Eldritch Science

January 2026 Supplement

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Fiction

Eldritch Science

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Editorial

I owe the author of this story a very sincere apology. John Thiel had been experiencing difficulties of his own making a submission and had sent me hard copies of both parts of this story. I transcribed both into Word files that could be used in Microsoft Publisher. Unfortunately I neglected to run Part 1 in the September issue as planned, but did run Part 2 in the January issue.

The reasons for this don't matter; I will own the error. Before honor becomes humility.

So, with many apologies to the author, I now present both parts of his story Omnis Vivandis in its entirety.

As mentioned in the November issue, John also puts out his own fanzine, Pablo Lemmis, where this story has been serialized for some time. What you see here are the last two parts, which John assures me can stand alone as a complete story. If you are interested in seeing more of his work, you can reach out to him at kinethiel@outlook.com

Thank you all for your patience. Happy reading!

Omnis Vivandi (Part 1)

by John Thiel

"What know you of evil?"

The voice came from a room above the regular room, in which Duanella stood on a pedestal four feet in height. The interrogator could be seen through two inches of parted curtain; a second set of curtains was closed. Candlelight behind her made her somewhat more visible. Duanella knew this was the standard opening question. She had been told the proper answer. "Very little, if anything," she said. She was telling the truth when saying this, and her tone of voice was sincere.

"Very good. Yet you stand here. Where have you heard of this?"

"Some people recommended it to me. Out in the streets." It had been whispered to her, three days now passed. Then she was signaled to come and follow.

"Why do you find what you have heard favorable?"

"People are not kind to me. When I spoke to people in this vicinity, they talked with me and were interesting. I may as well come among the dumps, as people have rejected me."

"You are lying. It is known that you were being merry elsewhere."

"I had lost my stature and was of low regard. They were not seeing me as being of worth."

"A fallen leader, perhaps. You have attracted notice here."

"It's what I want."

The experience of being asked questions here had an intolerability. It seemed altogether against her will to be standing here, and the threat of the place was enormous. Yet she had come. They knew of her. She watched strange curtains billow in the alcove above,

and at the erratically ornate decorations of this room, lit with unnatural lighting. It seemed to have a gypsy background.

The Mistress of All Things Evil spoke again. “You are a child. You are looked after as a child. Now you are in the late years of childhood. What if these people were to find you here?”

“I doubt that they would be able to.”

“Do you think you can learn of these things?”

“Yes, as I am instructed.”

“Just so.” The mistress was silent a moment, then said, “I am told you know about evil, but naught of it. What is an example of what you know?”

“Evil was hated and driven into the streets. They stayed alert and were ignored.”

“Is there profit in evil?”

“Its profit is life’s continuance.”

“When there is profit. We get what we need from the ways we have.”

Duanella said, “I’ve always wanted to know more about evil.”

“You shall learn here.”

She was accepted, then. The sorceress Sayona who was the Mistress of Evil now said, “We do not want to turn you away. You have much we need. We wonder how you will be.”

“I intend to fit in as well as I am able.”

The Mistress had finished her business. “She is acceptable as a new entrant. Take her onward.”

Men who had been out of sight came through doorways and stood at each side of her. They went through a doorway into a long corridor. Many years ago Duanella had watched this corridor being built, and later when it was finished, she was taken on a walk down it and looked at all the office fronts. The men were pleased with what they had built

and spoke optimistically of its future. Their business was the transposition of business interest among the other businesses in the city. This deteriorated over time and finally it fell apart. Evil took it over.

She had felt vacuous and empty as they approached the door, and as they went through she felt a rising sensation of hysteria which became fear as the two men who were with her and a third who had been standing on the other side of the door came to a halt. She stood hiding her fear and working to overcome it. The third man, who looked like a demon, gave her a knowing look. In a moment he spoke. “I am the escort,” he said. He took a step before turning. “Now we begin.” He turned full forward. “This is an abandon of ritual,” said one of the men. “She knows that she must remember all of this,” said the other. The demon gave her another knowing look. She’d been in this corridor before, but it was empty and lifeless to her now. It had not been renewed for the twenty-three years since she’d been in it. She had not aged much since then. She did not follow a normal life span. This set her apart from some others. “We’re being watched,” said one of the men. She was feeling the thoughts of others. The men spoke of what they were doing, but she thought it was better further to remain silent. “You must learn to do things you do not like,” said a voice in her head.

The Mistress of Evil had once worked in a small goods store as a stocker and counter person. Duanella had seen her there occasionally and had once asked her if it was a satisfying thing to be. “Few things are satisfactory. I do not base my life on any of this work.” Duanella had noticed she had a strange way of talking. Sayona was now a seamstress in a tailor shop. The shop was doing well enough by having become a rarity.

They reached a cross corridor and turned into it. “A man can’t become a cross

corridor," the demon said. "One, two, three, ha, ha, ha."

"Are those things that you like?" Duanella thought back to Sayona.

"I do not find most things to be likeable," the Mistress answered. "I do things for a purpose. Do you think you will stay?"

"I will stay in spite of all unless I see something that is intolerable to my beliefs and reason."

"You had an easy time with the witch," said the demon. Duanella maintained silence.

"That is being tested," Sayona said.

When the corridor walk was accomplished, they left the building. There was an automobile waiting for them. The drive was long and difficult. Finally, they were at another building, a waiting room for a transport service that no longer existed. Their driver had been speaking of the desolation of this area as he drove, a historical rundown of what there had been during those losses.

A sighting was taken to see that the streets were empty, and then they entered and the driver drove off.

Easy chairs from various locations were arranged in the waiting area. Standing there in the disarray, Brother Myron spoke. "I see we have the new *celibre."* He backed off, looking diffident but chipper and ready, and waited for their reaction. "She's well spoken of," said Hensley, the man who'd been on her left. There were a lot of answers from the people in the room. "Am I really getting that much attention?"

"Their reality might be questionable," the demon said.

"Yes indeed," Brother Myron said. "A very noteworthy person."

"Worthy of your notebook," said a man, sitting up suddenly and looking at Myron.

"A book indeed I have," Myron said.

"He keeps his book in the sky," someone shouted.

"Is that an ice-breaker, Ralph Rogers?" came from a corner of the group. A door-to-door salesman.

"There's no ice to break," Brother said. "All is friendly here."

A woman said to Duanella, "Do these people seem to talk strangely to you?"

"Their talk will get nowhere," the demon said.

"Chancillary Beckster's his name," another woman said. "Your demon."

"I've heard it," Duanella said. "It's his real name."

"As real as reality," said the demon.

A man named Paul Spencer said, "We try to formulate conceivable remarks when we are here."

"Do you expect a young girl like this to understand that?" Chancillary said.

"She should. I've talked to her many's the time."

"How did you get involved here?" Duanella asked the man.

"I helped think much of this up," Spencer said.

"This is just a reception," Myron said. "It's our usual talk. But the talk here is usually strange."

"Make yourself at home," the Big Pokey bear rumbled. He could make that easy.

The lighting came on. There was a big chandelier overhead.

"Another room in this building is used for seances," Rogers said. His original mood

had completely changed. “Do you know what those are?”

“I kept out of the way of two of them,” Duanella said.

“She’s among grown-ups now,” said Doreen, a vivacious lady who had spoken of the strange talk.

“No one younger than her among us,” said the bear. “A few that could match her age.”

“How di you come to be here, Growly Bear?” Duanella asked.

“I was sitting with people who thought I was in their group, so then I was,” said Growly.

“This is as dull a conversation as you could find anywhere,” Rogers said confidentially to her from the other side of the room. He looked as if he were going to talk further. “How about one with you?” the salesman said. “It looks like he’d have that to transpire,” Hensley said.

“The new reigning queen has not spoken as yet,” said the salesman. Much of the reception turned against the salesman. There was inquiry about his behavior. “Well, I’m getting a little high,” the salesman said. “I used to keep seeing her on my rounds. She was usually a good talker when I was at the door. I keep feeling I know her from somewhere. You see, it’s a matter of exultation to me that she’s here. I gave her the original invitation.”

“You ignore that it might be depressing,” said Rogers.

“I am not ignoring it. I’m saying something, aren’t I?”

“We are conversing as usual, you may come into or out of our conversations, as you please,” said Doreen.

After ascertaining the truth of this, Duanella started to relax, became even more conversant with the three men who had brought her. The talk went on, but at last Chancillary rose and excused himself, but said it was time to proceed with Duanella to another place, and the other two men she was with also, and were joined by Rogers and the other entrant to the conversation, Joe Hodge, who said on their way out that he was one of the investors in the failed corporation.

They came to a domed structure in an open space. It had been an observatory, with a medium-sized telescope in it. The people of the observatory were mostly still around. Sayona met them in the receiving room. "I'm here in this piece of the action," she told Duanella. "You made out well at the reception?" The men expressed agreement that she had. "This is a place of education," she said. "There are four others who are like you, new people. In this place I will express in plain terms the nature of evil and an introduction to our society. There will be observers of the five of you."

Duanella said, "What exactly is your position in all this society?"

"She knows me but slightly," Sayona told the men. She said to Duanella, "I am a spirit of this society, more or less the central spirit. When it began to form around my coterie, I made sure I was central to matters. I keep my position well. As it is a large society, there is other management of it, and people tending it. I have been with what is here since before it began. It is I who know the ways of evil. They say that such will fall, but it doesn't. I know the ways of that also. You have no answer? Then you will see me again on the next floor."

Following her, they went up the stairs and took their seats. Sayona stood in front of them. "You are all new to the arts, and these

you learn of as you enter the society, and thereafter you live these things. Relief is found when you return to your normal lives, but within these places our policy is evil. We do not find what is good to our liking. They hear little from us and thus our ways are unknown." There were four others with Duanella, not much older than her. "They are people of quality; lately we have become interested in those who are above us.

"Evil is those ways which are forbidden but are traveled nevertheless by the evil. The doing of evil is always debated. If we have an action, we find agreement to it among those who will participate. We learn that true evil is not a deviation, but something which is a part of those who are evil. Do you see this, Duanella?"

"I see that evil is there, but not being understood, and is thereby abstracted from the common life."

"Renald might also have something to say."

The person next to Duanella on her left moved around some more, sitting up in a way straighter than he had been sitting. "I am not very familiar with the person to my right," he said. "I have seen her amongst the stores and wondered who she was. She asked me if I was wealthy. I told her I was doing well."

"We were interested in what you had when you came here—apparently some ways and means."

"I am now a dispatcher at an automobile service and manage the headquarters as well."

"And you came here why?"

"I think my position may crash and I came where things seem to carry on."

"And the question of evil?"

"I had not thought it existed as such. I came here to learn more. It has been missing

from my scope. What I am particularly wanting here is you seem to be good at survival."

"Your people are lacking in evil, as I have said. You will keep your position and bring what they need to them. I have said that some are by nature evil and are cast aside. We must live the way we live.. There are attempts to get rid of it fully, to get rid of us. We resist these attempts."

"Is it not so that when it is not said to be evil, it is not evil?" This was spoken by Wayne Durman, who sat on the far right seat. Sayona looked at him meditatively. He sat secure in her regard. She made answer.

"It is the very nature and perpetuation of our society to give no allowance to this viewpoint. It muddles people and does little for us. We say that it IS evil that we do, and we continue with it as may be. It loses us as our way when we are doing otherwise, which of course we do on our surface lives. But then we return here to continue in our ways, which are more suited to ourselves."

"Is evil not originally the way people are naturally, and therefore not considered evil, but just the viewpoint these people have, and do not these same people consider going astray with selfhood to be evil, whereas the same things and attitudes when purer are not evil? said Duanella.

"Very good, you teach me, then," Sayona said. "It is true with life that that is the way that things are, but as to the way things are conducted, these do not remain constant with many of us. And we are those so condemned, we live as we must. At this time, there is no solution for this, for the evil in others has become manifest, and we are not treated with proper reference to the universal verities. This is a short explanation of evil, and the rest of the understanding of it comes with the living of it. As Duanella has noted, the

good are not very good anymore. As has been so in history before."

The next person to the left spoke. "I am certain what brought me here. There has been an utter failure in moral maintenance among the people I am with."

A third person to the left, named Samuel, said, "Are they, and us, not facing extermination?"

"I think that," said Duanella. "But there are people I have mentioned that wonder about the outcome here."

Sayona said, "That is the very thing we are concerned with, here now, and which Duanella has been very clear about before her arrival here. I was speaking with these boys about you before you got here, Duanella. Are you on our side, Duanella?"

"I think I have chosen my place correctly," Duanella said.

She was next placed in the company of the people with whom she had arrived, to which were added Hans Schroyer, from the left, and Wayne, the person on her right. Duanella was feeling the great loss she had been expecting, the loss of all fealty with her own people, its place taken by the uncertain commitment she had made here, with a future that was virtually a blank.

Two cars awaited them, the first their own, the second a car driven by Wayne's father. He was the only one who had accompanied Wayne. The two men who had accompanied Hans were going elsewhere. They went into the countryside and arrived at an unpleasant looking but large house. "I do not like this place," Duanella told Rogers.

"It's the place where all the most sordid activity takes place," Rogers said. "They do low plotting here." They sat in the house talking it over and then heard the doors opening outside and in walked an individual who intro-

duced himself and was introduced as Gerard Antonay. “One of our kind, though highly placed,” Chancillary said. “He is a guerdon, one of the highest people in the central mythos, with an importance about equal to that of our Mistress of Evil, somewhat counterbalancing her effects. He is the established management of the Inner Ring of Evil.” Antonay leaned against a bureau. “This meeting will come to order,” he said. They all became attentive. “I am here to see to the indoctrination of three of our newest members. You all know who you are. What I do is make an official seal upon your presence here, meaning you are to familiarize yourself with the inner group. This being an inner group hangout, you can see what the inner group is like. Are we more morbid than the people around us? It is for you to guess.”

They then entered the ballroom. Barron, her second escort, walked up behind Duanella and grabbed her around the waist and midsection, then walked her around in a circle. “Let’s dance,” he said. She being inert, he passed her over to Hensley, who did similarly, rotating with her in the opposite direction. “We have a rather grueling ordeal waiting for us here,” Antonay said.

Chancillary stepped forward. “This is the part I hate,” he said. He turned his head to Duanella. “I’ve been through this,” he said. “This is the reason I wasn’t talking very much as we came over. I knew this was ahead. Why talk nice when there’s going to be this?”

Hodge and the drive came over. Hodge stuck his hand into her dress. “Let’s see what she’s got,” he said. The driver pulled her blouse out of her dress. “Let’s get those two young dudes out here and see which she likes best.” Rogers went and got Wayne, who snapped up and hit him in his jaw, then placed one in his ribs. The driver came over and knocked Wayne to the floor. Wayne’s father came over and did the same thing to him.

Rogers went to get Chancillary. “I’m not going,” Chancillary said. “Yes you are,” said Rogers. Chancillary hit him in the side of his face and Rogers staggered back. “This doesn’t seem to be my day,” Rogers said. “Yes it is,” Chancillary cracked.

Everything happened to everybody for a while. They brought in a table and put Duanella on it and said they were making her a human sacrifice. Sayona came in, wearing a gray cape.

“All very much in order, Duanella,” she said. “Self-abnegation. You discover we don’t like you.”

“I don’t want you to like me!” Duanella said.

“Wait till you see our cellar. There are ghosts down there,” Sayona said.

They were moving her to the door. They went down a hallway and found the cellar door. “It’s real small,” said Rogers. “They didn’t know a cellar underlays a whole building.” They went through a rounded doorway and staggered down a few steps. There was Duanella, Sayona, Rogers, and Antonay. And in the back of the room were the ghosts, incompletely manifested.

“That is our audience,” Sayona said. Rogers straightened her attire and Antonay reached across to her. “Give me your hand,” he said.

“Why are the ghosts here?” Duanella asked. “To witness the bonding,” Sayona called from the doorway.

“Bonding? What’s the bonding?”

Antonay replied, “The seal that you’re part of our group, our society. You may turn it down. You will have turned down the hand that reaches for you. Regardless of our hopelessness and degeneracy, will you accept the bonding? Will you be one of us?”

“Yes!” she said.

The ghosts arose, shouting. "Humbazah! Humbazah! Hoorah!"

"Let there be joy," Antonay said. They all went for the stairway.

"We don't really have very much," Sayona said. "I'm not so pleased with things—you know we are hunted and buried as much as can be done—but it is better than being without bearings at all. I seem adrift in all of this, and am often ignored, but again, I am a central figure, and when I am called upon, no one can challenge me. With Antonay we are chief speakers in the doings. Little contradiction is allowed with what we say."

"And you were once one of the faithful?" Duanella asked.

"That I was, having faith in all manner of things. You know of this because I once told you when at the counters. My faith was never destroyed because when it was, I had faith in that destruction. I came to be the center of a circle of the dissatisfied. The wind carried me into strange activities."

"You seem not to have anything," Duanella said. "Nothing that can be held onto. You hide beneath the surface, and scramble for your identity. It is the view from above…I feel as if I did not like the activity which has transpired."

"Yet you answered 'yes' when asked if you would become one of us. It could be changed to 'no'."

"I felt the loss of my own bearings when I accepted. I am not likely to change that decision, which came from within me. It came unbidden, before I was ready to speak."

"You were looking at a handsome man."

"He was dissolute."

"You would not change your answer?"

"The word was 'yes'."

"Then you truly are one of our society."

"I am bound by my word. I will learn what it means to be one of these people."

They parted ways. A car took Duanella to a place where the other young entrants were kept, and there they talked over what had happened and where they were. The house was theirs, they were told.

Antonay arrived there and they were all driven away in a van. They were taken to a large and semi-deluxe restaurant where the food was excellent and the talk was lively. Then they were taken around for arrangement and placement, after being evaluated for what they might be worth.

The next day they were taken around the peripheral holdings of their society and also gained the acquaintance of two girls who were to be in their group, Clara and Jeanette. In the course of this they found out Duanella had acquaintance with people in the military. They took her to the entertainment district, where she was introduced to actors. The theater had been closed but the actors still hung around the area. They dressed her up in warrior outfits and made her portray a warrior woman.

So it was war. Joining them, she would be a genuine lost spirit. She might as well be that if she could get nowhere with her intentions. They sent her to the soldiers with whom she had been consorting to bring them knowledge of the existence of the society. She looked up and down the traveled road to the front and found it inert. Now she did not travel this road but was smuggled up to nearby where the soldiers were, and she made her own way from there. They were pleased to see her again and asked how she was coming along with her intentions. She told them, "I have joined with the forces of evil."

They were shocked. “No! The Druids! Why did you do that?”

“Druids and other such ragtag of our culture. You know where they are at, stuck in the byway.”

“But they steal your spirit! They make you a slave to evil!”

“I suppose they do that, but they are more liberal in this than you say. They are the only ones with a solid progressive intention.”

“If you had parents they would have advised you not to. You have no one to keep you from making this evil misstep. Now you are an urchin in the thrall of the demonic forces.”

“You would find it difficult in their midst. There are many freedoms and options.”

“Sort of a secret society, eh? No one else may enter. And in it, no one has a will of his own.”

“I am allowed to change my mind and no longer be in the society. But I am not going to change it.”

“You speak as though you were on their side.”

“I am on the side of having them come back among us. I was told to tell you of this.”

“Oh, you do what they say, eh? If you didn’t they would subject you to exquisite tortures.”

“They don’t do that, unless listening to them talk about evil is a torment.”

“What about US? We can’t be going along with anything like that. Are you undervaluing us when you take up this matter?”

“I like it that you would shield me.”

She finally told them. “I said that I never was completely with you. It was my pleasure to tell you of what I had become. And now I look upon you with just these intentions. There is no telling what the future may bring.”

They had always had a great respect for what she had to say about things in the world.

Duanella was at the theater building in the company of Clara and Jeanette, and all three of them were dressed in costumery. The theater people were discussing reality and how it compared with the theater. The show business was practically defunct around here, but there were civic productions put on in the theater, with which Ella, the manager, was familiar and to which she was a consultant. Sustenance funds were being given out here, while everyone insisted that the theater in the area still had its value.

Sayona arrived at the place in Whitford where she was to meet Duanella and puttered about things. She'd been there fifteen minutes when she looked out a front window and saw a crowd gathered about the place. She started making her way to the back door when she became aware that there were other people in the place. She opened the window and dropped to the street from it, the safest thing being to get mixed in the crowd. But they came forward and backed her to the wall.

"You're a witch!"

"How did you find this place? How did you know I would be in it?"

"We're in all the places around here. Then they saw you come in. We're raiders."

"Do you know what we will do? We will put you on a pillory!"

"I don't have to stay here in your midst."

"There's more coming. It's like a whole town is coming."

"We're all ready for any of your people coming in to help you too!"

The three girls had been out in the street where they were doing practice in costume. This was when Sayona had just been

coming into the desolated area. When Sayona had been gotten to the pillory, a taxicab pulled in near the apprentice actresses and a man climbed out. “They’ve got Sayona in the streets and they’re putting her to the pillory,” he said. “I came here without being asked because I know you were supposed to meet her there. I’ve gotten the cab that would have taken you down.”

“We’re still going,” Clara said.

“So let’s get in the cab, Jeanette said. All three of them got in and they headed for the place. The car careened into the forbidden area. The cabbie had an idea of where to go. They spotted the huge crowd around the pillory. They ran halfway around the crowd and got just behind where Sayona was. She wasn’t on the pillory yet. “You’re not going to hear what we’re here for until you’re tied on,” a man was saying.

“She won’t hear of it anyway,” Duanella said, coming up right behind Sayona. “You won’t be saying it.”

Some women tried to grab Duanella, and the others grabbed them and held them in place.

“Look at what they’re wearing! They’re some of her people.”

“Look things over,” Jeanette said. “There’s more of her people getting into the crowd. We are warrior women.”

“All hail the news! Crowd is thwarted!” Clara shouted. Some men in the crowd started to head forward and the cabbie cut through the crowd and clipped two of them, calling attention to himself. The forward crowd got interested. Jeanette had a razor and cut the ropes loose from the pillory and slung them across the crowds. In the distraction they pulled Sayona loose and the four of them fled, making for the cab. The cabbie saw them and

ran back. They all made it into the cab; he started it up and locked it. “Where to, ma’am?” the cabbie asked.

“The communications center.”

The communications center sent out a general alert. They had been readying themselves for this attack for years.

The battle lasted for hours, and then the guardsmen came in. As they were aggressors, the attackers were driven back out of the area and the battle was over. “They came in on the main highway. They were cul-de-sac’d,” a Whitford winner announced.

Sayona made telephone calls relevant to getting everybody to the five o’clock appointment she’d had in mind. Once there, she had the talk she had been going to have with Duanella. Some of it appeared not to be necessary.

Duanella was to enter the military territory with her group and two drivers, including the successful cabbie, and introduce all of them to the military people Duanella knew. The area was watched from afar and they knew just when to send them. Everybody sat around partying while they waited. “We aren’t very good,” Hans said, “but this is going to be a good thing.”

“It can’t miss,” Duanella told him.

The soldiers had vouched for Duanella being neither a scout nor a spy. She’d been investigated for seduction a couple of times. She was able to disclaim having special interest groups. Now the soldiers let them all in. The meeting was highly successful. There was an inspection due and they had to be out of there within a couple of hours, and that they were. There were no problems on the way back.

When they got back, they found it to be considered a complete success. So Duanel-

la and her associates were now full members of the society called the Decamerons.

What would the future hold? There were great changes taking place.

Omnis Vivandi (Part 2)

by John Thiel

Here's a girl who's grown down, not up. From a woman in her twenties with a professional employment to a child of five years, she has grown to the age of eighteen and then, having reached this landmark age, has with no great speed reverted to the age of sixteen, where she is intending to stay. In her adult days she had no family, but when her chosen way of life, that of a 'socialite,' ceased to be necessary she became a child, which entitled her to care and support. She'd been that when she first arrived in the city, too, and was part of a large and indistinct family of people. Now she was not able to return to them, for they had gone their ways. But she required dependance. It came when Valmar Menderson and his wife were showing her their extraordinarily large house and lands, for Valmar was wealthy, having gained the title and employment of Civic Alderman. She was greatly impressed and said she wished she could live in a house like that. It came in a flash to Valmar, and he said, "You can. Our house is equipped for guests, but Monique and I have been considering having a family. You might like to be our daughter, and then you could live in this place." Duanella reeled about, stunned, then regained her senses and said "I would very much like that." "Then come inside and we will talk this over," said Valmar, and within a few days the invitation was made certain. The parents told her that they loved her very much, and that this thing would last. As time passed she grew older, and developed a desire for independence, which was granted to her by Valmar, who knew very well she could take care of herself but also required guidance. She spent her

time in the lowly parts of the large area in which they dwelt, and along a ritzy route called the Avenue, and Valmar bought a cheap house for her in the area she was interested in. Valmar had seldom been in these parts of town, and she would send back information about these areas.

She became too independent, and great arguments developed between her and her father. He did not like the libertine areas in which she was living, and got harder and harder about the matter. She knew he was right, but he could not sense the values the anarchic Avenue could have. The people there had a new outlook on life and had built what they had along a rural highway. Valmar said their new outlook was to do everything wrong. But she had a soul feeling for the Avenue. “It could happen to someone,” he said of this. Their arguments were not serious, but they became morbid as the life around them seemed to deteriorate.

Finally Valmar came out to have a look at Nel Gwyn. His daughter had said that he might be the very man who could set things straight there, and she was a very perceptive person. He entered the area and found that he was exactly what was needed. An alderman had what the recently created area was lacking: official finality and completion. And so he took it upon himself to be the salvaging of Nel Gwyn, and became a great man thereby, and therefore proceeded to rectify the failings of everything along the Avenue, even to the very end where it met with soldiers. One of his new group who was in a partnership with his daughter, Antonay the demon, met with the military and helped solve the conflict the military had with the people of the Avenue, who also broke up the signal conflict with Vinton. In presenting himself for Judgment, Antonay shrived himself. He is now part of an effort instituted by Sayona the Savant to improve and elevate the Underworld and make

it safe. Brother Myron and Ralph Rogers, principal of the school of evil, have both done repentance, and Baylor of the Circle of Nine has fully repented and taken on a new way of living, and all of this is influential to the entire society known as the Decamerons. Duanella sits among the heads of the Avenue effort, where she fully belongs, and she has a lot of good connections, including several with us. She reasons similarly to ourselves, and joining the Decamerons has not interfered with her innocence. Her father has called her publicly a hooligan and a mantrap, but said he felt the public need be warned that she is wild without being watched strictly, but this is now being done. Antonay and Chancellary, and the new entrant to sin Jeanette, have established an office in the area of peace which is close to the Avenue, and country-related, and they are there to have doings with the superior people. Monarch Sokolsky, who is also one of the Circle of Nine, and some of his people have also established some buildings there, and says he is using these to go back to normal behavior.

A rising melody as the saxophone, having no faults, made its music while its player twisted in behind a shrub and opened up, honk beyond, barana blay, a tone that was miraculous. There was a clear crescendo, then another man began to sing:

When bohemian lips invite you to smile
You might take a break and stay for a while.
Don't let bad things fool you; they're likely all right
When you get in the mood and the sky's shining bright.
Rakacota Picardo, and try it again
Let's all get together, and be cozy again. Just like men.
When Stresses besiege you, take comfort, no strain.
When a lady once loves you, she'll love you again.
Bababado ditbo yore, amana piper,
Be sure of your earnings and blessings.
Get with your coffee, and sing in the rain.
You'll like it much better, from gripes you'll abstain.

The saxophone player came in from behind the shrub and raised his sax in full glory. It got to be a bash when a lady joined in, with all the fa-la-la you could want. Other instruments joined in, and they began to march in files of four, with all their disparate support behind them, also in close files of four. Across the grass and lanes they did go, coming from the music museum, ready to swing with all. Burrazimo Bonimono. The players started to improvise, deep vibrato and far-flung high wailing, the drummers seeming to attack but changing their minds. Ah, how they played! The Brothers Five from back in the sticks came looking at them near the roadway, then stopped short of the march and looked. Sheboygan Trailor unwound a bit and looked some more. It was easy, he considered, to hate people; why then was it not easy to like people when they came across playing good music? "I'm going to hear these guys out," he said. "Love rules," said Tik Schenway. "It comes easy when it comes." Many of them had been moved down to the industrial area, the rest demurred. Trailor had said, "I'm not going anywhere else. This is my place."

"They've got a power of fine musicians," a soldier said, a light colonel by rank. He'd been arguing about his rank, and it had got him moved over to the road. He also had his thoughts—if you were listening to music, all the trouble you had might just slide away—transient as well.

Over the way, an overseer was looking on with great approval. No sense making suggestions now, when they were making their own. He knew the musicians were following the path they had taken when they entered the area with the company of soldiers; he wondered if that meant anything to all the people around them, whether they noticed it. There had been talk about finality, of the military action being over with. The settlement

talks and the questions and answers were to begin. Once begun, going from there.

The Civic Improvement Movement was running classy. Various stokers on the way up the freeway had joined in, and it was overseen and doing well. It had amalgamated with civic action across the way into the great big area where many things were to be found. Here the big improvers got right in with them, even offered some ideas of their own, which were surveyed; they seemed to be filling up voids. Waithcoate was seen weeping because the old orders were passing away. He was now stationed in the other half, of which Darcey was a participant and in which Towanis Selig had turned out to be a major power, and of course that was being improved but at the same time they were revamping things and performing well under scrutiny. They knew pretty well they were committing transgression. Waithcoate had let on everything they were doing that wasn't in the lawbook of principles. They were turning out to like their improvements pretty well. There had been a lot of despair in their midst. Meanwhile they had been doing their big, rich thing on the upper Avenue, and all that could be done was figure out what to do about it. This had been found to be a major force in the riots, and it could have gotten over into war. But this didn't happen. The military filed away what was done here, in the big stuff files, which vandals had threatened to burn.

`The one thing the visitors wanted to know was how those people who ran things in the city could possibly let things get in the condition they were in. A lot of things were not even describable, no matter how much effort was put to it. Nothing like these things were seen previously or anywhere else, within the scope of their intelligence. "A lot of the people who got in here were not earthly," they were told at the top. "You'd probably find identifiable similarities elsewhere, and

people unchecked. The Earth was not invitational to dinosaurs. Yet there was quite a bit of that going on in places mentioned in Biblical listings. And, too, if you've seen fairy tales, they're more or less true; these were people who lost their places in a planetary system and, in a sense deported, brought with them inexplicable behavior which was never recognized very much. Here they blended in with other people better than they did elsewhere, but as for the results you speak of, things weren't monitored very well in the new territory, which was commenced in its mapping and construction over thirty years ago and was considered five or so years ago, both reasoning back from before your exact announcements, now there's more such thinking, but the doings are more active."

"As we've seen it, Withers and associated territory were about to plummet out of sight."

"You were just at the right time to see action being taken. When a conflict between Whitford and Seinfeld broke out, major actions were commenced. Those two places should have been one place, but there was never any ordination. Why we hadn't heard from them was that they were saying the same things as they had been saying at first, and seemed pretty much concerned with what they were doing, no real complaints. It had been rough getting those new places built, and everybody got more easy-going, maintaining hat for years but being careful and having some self-doubts. Somebody in Withers pointed out that the doing of all that travel was not compensated for in the consideration of the activity, and the reason for all that transference in living had not been adequately explained. The newspapers there certainly didn't show much intelligence about it, but there was a lot of awareness of it in those news writeups. Papers here could be exam-

ples of ignorance of anything but the facts. The first news stories of real significance we hard from them were about an outbreak of war. Later on we heard that the speculation of warfare from the outside had become other than speculation. We knew it was real when he heard from Whitford that they were hitting an area along the Avenue because it was a weak spot in our defense. That was not an actual weak spot, it was populated by workers and was an industrial area, and their advance had been observed by people in Whitford, who were connected with the industrial area and who met them head on in torrential warfare that obliterated the assailants."

One of the listeners to this said, "The leader of that warfare defensive has repented and it is a lifelong repentance."

"Who was it? We don't know who it would be or who it was, and they had no contact with us."

"He is a person named Ernest Baylor. His special platoon repented with him."

"That isn't the first name I had for him, but I've heard of Baylor and it seems to me you've gotten a really good early repentance."

"Sayona announced an end to the dominion of evil and Brother Myron led a march through that end of the city and stayed on a 'Watch' for a month."

"That's your case, and I've heard of both. Myron's a saint and we were asked to look through our records about Sayona De La Porte and found that she'd done city work involving housing and location of new arrivals. Her records were good. If they're good it's first class. Subsequently she was found to be odd but they say she is entering into city matters again with a new outlook."

"That of repentance. The Decamerons, who were the masters of evil, are changing their ways to reconstruction and civic improvement."

"No bluff there. I might have thought there was, it sounds like public speaking. I might like to see a few of you handling these matters."

"That's what we're doing. The Decamerons are being voluntarily purged. It's real."

"Her name's Candy Oates," Daryl Van Ness, one of the standbys of the sky, said.

"I've been feeling it," the main speaker, Calvin Thomas Deimarot, said. "Put out a general alarm. We have one ready."

"That's us," Dan Flight, one of the observers, said. "We'll help you out with that alarm."

"Some of that ground work happens everywhere," Elias Montaine observed, looking like a sidekick to Deimarot. He appeared to have said enough, all he was going to say. Another, Charles Rhodes, said "Really, we ought to have an intermediary meeting place, if this is to occur."

"This isn't my house, of course," Deimarot said. "This is the Procidium."

They had been standing in what may have been an anteroom, with the door readily accessible. Charles opened the door and they all went out through it, a crowd of twenty. An apparition said, "There should be people falling on that bottom step."

"There's nothing wrong with it," Charles said.

"There's nothing right in shantyland," said the apparition. "Dirt driver down there." He vanished.

Lawrence Whittingham (who may have commanded the Procidium, though Calvin wouldn't have been second in command) said, "I'd establish this meeting right directly, and no time to lose on it, but there isn't any place nearby to meet. Yet this is where we ought to meet."

"There isn't anything that could be converted to a meeting place, either," Deimarot said.

"We'd have to build one," Rhodes said. "Or we could bring one up piecemeal."

"I'd look like a commoner, doing work of that kind," Deimarot said.

"If you have a place, we could put something in at this very moment," Jack Desmond of the stellar group said.

"Let's all stroll down to where it would be," Deimarot said. "I know the place. It's spacious and hidden and nobody's looked at the area for a long while."

"Know the housing? Here's an empty place that looks kind of official," Desmond said.

"It's where they were making statues. It was called a museum. People have been wanting to get rid of it," Lawrence said.

"I know. That's why it looked good to me."

"It might as well be now," Deimarot said. "It'd be the same thing at any other time." They huddled and went into conference. A tired hour later, with most of the offensive encroachers gone, they decided upon doing it then, and then there was how to furnish it. Another forty-five minutes, and they were situating the place, and a good job was being done of it, too.

"This is the kind of thing that could take my hat off," Deimarot said.

"We have got to get the people classified, so the various places could be classified and known clearly to us for what they are" was coming out of a steam room outside the city, where various beings of the judgment were congregated. The idea was getting a comprehensive and even certain overview of all of it. This was a hard thing to do without offense to the top dogs, all of whom did not like to be considered inferior to the monarchs of the sky. THEY had an overview, and if an

overview came along from these overseers it would bother them. Wicked words came from higher than that, people who would contest these set views and who said conflict was inevitable at this particular point. There would have to be philosophical interjecting and that of the best, or the whole of the enterprise would be shaky. They referenced Deimarot. He formulated a sliding action when this matter was involved, the matter being that whether the actors of the judgment could tell those people of the city who were overseers of the whole of it what to do. There would have to be interactive persuasion with not a word of it suggesting that the judgment people had any control over these people. If any of them were found obdurate in a pursuit in which new happenings were outmoding his own doings, his approach to things wee to be fully investigated and discussed by the best and most cooperative, until the matter was cleared or fully explained. By all means they would find out why he was not giving up his position, and a solution would be found for it. It wouldn't matter or schmatter what the nature of it was as long as it could be brought in some good form to the true and natural objectives, those which would be put to the test in the future and not solidified as certainties. "This very thing has been the ruin of many a previous foray" came from above. "We have a grand committee looking for potential failures and the most notable contemplators and thinkers are not being blocked, but indeed are getting help getting to where their exquisite wisdom is needed." They all recognized a lack of vocabulary in their conversations and these were things much discussed and further researched in all the apparent right places, right then as the actions were progressing and, yes, getting reviewed by those most serious in what they were doing, but not bent upon certain formulations. In doing things this way they would be successful in their doings. No

trite statements of yore followed or dismissed, no platitudes, and all their like. These, as you may know, would not long be forgotten, anyway, in the passage of time. And there you had it, just remember to keep in goodwill. A saint had called this an imperative. Saints did not actually need their asses kicked. Try kicking the ass of a saint, so the story goes.

And so a major glitch was overcome. A word about all this fidelity: the original builders of the city, eleven in number all told, were in close contact with the judgment at this time, and what they say goes, once understood and communicated among themselves. They were still distant, all of them residing in one of two different states, and had been seeing their city from a distance, with only occasional visits. They were really interested in what was going on now, and would be there in not so long a time.

Roadrunning became a popular thing among the people repositioned in a new territory: Brother Myron's people, most of them being reestablished a decent distance away from the dividing line representing underworld territory, which was in the passage of time to cease being called the underworld. Among these people were some of Sayona's minions, from the days of her public psychic gatherings before the reign of evil had begun. She was going to reclaim their place in the city, too, as the northerly procedure she had begun with the city man was established. "The days of misery are coming to an end," she said, a statement that was scoffed at. A few of these people had remained in Whitford, and others were on the side of the dividing line from the main multitudes of them. Growly Bear had become more interested in Myron's parade of departure and, although he would not join with them, he remained with what they were doing and was

now in a house fairly near to the Circle of Nine, of which he was now a guard, and accessible to the northern territory. His actual name was Bernard Eminschaler. The people claimed they would stop calling him Growly, but then decided they would never stop calling hm Growly Bear. One of the two ladies who had spoken with Duanella in the transportation room had moved into Duanella's house, that now being her hideaway, as she had become relocated in a more viable pattern. She would still be coming there and staying for a while, but she needed someone to tend the house between, so Doreen Grumacher took over the residence. Duanella's father came down to look at this and said to Duanella, "Hasn't this house got any YOU to it?" Duanella said, "No, but it's got HOUSE to it." Doreen said she was going to get better flowers in it and yard improvement, and that Lavina would be one of her frequent visitors, who was now living close to the entertainment district. Duanella took her symbol out. There were still commissioned surveillance men looking over the attempt that had been made to exterminate the neighborhood, and the information was coming in from far afield; one of the men of the judgment commandos was making sure that all was being discovered and correctly interpreted, pointing out that this should not beset a city. Menderson had been asked twice whether he really wanted mercy for those involved in this attempt, and he said he did. The commando said that he need not expect to be asked this; he, the commando, already knew that there should be mercy for these people. Berringo was the name of the new territory up north. It might not have been named that had not Myron been more or less in charge of things. It might be that it would be changed as time passed.

Courtesy of the Grand Overseers, there was a grand one-storied building, even more decent in its distance away from the

line, forward from half the new territory. It faced in two directions, northeast and southwest, with side doors, and this was to gather as they had been doing, with items of various kinds in a lengthy and spacious yard enlarged centrally. “Now, you just be careful, you might be running over something of mine,” said Sayona, who had not been told this was being put here. A blessing from the grandees was added, the Temple of Truth, in which important things could be discussed and in which Brother Myron could orate. Easy transportation for the ones behind, even the ones there, was made possible and scheduling brought to mind, and a highway took them past Sayona’s house with a bus running on it at known intervals; they’d get out where there were nearby neighbors on the less ritzy side, and make their way through the neighboring area until Sayona could see them coming. They could leave on the same bus when it was going the other way. They were warned they might have to put on a costume if they went in the front way, but if they liked they could walk around the house and come in the front door. Myron had confessed all his worldly sins and evils within three weeks or so, and was now living regularly and going to the Temple of Truth when there was more he wanted to discuss, like the conversion of Baylor or the restitution of the ghosts that had been accomplished by the Far Aways. That had been where the apparition at the top came from, as was eventually learned.

The two demons, Antonay and Chancillary, with their secretary Jeanette, were now having real business, and this was all the work of the Overlords, who had them covering the various points of their concerns and bringing in the information about them, such as the interest in the civilian area and the onetime estranged area in which Wayne Durman lived, and the Parking Lodge of Jack Mangueld, and they were able to handle all of this in the fash-

ion of those who were managing things successfully. The Overlords had selected this for them wisely, and of course they were not the only ones seeing this.

It wouldn't be a job if there were nothing on the other side of them. They did keep files as well. Another plus for Antonay was his proximity to Duanella, who was now completely restationed. Her job in the entertainment district had been expanded and officialized (much as Menderson had been suggesting, though he was not making a point of it there) and she was now doing big business as an intermediary between the entertainment district and Nel Gwyn, with further expansion where Darcey was at, and she was contributory to the straightening out of that adjunctive to the Avenue—both were, under the direction of Towanis Selig, and this was further advanced and administrated by the up-and-at-'ems, who were super merciful and helpful to the roadway commission. She was also positioned importantly in the entire Avenue effort, met with her gang near the Circle of Nine and was at their meetings along with the rest, and then there was some off-and-on helter skelter. She was spending most of her time at home in Withers, of which she said "This is where I make my home." She had invited Jeanette (who had no true family) into the family, but Clara had one and was only a visitor. "I will not give the young lady up," her father said. Antonay knew when she was in her position and presence in the Avenue headquarters and was able to get there often and find a place for a private meeting. The two soldiers also found her readily available there, and Jack of the Service remained visitable or could be invited out there. So she was in solid, calling Withers her home ground. Menderson had three young ones, and none of them were in a hurry to get any older. Clara reckoned she would grow at a slow pace, and then be a dreadful woman. She was being cor-

rected about this last thing by operators from far away, who pointed out that it could be something different. They were into that whole area.

The Decameron building, still called that, was intact but visible. These were all still Decamerons, just as they had become, but with many a distinction coming or pending, and with some better associations, such as the library. Sayona was finding some better associations as well, including some with the city people.

That was how it all was, after three and a half years, and then some of judgment would be leaving and the rest were solidifying. They had made the city speakable, and then next was some real heavy talk about its improvement, some laying in of what was thought about what ought to be, or what had to be. Judgment…that was what it was all about: what had been wrong with things.

As to the talk about the people who had made the city, they had started to become more audible, and began becoming more nearby to the city. “It’s ours. Why not be close to it?” And at about this time it came to be a topic of discussion that was audible all around the city “Who indeed made this city? Why do we not hear very much from them? Perhaps they can explain themselves.” Those roller rigs had been doing their own things for as long as the city had existed, and were out in lands which pleased them, just as though they had retired in some way and were taking it careful for the future. A talk was achieved with some of the top people in the city for an answer to two questions. One was, “Did those people live close together?” and the answer was yes, except for three who resided in another state. The other question was “When would they ever come back?” And the answer to this was, they’ll be coming back now. Were they going to return on the judgment times?

No, they weren't sure when they'd be back, and they were talking about it from time to time. Then, with the Judgment coming, they came up with they'd better hurry on back, but they were going to wait until the big stuff was over.

It came into the office of Valmar Menderson, and his wife and Duanella were there, as was Ken. There were changes going on in that office, which had far out people of the first order in it anyway, and some finity explorers. Duanella said, "Someone should write to them. There should be contact with the masses, not we waiting around for them to get over the Judgment. That could be a long time. Probably, it would be a long time. Are we to wait for something like that? We need to hear from them now."

"Very good, then. You write that letter," one of the minotaurs of judgment said.

"I'll write it if you send it," Duanella said. And they asked her to sit down and write it. And this is what she wrote:

"Dear whoever you are, dear which one you may be out of eight or eleven, we would like to hear from you. In all the time we have lived here, we never have. Now it seems as if the city will fall apart. The people of the Judgment are amending this, but we need more than that. We need to hear from the people who made this city. We need to ask if it's the way it's supposed to be, which it clearly is not, but whether what we are doing is the way it's supposed to be and what do you think is the way we should be. You are the ones who wanted this city to be here and you left how it should be here, but most of us here have not heard in any direct way what has been wanted. We hope one of you, at least, will come here and tell us about this. And also have a direct look at what is here. Now, can you answer this letter, and tell us if you might come where we are? We'd really like to see you.—Duanella Menderson."

"That's very good, without any additions or explanations," the sky person said. "And now, I'll see if I can get it mailed, and find out that I can." He left the room carrying the envelope, which he'd addressed. He came back in an hour, saying the letter had been

dispatched. And in another half an hour a man walked through their door, who hadn't knocked or consulted with the front office. He was a sturdy man with blond hair and a good look to him, and a gentleness which compounded a look of great power. "Are you Duanella?" he asked her. And she replied that she was. "Then take this to mind: I would not think of answering this letter in anything but the affirmative. And you know this: I will not have my city come to naught. Already I am beginning to look at it, as I look at the people assembled here. And I shall find what I have dreamed of, and leave behind all the dross, with harm to no man, for it has been that way with me. I wish to see no man come to harm, unless he is a student of it, and then I wish him well. And all the losses there have been, will be drawn back to our intentions by my compatriots. And this is starting now."

"Are you the man who received this letter? Or was it opened first by someone else?" Menderson asked.

"It went through many hands until finally it reached me. And I am the one who answers it."

"What shall we see soon?" said Duanella.

"First I will see what I have come to see of you. Then you will see all the others, as they come into different places. We have all been waiting to see you. I was glad to receive the invitation. We shall make sure that what is wanted in your letter comes to pass."

THE END

Welcome to Accident (oh_candy)