

All except new readers will be familiar with the byline of Robert F. Young, who appeared regularly in these pages in the 50's and 60's (e.g., "Jonathan and the Space Whale," "In What Cavern of the Deep," "L'Arc De Jeanne.") Mr. Young writes: "For the past five or six years I have been working full-time as a castings inspector in a non-ferrous foundry, and although I write both weekends and evenings, my output is considerably less than what it used to be." We hope to have Mr. Young back on a more or less regular basis, and you will too after reading ...

Remnants of Things Past

by **ROBERT F. YOUNG**

IF IT SURPRISED HAVERS to find that he could return to the past, the past surprised him even more. It wasn't at all what he expected. He had always pictured the past as a sort of old movie through whose nostalgic scenes the intrepid time traveler wended his care-free way till he came to the one he wanted to revisit. It simply hadn't occurred to him that the past by its very nature must of necessity be dead, nor had it occurred to him that the piling up of historical events and the concomitant piling up of people and places might have imposed severe restrictions with regard how much of a person's existence could be retained, as well as have dictated the method of retention. As a result he was somewhat disconcerted when, after opening the strange door that had suddenly appeared before him and stepping across its threshold, he found himself in a rather ordinary windowless room.

After reflecting on the matter, Havers could see the need for such economy. The room was about twenty feet in length, some fifteen in width and approximately nine in height. The ceiling was concave and consisted of 12" -by-12" ceiling blocks made of a luminous material that bathed everything beneath in a pale but penetrating radiance. The floor consisted of 4" -by-4" linoleum tiles, red and black in color, and patterned like a checkerboard. The walls were covered with 9'-by-4' walnut-veneer panels.

Floor-to-ceiling shelves began on the left-hand wall, ran almost all the way around the room with but a single interruption. The interruption was a door directly opposite the one Havers had entered by. Above it glowed a red exit sign of the sort seen in old movie theaters. Against the wall to his right stood two cabinets, one gray, the other rose-colored, and centered in front of the wall to his left was a small plaster-of-Paris pedestal.

In the middle of the room stood a round display counter. Its shelves and top were glass and were covered with a wide variety of objects that Havers from his present position could not identify. It was clear to him, however, that whatever they were they must have played important roles in his past in order to rate such prominent display.

He walked over to the counter and stood before it. The first item to catch his eye was the novel he had never quite got around to finishing. It constituted the countertop's centerpiece and was appealingly bound with red morocco, with the title and his byline stamped in gold letters:

THE CASH AND THE CREDIT

by

George Waverley Havers

Havers picked up the book and opened it. Appropriately enough, all of the pages were blank except four, one of which was the title page and the other three of which contained the text proper as far as he had got. Turning to page 1, he began to read: *Ere we look into the brain of Elijah Thorne and*

examine one by one the machinations we are certain to find there, it might be well to dwell for a moment upon the physique and physiognomy of our hero, the one ectomorphic, the other dolichocephalic. We— Quickly Havers closed the book and replaced it on the counter.

To the left of it, artistically arranged in black plastic racks, were the pipes he had collected in the years following World War II and had somehow lost track of during the '50s and the '60s. There were briars, meerschaums, corncobs, Yello-boles and Kay woodies. He stared at them in mild astonishment. Why in the world had he, a cigarette smoker, wasted time and money collecting pipes?

From the pipe collection his gaze moved to an object he could not at first recognize. It was yellowish-brown in color, shaped like an oversized, extremely thick pancake, and deeply indented in the center. Could it be? Yes, yes it was:—the catcher's mitt his father had given him on his ninth birthday. Why, he hadn't seen it in ages! Ironically, seeing it now evoked not nostalgia, but repugnance. He had never really liked baseball, although he had played it sedulously and made the high-school team.

Next to the mitt lay his high-school diploma, next to that, reducing it to puerile insignificance, lay the gaudy yard-long vellum scroll he had received upon graduating from The Successful Businessmen's Institute. Slowly he circled the counter, taking in the articles on the shelves as well as those on the top. They included (among innumerable other things) a tarnished Zippo cigarette lighter, an Asiatic-Pacific Theater Service medal with two Bronze Stars, a Good Conduct Medal, a Philippines Liberation Ribbon, a package of Gillette razor blades, a Mobilgas credit card, a Flexible Flier sled, a standard Royal typewriter with the letter "G" missing, a Boy Scout knife with four blades, a pair of booster cables, a Japanese geisha doll, a discolored basketball, a red coaster wagon, a bottle opener, a 1962 Currier & Ives calendar, a carpenter's rule, a mildewed Polaroid Land camera, a calorie chart, a copy of *Tom Swift and his Motorcycle*, and a Happy New Year horn.

Many of the objects were meaningless to him; some he could not even remember. All of them were possessions that had long ago lost their value, if indeed they had had any to begin with. It was as though whoever had chosen them had done so with the intention of making his life seem trivial, whereas actually it had been as rich and full as a man could want.

However, they constituted only a minute portion of the room's contents. There were the shelves to be explored yet, and the two cabinets. The shelves seemed the most promising, and he walked over to where they began. As he did so, he noticed that there was a framed sampler centered on the wall above the empty pedestal. He expected to see a familiar apothegm embroidered on the cloth, such as *I dreamed last night that Life was Beauty; I woke to find that Life was Duty, or Early to bed, early to rise, Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise*. Instead, he saw a nursery rhyme:

*Hickory, dickory dock,
The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down;
Hickory, dickory dock.*

He removed his gaze from the sampler and confronted the first section of shelves.

Proust, after tasting his *petite madeleine*, had proceeded to recapture his past. Havers had no such intention with regard to his. When the strange door had appeared before him, he had known instantly that it provided access to his yesteryears; but in opening it and stepping across its threshold, he had been prompted by curiosity alone. Despite the richness and the fullness of his life, he had no real desire to relive any of it, either on paper or in actuality. He had always prided himself on his ability to take everything in his stride. He would take his past in his stride also.

Nevertheless, the shelves before which he had halted disconcerted him. They were lined with dolls. Why dolls? He had never collected dolls.

Then, looking at them more closely, he saw that they weren't ordinary dolls but miniature models, ranging in height from 7 to 8 inches, of the most important people in his life. A representative collection,

so to speak, of his relatives, friends and acquaintances.

Choosing one at random, he took it down so he could see it better. It was Dick Evans, who, up until a few years ago when the booze had finally overtaken him and Payne Westbrook had fired him, had occupied the office next to Havers' at Westbrook Co., Inc. Havers put Dick back and took down another doll. It was Payne Westbrook himself, tall, cold, correct, face sun-lamp tanned as always. Curious as to what kind of material the dolls were stuffed with, Havers pulled Payne Westbrook's right arm off. A cloud of fine yellow flakes drifted down to the floor. Just as he had thought: Sawdust.

He replaced Westbrook and, leaning forward, began peering at the homunculi one by one. He had difficulty identifying some of them, but most of them he recognized at first glance: Miss Trout, his fourth-grade teacher. Winston Barnes, his phys-ed teacher. John LaCrosse, his roommate while attending The Successful Businessmen's Institute. Virgie Harrington, Payne Westbrook's private secretary. Havers' father. Havers' mother. Havers' son Wesley. Peggy Phelps, the girl Havers had worshiped from afar during his senior year in high school and who had been caught *in flagrante delicto* with Ralph Collins in the boiler room, and expelled. Ralph Collins.

He had difficulty identifying the next doll. It was a tall young man with auburn hair, brown eyes and rather large ears. At last the truth struck him: he was looking at himself—not as he was now, but as he had been the year he married Jennifer. Had he really been so thin in those days?

He knew who the next doll would be, but he still had trouble recognizing it. Had Jennifer really been as stunning as all that when they were first married? He took the doll down for a better look. Those clear blue eyes, those willowy legs, that buttercup-colored hair ... all he could think of was a lovely Barbie doll. He felt suddenly cheated, not by life but by time. The girl in his hand bore little or no relationship to the tall gaunt female of the species—withdrawn, remote, in the midst of menopause—he lived with now.

He returned the Barbie doll to the shelf and moved on to the next section. It was devoted to miniatures of the electrical appliances and the radios and TV sets he and Jennifer had gone through during the twenty-three years of their marriage and to the portable TVs and radios they had bought for Wesley. They looked like toys sitting there on the shelves—toys little girls get for Christmas and play with on Christmas morning. The next section was devoted to miniatures of the cars he had owned. He was astonished at their number. How had he, a man of modest income, been able to afford all those tons and tons of steel and chrome? They, too, had a toylike aspect and brought to mind the toy autos little boys play with on sidewalks. All that was lacking was a toy fire truck.

He had reached the door with the exit sign above it, and he stood for a while regarding its mute panels before moving on. The next section made him think of a doll house. This was because the shelves contained miniature household furnishings. Bedroom suites, living-room suites, kitchen stoves, kitchen cabinets, dining-room sets, buffets, highboys, lamps, rugs, footstools, hassocks, magazine stands, end tables, lavatories, bathtubs, medicine cabinets. There was even a toy commode. No, two of them. The next section had only two shelves and exhibited miniatures of the two houses he had bought since his marriage. The one on the top shelf was a shoe-boxlike affair, which he had hated. The one on the bottom shelf was the rambling ranch style which he and Jennifer lived in now and which he hated even more.

The final section featured miniature wardrobes—his, Jen's and Wesley's. In his case, the clothing dated from the day of his birth, and in Wesley's, too. What Jennifer had worn before he met her had no bearing on his life and was therefore not included. He stared at all the tiny coats and dresses, at all the tiny shoes. They were remnants only in the sense—as were the furniture, the cars and the appliances—that they were all that remained of his past.

He had come, finally, to the two cabinets.

The first one appeared to be an ordinary filing cabinet and probably contained files listing and describing the room's contents. A glance inside proved such to be the case.

The second cabinet was by far the more intriguing. Its rose color, he saw now, did not derive from paint but from rose-colored radiance emanating beyond its translucent paneling. Fascinated, he walked over and stood before it. It was about four feet in height, and the upper part slanted back at a 45-degree angle and contained a large rectangular window. A ledge consisting of maroon keys, some with numbers on them, some with letters, ran along the window's base. Just to the right of the ledge was a small red

button labeled CANCEL. At length it dawned on Havers that he was looking at a jukebox.

He stood there, staring. What in the world was a jukebox doing in his past?

Peering through the window into the lighted interior, he saw a horizontal rack containing fifteen records, a little mechanical arm for pulling them out, and a felt-covered disk with a smaller arm suspended above it. Arranged laterally along the lower part of the window were two rows of small white cards with titles typed on them.

Eagerly Havers leaned forward. Here were the songs of his boyhood, here were the romantic melodies of his youth. Presently he frowned. For the titles did not pertain to songs; they pertained—or at least they seemed to—to episodes in his past: *What Miss Trout told the Class not to do at the Picnic (A-1)*; *To Peggy Phelps, a poem by George W. Havers (A-2)*; *Why George Washington deserves to be called the Father of his Country: Valedictory Address by G. W. Havers (A-3)*; *Warscape, with Frieze of Whores (B-1)*; *The Pom-pom Girl's Lament (B-2)*; *The Successful Institute's Businessman (B-3)*; *Westbrook Co., Inc., makes Room for one More (C-1)*; *****Jennifer**** (C-2)*; *A Son is Born (C-3)*; *Havers works his Way up the Ladder of Success: Hi-lites of the '50s and '60s (D-1)*; *The Haverses at Table: a Charming tete-a-tete betwixt Husband and Wife (D-2)*; *Dick Evans at the Roadside Bar & Grill: a Joycean Rhapsody (D-3)*; *A Father Counsels his Son on the Eve of the latter's Departure for the Halls of Higher Learning (E-1)*; *Payne Westbrook painlessly applies the Shaft: Excerpts from an After-dinner Speech delivered at the 25-year-men's Banquet (E-2)*; *Chez Shaman (E-3)*.

Havers was indignant. It was as though whoever was responsible for assembling his past had not been content merely to belittle his life but had felt the need to mock it too.

In spite of himself, he was also intrigued. He could not remember, and did not care, what Miss Trout had told the class not to do at the picnic, but the Peggy Phelps selection fascinated him. Had he really written a poem to that silly sex-crazed girl all those years ago?

He searched for a coin slot, but none seemed to exist. Apparently the selections were for free. He depressed keys A and 2. The voice that presently emanated from the speaker was his own of long ago, and he remembered suddenly how he had penned the poem one winter's night and had recited it afterward in his room up under the eaves—

To Peggy Phelps

"Peggy, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.
On desperate seas long wont to roam—"

Havers jabbed the cancellation button. He might at least have written an *original* poem!

He skipped *Why George Washington deserves to be called the Father of His Country* and *Warscape, with Frieze of Whores*, and played B-2.

The Pom-pom Girl's Lament

"Wan peso, two pesos, three pesos—for you, eeze no enough. You peek me out an you com een to my room weeth me, an now you no wanna make love. You strange Americano. For strange Americanos the price eeze five pesos, even eef they no make love. You pay me five pesos queekly, or I tell the other Americanos you not a man. I work hard all day. I need more pesos to buy food and new clothes weeth. Look, I lay down here all ready for you, an you no jump on. What kind Americano are you? Jump on—I show you extra good time for five pesos. Wan peso, two pesos, three pesos, eeze ."

As the lament went on, Havers saw in his mind the squalid little room with its windowless bamboo walls, the benchlike bamboo bed with the Filipino whore lying on it, her calico dress pulled up to her waist . . . and he saw himself standing there in big combat boots and GI khakis and silly little overseas hat, all of nineteen years old; and then he saw himself toss five wadded-up bills on the bed and drop his khaki trousers and throw himself upon the grinning girl; and simultaneously the record ended and silence reclaimed the room that held the remnants of his past.

He skipped *The Successful Institute's Businessman* (he didn't care to be reminded of how consummately he'd been conned), *Westbrook Co., Inc., makes Room for one More* (he didn't care to be reminded that he'd started out as a \$50-a-week clerk either), *** *Jennifer*** * (that Barbie doll again!), *A Son is Born* (the fact was sufficient unto itself), *Havers works his Way up the Ladder of Success: Hi-lites of the '50s and '60s* (he'd had his fill of the '50s and '60s), and played *The Haverses at Table: A Charming tete-1- tete betwixt Husband and Wife*, not because he wanted to hear it but because he was curious why so commonplace an occurrence had been included.

The Haverses at Table

"Where's Wes?"

"He'll be late."

"It seems to me he could manage to have *one* meal a day with his mother and father, Jen. Say, that meat loaf looks good."

"He wants to borrow the car tonight. To take Vicki to the movies."

"I thought he took her last night."

"That was Sandy."

"Hmf . . . I think I'll have another helping of potatoes, Jen. And another slice of that loaf . . . I made up my mind today. We're going to get a color TV."

"That's nice."

"It's embarrassing when people drop in and they see that broken-down black-and-white job sitting in the corner. Anyway, there's no excuse for us not getting a new one now."

"That's good, George."

"I said there's no excuse for us not getting a new one *now*."

"Yes, George?"

"I don't think you get the significance of the 'now'. So I guess I'd better fill you in on the good news: This morning Payne Westbrook called me into his office and told me I'm to be the new general manager. Carl Jacobs is retiring next month, and I'm next in line for the job. Well, almost next, anyway. Actually Dick Evans has been with the firm longer than I have, but he can't be depended on any more. He even keeps a bottle in his desk now, as well as the usual one in the water closet. Payne told me—confidentially, so don't breathe a word of this to anyone, Jen—that if Dick doesn't straighten out soon, he's going to do more than just pass him over for the general manager's job—he's going to let him go altogether."

"How awful."

"I know. I don't know what's come over him. He always drank, but before he always managed to control it. Now he can't—or else he doesn't want to. Anyway, Jen, I've finally made it to the top of the ladder."

"That's good."

"It was a long hard climb, but at last I'm there."

"That's nice."

"We'll send Wes to the best college in the country."

"That's fine."

"I think I'll have another helping of those peas."

This time, Havers didn't skip:

Dick Evans at the Roadside Bar & Grill

"So you gave me the shaft ol buddy Im still your fren and I wunt steer you wrong and thats why Im telling you now dont trust that old bastard hell screw you too like he did me thats the name of the game old buddy George screw them first or theyll screw you another drink Ferdie make it two cant you see the whole things no frigging good George cant you see we dont live our own lives the only time I ever do what I want to do is when Im drunk which is pretty often these days Ill admit all the rest of the time before I do something I think first of how what Im going to do will look to other people will they approve of it or wont they this way I dont give a damn Im free if they dont like what I do screw them wheres those drinks Ferdie honest to God its crazy a guy has only one life to live one frigging little life and he wastes it wondering if somebody else approves of the way hes living it he sees a nice dish walking down the street that hed like to make but does he go after her oh-no he thinks suppose his wife finds out and what will his neighbors think and so he lets her go by even if she looks at him and he knows he can make her he sees these kids these days doing just what they want to do and to hell with everybody else and he says its scandalous and kids werent like that in his day youre damn right they werent they were scared of what everybody would think except now and then maybe when they broke loose for a little while they grew up to be people like us George people without any lives of their own people governed by other people people governing each other sneaking out every now and then and doing what they really want to do and all the rest of the time putting on the big show and when the shows over what have we got who the hell will remember what we did or didnt do or give a good goddamn wheres those drinks Ferdie what kind of service you got in this stinking place **WHERE'S THOSE DRINKS** I tell you George we've thrown our lives into a big filthy wastebasket of a world that doesn't know us from two rolls of toilet paper."

Havers watched the little mechanical arm pick up the record and return it to the horizontal rack. Poor Dick, he thought. What terrible wind had torn him from the dock where he'd been so safely moored and blown him out to sea?

Perhaps the mooring line had been defective. Dick had never really settled down—not in the sense that Havers had. He had had three wives to Havers' one, and none of the marriages had worked out. Maybe he had been fore-doomed from the beginning to be blown out to sea.

After that night at the Roadside Bar & Grill, Havers had never seen him again.

Next, Havers played E-1.

A Father Counsels his Son on the Eve of the latter's Departure for the Halls of Higher Learning

"I guess I don't have to tell you, Wes, that your mother and I have high hopes for you."

"I have high hopes for me, too."

"We've been lucky. We've never had to suffer the embarrassment and the humiliation so many of your schoolmates have caused their parents. It's a tribute to your character that you've avoided the paths so many young people take today."

"I want the goodies. And you don't get them by going on trips and feeling sorry for yourself and playing trumpet in minority bands."

"The goodies are fine, Wes, but there's more to living a rich full life than the mere amassing of possessions."

"You don't have to worry—I'll follow the rules. But not because I'm afraid to break them, like you. Someday I'll even get married and have children. But it's the goodies that I want most."

"That—that girl you've been dating lately—Lola, I think her name is. She seems quite nice. Might make you a nice wife—after you get your degree, of course, and become established with some major

firm."

"Her? She's just an easy lay. Like all the rest of them. When I get married I'm not going to have to lie awake nights and wonder how many guys laid my wife before I did. I'm going to know that no one did. When you play the game for keeps, you play it different."

"You—you seem to know exactly what you want."

"I do. And what I want is exactly the same things those freakouts I went to school with want. They only pretend they want something else, and the reason they pretend is that they're afraid—afraid they can't compete, afraid they can't cope. So they console themselves by stealing frosting from the cake now and then and licking it off their fingers, but all the while they know the cake is there, and they hate it because they can't get any of it. I'll get my share of it. You wait and see."

It had been the first time Havers had ever really seen his son, and afterward he had wondered how this utter stranger happened to be living in his house. He had gone to bed unnerved and hadn't slept well. In the morning he had driven Wes to the airport, and he and Jennifer had said good-bye to the tall determined young man who had Jennifer's mouth and Havers' eyes and someone else's soul.

Payne Westbrook painlessly applies the Shaft

"There are outsiders in our society, gentlemen, who condemn employees who remain with the same organization all their lives, implying that they do so because of a lack of imagination, because of a sense of security, because of a need for a father figure. All of you sitting here tonight, gentlemen, give the lie to such implications. The word that describes you best is not 'fearful' but 'faithful.'

"What would our organization be like without employees like you? What would this country be like? It would fall apart, gentlemen, because you are the mesons that hold it together. For what is society but a great big atom, its nucleus the corporations and industries and institutions that make possible our way of life. Without loyal employees—mesons—like you holding this nucleus together, it would fly apart, and we would have chaos. Is this what your detractors want when they shoot barbed arrows, their heads dipped in malice, into your midst? No. The bows from which their arrows are launched are strung with the gut strings of jealousy. They level criticisms at you because they envy you. Anyone of them would give his right arm to be the recipient of one of the 25-year pins I am going to hand out tonight."

"I would like to pay particular tribute to our strongest meson of all—our Main Meson, so to speak—a man who has done more to hold our mesonic organization (if I may coin a term) together than any other. I am referring of course to our dependable, reliable and steadfast general manager, George Havers. Not only has he given our concern his very best throughout these past two and a half decades, he has also become a pillar of his community. He has a fine wife, and together they have reared a fine upstanding son, who at this very moment is trodding the Halls of Higher Learning in search of Eternal Truths and High Ideals with which to live a rich full life like his father's."

"In closing, I would like to make mention of a new echelon which will shortly be introduced into our organization. It will be called the Interliaison Department and will exist between the Main Office and the Office of General Manager. It will be headed by my grandson, Payne Westbrook II, who has just completed a high-intensity course in business administration and is eminently qualified for the post."

Havers regarded the final selection. *Chez Shaman*. A great weariness had overtaken him, clouding his mind and making it impossible for him to connect the curious title with any particular past moment. If he could have made the connection, he would not have played the record; as it was, he only played part of it—

"I thought for a minute there that you were going to tell me I only had six more months to live."

"How long you live, George, will depend a lot on you. If you stick religiously to your diet, keep those pills handy at all times, avoid overexertion and overexcitement, you'll live as long as your next-door neighbor. In fact, you'll probably live longer than I will."

"That diet's going to be torture. Can't I have even *one* egg for breakfast?"

"Definitely not. Eggs are one of your worst enemies ... Why don't you buy a bicycle and peddle to work instead of driving your car? It might do wonders for you."

"A bicycle! Me, a middle-aged businessman peddle to work on a bicycle? I can just see myself parking it in the parking lot between Payne Westbrook's Cadillac and Payne Westbrook II's Jaguar! Me, the Main Meson!"

"The main what?"

"Nothing, doc. Just a private thorn in my side."

After canceling the selection, Havers felt himself sway. Simultaneously his vision blurred. When it cleared, he saw that there was a small white card Scotch-taped on the jukebox window.

Funny he hadn't noticed it before.

Peering closer, he saw that there were words typed on it:

We hope that your visit has been a pleasant one and that your effects are arranged to your satisfaction. We trust you will forgive us for having taken a few liberties here and there with the material. It is our policy whenever possible to lend zest to our pastrooms and to have them convey a message.

When you are ready to depart, please use the door marked "Exit."

—*The Management*

Havers read the words again. They told him no more than they had the first time.

For all their politeness, he felt somehow that he was being patronized. He would *not* use the exit door. He would leave by the same door he had come in by.

Moreover, he would leave this very moment.

He stepped over to the door. For the first time he noticed that it had no knob. Perhaps it was a swinging door. He pushed against it with all his strength, but it was as unyielding as a brick wall. Next, he tried to insert his fingers between it and the jamb. There was barely enough space to insert his fingernails. He stepped back, defeated.

Again he felt himself sway. Again his vision blurred. When it cleared, he saw that the pedestal standing against the wall between the door and the first section of shelves was no longer empty. There was a doll standing on it—a doll slightly larger than the homunculi on the shelves; a doll wearing a dark-gray business suit, a striped dress shirt, a blue tie, and alligator shoes. The tie was sloppily tied and hung outside the little coat.

Havers stared at the doll. Except for the difference in size, its apparel duplicated the suit, shirt, tie and shoes he was wearing this very moment, that he had donned that very morning before going downstairs to breakfast. It updated the Havers doll on the shelf, reflected in miniature, save for the awry tie, the way he looked now.

(Funny he couldn't remember *eating* breakfast.)

As he stood there staring at the homunculus, he became gradually aware of the silence. He had noticed it only absently when he had first entered the room, and his preoccupation with the visual remnants of his past had relegated it to the back of his mind; later, the vocal remnants had counteracted it. Now it filled the room, and he could feel it all around him. It was the first *true* silence he had ever known. He couldn't even hear himself breathe ...

He remembered the pain then—the fiery terrible pain that had torn through his chest and surged down his left arm as he was going downstairs to breakfast. That was when the strange door had appeared before him and provided access to his past.

He wasn't particularly surprised. In a way he had known all along that he was dead.

He looked around the room. At the objects on the display counter; at the contents of the shelves; at the jukebox, its multivoice stilled, standing mutely against the wall. Presently he found himself staring at the exit door.

You couldn't fight "The Management" any more than you could fight city hall.

He found it odd that he could accept death so easily. Perhaps it was because he had never truly been alive.

He took a step toward the door, paused. Going over to the pedestal, he retied the Havers homunculus' tie and tucked it neatly inside the little coat. Then he walked across the room, opened the door, and exited.