “mental physiology” let me learn such things early, when taught them, and retain my lessons well. I needed much that lore to keep me from

“executing” out of hand, young as I was, her who did my Dad to death on the day before the birthday on which he would have become ninety-seven years of age.

The woman who slew Adolphus Brown of Newfoundland, the Lord of April, was herself a Newfoundlander who I think might have begun her fencing training with Patricia Bray, a fencer of some excellence and a teacher of children at school in St. John’s. This woman had been brought to April for trial on one of the more usual charges under the Laws of April and had challenged my father’s right to judge. He had shown how that authority was well founded on persons’ deserving their deeds’ effects and convinced her that any benefit which might accrue outside that principle’s far reach must be a matter of mere luck. But then she “authorized” herself to “guide her own luck.” My father told her she then must duel or bear punishment, he offering the choice of swords on ground of April or, since he would be a man fighting a woman, of firearms she might herself select, outside Elfland. She chose swords and fought well with one light and sharp. When it was over – she had made it quick at the end, both of them being unwounded until then – she said: “Why did he hold back those three or four times? I ought to have died instead of him, though God alone knows where I’d be now if he’d killed me!” (It

is a measure of her skill that she was ware, though afterward, of nearly all the occasions Dad had forgone: of all of them but one, which none of the Elven brought to her attention.) So my mother Ildominanë, grim, and proud though weeping much, explained to her that (as in a duel with a villainess recounted in an ancient chronicle) there were areas of anatomy at which April's Law had forbidden my Dad aim, and that his harming her in these even without intent would have brought bane on April. He had not told that to his foe, to influence her perhaps to choose firearms more in fairness to himself, for he had wanted allow her use the kind of weapon with which she deemed she would fare best. And so that woman sorely repented her great pride and remained in April for the Council to set her penalty for the offence which had had her brought here, since I, though then April's Lord if yet uncrowned, must have recused myself from such a case even had I been of age to wear the coronet. Dad was buried in high state on the day his slayer got release, in ground he and my mother chose long before, upon the borders of Newfoundland and April.

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