

# THE ANIMAL FAIR

Alfred Bester

*I went to the animal fair.  
The birds and the beasts were there.  
By the light of the moon,  
The big baboon,  
Was combing his golden hair.*

*The monkey he got drunk,  
And climbed up the elephant's trunk.  
The elephant sneezed  
And fell on his knees,  
But what became of the monk?*

## TRADITIONAL NURSERY SONG

There is a high hill in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, that is called Red Hill because it is formed of red shale, which is a kind of stone. There is an abandoned farm on top of the hill which is called Red Hill farm. It was deserted many years ago when the children of farmers decided that there was more excitement and entertainment in the cities.

Red Hill farm has an old stone house with thick walls, oaken

floors and the enormous fireplaces in which the cooking was done two hundred years ago. There is a slate-roofed smokehouse behind it in which hams should be hung. There is a small red barn cluttered with forgotten things like children's sleighs and pieces of horses' harness, and there is a big red barn which is the Big Red Schoolhouse.

Here the ladies and gentlemen who possess the farm in fact, if not in fee simple absolute, hold meetings by day and night to discuss problems of portent and to educate their children. But you must understand that they speak the language of creatures which few humans can hear or understand. Most of us learned it when we were young but lost it as it was replaced by human speech. A rare few can still speak both, and this is our story.

The meetings in the Big Red Schoolhouse are governed by the Chairman, a ring-necked cock pheasant who is all pomp and strut. He is secretly referred to as "The Sex Maniac" because he maintains a harem of five hens. The Professor is a white rat who escaped from the Rutgers university laboratories after three years of intensive education. He believes that he is qualified for a Ph.D. and is considering doing his dissertation "On the Relevance of Hot Water to Science."

George Washington Woodchuck is the peerless surveyor of Red Hill farm. He knows every inch of its forty acres and is the arbiter of all territorial disputes. The Senior Rabbit, who is occasionally called "The Scoutmaster," is the mentor of morality and much alarmed by the freedom and excesses of the Red Hill young. "I will not," he says, "permit Red Hill to become another Woodstock." He also deplures modern music.

There are many other members of the Big Red Schoolhouse—deer, who have darling manners but are really awfully dumb. The intellectuals call them "The debutantes." Moses Mole, who is virtually blind, as all moles are, is pestering the Professor to teach him astronomy. "But how can I teach you

astronomy when you can't even see the stars?" "I don't want to be an observing astronomer. I want to be a mathematical astronomer like Einstein." It looks as though the Professor will have to introduce a course in the New Math.

There are a Cardinal and a Brown Thrasher who have mean tempers and are always picking fights. The Cardinal is called "His Eminence," of course, and the Brown Thrasher is nicknamed "Jack Johnson." It's true that Jack Johnson has a rotten disposition but he sings beautifully and conducts regular vocal classes. On the other hand the voice of His Eminence can only be called painful.

The Chaldean Chicken is a runaway from a battery down the road and she's a real mixed-up girl. She's a White Leghorn and had the misfortune at an early age to discover that Leghorn is a place in Italy. Consequently she speaks a gibberish which she believes is fluent Italian. "Ah, *caro mio, come est? Benny*, I hope. *Grazie*. And with *meeyo* is *benny* too." She's called the Chaldean because she's spaced out on astrology, which infuriates the Professor. "Ah, *caro mio*, you will never be *sympathetico* with him. You are Gasitorius and he is Zapricorn."

The cleverest members of the Big Red Schoolhouse are the crows who are witty and talkative and sound like an opening night party at a theatrical restaurant. Unfortunately they are not respected by the Establishment which regards them as "mere mummies" who are likely to try to borrow something (never returned) and who turn serious discussions into a minstrel show. It must be admitted that when two crows get together they begin to behave like Endmen in search of an Interlocutor, convulsing themselves with ancient gags.

"Which do you like, the old writers or the new writers?"

"My brother's got that."

"Got what?"

"Neuritis."

Caw! Caw! Caw!

“How many children do you have?”

“I have five, thank you.”

“Don’t thank me, friend. Don’t thank me.”

Caw! Caw! Caw!

It was on an evening in May when the light is long and the shadows even longer that the Chairman entered the Big Red Schoolhouse attended by his harem. Everyone was there and deeply involved in a discussion of a proposal by the Professor. It was that they should establish an Underground Railroad, something like the Abolitionists, to enable other escapees to reach freedom. Moe Mole, who is rather literal-minded, was pointing out that it would be extremely difficult for him to dig tunnels big enough to accommodate railroad cars. “I saw one once. They’re as big as houses.” Jack Johnson was needling His Eminence to give flying lessons to all refugees, regardless of race, creed or species. Two black crows were cawing it up. In short, it was a typical Red Barn gathering.

“I call this meeting to order with important news,” the Chairman said. “I say, Kaff Kaff, with vital intelligence. Flora, do sit down. Oh, sorry. Frances, do sit— Felicia? Oh, Phyllis. Yes. Quite. Kaff Kaff. Do sit down, Phyllis. This morning a Cadillac drove up the lane leading to Red Hill farm—”

“Two hundred and thirty-five-point-nine yards,” Geo. W. Woodchuck said, “bearing east-south-east. Latitude—”

“Yes, yes, my dear George. It was followed by a Volvo containing—”

“Which do you like, a Cadillac or a Volvo?”

“My father’s got that.”

“Got what?”

“A cadillac condition.”

Caw! Caw! Caw!

“Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Please! This is serious. The Cadillac contained a real estate agent. The foreign vehicle contained a man, a woman and an extremely small child, sex as yet undetermined. It is my judgment, Kaff Kaff, I say, my measured opinion that our farm is being shown for sale.”

“May is a bad month for buying,” the Chaldean Chicken declared. “*Importanto* decisions should be *reservato* for the Sign of Jemimah.”

“The word is Gemini,” the Professor shouted. “The least you can do is get your superstitions straight.”

“You are a male chauvinist rat,” Miss Leghorn retorted, “And I am going to form a Chickens’ Lib.”

“Yes, yes, my dear. And I will be the first to contribute to your worthy cause. Never mind that look, Frances— Oh, Fifi? There is no need for a Pheasants’ Lib movement. You are already liberated. Kaff Kaff. Now, ladies and gentlemen, we are involved in, I say, we are committed to a struggle for the preservation of our property. We must not permit any strangers (I might almost call them Squatters) to invade us. We must make the land as unattractive as possible, and this will demand sacrifices.”

“Name one that you’ll make,” the Professor demanded.

“I will name several. Ladies,” here the Chairman addressed himself to the does. “Please do not permit yourselves to be seen. The human animal is always enchanted by your beauty and glamour.”

The debutantes giggled prettily.

“My dear Scoutmaster,” the Chairman went on to the Senior

Rabbit, “the same holds true for yourself and your entire troop. Please disappear until further notice. No more jamborees on the lawns. I, of course, will make a similar sacrifice. I shall conceal my blazing magnificence. Kaff Kaff.”

Moe Mole said, “I’m always concealed.”

“To be sure. To be sure. But Moses, would it be possible for you to tunnel all the grounds, raising those unsightly mounds? You will have to double your efforts but it would be most helpful.”

“I’ll get the brothers from Moles Anonymous to lend a hand.”

“Splendid. Splendid. Now, George W., I ask this as a special favor. Would you be kind enough to give up your invaluable surveying for the nonce, I say, Kaff Kaff, temporarily, and eat the daffodils?”

“I hate the taste.”

“I don’t blame him,” the Senior Rabbit said. “They’re disgusting.”

“But so appealing visually to the human eye. You don’t have to actually devour them, George; just cut them down and chew a little. I will do the same for the lilacs, under cover of darkness, of course, and my dear ladies will assist.”

Jack Johnson said, “What about me and His Eminence?”

“His Eminence will remain out of sight but will sing. You will remain in sight but will not sing.”

“I’m as pretty as that Jesuit.”

“Yeah? You want to prove it? Step outside.”

“Gentlemen. Gentlemen. Please! We are concerting an all-out attack. Now our members of Actors Equity will continue their customary depredations, concentrating on the apple, pear and peach trees.”

“We ought to eat the corn, too.”

“I’m not going to eat you, friend.”

Caw! Caw! Caw!

“Miss Leghorn will remain out of sight. There is nothing more appealing to the human animal than a chicken meditating on a summer day. Oh, and Jack, dear boy, will you try to dispossess the Mocking bird? There is nothing more appealing than a Mocking bird serenading on a summer night.”

“Why don’t he ever join up?”

“I have solicited him many times and he has always refused. I’m afraid he’ll refuse to be drafted now.”

“I’ll chase him all the way to Canada.”

“I shall continue to supervise the campaign from my command post in Freda’s—ah, Francie’s—ah, from my command post under the lilac bush. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, we cannot fail. Meeting adjourned.”

They failed, of course. Those losers from the Big City took two looks at Red Hill farm and fell in love with it. They saw the miniature hog-backs that Moe Mole had dug and loved them. “Moles have their rights,” the husband said. They saw George W. decimating the daffodils. “Woodchucks have their rights,” the wife said. “Next year we’ll plant enough for us and him.” The Kaff Kaff of the Chairman doing his best to destroy the lilacs put them in ecstasies. Flashing glimpses of the does and their fawns hiding in the woods enchanted them. “Do you think they’ll all let us live here with them?” the wife asked.

They bought the farm at a high price (\$1,000 an acre) with the help of a mortgage, moved in all their possessions and took up residence. Almost immediately there were hammerings and sawings inside the house and flutters of wash outside, hung on a



line strung between a couple of oak trees.

They were a family of four. The head of the house was a Burmese cat, all tan and brown with golden eyes, who ruled with an imperious hand. Then there came the husband and wife, and a small boy aged two years who ruled the Burmese. The news of the cat rather disturbed the Big Red Schoolhouse which is not fond of predators. They are all vegetarians, and the Chaldean Chicken has formed an association called OFFO, which stands for Organic Foods For Oll. In the opinion of the Professor Miss Leghorn is ineducable.

“No, it’s nothing to worry about,” George W. assured the assembled. “She’s a right royalty.”

“Royalty?”

“I had a long talk with her through the screen door. She’s some kind of Burmese Princess, and if the Burmese were ever hunters it’s been bred out of her.”

“She says. Behind a door.”

“No. I helped her get it open and we had a real friendly time until the lady ran out and grabbed her and put her back in the house. She was mad.”

“Why?”

“Well, it seems that these Burmese types are very highclass and they don’t let them out. They’re afraid she’ll catch hemophilia or something. The Princess is kind of lonely. We ought to do something for her.”

“Hemophilia is not contagious,” the Professor said. “It is a congenital characteristic transmitted through the female chromosome.”

“So, all right. Leukemia or something.”

“What about the family?”

“The Princess says they’re a little loose. The name is Dupree. He’s Constantine and she’s Constance, so they call each other Connie and the Princess never knows where she’s at.”

“And the kid?”

“He’s a boy and he’s got six names.”

“Six?”

“They call him after some kind of poem, which I think is a pretty rotten scene: James James Morrison Morrison Weatherby George.”

“That’s four names,” the Professor objected.

“But mathematically speaking,” Moe Mole began, “it really counts up to—”

“All right. All right. Six. How old is he?”

“Two.”

“What does he do?”

“Not much. Just crawls around.”

“At two? Arrested. What does the father do?”

“He’s an editor.”

“What’s that?”

“You know those pieces of paper we see sometimes with print on them like; Tomato Ketchup, Net Wt. 32 Oz. or Pall Mall Famous Cigarettes—Wherever Particular People Congregate?”

“Whatever they mean. And?”

“The Princess says somebody has to be in charge of the print. That’s an editor.”

“What does she do?”

“Who?”

“The other Connie.”

“She pastes food on paper.”

“She what?”

“That’s what the Princess said.”

“Pastes food on paper?”

“The Princess says it tastes real good.”

“She is not pasting food on paper,” the Professor said. “She is making paintings.” He turned to Geo. Woodchuck. “In my opinion your friend, the Burmese Princess, is an ass.”

“She wants to meet you. Her Connie, the man, went to Rutgers, too.”

“Did he, now? Was he Phi Beta Kappa? No matter. Perhaps we can arrange something.”

“He doesn’t speak our language.”

“Too bad. Can he learn? How old is he?”

“Around thirty.”

The Professor shook his head. “A Senior Citizen. Too late.”

At this point one of the Endmen said, “A funny thing is happening on its way to the barn.”

They all stared at him.

“Something’s coming,” he explained.

They looked through the slit in the barn door. A curious creature, pink and naked, was crawling across the lawn in their direction.

“Where? Where?” Moe Mole asked.

“Bearing south-south-west,” George W. told him.

“What is it?”

“It’s a Monster!” Miss Leghorn cried.

The Monster crawled through the slit, stopped, rested and panted. Then he looked at the assembly. The assembly examined him.

“It’s James James Morrison Morrison Weatherby George,” the Woodchuck said. “I saw him hugging the Princess.”

“Da,” the Monster said pleasantly.

“An obvious illiterate,” the Professor said peevishly. “It can’t speak. Let’s adjourn.”

“I can too speak,” James said in the creature tongue. “Why are you so mean to me?”

“My dear Monster,” the Professor apologized handsomely, “I had no idea. I beg you to forgive me.”

“Da,” James said.

“But of course,” the White Rat explained. “Science always finds the answer. He can speak to us but he can’t speak to his own kind.”

“Da,” James said.

“You’ve got to speak our language, buddy-boy,” Jack Johnson said.

“We think he’s cute in any language,” the debutantes tittered.

“Ladies,” the Monster said. “I thank you for the generous compliment. I am but a simple soul, but I am not impervious to flattery from such glorious females as you. In this hurly-burly world of conflict and confrontation it is a comfort for a lonely creature like myself to know that there are yet a few who are capable of relating and communicating.”

“His primitive eloquence goes to the heart,” said a fawn, batting her eyes at James.

“Where the hell did you get that fancy spiel?” one of the Endmen demanded.

“From my father’s editorials,” James grinned. “He reads them out loud to my mother.”

“Honest and modest,” the Scoutmaster said. “I approve of that.”

“Hey, Monster, what’s it like living with human types? Is it different?”

“I don’t know, sir. I’ve never lived with anything else.”

“What about that Princess? The Burmese type.”

“Oh, she’s just a flirt. She’s visceratonic; that is, she operates from instinctive rather than intellectual motivation.”

“Jeez!” Jack Johnson exclaimed.

“One of them editorials?” an Endman asked.

“Yes, sir. What I mean, ladies and gentlemen, is that this is the first chance I’ve ever had to carry on a rational conversation with anyone.”

“Don’t your parents talk to you?”

“Oh yes, but when I answer they don’t listen.”

“That’s because you talk Us and they talk Them.”

“You know,” the Professor said, “I believe this simplistic Monster may have some potential. I think I’ll take him on as one of my students in Arts & Science I.”

“Here comes one of the two Connies,” His Eminence warned.

“Right. Out, Monster. We’ll see you tomorrow. Push him through the door, somebody.”

James’ mother picked him up and started back to the house.

“Darling, you had a wonderful exploration. How nice that we don’t have to worry about cars. Did you discover anything?”

“As a matter of fact I did,” James answered. “There’s a brilliant sodality of birds and beasts in the Big Red Barn who made me welcome and have very kindly volunteered to begin my education. They’re all characters and most amusing. They call me Monster.”

Alas, he was speaking creature language which his mother couldn’t hear or understand. So he settled for “Da” in human, but he was extremely annoyed by his mother’s failure to hear him, and this is the terrible conflict of our true story.

And so the education of James Dupree began in and around the Big Red Schoolhouse.

“Music achieved its peak in the Baroque Era,” Jack Johnson said. “Teleman, Bach, Mozart. The greatest, the guy I dig the most, was Vivaldi. He had muscle. You understand? Right. Now what you have to keep in mind is that these cats made statements. And you have to realize that you just don’t listen to music; you have to make it, which means that you have to conduct a conversation with the artists. Right? You hear their statement and then you answer them back. You agree with them or you argue with them. That’s what it’s all about.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“That’s all right. Now let’s hear you sound your A.”

“As we dig deeper and deeper,” Moe Mole said, “we find that, mathematically speaking, the temperature increases one degree Fahrenheit per foot. But the brothers from the north tell me that they strike a permafrost layer which is left over from the Glacial Epoch. This is very interesting. It means that the last glaciation is

not yet finished in the mathematical sense. Have you ever seen an iceberg?”

“No, sir.”

“I would like to dig down to the bottom of an iceberg to check the temperature.”

“But wouldn’t it be cold, sir?”

“Cold? Cold? Pah! Cold is better than pep pills.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Let me see your hand,” Miss Leghorn said. “*Benny. Benny.* The line of life is strong. Ah, but the line of Venus, of *amourismo*, is broken in *multo* places. I’m afraid you will have an unhappy lovelife, *caro mio.*”

“Repeat after me,” the Senior Rabbit said. “On my honor.”

“On my honor.”

“I will do my best to do my duty.”

“I will do my best to do my duty.”

“For God and my country.”

“For God and my country.”

“And to obey the scout law.”

“And to obey the scout law.”

“I will help other people at all times.”

“I will help other people at all times.”

“And keep myself physically strong.”

“And keep myself physically strong.”

“Mentally awake.”

“Mentally awake.”

“And morally straight.”

“And morally straight.”

“Good. You are now an official Tenderfoot. We’ll start knot-tying tomorrow with the bowline.”

“Excuse me, sir. What does morally straight mean?”

“Now watch me,” the debutante said. “First you take a step/And then you take another/And then you take a step/And then you take another/And then, you’re doing the Gazpacho. Now you try it.”

“But I can’t even walk, m’am.”

“That’s right,” the debutante said brightly. “So how can you dance? Shall we sit this one out? Tell me, have you read any good books lately?”

“My professor at Rutgers,” the White Rat said, “taught me everything I know. He was a Phi Beta Kappa. He said that we are always faced with problems in the humanities and scientific disciplines and that the most important step is to first decide whether it’s a problem of complexity or perplexity. Now, do you know the difference?”

“No, sir. I’m afraid I don’t.”

“Hmp! Arrested!”

“Sir, what is the difference?”

“George Woodchuck wants to tell you about surveying.”



“I can’t understand why the Professor said that,” Geo. W. said. “Surveying can be an awfully dull line of work. I wouldn’t want to wish it on my worst enemy.”

“Then why do you do it, sir?”

“I don’t know. Maybe, I suppose, because I’m the dull type that enjoys it. But you’re not a dull boy; you’re very bright.”

“Thank you, sir. Why don’t you try me and see if I like it, too?”

“Well, all right, provided it’s understood that I’m not trying to lay this on you.”

“Understood, sir.”

“Fair enough. Now, a proper surveying job can’t be done unless you’ve got a fix on latitude and longitude. The altitude of the sun gives you your latitude and time gives you your longitude. Got that?”

“But I can’t tell time.”

“Of course you can, my boy. You have your biological clock.”

“I don’t know what that is, sir.”

“We all have it. You must have it, too. Quick, now. What time is it?”

“Just before supper.”

“No! No! How long since the sun culminated, that is, reached its highest altitude in the sky at noon? Quick, now! In hours, minutes and seconds. Off the top of your head.”

“Six hours, seventeen minutes and five seconds.”

“It should be three seconds. You’d be out by eight hundred yards.” The Peerless Surveyor patted James generously. “You’re a brilliant boy and you have your biological clock. Tomorrow we will

beat the bounds of the farm.”

“Ladies, I say, Kaff Kaff, women are changeable. Never forget that. We can’t live with them and we can’t live without them. As the great poet wrote: Whenas in silks my pheasant goes, then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows the liquifaction of her clothes. You are, I am afraid, a little too young for the second stanza which is, to say the least, a trifle bawdy.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Now we come to the matter of the moment,” the Chairman said. “I hope you’re not colorblind.”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“Color perception is essential for survival. Very well, we’ll test you. What is the color of that flower?”

“It’s the color of an Iris.”

“I know that, but what color? The name? The name?”

“Blue?” James said at a venture.

“It is Marine Purple Navy. And that tulip?”

“Red?”

“It is Cerise. Really, my young friend! Survival! Survival! And the lilacs?”

“Lilac, sir.”

“Ah! Now you’re exhibiting some perception. Very good. Tomorrow we will study ROYGBIV.”

“I don’t know what that is, sir.”

“They are the initial letters of the colors of the spectrum,” the Chairman said severely, and stalked off in a marked manner.

“Hey, kid.”

“Yes, your Eminence?”

“Which one is your father?”

“The tall one, sir.”

“What does he do?”

“Well, he talks a lot, your Eminence; and I listen a lot.”

“What’s he talk about?”

“Practically everything. Science and the State of the Nation. Society. Ecology. Books. Ideas. The theater.”

“What’s that?”

“I don’t know, sir. He also does a lot of cooking when he’s home; mostly in a foreign language.”

“He does, huh? Say, kid, any chance of him putting out some suet for me? I’m queer for suet.”

All was not perpetual sweetness and light in the Big Red Schoolhouse; there were unpleasant moments occasionally.

There was the time that James crawled in cranky. He’d had a bad night owing to a surfeit of chocolate pudding w. whipped cream at supper, and was tired and sullen. He rejected the gracious advances of the debutantes. He made faces while the Professor was lecturing. He was quite impossible. He spoke just one word. It wasn’t creature, it was human, and it wasn’t “Da,” it was “Damn!” Then he began to sob. The creatures, who never cry, gazed at him perplexedly.

“What’s he doing?”

“He’s crying,” the voice of the Burmese Princess explained.

She entered the barn. "I hope you'll forgive the intrusion, but I managed to get out and came after him. Hello, George. You're looking handsome today. This must be the Professor. James never told me you were so distinguished. The Chairman and His Eminence are magnificent, as usual. I can't tell you how many times I've admired you through the windows."

"Kaff Kaff. I thank your highness."

"You ain't so bad-looking yourself, baby."

"Come on, James, we'll go back to the house."

"But is he sick?" the Professor asked.

"No, just out of sorts. He has a temper, you know, inherited from his mother who is rather Bohemian. Come along, James. Back to the house."

The Princess began to vamp James, tickling him with her cuddly fur but moving off a few steps each time he tried to embrace her for comfort. He crawled after her, out of the Schoolhouse and through the grass toward the house.

"He'll be all right tomorrow," she called. "Charming place you have here. 'Bye, all."

"I told you she was a right royalty," George W. said.

And there was the time when one of the Endmen reeled into the Schoolhouse singing, "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they seen Paree?" He examined the assembly with a bleary eye, rocking slightly. "You're all plastered," he informed them. "You're stoned." Then he was sick.

"What's the matter with our entertaining, I say, thespian friend?" the Chairman inquired.

"The berries on one of the bushes fermented," the other Endman explained, "and I couldn't stop him from eating them.

He's blind drunk."

"Actors!" the Senior Rabbit burst out. "Let this be a lesson to you, James. Well, just don't stand there. Somebody get him out of here and walk him around."

"Sir?"

"Yes?"

"The hose is spraying the rose bushes. If we put him under the cold spray...?"

"That is keeping yourself mentally awake. By all means put this clown under the hose. I only hope he sits on a thorn."

"What d'you mean, you can't swim?" the Mallard duck demanded.

"I can't even walk, m'am."

"I am a gentleman."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"Get into this pond at once. Now!"

"Yes, sir."

"Not too deep. That's fine. Now pay attention."

"Yes, sir."

"Watch my leg action. I'm paddling, see? Now I've only got two legs; you've got four so you ought to do twice as well. Roll over on your front and paddle with all four. Go ahead. Alternately! Alternately! A-one-and-a-two-and-a-three-and-a-four. Keep your head up and breathe through your mouth. Faster! Faster! That's the way. It's the same as crawling except you're crawling through water."

"Am I really swimming, sir?"

“My boy,” the Mallard said, “today the pond; tomorrow the English Channel.”

“Connie,” Constance said to Constantine, “I’m worried about Jamie.”

“Why?”

“Shouldn’t he be going to pre-school?”

“Why?”

“He seems to be arrested.”

“He isn’t three yet. What do you want, Connie, some sort of prodigy entering Harvard aged ten and blighted for life? I want James to grow up a healthy normal boy without having his mind forced prematurely.”

“If you will permit me, Professor,” James said, “I would like to disagree with my learned colleague, Moe Mole, on the Big Bang theory of cosmology.”

“Cosmogony,” the White Rat corrected shortly.

“Thank you, sir. The idea of a giant protoatom exploding to produce the expanding universe as we know it today is most attractive but in my opinion is pure romance. I believe in the Steady State theory—that our universe is constantly renewing itself with the birth of new stars and galaxies from the primordial hydrogen.”

“But what is your mathematical proof?” Moses Mole asked.

“The eternal equation,” James answered. “Energy is equal to mass multiplied by the speed of light raised to the second power.”

A voice called in human, “James? Jamie? Where are you?”

“Excuse me, Professor,” James said politely. “I’m wanted.”

He crawled to the crack in the barn door and squirmed through with difficulty. “Da!” he cried in human.

“We’ll have to open that door more,” the Professor said irritably. “He’s grown. Why in the world hasn’t he learned how to walk? He’s old enough. When I was his age I had grandchildren.”

The rabbits and fawns tittered.

“Class dismissed,” the Professor said. He glared at Moses Mole. “You and your Big Bang theory! Why can’t you help me get microscopes for my biology seminar?”

“I haven’t come across any underground,” Moe said reasonably. “As a matter of fact I wouldn’t know one if I saw it. Could you describe a microscope mathematically?”

“ $E=Mc^2$ ,” the Professor snapped and marched off. He was in a terrible state of mind, and his classes were fortunate that they weren’t taking examinations just now. He would have flunked every one of his students.

The Professor was deeply concerned about James James Morrison Morrison who was past two years old and should be walking and talking human by now. He felt a sense of impending guilt and went to the duck pond for a searching self-examination.

“Now I am alone,” the White Rat said. The Mallard ducks paddled up to have a look at him but he ignored them. Everybody knows that ducks are incapable of appreciating a solemn soliloquy.

“The quality of wisdom is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven, so who are we mere fardels to do battle with the angels? All I ask, James, is that ye remember me. This day is called Father’s Day. He who shall outlive this day will stand a tiptoe when this day is named and yearly feast his neighbors. Old men forget, but is it not better to bear the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune?”

Then he began something halfway between a growl and a song:



My father sent me to old Rutgers,  
And resolved that I should be a man,  
And so I settled down  
In that noisy college town  
On the banks of the Old Raritan.

Her ardent spirit stirred and cheered me  
From the day my college years began  
Gracious Alma Mater mine  
Learning's fair and honored shrine;  
On the banks of the Old Raritan.

I love her flaming far-flung banner,  
I love her triumphs proud to scan,  
And I glory in the fame  
That immortalized her name  
On the banks of the Old Raritan.

My heart clings closer than the ivy  
As life runs out its fleeting span  
To the stately, ancient walls,  
Of her hallowed, classic halls,  
On the banks of the Old Raritan.

On the banks of the Old Raritan, my boys,  
Where Old Rutgers evermore shall stand,

For has she not stood since the time of the flood

Feeling much better, the Professor returned to the Big Red Schoolhouse to prepare his first lecture on the New Math. “Zero,” he said to himself. “One. Ten. Eleven. One hundred. One hundred and one...” He was counting in binary arithmetic.

Meanwhile, James James Morrison Morrison had finished his lunch (chicken salad, 1 slice bread w. butter, applesauce and milk) and was upstairs in his cot theoretically having a nap, actually in drowsy conversation with the Princess who had made herself comfortable on his chest.

“I do love you,” James said, “but you take me for granted. All you women are alike.”

“That’s because you love everything, James.”

“Shouldn’t everybody?”

“Certainly not. Everybody should love me, of course, but not everything. It reduces my rank.”

“Princess, are you really a Burmese Princess?”

“I thought you said you loved me.”

“But I happen to know you were born in Brooklyn.”

“Politics, James. Politics. Daddy, who was also an admiral, was forced to flee Burma at a moment’s notice. He barely had time to throw a few rubies into a flight bag and then came to Brooklyn.”

“Why Brooklyn?”

“The plane was hijacked.”

“What’s a ruby?”

“Ask your professor,” the Princess snapped.

“Ah-ha! Jealous. Jealous. I knew I’d get you, sooner or later.”

“Now who’s taking who for granted?”

“Me. Shift up to my neck, Princess. I can’t breathe.”

“You are a male, chauvinist pig,” the Princess said as she obliged. “I’m merely your sex symbol.”

“Say, why don’t you join Miss Leghorn’s Chickens’ Lib movement?”

“Me, sir? What have I to do with chickens?”

“I notice you did all right with my chicken salad. Don’t pretend you don’t know what I’m talking about. I saw you up on the table when mama was loading the dishwasher. I thought the mayonnaise was awful.”

“Commercial.”

“Can’t you teach mama how to make home-made mayo?”

“Me, sir? What have I to do with kitchens? I leave that to the help.”

“Ah-ha! Gotcha again.”

“I hate you,” the Princess said. “I loathe and execrate you.”

“You love me,” James James said comfortably. “You love me and you’re stuck with me. I’ve got you in my power.”

“Are there any cats in the Red Barn?”

“No,” James laughed. “You’re the one and only Princess on Red Hill.”

There was an outlandish noise outside; a snarling and screaming in creature voices.

“What’s that?” James exclaimed.

The Princess got to the window in a scamper and returned.

“Just a couple of farm dogs playing with George Woodchuck,” she reported lazily. “Now, as we were saying about me—”

“Playing? That doesn’t sound like playing to me. I’d better see for myself.”

“James, you know you can’t walk.”

“I’m damn well going to walk now.”

James James hove himself over the edge of the cot and fell to the floor. He gripped the edge of the bed and pulled himself upright. Then he tottered to the window.

“They aren’t playing with George. He’s in bad trouble.”

James made his way out of the room, clutching at walls and door frames, managed the stairs by sitting down on every tread, butted the screen door open with his head and was out on the soft meadow, trotting, tottering, falling, picking himself up and driving himself toward the Peerless Surveyor who was being torn by two savage mongrels.

They snarled and snapped as James threw himself over George W. and were quite prepared to come in after both of them. James kicked and flailed at them. He also challenged and cursed them in the creature tongue, using language so frightful that it cannot be reported. The display of courage and determination discouraged the mongrels who at last turned and made off jauntily as though it had only been a game all along. James pulled himself to his knees, picked up George, lurched to his feet and began tottering toward the Big Red Barn.

“Thank you,” George said.

“Aw, shut up,” James replied.

When they reached the Schoolhouse everyone was there. Nothing escapes attention on Red Hill. James James sat down on his fat bottom with the Surveyor still cradled in his arms. The debutantes made sympathetic sounds.

“Hunters! Hoodlums!” the Senior Rabbit growled. “No one is safe from them. It’s all the fault of the Bleeding Hearts. Understand them. Be kind to them. Help them. Help them do what? Kill.”

“There is a triangle of Red Hill farm,” Geo. W. said faintly, “measuring exactly one point six acres. It extends into the property next door where Paula, the pig, lives. Tell Paula she must respect our— She must— Our boundar—”

“I’ll tell her,” James said, and began to cry.

They took the body of the Woodchuck from his arms and carried it to the woods where they left George exposed to the weather and nature. Creatures do not bury their dead. James was still sitting in the Big Red Schoolhouse, silently weeping.

“The kid’s a right guy,” one of the Endmen said.

“Yeah, he’s got moxie. You see the way he fight them dogs to a Mexican stand-off? Two to one against, it was.”

“Yeah. Hey, kid. Kid. It’s all over now. Kid, you ever hear the one about the guy who goes into a butcher store, you should excuse the expression?” The Endman poked his partner.

“I’d like a pound of kidleys, please.”

“You mean kidneys, don’t you?”

“Well I said kidleys, diddle I?”

“Oh, funny! Fun-nee! Huh, kid?”

“He will have to fall into the pond, Kaff Kaff, I say be immersed,” the Chairman said. “He is covered with George’s blood and the two Commies will ask questions.”

“That’s Connies.”

“No matter. Will our lovely young debutantes be kind enough to convey our valiant friend to the pond and—”

“I can walk now,” James said.

“To be sure. To be sure. And push him in. Kaff Kaff. And my apologies to the Mallards who may resent the trespass. May I say, my dear boy, I say, may I state on behalf of us all that we welcome you as a fully accepted member of our commune. It is a privilege to have a specimen of your species, Kaff Kaff, among us. I’m sure my valued friend, the Professor, will agree.”

“He’s my best pupil,” the White Rat admitted grudgingly, “but I’m going to have to work him over if he ever hopes to get into Rutgers.”

“Oh, Jamie! You fell into the pond again.”

“Da,” the hero said.

That night was another bad night for James. He was terribly upset over the murder of George. He was in a quandary about the Scoutmaster’s denunciation of dogs because he was as fond of dogs as he was of all creatures.

“There are good dogs and bad dogs,” he kept insisting to himself, “and we mustn’t judge the good by the bad. I think the Senior Rabbit was wrong, but how can a Scoutmaster be wrong?”

“It’s a question of the Categorical Imperative. Good acts lead to good results. Bad acts lead to bad results. But can good lead to bad or bad to good? My father could answer that question but I’m damned if I’ll ask him in his language. He won’t speak ours.”

Here, the deep rumbling of the bats began to irritate him. Creature voices are pitched so much higher than human voices that what sounds like a bat squeak to the human ear sounds like a bass boom to the creature ear. This is another reason why most humans can’t speak creature. James went to the window.

“All right! All right!” he called. “Break it up and move it out.”

One of the bats fluttered to the window screen and hooked on. “What’s bugging you, old buddy-boy?” he rumbled.

“Keep it down to a roar, will you? You want to wake up the whole house?”

“They can’t hear us.”

“I can hear you.”

“How come? Not many human types can.”

“I don’t know, but I can, and you’re making so much noise I can’t sleep.”

“Sorry, old buddy, but we got to.”

“Why?”

“Well, in the first place we’re night people, you know?”

“Yes. And?”

“In the second place we don’t see so good.”

“Moe Mole doesn’t see either, but he doesn’t make a racket.”

“Yeah, but Moe is working underground, old buddy. He hasn’t got like trees and barns and buildings to worry about. You know? Now the last thing we want to do is crash into something. There’d be a C.A.B. investigation and somebody would lose his license for sure.”

“But what’s the noise got to do with it?”

“That’s our sonar.”

“What’s sonar?”

“Radar you know about?”

“Yes.”

“Sonar is radar by sound. You let out a yell and the echoes come back and you know where everything is.”

“Just from the echo?”

“Right on. You want to try it? Go ahead. Wait a minute; no cheating. Close your eyes. Now make with the sonar.”

“What should I yell?”

“Anything you feel like.”

“WEEHAWKEN!” James shouted. The bat winced. Three echoes returned; Weehawken, Whyhawken and Weehawkee.

“I heard three,” James said.

“What were they?”

“Weehawken.”

“That was the big barn.”

“Whyhawken.”

“The smoke house.”

“Weehawkee.”

“The oak tree. You’re getting the hang, old buddy. Now why don’t you practice a little? It won’t bother us. None of us use place-names except one cracker from the south who keeps hollering Carlsbad.”

In addition to the Chickens’ Lib and OFFO Miss Leghorn started a Witches’ Coven. “In my native Italy,” she said, “they still worship paganism. The Establishment concept of *Dio* is *morto*. We must go back to the old gods.”

Her only disciple was James James. She had solicited the Burmese Princess who rejected the proposal with revulsion. “Diabolism,” her Highness said, “has ruined our reputation for centuries. Is a dog ever a Witches’ Familiar? A lamb? A cow? No, it’s always a cat. Avaunt!”



So Miss Leghorn held her Covens in the slate-roofed Smokehouse and her Familiar was James. With his help she collected an enormous assortment of herbs; wild garlic, parsley, basil, mint, dried dandelion, bay, sage, fennel, and once James won her undying gratitude by bringing her some bones left over from his father's Ossobuco Milanese Style. However, he indignantly refused to bring her anything newborn for a sacrifice. They compromised on a tablespoonful of red caviar. James also brought a handful of kitchen matches to provide the necessary sulphur for the invocation of Satan.

The plan was to inscribe a pentacle within a circle on the hearth of the big Smokehouse fireplace, scatter the ingredients of necromancy over the pentacle, set them on fire and invoke the Prince of Hell who would, Miss Leghorn said, most assuredly appear. The only trouble was Miss Leghorn didn't exactly know what a pentacle was. She couldn't very well ask the Professor who would have quashed the Coven immediately. All James could suggest was that he had heard his father mention a pentagon in Washington, and from the language he used it certainly sounded exactly right for raising the devil. Miss Leghorn asked James to get the information from his father but James stubbornly refused to speak Them. However he promised to ask around and gave his word of honor that he would not consult with the Professor.

"Sir," he asked Jack Johnson, "do you know what a pentacle is?"

"Can't say I do, kid, but I can tell you all about the pentatonic scale."

"What's that, sir?"

"A five-tone scale; the fourth and seventh are omitted and you reach the octave on the sixth. The Medieval types used it a lot, but I don't dig it myself."

"Thank you, sir."

“What you up to, kid?”

“I’m trying to get in touch with Hell.”

“Jeez!”

“Sir,” James asked the Chairman, “do you know what a pentacle is?”

“Negative, my boy, that is, I say, I haven’t the information. But I came across an interesting reference to a pentarchy in Robert’s Rules of Order.”

“What’s that, sir?”

“Good Heavens! Everybody must know Robert’s Rules of Order. No meeting can be chaired without thorough familiarity with formal procedure. How does one rule when a point of order is raised while a motion is before the house but not yet seconded, and—”

“I mean a pentarchy, Mr. Chairman.”

“Oh. Ah. That is government by five persons, by five joint rulers.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“What are you after, my boy?”

“I want to get in touch with one of the five rulers.”

“You’re speaking to him now, Kaff Kaff.”

“Another one, sir.”

“Uncle Moe,” James said, “do you know what a pentacle is?”

“No I don’t,” Moses Mole answered. He reflected for a moment. “But visual astronomers use something called a pentaprism.”

“What’s that, sir?”

“It’s a piece of glass with five sides.”

“What do they use it for?”

“To tell you the truth, I don’t know. I’ve never seen one. I think they use them on telescopes but I’ve never seen a telescope either.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“What are you digging for, James?”

“The Unseen, sir.”

“Tenderfoot Dupree reporting, sir.”

“The meeting is next Wednesday night.”

“With a question, sir.”

“Very good. I approve of that,” the Senior Rabbit said. “Always come to your Scoutmaster with your problems. What’s yours?”

“Is a pentacle a kind of knot?”

The Senior Rabbit thought hard. “No.”

“Do you know what a pentacle is, sir?”

“Of course I do. So do you. You’ve been looking at fifty of them all your life.”

“I have? Where?”

The Scoutmaster stood to attention, saluted, and pointed to the American flag which flew over the little barn on various occasions. “There, my boy. Those sacred stars are pentacles. Each of the five points stands for one of the five virtues; loyalty, leadership, piety, law and order.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Are you studying for a merit badge, James?”

“In a way,” James said. “I’m studying a sort of piety.”

“There is no merit badge for piety.”

“A pentacle is a five-pointed star,” James told Miss Leghorn. “Like on the flag.”

“*Benny! Benny! Multa benny!* You didn’t ask the Professor?”

“No. I’m a boy scout so I kept my word of honor. Now we can raise the devil. Incidentally, what is the devil, Miss Leghorn?”

“The Prince of Hell.”

“Yes, I know. You told me. But what is hell?”

“You’ll find out tonight,” the Chaldean Chicken said with sinister gloating and departed from the Smokehouse like Tosca after the murder of Scarpia. James knew because Jack Johnson had acted out the entire opera for the Big Red Schoolhouse one afternoon, singing all the roles. Jack had been particularly impressive in Tosca’s second act exit.

So that night while his father was reading his editorial (“Whither Pot: Paradise or Poison?”) to his mother, James stole out and joined the witch in the Smokehouse. Between them they managed to scribe a circle and star on the hearth of the fireplace and decorate the diagram with black magic herbs. Then James lit the sulphur matches, everything began to burn noisomely, and Miss Leghorn began her litany which went something like this:

“Satan, come to me! Lucifer, appear! Mephistophales make yourself manifest to your faithful! Belial and Beelzebub, heed my calling! Asmodeus and Apollyon, tempters of evil, tempt me! Prince of Darkness, evil one, foul fiend, devil incarnate, come to your beloved, your adorer, your—” Suddenly Miss Leghorn let out a scream. “He’s here! At the window! He’s here!” In a panic she actually flew to James’ shoulder and perched there, terrified and trembling.

James looked at the window. Reflected in the dim light from

the arcane fire was an enormous eye. It disappeared as soon as he saw it and then the Smokehouse door began to creak open. James stood up manfully. Miss Leghorn began to shriek, "I didn't mean it! Go back! Go back!"

An enormous head poked through the door, the head of a horse. "Say," the horse said, "I saw your light and I wanted to ask you. Which way is the Rich farm? I'm kind of lost."

"No, sir, you're not lost," James said. "You're real close. It's just a mile down the road. Go over the hill and you can't miss it."

"Say, thanks," the horse said. Then he inspected Miss Leghorn. "Say, aren't you the hen who ran away from the rooster last year?"

"I am not," Miss Leghorn quavered.

"Sure you are. We're still laughing about it at the Rich farm. A girl afraid of a guy. What are you, some kind of freak? Well, thanks again. Good night."

The horse disappeared into the darkness. Miss Leghorn trembled with indignation.

"Was what he said true?" James asked.

"No!" Miss Leghorn cried. Then, "How dare they laugh at me? A woman has the right to refuse unwelcome advances."

"So it was true."

"All men are beasts."

"You should hear what they say about women."

Miss Leghorn fluttered down from James' shoulder. "How dare you use that sort of vile language to a lady?"

"I'm sorry, Miss Leghorn. I didn't know it was vile. Are we going to make another try at raising the devil tonight?"

"We've already raised him," Miss Leghorn said.

And then James James fell in love. It was a mad, consuming passion for the least likely candidate. Obeying George Woodchuck's dying admonition he went down to the triangle to request Paula, the pig, to respect the boundaries, and it was love at first sight. Paula was white with black patches or black with white patches (Poland China was her type) and she was grossly overweight. Nevertheless, James adored her. He brought her armfuls of apples from the orchard which she ate methodically and without thanks. Nevertheless, James loved her. He was the despair of the Big Red Schoolhouse.

"Puppy love," the Professor snorted.

"He's a set-up for a my-wife-is-so-fat-that joke," one of the Endmen said.

"Marriage is out of the question," the Senior Rabbit said. "She's twice his age."

"And twice his weight."

Caw! Caw! Caw!

"If he dares to bring that woman here," the debutantes said, "we'll never speak to him again."

James dreamed into the barn. "Ready for the biology seminar," he said.

"Mathematics today," the Professor rapped.

"Yes, Paula."

"I am the Professor."

"Sorry, sir."

"We will begin with a review of binary arithmetic. I trust you all remember that the decimal system uses the base of ten. We count from one to ten, ten to twenty, twenty to thirty, and so on.

The binary system is based on zero and one. Zero is zero. One is one, but two is ten. Three is eleven. Four is one hundred. What is five, James?"

"One hundred and Paula."

"Class dismissed."

And then James began to skip classes.

"We were supposed to start a dig yesterday," Moe Mole reported, "and he never showed up."

"He cut my oratorio session," Jack Johnson said.

"That boy is turning into a drop-out."

"Have you noticed how he's brushing his hair?" the debutantes inquired.

"Oh, come on!" His Eminence said. "If the kid's got hot pants why can't we—"

"The boy is morally straight," the Scoutmaster interrupted sternly.

"It can't be solved on simplistic terms," the Professor said. "Emotions are involved, and the cerebrum is never on speaking terms with the cerebellum."

Alas, the situation resolved itself on an afternoon when James, carefully combed and brushed, brought another armful of apples to his love. Paula devoured them as stolidly as ever while James sat and watched devotedly. Apparently Paula was extra-hungry this afternoon because when James started to embrace her she started to eat him. James pulled his arm out of her mouth and recoiled in horror and disillusionment.

"Paula!" he exclaimed. "You only love me for myself."

"*Khonyetchna*," Paula grunted in Cyrillic.

James returned to the Big Red Schoolhouse in a gloomy

mood. Of course everybody had seen the sad incident and all of them did their best to be tactful.

“Physiology tomorrow,” the Professor said. “We will discuss the hydrogen-ion balance in the blood.”

“Yes, sir.”

“We got to get on to the modern composers, kid.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You know, shale is an oil-bearing rock,” Moses Mole said. “But why isn’t there any oil in red shale? There must be a mathematical reason.”

“We’ll try to find it, sir.”

“Stick out your chest and be a man,” the Scoutmaster said.

“I’m trying, sir.”

“It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all,” the Chairman said.

Then a fawn nestled alongside James and whispered, “It’s all right. We’re sorry you picked the wrong girl, but it has to happen to every man at least once. That’s how you find the right girl.”

James burst into tears and cried and cried for his lost love while the fawn petted him, but in the end he felt curiously relieved.

“James,” the Professor said, “we must have a serious talk.”

“Yes, sir. Here?”

“No. Come to the willow grove.” They went to the willow grove. “Now we are alone,” the Professor said. “James, you must start speaking to your mother and father. I know you can. Why don’t you?”

“I’m damned if I will, sir. They won’t speak Us. Why should I



“speak Them?”

“James, they don’t know how to speak Us. Aren’t you being unfair?”

“They could try.”

“And I’m sure they would if they had a clue, but they haven’t. Now listen to me. You’re our only link between Us and Them. We need you, James, as a diplomatist. Your mother and father are very nice people; no hunting or killing on Red Hill and they’re planting many things. We all live together very pleasantly. I admit your mother loses her temper with the Scoutmaster and his troop because they won’t get out of her way when she comes out to hang the laundry on the line, but that’s because she has a Bohemian disposition. We know what artists are like, unpredictable.”

“I won’t talk to her,” James said.

“Your father is an intellectual of top caliber, and he went to Rutgers. You’ve brought many of his ideas and speculations to the Schoolhouse, which are stimulating and appreciated. In all fairness you should let him know how grateful we are to him.”

“He wouldn’t believe me.”

“But at least you could speak to him.”

“I won’t speak to him. He’s old, old, old and hidebound. He’s a cube. He’s trapped in a structured society.”

“Where did you get that?”

“From my father.”

“Well, then. You see?”

“No, I don’t,” James said stubbornly. “I won’t talk their language to them. They have to try Us first.”

“In other words, you have opted for Us?”

“Yes, sir.”

“To the exclusion of ‘Them?’”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then there’s nothing more to say.”

“Connie,” Constance said to Constantine, “we must have a serious talk.”

“Now?”

“Yes.”

“What about?”

“Jamie.”

“What about Jamie?”

“He’s a problem child.”

“What’s his problem?”

“He’s arrested.”

“Are you starting that again? Now come on, Connie. He’s learned to walk. What more do you want?”

“But he hasn’t learned to talk.”

“Talk! Talk! Talk!” Constantine sounded as though he was cursing. “Words! Words! Words! I’ve lived my whole life with them and I hate them. Do you know what most words are? They’re bullets people use to shoot each other down with. Words are weapons for killers. Language should be the beautiful poetry of communication but we’ve debased it, poisoned it, corrupted it into hostility, into competition, into a contest between winners and losers. And the winner is never the man with something to say; the winner is always the fastest gun in the west. These are the few simple words I have to say about words.”

“Yes, dear,” Constance said, “but our son should be shooting

words by now, and he isn't."

"I hope he never does."

"He must, and we'll have to take him to a clinic. He's autistic."

"Autism," the Professor said, "is an abnormal absorption in fantasy to the exclusion of external reality. I have known many laboratory victims who have been driven to this deplorable state by fiendish experiments."

"Could you put that in mathematical terms?" Moe asked. "I can't follow your words."

"Ah, yes. Kaff Kaff. I'm having some slight difficulty myself. I'm sure our valued friend will be good enough to simplify."

"All right," the White Rat said. "He won't talk."

"Won't talk? Good heavens! We can't shut him up. Only yesterday he engaged me in a two hour dispute over Robert's Rules of Order, and—"

"He won't talk human."

"Oh. Ah."

"The *questo* is can he?" the Chaldean Chicken said. "Many who are born under the Sign of Torso find it *difficulto* to—"

"Taurus! Taurus! And will you be quiet. He can talk; he just won't."

"What's a fantasy?" Moe asked.

"A hallucination."

"What's that?"

"Something unreal."

“You mean he’s not real? But I only saw him yesterday and he—”

“I have no intention of discussing the metaphysics of reality. Those of you who are interested may take my course in Thesis, Synthesis and Antithesis. The situation with James is simple. He talks to us in our language; he refuses to talk to his parents in their language; they are alarmed. The Princess told me.”

“Why are they alarmed?”

“They think he’s autistic.”

“They think he’s unreal?”

“No, Moe,” the Professor said patiently. “They know he’s real. They think he has a psychological hang-up which prevents him from talking human.”

“Do they know he talks Us?”

“No.”

“Then why don’t we tell them? Then everything will be all right.”

“Why don’t you tell them?”

“I don’t know how to talk Them.”

“Does anybody here know how? Anybody?”

No answer.

“So much for that brilliant suggestion,” the Professor said. “Now we come to the crux of the situation. They’re going to send him to a remedial school.”

“What’s the matter with our school?”

“They don’t know about our school, you imbecile! They want him to go to a school where he can learn to speak English.”

“What’s that?”

“Them talk.”

“Oh.”

“Well, Kaff Kaff, as our most esteemed and valued scholar, surely you can have no objections to that program, my dear Professor.”

“There’s a dilemma,” the White Rat said sourly.

“Name it, sir. I say, describe it and we shall, Kaff Kaff, we shall cope.”

“He’s so used to speaking Us that I’m afraid he won’t learn to speak Them.”

“But why should he want to, my learned friend?”

“Because he’s got Rutgers before him.”

“Ah, yes. To be sure. Your beloved Alma Mater. But I still can’t quite fathom, I say, perceive the basic difficulty.”

“We’ve got to turn him off.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“We’ve got to stop speaking to him. We’ve got to break his Us habit so he can learn Them. Nobody can speak both.”

“You can’t mean Coventry, Professor?”

“I do. Don’t you understand? No matter where he goes there will be others of us around. We must break the habit. Now. For his sake.” The Professor began to pace angrily. “He will forget how to speak Us. We’ll lose him. That’s the price. My best pupil. My favorite. Now he may never make Phi Beta Kappa.”

The debutantes looked despairing. “We love that boy,” they said. “He’s a real swinger.”

“He is not,” the Senior Rabbit stated, “He is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty,

brave, clean and reverent.”

“He told me all about E equals M C two,” Moe said. “It gave me an insight. It will change the world.”

“Aquarium,” Miss Leghorn said profoundly.

“He is a pest, a bore, a nuisance, a—a human,” the Professor shouted. “He doesn’t belong in our Schoolhouse. We want nothing to do with him; he’ll sell us out sooner or later. Coventry! Coventry!” Then he broke down completely. “I love him, too, but we must be brave. We’re going to lose him but we must be brave for his sake. And somebody better warn the Princess.”

James James Morrison Morrison shoved the barn door a little wider and swaggered into the Schoolhouse. There was no mistaking his pride in his walk. In an odd way it was a reflection of the Chairman’s strut.

“Ladies and gentlemen, good evening,” he said, as courteous as ever.

The debutantes sniffled and departed.

“What’s the matter with them?” James asked curiously. He turned to the mole. “Uncle Moe, I just heard something up at the house that’ll interest you. It seems that the universe may break down. Time is not reversible from the mathematical standpoint, and—”

Here Moe broke down and went underground.

“What’s the matter with him?” James asked.

There was no answer. Everybody else had disappeared, too. The long sad silence had begun.

The pheasant strutted, accompanied by his harem, and he ignored James. Martha W. Woodchuck, who had taken on George’s surveying duties (she was his daughter-in-law) ignored James. Neither the Professor nor the Scoutmaster were to be seen. The

does and the fawns hid in the woods. Moe Mole decided on an early hibernation. Jack Johnson went south for the winter and His Eminence suddenly moved his residence to Paula's territory. The crows could not resist the challenge of an *art nouveau* scarecrow on a farm a mile off and left. James James was abandoned.

"Would you like to read my palm?" he asked Miss Leghorn.

"Cluck," she replied.

"Princess," he said, "why doesn't anybody want to talk to me?"

"Aeiou," she replied.

James was abandoned.

"Well, at least he's learned how to walk," Dr. Rapp said, "and that's a favorable prognosis. What beats me is how he can be autistic in such an articulate home. One would think that— Stop. An idea. Is it possible that the home is too articulate; that his autism is a refusal to compete with his betters?"

"But there's no competition in our home," one of the two Connies said.

"You don't grasp the potential of the idea. In our society, if you don't win you have failed. This is our contemporary delusion. James may well be afraid of failure."

"But he's only three years old."

"My dear Mrs. Dupree, competition begins in the womb."

"Not in mine," Connie said indignantly. "I've got the fastest womb in the west."

"Yes. And now if you will excuse me, the first lesson will begin. That door out. Thank you." Dr. Rapp buzzed the intercom. "Sherbet," he said. A chalice of orange sherbet was brought to him.

“James,” he said, “would you like some orange ice? Here.” He proffered a spoonful. James engulfed it. “Good. Would you like some more? Then tell me what this is.” Dr. Rapp held up a striped ball. “It’s a ball, James. Repeat after me. Ball.”

“Da,” James said.

“No more orange ice, James, until you’ve spoken. Ball. Ball. Ball. And then the goody.”

“Da.”

“Perhaps he prefers the lemon flavor,” Dr. Rapp said next week. He buzzed the intercom. “Lemon sherbet, please.” He was served. “James, would you like some lemon ice?” He proffered a spoonful which was absorbed. “Good. Would you like some more? Then tell me what this is. It’s a ball, James. Repeat after me. Ball. Ball. Ball.”

“Da,” James said.

“We’ll try ice cream,” Dr. Rapp said a week later. “We can’t permit him to fall into a pattern of familiarized societal behavior. He must be challenged.” He buzzed the intercom. “Chocolate ice cream, please.”

James relished the chocolate ice cream but refused to identify the striped ball by name.

“Da,” he said.

“I’m beginning to dream that confounded expression,” Dr. Rapp complained. “A Roman centurion comes at me, draws his sword and says, ‘Da.’ Stop. An idea. Is it a phallic symbol?”



Sexuality begins with conception. Is the child rejecting the facts of life?”

He buzzed the intercom.

“James, here is a banana. Would you like a bite? Feel free. Good. Good. Would you like another? Then tell me what this is. A ball. Ball. Ball. Ball.”

“Da.”

“I am failing,” Dr. Rapp said despondently. “Perhaps I had better go back to Dr. Da for a refresher— What am I saying? It’s Dr. Damon. Stop. An idea. Damon and Pythias. A friendship. Can it be that I have been too clinical with James? I shall establish fraternity.”

“Good morning, James. It’s a beautiful October day. The autumn leaves are glorious. Would you like to go for a drive with me?”

“Da,” James said.

“Good. Good. Where would you like to go?”

“To Rutgers,” James said, quite distinctly.

“What did you say?”

“I said I would like to go to Rutgers.”

“But—good gracious—you’re talking.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Why haven’t you talked before?”

“Because I damn well didn’t want to.”

“Why are you talking now?”

“Because I want to see the banks of the Old Raritan.”

“Yes, yes. I see. Or do I?” Dr. Rapp buzzed the intercom. “Please get me Dr. Da, I mean Dr. Damon, on the phone. Tell him I think I’ve made an important discovery.”

“Discovery,” James said, “is seeing what everybody else sees but thinking what no one else has thought. What’s your opinion? Shall we discuss it on the way to Rutgers?”

So the second summer came. James and his father were strolling the lawns in a hot debate over the bearded irises which, alas, James pronounced Iritheth. He had developed a human lisp. The issue was whether they should be picked and vased or left alone. James took the position that they were delicate ladies who should not be molested. His father, always pragmatic, declared that flowers had to justify their existence by decorating the house. Father and son parted on a note of exasperation, and the senior Dupree went to inspect the peach trees. James James Morrison Morrison stood quietly on the lawn and looked around. Presently he heard a familiar Kaff Kaff, and the Chairman appeared from under the lilac bush.

“Well, if it isn’t my old friend, the Sex Maniac. How are you, sir?”

The cock pheasant glared at him.

“And how are Phyllis and Frances and Felice and all the rest, Mr. Chairman?”

“Their names are, I say, the nomenclature is, Kaff Kaff, Gloria, Glenda, Gertrude, Godiva and—” Here the Chairman stopped short and looked hard at James. “But you’re the monster.”

“Yes, sir.”

“My, how you’ve grown.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Have you learned how to speak Them?”

“Not very well, sir.”

“Why not?”

“I’ve got a lisp. They say it’s because I have a lazy tongue.”

“But you still speak Us.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Amazing! I say, unheard of!”

“Did you all think I’d ever forget? I’m the Professor’s best pupil, and I’d die for dear old Rutgers. Can we have an emergency meeting right away in the Big Red Schoolhouse, Mr. Chairman? I’ve got a lot to tell you about the crazy, mixed-up human creatures.”

The meeting was attended by most of the regulars plus a few newcomers. There was a Plymouth Rock hen who had become close friends with Miss Leghorn, perhaps because her only reply to the Chaldean harangues was, “Ayeh.” The hold-out Mockingbird had at last joined up now that Jack Johnson seemed to be remaining in the Florida keys... his (the Mockingbird’s) name was Milton. There was one most exotic new member, a little Barbary ape who was very friendly but extremely shy. James shook hands and asked his name.

“They called me... Well, they called me The Great Zunia. Knows All. Does All.”

“Who’s ‘they,’ Zunia?”

“The Reeson & Tickel Circus.”

“You were in the circus?”

“Well... yes. I... I did tricks. Knows All. Does All. I was what they... what they call a headliner. You know. Rode a motorcycle with the lights on. But I... I...”

“Yes?”

“But I cracked up when we... when we were playing Princeton. Totaled the bike. I got... well... I split when they were picking up the pieces.”

“Why did you run away, Zunia?”

“I... I hate to say this... Never blow the whistle on another man’s act... But... well... I hate show business.”

“Zunia, we’re all delighted that you’re here, and you know you’re more than welcome, but there’s a problem.”

“Well... gee... Just a little fruit now and then, apples and—”

“Not food. The weather. Winters can be damn cold on Red Hill farm. Don’t you think you might be more comfortable farther south?”

“Well... If it’s all the same to... Well, I’d rather stay here. Nice folks.”

“If that’s what you want, great for us. My parents are going to have fits if they ever see you, so stay under cover.”

“I’m a night-type anyway.”

“Good. Now stand up, please. All the way up and we’ll stand back to back. Professor, are we the same size?”

No answer.

“Professor?”

Moe Mole said, “The Professor is indisposed.”

“What?”

“He couldn’t come.”

“Why not?”

“He’s not feeling so good.”

“Where is he?”

“Up in his study.”

“I’d better go and— No, wait. Are we the same size, Zunia and me? Anybody? Everybody.”

It was agreed that James and Zunia were an approximate match. James promised to pinch some of his sweaters and woolly underwear for Zunia to wear during the winter months.

“If you... Well, I’m not asking... But I’d love a sweater with Boston on it.”

“Boston! Why Boston?”

“Because they hate show business.”

James shinnied up one of the rough oak columns that supported the barn roof, walked across the heavy beam above the empty hay loft as casually as a steelworker (his mother would have screamed at the sight), came to a small break in the loft wall and knocked politely.

A faint voice said, “Who is it?”

“It’s the Monster, sir. I’ve come back.”

“No! Really? Come in. Come in.”

James poked his head through the break. The Professor’s study was lined with moss. There were fronds of dried grass and mint leaves on the floor on which the Professor lay. He looked very ill and weak, but his albino red eyes were as fierce as ever.

“Well, James, you’ve come back,” he panted. “I never thought— Do you speak Them?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you still speak Us. I would never— Phi Beta Kappa and cum laude for you. No doubt of it.”

“I visited Rutgers, sir.”

“Did you? Did you, now? And?”

“It’s beautiful, just like you said,” James lied. “And they still remember you.”

“No!”

“Yes, sir. They can’t understand how you escaped. They think you probably bribed the lab attendant, but a few claim you had something on him. Blackmail.”

The Professor chuckled, but it turned into a painful hacking.

After the spasm subsided James asked, “What’s wrong, sir?”

“Nothing. Nothing. Probably a touch of the Asiatic flu. Nothing serious.”

“Please tell me.”

The Professor looked at him. “Science is devotion to truth,” he said. “I’ll be truthful. I’m badly wounded.”

“Oh, sir! How?”

“An air-rifle. A couple of farm boys.”

“Who are they? From the Rich place? I’ll—”

“James! James! There is no room for revenge in science. Did Darwin retaliate when he was ridiculed?”

“No, sir.”

“Did Pasteur?”

“N-no, sir.”

“Will you be true to what I’ve taught you?”

“I’ll try, sir, b-but those damn boys...”

“No anger. Reason always; anger never. And no crying, James. I need your courage now.”

“If I have any, sir.”

“You have it. I remember George. Now I want you to take my place and continue my classes.”

“Oh, Professor, you’ll be—”

“I take it you’re on speaking terms with your father now. Learn all you can from him and pass it on to Us. That’s an order, James.”

“Yes, sir. It won’t be easy.”

“Nothing is ever easy. Now I’m going to ask for an act of great courage.”

“Sir?”

“I can’t linger like this. It’s too painful and it’s useless.”

“Professor, maybe we can—”

“No, no. I’m hopeless. If you hadn’t cut my anatomy classes when you fell in love with Paula, you’d—” He hacked again, even more painfully. At last he said, “James, end this for me, as quickly as possible. You know what I mean.”

James was stupefied. At last he managed to whisper, “S-sir...”

“Yes. I see you understand me.”

“Sir, I c-couldn’t.”

“Yes you can.”

“B-But I wouldn’t know how.”

“Science always finds a way.”

“At least let me ask my—”

“You will ask no one. You will tell no one.”

“But you leave me all alone with this.”

“Yes, I do. That’s how we grow up.”

“Sir, I have to refuse. I can’t do it.”

“No. You just need time to make up your mind. Isn’t there a meeting on the floor?”

“Yes, sir. I asked for it.”

“Then go to your meeting. Give them my best. Come back quickly. Quickly.” The Professor began to tremble and rustle on the dried grass.

“Have you had anything to eat, sir? I’ll bring you something, and then we’ll talk it over. You have to advise me.”

“No dependence,” the White Rat said. “You must decide for yourself.”

The Chairman was in the full flood of oratory when James climbed down from the loft and seated himself with his friends, the birds and the beasts, but he came to a close fairly promptly and gave the floor to James James who stood up and looked around.

“I’m going to tell you about Them,” James began quietly. “I’ve met Them and lived with Them and I’m beginning to understand Them. We must, too. Many of Them are damned destroyers—we all know that—but what we don’t know is that a new breed of Them is rising in revolt against destruction. They’re our kind. They live in peace and harmony with the earth, whatever they take from it they return, they do not kill and they fight those who do. But they’re young and weak and outnumbered and they need our help. We must help them. We must!

“Now up to now we’ve done nothing. We hide from the destroyers and use our intelligence to outwit them. We’ve just been passive victims. Now we must become activists, militant activists.



The Professor won't like this; the great scholar still believes in reason and light. So do I, but I reserve reason and light only for those who also are guided by reason and light. For the rest, militant action. Militant!

"I heard my father once tell a story about Confucius, a very wise sage of many years ago. Although he was one of Them he was much like our Professor and may have been almost as wise. One of his students came to him and said, 'Master, a new wise man named Christ has appeared in the west. He teaches that we must return good for evil. What is your opinion?' Confucius thought and answered, 'No. If we return good for evil what then will we return for good? Return good for good; for evil return justice.'"

James' voice began to shake. "They shot the Professor. You knew that, didn't you. They shot him. He's not indisposed. He's up there and he's hurting. They— We must learn to return militant justice for evil. We can't use this barn as a sanctuary anymore. We must leave it when we graduate and travel and teach. There is a desperate battle being fought for what little remains of our earth. We must all join the fight."

"But how?" Moe Mole asked reasonably.

"That will be the subject of my first lesson tomorrow," James answered. "And now, with the permission of our distinguished chairman, I would like to move that this meeting be adjourned. I have the Professor to look after."

"So moved," the cock pheasant said. "Seconded? Thank you, Miss Plymouth. Moved and seconded. This meeting is adjourned."

"Zunia," James said, "wait here for me, please. I'll need your help. Back in a little while."

James walked to the nearest apple tree, began picking up fallen apples and hurling them into space. His mother glanced out out of the kitchen window and smiled at the sight of a small boy happily lazing away a summer afternoon.

“If I do what the Professor asks it’ll be murder,” James thought. “They call it mercy killing but I’ve heard my father say it’s murder all the same. He says some doctors do it by deliberately neglecting to give certain medicines. He says that’s murder all the same and he doesn’t approve. He says religion is against it and if you do it you go to hell, wherever that is. He says life is sacred.

“But the Professor hurts. He hurts bad and he says there’s no hope. I don’t want him to hurt anymore. I want the boys who shot him to hurt, but not the Professor. I could just bring him a little milk and let him die all by himself, but that could take a long time. It wouldn’t be fair to him. So— All right— I’ll go to hell.”

James returned to the house, lisped courteously to his mother and asked for a small cup of warm milk to hold him until dinnertime. He received it, climbed upstairs to his room and put the cup down. Then he went to his parents’ bathroom. He climbed up on the washstand, opened the medicine cabinet which had been declared off-limits for him on pain of frightful punishment, and took a small vial off one of the shelves. It was labeled “Seconal” and was filled with bright orange capsules. James removed a capsule, returned the vial, closed the cabinet and climbed down from the sink.

“What are you stealing?” the Burmese princess asked.

“Medicine,” James answered shortly and returned to his room. He pulled the capsule open and shook its contents into the cup of milk. He stirred gently with his forefinger.

“If that’s for me, James, forget it,” the Princess said. “I’m not sick and I hate milk. Whatever gave people the idea that cats adore milk? I loathe and execrate it.”

“I suppose because you were raised on caviar and champagne.”

“Mercy, James, you’ll have to put your humor on a diet. It’s gaining weight.”

“I’m sorry. I’m not feeling funny right now, Princess. In fact I feel damn rotten lousy.”

“Why? What’s wrong?”

“I can’t tell you. I can’t tell anybody. Excuse me.”

He carried the cup of milk to the Big Red Barn where the Great Zunia was patiently awaiting. “Thanks,” James said. “Now look, I’ve got to shinny up that column and I can’t do it and carry this cup. You can, easy. Go up with the cup. Don’t spill it. I’ll meet you on the beam.”

They met on the beam and James received the cup.

“It looks like milk but it tastes funny,” Zunia said.

“You didn’t drink any!”

“Well, no... Just stuck my tongue in... You know. Curious. It’s... well, traditional with us.”

“Oh. That’s all right. It’s medicine for the Professor.”

“Sure. Tell him... Tell him get well soon.”

“He’ll be well soon,” James promised. Zunia flip-flopped and catapulted himself to another empty loft. James crossed the beam and knocked at the Professor’s study. “It’s James again, sir.”

He could barely hear the “Come in.” He poked his head in. The Professor was trembling. “I brought you a little something, sir. Warm milk.” James placed the cup close to the Professor’s head. “Please drink a little. It’ll give you strength.”

“Impossible.”

“For me, sir. You owe that much to your best pupil. And then we’ll discuss your proposal.” James waited until he saw the White Rat begin to drink. He withdrew his head, sat down on the beam with his legs dangling and began to chat lightly while tears blurred his eyes.

“Your proposal, Professor, raises an interesting dilemma in the relationship between teacher and pupil. Let me tell you about my lunatic teacher at the remedial school, Dr. Rapp, and my relations with him. I’d value your opinion. How is the milk, sir?”

“Terrible. Did you say lunatic?”

“Drink it anyway. Yes, lunatic. He’s a psychiatrist, excessively educated, and—”

“There is no such thing.”

“Not for a genius like yourself, sir, but in lesser people too much education produces alienation from reality. That was Dr. Rapp.”

“You must be specific,” the White Rat said severely.

“Well, sir, let me contrast him with yourself. You always understand the capacity and potential of your students and treat them accordingly. Dr. Rapp was so crammed with education that he never bothered to understand us; he simply tried to fit us into the text book cases he’d read.”

“Hmmm. What was his school?”

“I was afraid you’d ask that, sir. You won’t like the answer. Abigail college.”

“What? What?”

“Abigail college, sir. Finished your milk?”

“Yes, and it was disgusting.”

“But you sound stronger already, sir.”

“Where is Abigail college?”

“In a state called Kansas.”

“Hmp! Fresh water college. No wonder.” The Professor’s speech began to slur. James began to rock back and forth in agony.

“What would you do if this... this Abigail made same proposal to you, James?”

“Oh, sir, that’s not a fair question. I don’t like or respect Dr. Rapp. I love you.”

“No place—f’love—in science.”

“No, sir. Always be objective. That’s what you taught me.”

“Gett’n sleepy... James... ‘bout Zunia.”

“What about Zunia, sir?”

“Like him?”

“Very much, sir. You’ll enjoy teaching him.”

“Don’t... D’not le’him... Came to us f’m Princeton, you know... D’nt let’m talk you into going Princeton. Yes?”

“Never, sir. Rutgers forever.”

There was a long, long pause. The painful rustling in the study stopped. James poked his head in. The cup of milk was empty. The Professor was peacefully dead. James reached in, picked him up, carried him across the beam and skinned down the oak column with the body in one hand. On the floor he stamped his foot hard, three times. He repeated the signal three times. At last Moe Mole appeared from the depths.

“That you, James?”

“Yes. Please come with me, Uncle Moe. I need your help.”

Moe shuffled alongside James James, blinking in the twilight. “Trouble, James?”

“The Professor’s dead. We’ve got to bury him.”

“Now that’s a shame. And we never started my astronomy lessons. Where’s the body?”

“Right here. I’m carrying him.” James led Moe to the sundial

on the south lawn. “Dig here, Uncle Moe. I want to bury the Professor under the center of the pedestal.”

“Easy,” Moe said. He tunneled down and disappeared; little flurries of earth sprayed out of the tunnel mouth. Presently Moe reappeared. “All set. Got a nice little chamber dead center. Where is he now?”

James placed the body at the mouth of the tunnel. Moe pushed it before him and was again lost from sight. He reappeared in another flurry of soil. “Just filling in,” he explained apologetically. “Got to pack it solid. Don’t want any grave robbers nosing around, do we?”

“No,” James said. “Bury him for keeps.”

Moe finished the job, mumbled a few words of condolence and shambled off. James stared hard at the sundial. “Militant,” he said at last and turned away. The weathered bronze plate of the sundial was engraved with a line from the immortal Thomas Henry Huxley: “The great end of life is not knowledge but action.”