



## England Underway

### a short story by Terry Bisson

Mr. Fox was, he realized afterward, with a shudder of sudden recognition like that of the man who gives a cup of water to a stranger and finds out hours, or even years later, that it was Napoleon, perhaps the first to notice. Perhaps. At least no one else in Brighton seemed to be looking at the sea that day. He was taking his constitutional on the Boardwalk, thinking of Lizzie Eustace and her diamonds, the people in novels becoming increasingly more real to him as the people in the everyday (or "real") world grew more remote, when he noticed that the waves seemed funny.

"Look," he said to Anthony, who accompanied him everywhere, which was not far, his customary world being circumscribed by the Boardwalk to the south, Mrs. Oldenshield's to the east, the cricket grounds to the north, and the Pig & Thistle, where he kept a room--or more precisely, a room kept him, and had since 1956--to the west.

"Woof?" said Anthony, in what might have been a quizzical tone.

"The waves, " said Mr. Fox. "They seem--well, odd, don't they? Closer together?"

"Woof."

"Well, perhaps not. Could be just my imagination."

Fact is, waves had always looked odd to Mr. Fox. Odd and tiresome and sinister. He enjoyed the Boardwalk but he never walked on the beach proper, not only because he disliked the shifty quality of the sand but because of the waves with their ceaseless back and forth. He didn't understand why the sea had to toss about so. Rivers didn't make all that fuss, and they were actually going somewhere. The movement of the waves seemed to suggest that something was stirring things up, just beyond the horizon. Which was what Mr. Fox had always suspected in his heart; which was why he had never visited his sister in America.

"Perhaps the waves have always looked funny and I have just never noticed," said Mr. Fox. If indeed *funny* was the word for something so odd.

At any rate, it was almost half past four. Mr. Fox went to Mrs. Oldenshield's, and with a pot of tea and a plate of shortbread biscuits placed in front of him, read his daily Trollope--he had long ago decided to read all forty seven novels in exactly the order, and at about the rate, in which they had been written--then fell asleep for twenty minutes. When he awoke (and no one but he knew he was sleeping) and closed the book, Mrs. Oldenshield put it away for him, on the high shelf where the complete set, bound in morocco, resided in state. Then Mr. Fox walked to the cricket ground, so that Anthony might run with the boys and their kites until dinner was served at the Pig & Thistle. A whisky at nine with Harrison ended what seemed at the time to be an ordinary day.

The next day it all began in earnest.

Let us know what you think of **infinity plus** - e-mail us at:  
[sf@infinityplus.co.uk](mailto:sf@infinityplus.co.uk)

**support this site - buy books through these links:**  
[A+ Books: an insider's view of sf, fantasy and horror  
amazon.com \(US\)](#) | [Internet Bookshop \(UK\)](#)

[top of page](#)  
[ [home page](#) | [fiction](#) | [non-fiction](#) | [other stuff](#) | [A to Z](#) ]  
[ [infinity plus bookshop](#) | [search infinity plus](#) ]