

## The Revivalist by Albert E. Cowdrey

*When Hurricane Katrina hit the Big Easy, our favorite chronicler of weird New Orleans was safely ensconced in a rented home in Mississippi. The ensuing weeks without regular access to mail or to telephone service gave him a lot of time to work, so we can promise you that we'll have more of Mr. Cowdrey's magic in the months ahead. Of this story, however, it must be noted that it was finished well before Katrina was even a tropical storm and its setting is north of New Orleans. (Not that we think either of these points detract from it--we just want to set the record straight.)*

\* \* \* \*

I remember the ambulance careening toward the hospital, siren howling and braying by turns ... enormous young men flashing lights into my eyes, running needles into my flaccid veins ... the controlled chaos of the emergency room.

I remember a resident in green scrubs demanding, "Where'd you dig him up?" One of the EMTs mumbled a reply, and the doctor shouted, "In a *graveyard*??"

I remember the beeping machines, the needles, the IVs. A slick tube sliding down my throat, the warm feel of liquid nourishment beginning to fill my shrunken stomach.

I remember being born to a second life.

After resting for a while in the ICU, I wound up in a rather comfortable locked ward, wearing blue pajamas that lacked a drawstring--I suppose to discourage suicide.

Other men similarly attired filled the ward; some were masturbating, some playing chess, some conversing with invisible comrades, some watching a futuristic marvel often predicted in newsreels of the Thirties and Forties: television! and in technicolor!

By this time I was thinking coherently and able to say to myself: this is where I am; but *when* am I?

A fat man working an *Evening Sun* crossword puzzle kindly loaned me a section of his newspaper, and as I stared at the date--September 30, 1999--I felt the ward begin to whirl around my head, and had to sit down quickly.

Just then an orderly appeared, pushing a cart filled with little paper cups that he handed out, one to each patient.

"What's this?" I asked.

"Something to make you sleep."

I fell into such a fit of laughter that they had to put me into restraints. Another needle pricked my arm and I passed out, shouting, "Call me Rip! Call me Rip!"

Of course I meant Van Winkle.

\* \* \* \*

My strange sleep habits first appeared an hundred years ago, when I was young.

Oh, once awakened I was sprightly enough, exploding with all the random energies of boyhood. But when I slept, my breathing became so slow as to make Mama fear that it might cease for good. And come the dawn, I clung to unconsciousness like a remora to its favorite shark. Even when consciousness returned, I spent anything from a few minutes to half an hour in a most unpleasant state--hearing

everything that went on around me (including Dad, shouting, "Up! You lazy devil, up!") yet unable to move even an eyelid.

Nowadays scientists call this sleep paralysis. Dad had more vigorous names for it. He was a thick-bodied red-faced man, known to the servants (who were constantly being hired and fired) as Mr. Bang. He seemed to pole-vault out of bed, wide awake from the termination of his last snore, ready to swallow breakfast at a gulp and rush off to his brewery to catch any tardy employees and fire them on the spot.

Before departing he would shake me into a zombie-like state, a kind of stupefaction. After spooning in breakfast half-consciously, I'd set out for school, only to fall asleep on the trolley car, miss my stop and arrive late to class. Inevitably, my grades were poor. Whenever Dad wasn't blaming me for the problem, he blamed Mama.

He recalled that her brothers were sluggards and lie-abeds, and accused her of infecting his own vigorous stock with the "germ of laziness." This despite the fact that Mama herself was a hard and submissive worker--as she had to be, under such a taskmaster.

Dad had some hope that the onset of puberty would change me. But I seemed reluctant to mature. Long after my friends' voices had broken (and their faces had broken out) I retained a smooth, childish visage and a distressingly high voice. The hint of effeminacy was the last straw, as far as Dad was concerned; in the fall of 1910 he sent me as a boarding pupil to Lynwood Academy in rural Pennsylvania, whose principal had the reputation of knowing what to do with unsatisfactory boys.

The academy was a single stark brick building in a neat Quaker quilt of cornfields, meadows, and paddocks filled with drowsy horned cattle, whose peaceful lives I soon came to envy. I slept in the dormitory ell, and at dawn, when my roommates had failed to rouse me--when the bullies had dragged me to the floor and poured cold water on me in vain--Dr. Lynwood was sent for.

No writer but Poe could convey the awful fear I felt, lying immobilized and hearing the principal's thundering footsteps approach, accompanied by a soft whistling sound as he took practice swings with a two-foot, brass-bound ruler. My pajamas did not afford me the slightest protection from the sudden, explosive shocks of pain on my thighs and buttocks as Dr. Lynwood, in his own inimitable way, roused me from slumber.

During the Easter vacation my mother happened to see me trouserless in the bathroom, and grew alarmed over the multicolored bruises decorating my southern exposure. So she took me to our family doctor--a man as inept as he was kindly, and as kindly as he was inept--and explained my troubles at school.

"My young friend," said the doctor, beaming upon me, "you are merely going through a phase. What can be more natural than for a youth to sleep long and deeply? I've known other adolescents to sleep for ten, twelve, or even fourteen hours at a stretch. Their bodily energies are being poured into growth--"

He hesitated, viewing my puny form, and corrected himself--"or else are attempting to make up for lost time."

At Mama's request he wrote a letter declaring that my sleeping habits were healthy, natural, and in no way blameworthy. On my return to the academy I presented Dr. Lynwood this note, along with my mother's addendum forbidding him to beat me out of slumber ever again.

And indeed he never did. Instead, he expelled me from school.

\* \* \* \*

"You are a great disappointment to me," said Dad on a Friday evening in April 1911, when I returned home from Lynwood Academy, carrying my battered suitcase.

He was drinking brandy, and the volatile almost incandescent smell of that noble drink has ever afterward been a reminder of humiliation and defeat. In his resonant baritone, he read me Dr. Lynwood's letter, his normally red face going scarlet, crimson, fuchsia, and magenta in turn:

\* \* \* \*

*It is with a heavy heart that I inform you, Mr. Fogarty, that your son Edward is utterly incapable of completing the requirements of a certificate from Lynwood Academy.*

*I blame this sad outcome upon your lady wife and her medical adviser. Perhaps I am old-fashioned, but I feel that continuing my original course of severe chastisement might well have altered the perverse disposition that causes Edward to take refuge from Life and Duty in the dark womb of Nescience.*

*I would like to offer you some gleam of hope for your son's future, but cannot in conscience do so. Even as a common soldier--the lowliest of all human callings--he would be shot for sleeping on sentry-duty.*

\* \* \* \*

"Well," Dad went on, after a moment of grim silence, "I suppose it's obvious that you cannot possibly remain in this house, for I refuse to support you in your vicious and depraved indolence. You needn't go tonight--that would be excessively harsh--but don't bother to unpack, for as God is my witness, you will leave in the morning."

My voice had finally broken, but I still tended to squeak under stress. "How am I supposed to live?" I shrilled, causing Dad to look upon me with even deeper disgust than before.

"That is your problem. You are seventeen years of age, and have received as much of an education as you are fitted to absorb. People have made their way in the world with less. Good-night."

Mama rustled up some dinner and brought it to my bedroom, since Dad refused to look at me while he was eating. Sitting beside me on the child's cot that had always been my bed, she pressed into my hand a small roll of bills saved from her housekeeping allowance. Both of us were weeping, yet even at this most poignant moment of my young life I felt a profound urge to seek my usual refuge in sleep.

Next morning I awoke stiff and cold. Every instinct bade me remain unconscious, for I faced the life that lay ahead of me--as an outcast and a wanderer--with terror and revulsion. Yet face it I must, for I knew that if I failed to go, Dad would boot me into the street whether I was awake or asleep.

Slowly, painfully, I opened my eyes and began to move limbs that felt as if they had rusted in place. Creaking to my feet at last, I dashed cold water on my face, dressed, put a few extra clothes into my suitcase and left the house quietly--longing only (as Dr. Lynwood had expressed it) to return to the dark womb of Nescience.

\* \* \* \*

I had lived all my life in Burgville, Maryland, a small city or overgrown town on Chesapeake Bay that later disappeared into the sprawl of its great neighbor, Baltimore.

I remember its red-brick rowhouses, a Siamese tribe marching shoulder to shoulder, up hill and down dale; the coal-smoke brooding over its snowy slate roofs during winter time; and the breathless midsummer heat in its narrow stony streets, where clouds of flies hovered over the horse-droppings.

To these scenes, the march of progress had added the blue smoke and explosive farting of motor-cars. Charming gaslights had given way to garish Edison bulbs, ambling horse-cars to electric trolleys. That Saturday morning I waited on a misty sun-shot corner for one of the latter, not knowing which line I should take--nor did it seem to matter, since I did not know where I was going.

When a car clanged up, I paid my nickel and found a seat. The line ran into the bustling center of town, and I gazed miserably at the hurrying people, all of whom had someplace to go and something to do once they got there.

At one point the trolley stopped in front of a building I remembered visiting years before with my grammar-school class. It was called the Museum of Nature and Science, and a fat little man with a huge bald head was engaged in posting a sign on the door. I caught a brief glimpse of its message; then the trolley clanged on, while the words slowly registered in my clouded mind.

Abruptly I snatched at the bell-cord, jumped off at the next stop, and hurried back, suitcase banging at my legs. For the sign had said Watchman Wanted, Nights and Holidays.

So began my first experience in earning a living. The museum's director, Morris Holmes, B.S., M.S., Ph.D., closely questioned me as to my reason for seeking work. On the spur of the moment I told him that I was an orphan--which was exactly how I felt--obliged to work while completing my education.

This story at once raised me above the seedy level of the watchman profession. Dr. Holmes still had doubts about my age, but I assured him that my eighteenth birthday was fast approaching.

"I should have thought you fourteen at most," he said. "I cannot possibly pay a mere child more than a dollar and a half for each day or night of work."

I told him that figure would admirably meet my needs, and he agreed to try me out. I was to report for work that evening at seven sharp; under the Blue Laws then in force, nothing but churches and hospitals could remain open on Sunday, and so I would be in charge until the new week began.

Delighted at having gained employment so quickly, I ate a hearty fifteen-cent breakfast at a greasy spoon, and afterward found a boarding house displaying a to let sign and rented a small, stuffy bedroom for four dollars a week, the price to include dinner each day.

I put my gear into my room, which smelt of mothballs and varnish, then lunched on a huge sandwich and set out to examine my new neighborhood. I was strolling randomly, feeling comfortable in gut and mind, when all at once I began to taste something that was not greenish aged beef, German mustard, or limp shredded lettuce.

Halting so suddenly that a lady walking behind ran into me, I realized that I was tasting freedom: that I was really free for the first time. I began to walk faster and faster, until people turned to stare at me. I frisked, I ran, I fairly galloped uphill and down. I rushed into Memorial Park, a weedy site with a bronze statue of U. S. Grant on horseback, where I sprang upon a grove of juvenile plane trees, swinging from branch to branch and giving vent to war-whoops.

When at last my energy was spent, I threw myself down on the grass and panted, happy as a terrier after frenzied play. Even today--ninety-three years later--I can still smell the crushed green grass stems, still feel the gentle play of sunlight and dancing leaf-shadows upon my face.

*Nobody will beat me!* I thought over and over. *Never again!*

In my lifetime, Dad accidentally did me three great favors. He begot me; he threw me out of the house;

and ... but I'll come to his third favor in a moment.

\* \* \* \*

I returned to my room, laid my few clothes in a musty dresser whose drawers were lined with wax paper, and at five o'clock, when a brazen gong sounded, joined the landlady--a stout, fiercely corseted woman named Grunion--and her eight other guests in the gloomy dining room.

At first I merely stuffed my face, hardly noticing my housemates save as a collection of suits and dresses resembling clothing-store dummies. They were passing cracked serving dishes heaped with potatoes and cabbage, and conversing (or at any rate talking) in loud voices.

"Pickles, please." "The weather is surprisingly warm for this time of year." "Potatoes?" "Our army's efforts to civilize the Filipinos seem to be bearing fruit at last." "President Taft is quite amazingly fat, is he not?" "Mustard, please."

"Excuse me."

A young lady seated across the table was addressing me. Tightly wound plaits of reddish hair topped a small pointed face vaguely reminiscent of a white mouse, minus the fur and whiskers.

"Yes?"

"I wonder if I might trouble you for the chow-chow."

I passed her a saucer of this loathsome relish, and we introduced ourselves. Her name was Myra Means, and she taught Department, Reading, Composition, Bicycling, Field Hockey, and Music Appreciation at a local young ladies's seminary.

"That seems a great deal to teach," I suggested.

She sighed like one already disappointed by life. "Since my pupils are interested only in boys, scandal, and the latest fashions from Paris, it hardly seems to matter whether they learn their lessons or not. And you, Mr. Fogarty: What is your profession?"

Since the working-my-way-through-school story had succeeded once, I hauled it out again.

"Actually, I'm planning to enter college in the fall term, so I spend all day reading up on subjects where I know I'm weak. I work in the museum at night."

I saw at once that she was favorably impressed. "You work both day and night!" she exclaimed. "Surely that leaves you no time for sleep?"

At this I choked on my food, and the gentleman sitting next to me had to pound me on the back. Once my throat cleared, I chatted with Myra through the rest of the meal, parting from her with reluctance only when I was due at the museum.

Thus all unknowing did I meet for the first time the Dominatrix of my life--she who would save it, enrich it, and in time almost end it. Only a Delphic Oracle could have foretold such an outcome, and (oracles being what they are) would probably have foretold it only in riddles.

\* \* \* \*

On the way to work I revisited the greasy spoon, purchased another sandwich to tide me over Sunday, and presented myself to Dr. Holmes on the dot of seven.

After locking up, I spent half an hour wandering through my new domain, turning lights on and off as I went. In the Great Hall of Life I viewed the skeleton of a Megatherium and a dramatic group with a stuffed lion attacking a moth-eaten dromedary. Other exhibits included pickled snakes in bottles, moths impaled on pins, an array of dried turtle shells, and--Dr. Holmes's only truly unique exhibit--the very last Passenger Pigeon on Earth, with a card thanking the hunter who had shot it, for presenting the museum with this interesting rarity.

The Great Hall of Progress included some elderly steam engines, newer internal-combustion engines, pictures of the Wright Brothers's<sup>TM</sup> aeroplane, a static-electricity device that gave me a wicked shock when I spun a wheel, and a primitive adding-machine called a comptometer. The prize exhibit was a Maxim gun, with a tag explaining how this wonderful invention enabled a few soldiers of the Civilized World to introduce whole native tribes en masse to the benefits of Christianity and Science.

All of this I found tremendously interesting and exciting. Free from the tyrannies of home and school, I seemed to stand upon the threshold both of a new life--and a new era. How wonderful, I thought, is Progress! Life marches on, from the Megatherium to the aeroplane--from teeth and claws to Maxim guns. What new marvels would I live to see?

Wearied by my exciting day, I stretched out on a bench in the Great Hall of Life, and--after a few confused dreams of great things to come--sank into the sweetest sleep I'd ever known.

I was awakened by the sound of rattling wheels and the horn of a motor-car in the street outside. Morning light fell upon my closed eyelids; when at last I was able to open them, I saw sunlight pouring in through a clerestory above the Great Hall.

At first I couldn't imagine where I was; I felt stiff as a poker. Then sight of the stuffed lion brought memory flooding back. Slowly life was restored to my limbs and I became able to rise, even to run in place a few steps to get my blood pumping again. Somewhere a clock with Westminster chimes struck eight.

I found the Gentlemen's, washed my face and hands, and retrieved my hero sandwich, which seemed unusually sodden and unappetizing. But I ate it anyway, for my appetite was ravenous. I was strolling through the museum, making a perfunctory inspection, when loud knocking began at the front door. I opened it to find Dr. Holmes outside.

"Ah, Edward," he said. "I seem to have misplaced my key. Glad to find you awake and alert. I trust everything went well over Sunday?"

Without waiting for an answer he bustled past me in the direction of his office. For the first time I took in the volume of traffic, the clanging trolleys, the crush of horse-drawn vehicles, the tooting motor-cars with their goggled drivers, the blue-helmeted policeman at the corner raising his baton. A less Sabbath-like scene I never saw.

A paperboy wearing a checked cap and knee-pants was yelling the news of the day--the Kaiser was at it again, threatening war over something or other--and I paid three cents for a paper, for no reason but to view the date.

Yes, it was Monday.

I turned back into the museum in a daze. I assisted Dr. Holmes to open, received \$4.50 for two nights and a day of labor, then bade him farewell until the evening.

Walking in the direction of my boarding house, I brooded about my astonishing weekend sleep of some

forty hours. Surely this could not be normal! Was I really infected with the germ of laziness, and without Dad or Dr. Lynwood to awaken me, would I sleep longer and longer until I died?

Turning abruptly on my heel, I set off in a different direction, headed for Burgville's brand-new Carnegie Free Library--determined not to rest, until I found out the truth about my strange condition.

\* \* \* \*

Upon the portico of a limestone Acropolis, chiseled letters announced Mr. Carnegie's intention of making knowledge available "to All Persons, However Lowly and Useless They May Be." That was encouraging; the philanthropist seemed to be speaking directly to me.

Inside, card catalogues gleaming with new varnish stood against one wall. A translucent lady presiding at an elevated desk left her eyrie long enough to show me how to use them, and for the first time in my life I settled down for serious brainwork upon a topic that deeply interested me.

A search under the heading *Sleep* revealed one book on *Sleeping Sickness*. But it turned out to be about tropical diseases. An information card advised *See also Catalepsy; Coma; Dementia Praecox; Hibernation; Trance*. I filled out more call slips, sent them down to the stacks--and what a strange conglomeration of books the clanking dumbwaiter returned!

How many forms sleep takes! How mysterious it is, and how little understood, though we all spend at least a third of our lives in it! In a kind of drunkenness, I sent for new books even before I had plumbed the old, flipping pages and scanning for a glimpse of my own condition--which I found at last in a small, quaint treatise called *Hibernative States*.

I must confess that precisely what it said has long since grown dim in my mind. Not only because so much time has passed, but because I subsequently read so many other books on the same subject.

Yet I must have learned some elementary things about the lengthy naps taken by an improbable bestiary of fish, snakes, frogs, dormice, and bears; about the suppression of their bodily functions; about their radically slowed heart-rate and breathing; about their ability to retain urine without suffering uremic poisoning; about their plummeting body temperatures--in the case of one snoozing rodent, to twenty-seven degrees Fahrenheit!--which, for reasons unknown, did not result in injury or death.

With growing excitement, I learned that some species experience a similar state for a shorter time: for example, the hummingbird sinks into a kind of trance at night, which is fortunate, since its metabolism is so rapid that it would otherwise starve to death before dawn!

So, I reflected, an animal may lie entranced for a night, or a month, or a season. Some sleep much longer. Certain fish and toads that live in desert regions hibernate for long years, until the erratic rainfall returns and summons them back to life. Strange stories, never entirely verified, suggested that some cold-blooded creatures may have survived for centuries, after being walled up by accident or mischance!

It was at this point in my reading--sitting there in the quiet of the Carnegie library, with the translucent lady hovering at her desk--that I experienced sudden enlightenment. If I hadn't been struck dumb, I might have shouted, "*Eureka!*" or (a word just then coming into use) "*Bingo!*!"

At last I knew the name of my condition. It was not a disease, and still less a sin. It was a natural occurrence, like the change of seasons or the phases of the moon. How it had come about, I did not know; I could only accept the fact that I was the world's first, and perhaps only, Hibernating Man.

\* \* \* \*

On my way to work that night, I paused at a hardware store, where for one dollar I purchased a brass

alarm clock that I was assured would "wake the dead." In the museum, I set the clock for six, wound the springs tight, and lay down to sleep with my mind in a tumult over all I had lately seen, discovered, and thought.

I played with pleasant fancies of drowsy chipmunks and weary hamsters; of dormice wearing little nightshirts; of hedgehogs curled in spiny slumber. Then I plunged--for the first time diving, rather than sinking--into the depths, until wakened by my shrilling alarm, with all the customary agonies which now I bore uncomplaining, since I felt I understood their cause.

As usual, I repaired to the Gentlemen's to relieve myself, wash my face, and slick down my hair. Yet this morning was different. Gazing at the image of the fresh-faced youth in the clouded mirror above the wash-basin, I began to have an extraordinary feeling that I knew something I had not known last night. A bell was ringing once again, only this time inside my head!

Why is my upper lip nude? I asked myself. Why am I so small for my age, though both my parents are of normal size? Why do I let adults bully me, when I am of an age that resists authority, with its fists if necessary?

I thought also of intimate things that had caused me untold shame--for example, the fact that my face was not the only part of me that had too long remained hairless, exposing me to cruel jests in changing-rooms at gymnasiums and swimming-baths. I thought of dirty jokes told by my schoolmates that passed completely over my head, and of the busy (and to me incomprehensible) creaking of bunks after lights-out at Lynwood Academy.

When my new idea came, it came full-formed. If all my bodily processes slowed radically when I slept, might I be aging less rapidly than other people? What if I was younger than my years, not from some freak of retarded development, but simply because I had not--physiologically speaking--lived as long as my contemporaries? People spoke of Time as if it were common to all; but what if each of us has an internal clock whose pace is unique?

I thought of those walled-in frogs, snoozing away the centuries, and I began to wonder whether--if only I slept long enough--I might outlive my generation by many years!

This thought so astounded me that I could barely mumble a good-morning to Dr. Holmes when he arrived. After receiving one large dollar bill and five dimes for my night's work, I hastened--indeed, I ran--to the library and again plunged into the card catalogue. Now I was searching for the literature of prophecy.

It proved easy to find, for writers in those days were vying with one another to describe the glories they thought would fill the Twentieth Century. From the likes of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and G. B. Shaw, I learned that the future promised the final and total conquest of disease--the replacement of our corrupt and rotten economic system by a beneficent socialism--the Earth ruled by a Parliament of Mankind--and universal peace established, with freedom and justice for all!

Verne and Wells even predicted that men would one day walk upon the Moon--and I, Edward Fogarty, if only I slept long enough, might live to see all these things accomplished!

Late that afternoon (I was still raptly reading) a disturbance caused me to look up in annoyance. Miss Means had walked in, leading a parade of ginghamed gigglers. The party spent a great deal of time at the desk, being lectured to by the translucent lady on the resources of the library--a subject that did not appear to interest the girls very much. I began to fear that Miss Means might leave without noticing me, and rose to my feet and waved at her the instant she turned in my direction.



This produced a great reaction in the girls, who stopped giggling and stared at me as if I were unclothed. But Miss Means was up to the situation; she frowned at first, as if I were a "masher" who had accosted her on the street: then she bestowed upon me a benign but impersonal smile, like the one seen on statues of the Blessed Virgin.

"Ah, Mr. Fogarty," she said, approaching and extending her hand in a businesslike way. "I did not recognize you at first. Girls, this is Mr. Edward Fogarty, a distant cousin of mine who is readying himself to enter college this fall. All of you might well imitate his scholarship and determination to succeed."

I observed that as soon as I was transformed into a relative and--worse yet--a moral model, the girls lost all interest in me, and the whole party soon left the library. That evening at supper, Myra apologized for her white lie.

"You have no idea," she sighed, "how foolish my girls are, and what a tale they would have made of our acquaintanceship, had I not said what I did."

"I thought you handled everything beautifully," I assured her.

"I am so glad you feel that way. I was afraid you might think I had gone to the library expressly to see you, though nothing was further from my thoughts."

I assured her that nothing was further from mine than suspecting her of wanting to see me. By such small and harmless lies are relationships cemented, and in time lives changed forever. For now I felt assured that Miss Means found me interesting, which made me all the more interested in her, and soon a fragile romance began to unfold its first small leaves.

\* \* \* \*

In the beginning, it was utterly innocent--considering my physical immaturity, it could hardly have been anything more.

On Saturday mornings we drank soda-water at a local fountain--laughing when the bubbles tickled our noses--ate ice cream from a hand-cranked freezer, and listened to a brass band playing noisy Offenbach and noisier Sousa in the park.

As our acquaintance ripened, we became what a later generation would have called "an item." Neighbors smiled to see us together; I bought for one dollar a straw skimmer, and when I tipped it to passing ladies, with my own lady on my arm, began to feel as if I might one day become a man after all. And indeed--as summer ripened into a long golden fall, fall slumped into winter, and winter flowered into spring--I found myself changing, and sensuality beginning to intrude upon our lives.

As if summoned forth by Myra's presence, a fine stubble appeared on my upper lip, and I began shaving it carefully every day in hopes of stimulating its growth. Silken body hair sprouted like fresh grass on a barren landscape. A certain part of my anatomy woke from long hibernation and began to display erratic but surprising vigor.

At night, before sinking into the dark waters of Nescience, I began having vivid dreams in which Myra and I did some remarkable things. I was even more shy and formal with her after such dreams, lest she suspect the basic foulness of my nature. And yet--and yet. A fire had come into our relationship. New-wakened lust mingled with my dreams of the future to create a heady brew.

For I continued to refine my hopes of long life. If I was to experience the wonders of the glorious Future, clearly I had to find a way to sleep even longer than I was already doing. An image danced before my mind of a human life unlike any other. Like the wise bruin, I would hibernate for, say, six months out of

the year and live a more or less normal life for the rest. By disciplining my gift, I hoped to live 120 or even 150 years--barring accidents--while observing the interesting changes which must occur in that long time.

I would marry often and leave a vast progeny by a succession of beautiful consorts, whom I would compassionately pension off when they grew too old to satisfy my ever-young desires. In the end, by virtue of my rich and unique experience, I planned to write a book that would supersede all Bibles and Korans, revealing the course of human destiny and insuring my fame forever!

Such was my modest plan. It was in this complex of heated dreams and rosy-hued prophetic visions that I began to think about marrying Myra, and making her my first consort.

Why not? I felt at last physically ready for the husband's role. I was under the usual delusion that two can live as cheaply as one. Myra had her small salary to contribute; I had my profession as a night-watchman; together we could surely afford a room with a double bed. What more, I asked myself, did we need?

But when I tremblingly broached the topic, Myra informed me that we could not even discuss it until I had finished college, obtained a permanent position, and had one thousand dollars in the bank. This was my first encounter with the tough-minded realism of which she would later give so many--ultimately such deadly--proofs.

My only consolation was that she hinted her willingness to wait for me. That was good of her, considering that the proposed wait struck me as an eternity, or possibly two eternities. Who could have imagined that Dad, of all people, would suddenly open the way to the fulfillment of all my desires?

\* \* \* \*

Despite all the advantages I'd gained by being thrown out of the house, I loathed Dad, for I understood perfectly that he wished me no good, and that my new-found happiness had come about entirely by accident.

On the other hand, I loved Mama, and kept in touch with her during all the time I lived at Mrs. Grunion's. Like all thriving communities of that period, Burgville boasted a telephone exchange. Although the charge of a nickel seemed high to me (was a phone call really worth one-third of a breakfast, or one-half of a schooner of beer?), I called Mama from the library at least twice a week during the day, when Dad was unlikely to be home.

About ten o'clock upon a Tuesday morning in May 1912, I cranked the gadget vigorously and, when the operator answered, said in a loud penetrating voice, "Five-nine-one, please." At the other end came the usual click, followed by the sound of weeping.

"Mama, what's wrong?"

"Edward, you must be strong. This morning your father read in the *Sunpaper* that Samuel Gompers is demanding the eight-hour day for workers. He began ranting about Communism, turned a quite extraordinary color, and pitched over dead upon the breakfast table! The doctors say he died of an apoplectic stroke. Please, please come at once."

Well, I will not pretend that I grieved very long. When, a few days later, I saw Dad's corpse--Mama had employed an embalmer who applied one deft touch of rouge to his cheeks, so that he looked much more natural than in life--I experienced a painful confusion of feelings. I suppose you cannot help loving your father, even if you hate him; I certainly did both, and turned away from the coffin, where it rested upon trestles in our parlor, with a shudder of revulsion that ended, strangely enough, in tears.

On the morrow, I supported Mama through the tedium of a church funeral followed by Dad's interment in a pompous mausoleum with marble crypts and an iron gate, where generations of Fogartys were stored up to await the Resurrection. And from that time to this, I never willingly thought about the man again.

At home after the funeral, Mama and I anxiously discussed our future, whose lineaments we thought we saw only too clearly. She assumed that Dad in some way had embargoed his money, so that instead of squeezing a few dollars from him every week, she would have to beg from a skinflint banker. I expected to be disinherited, and if Mama was right, I could not expect even an allowance from her.

It was only a week later--after talking to Dad's lawyer, searching his bank-box, and going through his desk--that we came to realize the truth. Dad had left no will at all! For all his noisy forcefulness of manner, he had been afraid to confront his own mortality. Thus Mama, as his spouse, and I as his only child became co-heirs to the brewery and everything else he possessed--the whole amounting in value to one hundred fifty-three thousand, two hundred sixteen dollars and ninety-one cents. In those times, a small fortune!

The court appointed Mama trustee until I arrived at the magic age of twenty-one. She installed Dad's long-suffering foreman as manager, where he gave every satisfaction, and the brewery--now running more efficiently, since workers were not being fired and new ones hired every day--was soon yielding us a handsome income of five thousand a year.

Suddenly the way to the shining Future seemed to lie wide open. I renewed my offer of marriage to Myra, pointing out to her that even though I had not gone to college, I now had considerably more than one thousand dollars. Confidently I awaited her passionate *Yes*, and was amazed to receive instead a cool and rather distant *Maybe*.

I was put on probation, and Myra, in firm schoolmistress fashion, devoted the next half-year to housebreaking me. Her mantra (as we would say today) was, "Edward, I have needs too, which you must learn to respect."

And learn I did. Even today, in my dreams I hear her voice saying bossily, "Edward, *gentlemen* walk on the outside, so that if a motor-car jumps the curb, it will hit them first." Again I go shopping with her on a school holiday. Dear God, the exquisite boredom of it! The impossibility of saying anything she would agree with!

"What do you think of this color, Edward?"

"Beautiful!"

"Do you think so? I don't like it at *all*."

In dreams I taste again my first kiss (really!), stolen in Memorial Park, with General Grant and his bronze horse looking on. I submerge again into our first serious embrace, at the door of the museum as I was going in to work, and hear her firm voice saying, "No more, Edward--that is *enough!*"

While all this training went on, I lay alone during the day, sweating at every pore as I thought of Myra's demure bed less than fifty feet away--both bed and occupant, of course, eternally beyond my reach. Oh, the nights of hibernation! The days of hopeless lust!

In desperation I began reading the Agony Column of the local paper, marking and then scratching out such items as "Christian Lady desires to find Honorable Gentleman as escort to the Presbyterian Church on Sabbaths"--a come-on that remains in my memory as the most depressing I've ever read. I might have fallen prey to the "Mature Gentlewoman of Independent Means" who desired to "meet a younger

Gentleman, in whom she might take a Maternal Interest"--had not Myra, at long last, accepted me.

A frenzy of preparations began that I still look back upon with horror and dismay. Well, well, it was all long ago--and thank heaven, time does dull the memory of suffering. Suffice it to say that we were wed at last. Dr. Holmes acted as my best man, presenting the fang of a saber-toothed tiger as his wedding gift. Mama, who had accepted the match with deepest reluctance, wept steadily throughout the entire ceremony. Had I known what lay in store, I would have wept with her.

The new Mr. and Mrs. Edward Fogarty honeymooned in St. Michael's on the Eastern Shore. And it was there, in an upstairs room of a pleasant old wooden hotel--with the salt smell of the Chesapeake blowing in an open window and a bowl of potpourri exhaling on the mantelpiece--that I revealed to Myra that she had married the world's only Hibernating Man.

Somehow I had never found an opportunity to convey this information before, and she took it very badly.

\* \* \* \*

"What exactly do you mean by that?" she asked in what I had already identified as her "dangerous" voice.

At the time we were snuggled deep beneath the quilts on a peaceable Sunday morning. Feeling infinitely comfortable beside her scented body, which was emitting a delicious warmth, I drowsily began to explain.

"Have you not," I asked, "noticed how deeply I sleep, and how hard it is to awaken me?"

Well, of course she had. I had just learned that last night she'd spoken to me for nearly three hours about the happy prospects she foresaw for our union, provided I could overcome the defects of my character and learn to appreciate her needs, before noticing that I was totally unconscious: moreover, that I could not be roused so that she could upbraid me.

Briefly and not very clearly, I explained to her the nature of hibernation and what it would mean for our life together. Suddenly it was as if I were back at home, with a cleverer version of Dad in charge. Myra grilled me with an intensity and degree of dark suspicion that would have done honor to Teddy Roosevelt when he was cleaning graft out of the New York City Police Department.

"Surely," she exclaimed, "you must have tried to cure this perverse disposition!"

With some heat I pointed out that hibernating was neither perverse nor was it a disposition; that it was a natural process practiced by everything from bears to dormice; that my nature was what it was, and that my great ambition in life was to sleep more, not less, in order to live for centuries.

At this, she rose up in bed with lightning darting out of her eyes. "Have I married a man, or a dormouse? How could you have concealed all this from me until now, when it is too late for me to sever all connection with a person given to abnormal habits and mad ambitions?"

That day she spent approximately seven hours working me over with what I discovered to be a very rough tongue. Admittedly, she had some powerful arguments. I *had* unwittingly deceived her, on the childish assumption that she would adopt my view whenever I chose to reveal it to her.

By the end of that uncomfortable day--the day when our honeymoon came to an abrupt end, almost before it started--I'd begun dimly to comprehend that a wife might not necessarily enjoy life with a husband who spent half the year snoring, in order to outlive her by three or four generations and enjoy the caresses of other women after she was gone.

Somehow, this had never occurred to me.

The upshot was that we separated at once, Myra returning to Mrs. Grunion's, while I went home to Mama. Pointing out that she had foreseen trouble, Mama laid the whole blame of the break-up on Myra, excoriating her as cruel and unfeeling, and comparing her behavior (rather unfairly) to the way Dad and Dr. Lynwood had abused me in times gone by.

As for me, I wanted to sleep long--if possible, never to awaken. I wrote to Dr. Holmes, resigning my position with the museum, and then went back to my old room, only to discover that I no longer fit on the little cot where I used to sleep. Fortunately we had a guest room, though to my recollection no guest had ever used it. Here, in a bed as virginal as I had been, I lay down, begging Mama to let me sleep as long as nature permitted.

My last thought before passing out was a bit of wisdom from Lord Francis Bacon: "A married man is older by ten years the first day."

"You underestimate, my lord," I muttered, and fell asleep.

I slept for something over seventy hours. As I later learned, Mama was deeply concerned, and called the same old family doc who had misdiagnosed me so long ago. He examined me as I slept and declared me to be in perfect health, even though my pulse was 43 and rectal temperature 81 degrees Fahrenheit.

"My watch must be slow," he told her, shaking his honest old ticker, "and I need a new thermometer. Fortunately I never trust gadgets. One has only to look at Edward to see he's in perfect health, with no fever at all. Why, I've seldom felt a brow as cool as his."

Thus encouraged, Mama let me sleep on, though not without checking on me a dozen times a day. And when I woke at last--ravenous as usual--she fed me an enormous meal, watching me eat with such pleasure and delight that she might have been the one feasting, instead of I.

In the following weeks I carefully explained my condition to her, using the example of her brothers to make everything clear. She saw at once the resemblance between my behavior and theirs; she might have done so earlier, except that Dad made her so angry by saying her family was infected with the germ of laziness. With him gone, she was ready to acknowledge me a revised and updated version of the Sleepy-Time Boys with whom she had grown up.

"Why, Edward," she said, "I do believe you are far more my son than your father's!"

"Thank God for that!" I replied.

Cared for and encouraged by one woman, I tried to make peace with another. I wrote my wife long letters; I pleaded for forgiveness, but did not really expect to receive it. I waited every day for some lawyer's missive announcing a divorce action, but none came. Once I got up courage enough to approach the boardinghouse, but was driven off by Mrs. Grunion in such ferocious style that I never dared to return. I hung about the school where Myra taught, hoping to speak to her. But the only result was to have a policeman threaten to arrest me as a masher if he saw me in the neighborhood again.

In despair I had recourse to the veiled seductions of the Agony Columns, and even drew up an item of my own that began, "Young Gentleman, independently wealthy, desires...."

But what did I desire? I desired Myra.

One morning--I had just devoured a huge breakfast after a sleep of eighty-six hours duration--I was passing through the downstairs hall when the telephone rang. I picked it off the wall automatically and heard Myra's voice say briskly, "Edward, I must see you."

I burst into tears, and her voice softened. "My dear," she said, "I can see that you too have suffered."

"Wh-when can I see you?" I blubbered.

"Today," she replied, gladdening my heart. "The fact is, Edward, that as a married woman I have been asked to resign my post at the young ladies' seminary--and as a divorce, I would be even less acceptable to the teaching profession. My marriage to you was a tragic mistake, yet I have made my bed and see now that I must lie in it. If you agree henceforth to respect my needs, I will do my best to accommodate your strange and (I am bound to say) somewhat repellent nature."

There was less ardor in Myra's terms than I would have hoped for. Her speech sounded less like a reunion of lovebirds than a treaty of peace between two small hostile nations which had grown temporarily weary of war. Yet I wanted my wife back, and hastily subscribed my name to the pact.

That afternoon Myra arrived with her trunk, and the guest room became a bridal chamber.

\* \* \* \*

Vast is the panoply of human experience over the ages, comprehending every shade of glory and horror, of tragedy, comedy, and tragicomedy. But I don't believe that any of our species ever found themselves in quite our family's situation--a ménage trois consisting of two women and a Hibernating Man.

At any rate, when Myra and Mama again approached each other, rather like two prizefighters touching gloves before a match, all three of us understood the basic situation. Bound as we were by blood and marriage, we must all abide beneath one roof and depend for our livelihood upon Fogarty's Finest Foam, as the product of the brewery was called.

There were compensations. That night my wife and I made up our quarrel so ardently that all the bad times seemed erased in an instant. I fell asleep in her arms and she in mine, but she must have pulled loose at some point, for I slept for three days and nights.

When I awoke at last, I found that my keepers had conferred together and decided our future course of existence. The basic verdict was this: Mama and Myra would care for me during my periods of hibernation if, in return, I performed all the duties of the man of the house while awake.

This was a long way from the future I'd imagined for myself, but the ladies clearly had the upper hand. Somehow I'd never grasped the fact that a life spent snoozing meant a life of permanent dependency on whoever agreed to watch over me.

Well, I knew it now, and so went to work in the brewery, spending a week rolling barrels, a month studying the processes of fermentation, and another month shuffling endless papers. I then took a week off and slept for one hundred and fifty-six hours straight.

Feeling well rested after my long snooze, I entered the head office where our manager undertook to complete my education in the brewery business. Until he retired I worked as his assistant, while Myra became our secretary and soon was handling all our correspondence with breathtaking efficiency. From time to time I took a few days off for sleep, and my energy upon awaking gradually reconciled my wife to these episodes.

"After all," she told Mama, "if I had married a sailor, I would see even less of him, and would have to worry about the wives he might be keeping in foreign ports."

"My dear girl," replied Mama from the depth of her own experience, "one should count an unconscious husband as a blessing."

As the years passed, my talent for Nescience grew. By 1913 I could sleep for nine days; by 1914, for two solid weeks; in mid-1916 I slept for a month, and woke to find that in my absence, Myra had managed the business with a competence that I ascribed to her skilled imitation of my own methods. For by now our manager had retired, and I was both a man and a businessman.

I had also become a reformer, seeking to improve the Future where I expected to spend so much of my life. I joined the Baltimore Eugenics Club, which sought to benefit the human species by persuading (or if necessary, compelling) the unfit not to breed. Like many people of my generation, I thought this a fine idea, having no notion of what it would lead to in the end.

I also joined the Universal Peace Society, which aimed to promote disarmament by proving to world leaders that armies and navies were expensive and unproductive. With a third popular reform group--the Anti-Saloon League, whose answer to human betterment was prohibiting the sale of spirituous liquors--of course I had nothing to do whatever.

All of this seems quaint and far-away now. For in 1914--disregarding all the wise thoughts of the Universal Peace Society--Europe's leaders embarked on the ambitious goal of destroying civilization. As America began to drift toward war, I became a staunch Wilsonian Democrat, committed to neutrality. I had no desire whatever to be killed, for of what use would be my talent for long life if it (and I) were cut off at the knees by a Boche machine-gun?

So I supported Mr. Wilson, in the firm conviction that he would (as his reelection campaign slogan put it) Keep Us Out of War, a conviction that lasted until he took us into it. In the spring of 1917, Congress, with a great war-whoop, voted accordingly, and the military draft went into operation.

That summer I received a notice requiring me to present myself for physical examination in the Baltimore Armory. Myra and I discussed the situation anxiously. At the age of twenty-three and in perfect health, I was obviously a candidate for doughboy status. Yet I remembered only too well Dr. Lynwood's long-ago words: the military services are notoriously unsympathetic to sleeping soldiers. Might I end my career by being, after all, shot for snoozing on sentry duty?

Though troubled in conscience by draft-dodging, I argued that if flat feet or color-blindness could keep a man out of the Army, why not hibernation? Instead of going to Baltimore, I put on my nightshirt and went to bed. Myra then contacted the draft board and informed them that a sudden cataleptic attack had left me unable to present myself as required, much less to serve in the military.

The board promptly sent a doctor of their own choosing, a brusque, no-nonsense sort accustomed to seeing through the clumsy devices of evaders and slackers. Myra led him to our bedroom, where he proceeded to make the usual tests. When he was done, he sat down and wiped his brow; Myra told me later that his eyes were fairly starting from his head.

"Pulse twenty-five," he muttered over and over, "temperature sixty-one. Pulse twenty-five. Temperature sixty-one."

"I take it," said she dryly, "that you will certify Edward to be incapable of military service."

"Military service!" he exclaimed. "My dear young lady, I will gladly certify him for the mortuary if you so desire, for he will surely be going there within the hour."

In all, I slept for twenty months, with three or four periods of wakefulness devoted mainly to ingestion, digestion, and excretion. During these episodes everything seemed to be quite normal, and so I was stunned when I woke early in 1919 to find Myra sobbing noisily beside my bed.

"My God!" I exclaimed, when at last able to speak. "We have lost the war, and all because I failed in my duty!"

"No, Edward, we have won," she assured me between sobs. "But oh my dear, something awful has occurred!"

"Mama!" I cried, sitting up in bed--no easy job, considering how far I had sunk into the mattress. "Mama has died, and I was not here to comfort her last hours!"

"Your mother is perfectly well, though increasingly domineering and dictatorial about the house. No, Edward, something even worse than defeat and death has visited our household. It concerns the brewery--"

"Lord, I should not have left a woman in control for so long!" I mourned. "Only men are fit for commerce, and you have let the business go to smash while I was snoring!"

"Finest Foam has never been more successful, or more productive, than in your absence," she answered tartly. "Indeed, our success only compounds the tragedy! For Congress has passed a Prohibition amendment, and the states have ratified. Oh, Edward! When the brewery is shut down, how shall we live?"

\* \* \* \*

There were times when I almost regretted missing World War I, the great struggle that ended fifteen million lives and cracked the foundations of civilization. If history stages such a spectacular show, surely sleeping through it smacks of ingratitude?

But if I did not fight at the battle of Chteau-Thierry, I certainly did struggle in the toils of Prohibition. In 1920 the brewery was closed by federal agents, and the job of purveying alcohol to the American people was taken away from honest publicans and placed in the eager hands of the underworld.

To our surprise (for had not the whole business been made illegal?), Mama and I were able to sell the building, beer-making equipment, and our last batch of Finest Foam for a handsome price to a gentleman of Sicilian extraction. With the proceeds we bought gilt-edged bonds, securing a stable if modest income, and retired from the busy world of commerce.

For me the word "retirement" had a literal meaning. Like many Americans of the time, I was suffering from a vast sense of disillusionment. The Future was proving to be a rougher business than I had expected. My hopes of Universal Peace had been dashed, while Progress seemed to consist largely of great leaps forward in the use of submarines, aerial warfare, and poison gas. I had not yet heard of Hitler, but a vague sense of uneasiness about some of the Eugenics Club's projects for eliminating inferior races caused me to resign. Meantime the Anti-Saloon League had abolished the only way I knew of making a living.

Feeling depressed and entirely useless, I went back to bed in 1921, little guessing what I would find when I awoke. Two years later my fluttering eyelids opened at last to discover, parading herself before the mirror in our bedroom, my wife--but ah! how changed!

During my downtime Myra had bobbed her hair, clad her legs in sheer silk, and donned a dress that at first I took to be a particularly immodest undergarment. And she was *smoking a cigarette!!*

"Myra!" I exclaimed, as soon as I was able. "Put that out at once! Do you wish to be mistaken for an inhabitant of a brothel?"



Gaily she laughed, and skillfully blew a smoke-ring. "The penalty of being unconscious so much, Edward, is that you have no idea what is happening in the world. True, at thirty I am a bit old for a flapper. But I am not too old to enjoy life."

"I absolutely forbid you to enjoy life!"

"You may think you are your father, but you will soon learn that I am not your mother," she said, approaching the bed and deliberately blowing smoke into my face.

"I have needs too, and I am resolved to satisfy them myself, since you cannot or will not. I've bought myself a gramophone and a collection of jazz records. I've taken to visiting speakeasies and nightclubs where I drink and dance with men who, unlike you, are fully conscious. Last month I was ready to become a bootlegger's Boopsie, when to my annoyance he was dynamited by a business rival. But there are other bootleggers in the world, and some of them are quite charming."

Once I became mobile, I anxiously consulted my mother about the astounding change in Myra--only to learn that the change was not as sudden as I had thought.

"In years past, while my innocent boy was sleeping," Mama said darkly, "more things have gone on than you can imagine. I did not tell you earlier, hoping to spare you the shock and praying that Myra would mend her ways. Were you aware that during the war she joined a Liberty Bond drive and sold kisses to absolute strangers for one dollar each?"

"Good God!"

"I could hardly believe it of someone who taught Deportment at a young ladies' seminary. Edward, I am drifting rapidly into the sere and withered leaf; I have begun to think of death, and wonder whether God will be so unkind as to reunite me with your father in the next world. I don't think I could bear it if, facing such unhappiness myself, I left you miserable as well."

"What shall I do, Mama?"

"Give up for now your practice of sleeping for months or years at a time. No doubt it keeps you young, as I have often noticed; there is a bloom and freshness in your cheeks that only prolonged unconsciousness of the real world can put there. Yet, if you are to save your marriage, you must be present in every sense of the term, both to comfort your wife with your caresses and to guide her erring footsteps when she threatens to go astray."

"Mama, you are wiser than Dorothy Dix," I declared, meaning a newspaper columnist whose specialty was advising people about their most intimate problems. "I will take over the duties of the man of the house, and be a true husband to the bitch I married."

A series of confrontations ensued between husband and wife which, even now, I hesitate to remember. But of marriage it may be said that, while its quarrels are as frequent and nasty as those of the Balkans, its methods of peacemaking are far more delightful.

In the end, Myra and I compromised: she allowed me to sleep for two or three days continuously each week, and in return I smeared Slickum on my hair and squired her every weekend to the sparkling fleshpots of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and--on special occasions--even New York.

We had a few embarrassing moments, for while she looked her years, I looked more like eighteen, and terms like "gigolo" and "cradle robber" were sometimes heard, even from bartenders and bouncers. We adopted cosmetic solutions to the problem: Myra endeavored to make herself look younger, while I tried

to look older, and we succeeded well enough to fool the mobsters, flappers, and raccoon-coated swells with whom we tangoed and downed bathtub gin.

Unfortunately, as practicing Man of the House, I also took control of the family finances. As the jazzy new tempo of life quickened my heartbeat, I began to believe in the Future again--though quite a different one. Instead of seeking universal peace and human betterment, now I wanted to become rich.

I began to feel that our investments were excessively old-ladyish and yielded far too little return. Everyone in the clubs and speakeasies, as well as all the oracles who spoke from the financial pages and the radio, agreed that the day had arrived when every American not only could be rich, but ought to be. Then why were we struggling along, unable to afford a twelve-cylinder Duesenberg and a chauffeur to drive it?

I began to invest in stocks recommended by Myra's and my favorite boon companions, and we were handsomely rewarded for our boldness when the market soared to ever dizzier heights. I also invested in Florida real estate, having been assured by the boomer who sold it to me that the Everglades, where the land was located, would soon be drained. I hoped so, for I very much wanted to visit the new metropolis of Miami, feel the gentle zephyrs ever playing over its sugar-white sands (as one brochure put it) and view the rich, fertile land of our future estate as soon as it could be seen directly, rather than through the hull of a glass-bottomed boat.

For a time everything went well. I flatter myself that our increase in wealth (we were worth five hundred thousand dollars by 1928) helped to make Mama's last years more comfortable than they would otherwise have been. Despite occasional twinges about the heart, which she attributed to indigestion, she seemed the very picture of health on the morning of July 28, 1929, when our French maid entered her bedroom with a breakfast tray, and found her dead. Wisely and peacefully, Mama had departed life in her sleep--but that was not how I saw things then. For at the hour when her death occurred, Myra and I had been drinking at a Baltimore speakeasy called The Bookstore, and enjoying H. L. Mencken's impromptu piano-playing.

I was left with a surfeit of guilt none the less severe for being irrational. Perhaps I was the ultimate Mama's Boy, but I had lost my best and oldest friend; I blamed myself for not being with her at her passing, and was inconsolable.

Knowing she would not want to lie in Dad's vicinity, I bought her a plot of her own at the other end of town, and a red granite headstone carven with forget-me-nots. As she was being laid to rest, I wept so loudly as to cause much annoyance to the clergyman, who could not make himself heard, and embarrassment to Myra, who ordered me *sotto voce* to "act like a man, if you cannot be one."

Once the funeral was over, I sought my usual escape in sleep. I informed Myra that our prosperity was now secure; that our wealth could not help but grow exponentially; that she was provided with every luxury; that I was going to bed, and she was forbidden to wake me until nature did so.

"You mean," she replied caustically, "that you have reverted to form as an immature, puling coward in flight from reality. As usual, you think only of your own needs, and not of mine. Very well, Edward--but remember this: while you are snoring, I shall not be growing a new cherry!"

Undoubtedly my once demure bride had become coarsened by the company we kept during the Jazz Age. Shocked beyond words, I put on my nightshirt at once, and retired to Mama's room.

Well, I need not say yet again that history is full of surprises. I conked out believing that the only problem I should face on waking was continuing grief and guilt. For her part, Myra thought the life of the Twenties would go on indefinitely, and (as she confessed later) hardly bothered to listen for my first snore before

she set out to find a gigolo of the sort likely to be attracted to a well-to-do lady still on the bright side of forty.

How different things looked, when at last I awoke on a blustery day in what a wall calendar averred was March 1931! The house was cold, I was starving, and when I glanced through a window while dressing, I observed discouraged-looking men in cloth caps clustered at a nearby corner, holding up hand-lettered signs that said will work for food. What was going on?

Our maid had vanished; the house was empty. Downstairs, the icebox contained only a slab of rat-trap cheese and a loaf of stalish bread, both of which I devoured. I turned on the radio--a sort of Gothic cathedral in wood--and after listening to a new ballad I was unfamiliar with ("Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?") I heard President Hoover's voice predicting an end to the current state of economic distress "as soon as confidence can be restored."

Then the lock on the front door clicked, and Myra came in. She wore a mauve velvet cloche hat that I recognized, and a somewhat bedraggled mink stole that I had given her. Indeed, I recognized every single garment she had on! Was that possible? Had she bought nothing new in two whole years?

Catching sight of me, she rushed into my arms and began to pour out her tale of woe. It was then that I learned the truth: we owned nothing but Mama's house (as I still thought of it) and the money in Myra's purse and my wallet.

Our broker had sold out our stocks for lack of margin shortly before defenestrating himself from the forty-second floor of his building. Our Florida estate had been reclaimed by a bank which had itself failed, and the First National Bank of Burgville had collapsed, taking our savings account with it.

"Nothing is left," Myra wailed, "except this house and our knowledge of the brewer's art, which we dare not use for fear of the Feds. Oh my dear, what are we to do?"

\* \* \* \*

For once I entirely forgot about the Future: the needs of the Present were far too demanding. Past quarrels no longer seemed to mean much, either. As if we had never fought, Myra and I put our heads together to figure out a means of survival.

Fortunately I had some dollars in my other pants, so that we were able to stock the icebox, and even to buy a chunk of ice. Then we instituted a search of the house for any forgotten bits of cash, and after some hours had a great stroke of luck. In examining Mama's mattress, I found that the saving habits acquired under Dad's regime had continued into old age. She had almost a thousand dollars tucked away, and a careful examination of chairs and furniture in her bedroom yielded another two-fifty-eight-fifty.

"Good heavens!" Myra exclaimed. "Had you not been sleeping there, I would have given all her things to the Salvation Army! Oh, the saintly woman! How much we owe her!"

Yet Mama's money could not last forever, and our lives became a series of shifts. Remembering Mrs. Grunion's establishment, we began renting rooms to traveling salesmen, which brought in enough to keep food on the table. We pawned every pawnable item we did not absolutely need, and Myra became expert in buying the cheapest cuts of meat, and potatoes whose rotten spots could be cut out before boiling.

In searching the house yet again, I came across Dr. Holmes's Saber-Tooth Tiger fang, which gave me a thought. I took it down to the Museum of Science and History, introduced myself to Dr. Holmes's son, who now ran that establishment, and presented it to him for his collection.

While he was still in the weakened condition produced by gratitude, I asked dulcetly if he might be in need of a night-watchman. At first he hemmed and hawed. But when I pressed him with sob stories about a sick wife, and tales of the warm friendship between our fathers (I could hardly expect him to believe that I myself had been employed by the museum twenty years before) he gradually yielded.

"In view of the times," said young Dr. Holmes--who, except for having brown hair, and much of it, was a rotund carbon-copy of his sire--"I cannot pay much; but I trust that you will not decline two dollars for each night or day worked, for I can offer no more."

Thus, in a mere two decades my pay as a watchman had advanced by fifty cents a day. Surely H. G. Wells would have seen in that fact a small yet telling proof of the inevitability of Progress! And if that sounds cynical--well, so be it: by that time, I had a lot to be cynical about.

How strange it felt that night to stretch out upon my old bench--to see the white bones of the Megatherium glistening palely in the darkness--to be reunited with my old friends the lion and the dromedary, both considerably more moth-eaten than in times past.

In wandering the halls next evening, I found that the passenger pigeon, by getting itself devoured by mice, had demonstrated anew its species'™ strange lust for extinction. In the Great Hall of Progress, a water-cooled machine gun had taken the place of the Maxim, hinting that humanity was advancing in its own peculiar manner--or perhaps preparing to go the way of the pigeon. Shaking my head, I thought of the visions of the Future that had filled my head. Where was Peace, with some nations already arming for another war? Where was Prosperity, amid universal poverty? At least, I told myself, I was now free of illusions--I was a realist, cold, strong, cynical, and ready to confront the harshness of Fate!

"My head is bloody but unbowed!" I shouted, waking echoes throughout the Museum.

Then I rolled up my coat, placed it under my head for a pillow, wound up my alarm clock, and plunged gratefully back into that Nescience from which I had so unwisely awakened.

Through my paltry job and the miserable rents we obtained from the salesmen, Myra and I survived until 1933 when the Noble Experiment of Prohibition came to an unlamented end. Then we mortgaged our house, bought new brewing equipment, installed it in an abandoned warehouse and began to teach ourselves once again the art of brewmanship.

Our first batches of Fogarty's Finest Foam were quite dreadful, but people were so desperate to escape the harsh realities of the Depression that they would have drunk animal urine, only provided it was alcoholic. Indeed, when I began peddling our product, the bartender of a Greenmount Avenue saloon unwisely took a mouthful, spat it out and roared, "*Take dis, and put it back inna hawse where ya got it!*"

"You can have it at half price," I said hastily.

"Okay, gimme twenny cases," he replied.

I resigned again from the museum, and in the course of three years or so Myra and I rebuilt a thriving business. We cleared the mortgage, ousted our boarders, and began to enjoy the comfortable life of those fortunate enough to have money in a Depression.

Everything was so cheap--and by now Myra was so skilled at making it even cheaper! For a few dollars she hired skilled carpenters and painters to redo our dilapidated dwelling, and a talented gardener put the grounds in order for nothing but a week's supply of roast beef sandwiches.

Yet the hard years had forever marked my wife. In the process of pinching pennies and tormenting dimes, Myra had so toughened that scarcely a fleck of the girl I had wed remained, except for the temper and rough tongue.

She had become a hard-eyed harridan, her hair graying and her lips ever compressed into a thin line. Crow's-feet appeared around her eyes, and a long groove descended from each nostril to the corners of her unsmiling mouth. She ruthlessly broke a feeble attempt by our workers to strike, and she ruled me, the house, and the brewery with an iron hand.

Her politics surged rightward. She loathed Hitler as a troublemaker but admired Mussolini, remarking on several occasions that we needed him in Washington in place of That Man in the White House.

"Let us not forget, my dear, that FDR ended Prohibition," I protested feebly.

"I suppose if you searched, you could find that the Devil himself has done one good deed." She then launched into a denunciation of New Deal policies so bitter that I was happy to take refuge in bed and sleep another year or two. But before I dropped off, she had one last thing to say, and said it.

"Someday," she declared presciently, "That Man will connive us into another war, the next time those wretched Europeans decide to blow things up."

As usually happens, it was the realist, Myra, who saw the future most clearly. In 1940, with war already raging on several continents, Congress voted a new draft. I was forty-six and too old for active service--only I didn't look too old; I looked as if I were still in my twenties, which in a sense I was. I knew that medical tests would show that I had the physiology of a young man, exposing me to charges of fraud and draft evasion.

Once again I sought refuge in sleep. Myra--now assuming the character of my mother--visited the draft board to explain that her son was a terminal case following an attack of encephalitis, which had left me in a profound coma. Again a doctor was dispatched, and finding no detectable heartbeat or respiration, and my body temperature at 33 degrees, he made out a death certificate that caused Selective Service to drop me forever from its rolls. When I awoke in 1942 and saw this document for the first time, I was overcome by a most extraordinary emotion. How many people have ever had the experience of being simultaneously alive and dead? To be here and yet not here; to coexist in Time and in Eternity; to be able to prove one's nonexistence through an official document, in a world where only official documents can prove one's existence anyway!

*How marvelous!* I thought--entirely missing the hidden danger lurking in that bland official form.

\* \* \* \*

I slept through most of the emergency.

But from time to time I woke, and after having a bath and eating a few disgusting wartime meals ("What's this?" "Spam." "What is Spam?" "Watch out! If you insist on knowing, I may tell you!"), I was left with idle time on my hands.

I had to keep out of sight, so that no War Department spies or FBI men could spot a corpse out for a stroll, and devoted my awake time to studying the course of the war. As I caught up on the newspapers, listened to the exciting news the radio brought from the battlefronts, and absorbed the messages of wartime prophets, I found my ancient idealism rekindling.

Yes, it had taken longer than I'd expected, and millions had had to die, but at last it seemed the glorious Future might be coming to birth. I listened to Winston Churchill promise that once the Nozzies were

destroyed the world would move "into the broad, sunlit uplands." I didn't know exactly what that meant, and maybe Winnie didn't either, but it sounded like a journey I wanted to make. Why does war always bring garish hopes of better times to come? Surely it must be the suffering. People think: if we endure all this, better times *must* lie ahead! In logic I think this is called the Pathetic Fallacy--or if not, it should be. Yet during a war, logic is buried even quicker than mercy, decency, and truth.

Touched anew by the flame of prophecy, I asked Myra to buy me some writing materials at the drugstore the next time she went to obtain hair dye and cosmetics. She brought me a Blue Horse notebook, and I began making notes for a Great Book I planned to write in my spare time. The notebook lies at my hand as I write this memoir--its foolscap pages brittle and yellow--its covers cracked and peeling--its iconic horse eyeing me with a gentle and quizzical gaze.

*The greatest of wars signals the end of all wars*, I began. For several embarrassing pages I went on about the coming triumph of the Four Freedoms, the reborn League of Nations that would suppress any act of aggression almost before it started, and the enduring friendship between the United States and the Soviet Union that would guarantee world peace for centuries to come!

Even in 1944, I must have found this stuff tiresome. For suddenly--on page three--the dithyramb is interrupted by the underlined words, *What am I to do about Myra?*

How well I remember asking myself that question. And how well I remember making the mistake of answering it in writing. My wife was not only dictatorial, she had gotten long in the tooth. With my desire for her waning, if not dead, I wanted to divorce her as soon as the war was over, pension her off in decent fashion, and find myself a young wife, precisely as I had imagined doing a generation earlier.

Oh, I expected Myra to be unreasonable about it. For years I had watched her jealousy increase with every gray hair that sprouted on her head, until the mere attentions of a waitress to me at a nightspot produced a torrent of denunciation when we reached home. I understood that she deeply resented, even as she desired, my youthful body, which she could not but contrast with her own--at fifty, sagging, spotty and graying--whatever dyes and oils and creams she might apply to it.

But the gap between us was wider than mere appearance. I didn't only look in my late twenties: I had all the needs, passions, and cravings of a twenty-something, as well as the fecklessness and naivet that had dogged me throughout life. So far from being the cynic I imagined, I still believed that ultimately everything would come out more or less as I wanted it to.

Myra--I learned to my sorrow--had no such delusion. She was far too intelligent not to realize that the future I had forecast so long ago during our honeymoon in St. Michael's, was now fast approaching reality. She could not hold me for long, but she could at least make sure that no other woman took her place.

I provoked the disaster myself by jotting into the notebook a draft letter I planned to insert in a local Agony Column after ditching Myra. In those days, one could not advertise for "a hot dwarf to chill with" and similar exotic comforts, such as I see in the papers today. No, my proposed advertisement--I'm looking at it as I write--said only *Prosperous Gentleman, recently divorced, seeks honorable union with attractive and warm-hearted Young Lady*.

Feeling the urge to sleep another year or two, I rolled the notebook into a cylinder and locked it into a strongbox with a few other items which I foolishly imagined to be exclusively my own--a locket containing Mama's picture, the first dollar I had ever earned, and a bit of mild pornography that helped me take care of my own needs when Myra was not in the mood for sex.

Yet while I was unconscious, she could obtain the key, learn my pitiful secrets, and decide in leisure what

to do about them--and about me.

\* \* \* \*

I've always liked organ music. One of our few luxuries during Dad's unlamented reign was a pump organ in the parlor, where Mama, at the end of her long hard day, was permitted to soothe her master (and enchant her son) by playing tunes she had learned in her youth.

I used to think that if upon my deathbed I heard an organ playing "The Lost Chord" or "Lavender's Blue" or "Reuben, Reuben" or "The Vale of Tralee" or "Love's Old Sweet Song," I'd know I had arrived in Heaven--or if not, in some perfectly agreeable corner of Hell. As an adult I went to recitals at Baltimore Cathedral, or drove down snaky and traffic-throttled Route 1 to Washington to hear Bach and Buxtehude played in one of the churches along Sixteenth Street. With this background, I was not at first disturbed when, waking from the last installment of my wartime snooze early in 1946, I heard the muted notes of an organ playing Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring."

I lay there in the familiar state of sleep paralysis, unable to move a muscle, and for once not inclined to do so. How familiar it all was--how many times I'd experienced it--how sure I felt that in time life would return to my ice-cold limbs!

A soft light bathed my closed eyelids. The sweet attar of flowers touched my nostrils. Deep down and seemingly far away, I could hear the infinitely slow pulsing of my heart, the tempo of its syncopated rhythm gradually, oh so gradually increasing, *ka ... thump, ka ... thump, ka ... thumpathumpa.*

But as feeling slowly returned, a sense of unease began to come with it. The bed where I lay was strangely narrow. The mattress, though soft, was very thin with something hard as a board under it. The pillow was also thin, and I was tasting something like a very dry cracker in my mouth. Strangest of all, when my eyes at last were ready to open, they were unable to do so--something glued the lids down.

I realized that I was wearing a suit--in bed, a suit?--only it was but half a suit. Up top I was well attired, with the edge of a starched collar pinching my neck and the knot of a necktie lodged against my Adam's apple. My hands lay folded over the buttons of a double-breasted jacket. Yet below the waist I was wearing only drawers, while my legs and feet were entirely bare. Meantime the music had stopped. A mooring, clergymanish sort of voice began to speak of my excellent qualities--of my abiding Christian faith (which was news to me)--of my deep love for my mother and my wife (which was at least half true)--of the pity of my being struck down well short of the Biblical threescore and ten. But such was the will of God, and unsearchable were His counsels, His ways past finding out. Amen.

At this point my mind awoke fully. Unfortunately, my body remained immobile. I strained to speak but could not; to move a limb, a hand, a finger, but could not. My spirit hurled itself vainly against the dull, unresponsive walls of flesh like an animal in a trap.

For an instant I felt a flicker of hope--someone bent over me. I recognized the perfume--it was Myra, wearing a dab of her favorite scent, called My Sin. She was weeping; her tears struck my cheeks; she thrust something under my pillow and whispered, "Good-bye, my dearest. If only you had understood my needs, and loved me as I love you, things would never have come to this."

She pressed her lips against my unresponsive ones. And then, ultimate horror! The light faded from my eyelids and a heavy lid closed above me. I fainted in sheer terror.

How long I was "out" I do not know. Maybe hours. When I woke, the coffin rested unmoving, so the burial had been accomplished, no doubt in that same pompous mausoleum where Dad and a dozen former Fogartys had been laid before me. My body was now mobile, for all the good it did me. I peeled the wax from my eyelids, and removed from my mouth a piece of cardboard meant to hold my lower jaw

in place.

Then I strained at the coffin lid; I might as well have tried to lift a mountain. And even if I escaped the box, I would still be sealed in a marble crypt. I ceased to struggle, fearing to use up whatever air remained, and tried to think what could have brought me to this desperate pass.

My hands restlessly moved about, as if searching for an answer, and found under the pillow (still rolled into a cylinder) the Blue Horse notebook--Myra's accusation; Myra's farewell.

Far too late, I realized the hidden danger in that death certificate. Besides her, no one on Earth knew my secret. While I was in deep hibernation, any undertaker would take me for a corpse--and since a doctor had certified me dead, I could be buried. All that Myra had needed to do was erase the date of death, and enter the date she selected for my demise.

So this was my glorious Future! Though I'd lived for fifty years, I'd been conscious for considerably less than half of that. How brief had been the time when I was truly alive--and now I had to die!

I lay still, struggling to quell the panic that could only hasten my doom. And as I did, a cold and thoroughly adult determination took form. Whatever happened, I resolved not to perish gasping and clawing at the silk-clad roof just above my face. Somehow, somehow I would survive, and bring justice to my murderess!

I began taking breaths as shallow and widely spaced as possible. Little by little I felt my heartbeat begin to slow, cold again to invade my limbs. How many times I had fled from reality into sleep--and here I was, finding refuge from the most terrible trouble I ever faced by plunging deep, deep into the little death of hibernation.

\* \* \* \*

I came to in a kind of twilight, without the least idea where I was, feeling vaguely that a vast quantity of time had been erased.

I was desperately hungry. When--after the usual long, slow process of awakening--my eyes fluttered open at last, I was baffled to see close above me a dim ceiling, from which white strips hung down, moving in a vagrant current of air.

I heard also a grinding sound coming from someplace nearby, and a chorus of shrill squeaks. Something plucked at my left shoulder, tearing cloth, and the dusty smell of rotted fabric filled my narrow space. I moved convulsively--another chorus of squeaks followed, and a rapid scabble of claws--and I was left alone. The graveyard rats were unused to corpses that moved.

Still confused, filled with a horror of I did not know exactly what, I struck out with both elbows against the sides of the coffin--and the left side, where the rats had been gnawing, split!

In place of the dim trickle of light seeping through the rat-hole, a kind of pale dawn now filled the box. With it came memory--of Myra's crime, of my burial, of everything I had undergone--and I struck again and again at my prison. Myra had been as frugal in buying my coffin as in everything else, and the cheap wood weakened by dry-rot and gnawed by rodents crumbled under my blows. Soon I was able to crawl out--into what looked like the Day of Resurrection!

In chilly autumn sunlight I was lying on the ground beside my broken coffin. After the frenzied effort to escape, my muscles twitched and quivered like the legs of new-dead frogs. Before me stood the family mausoleum, with fogarty inscribed over the door. The iron gate had disappeared. The marble crypts had been broken open and their contents removed, by what unspeakable power I could not imagine.



Nearby, a large bag of some transparent material bulged with femurs, ribs, ulnas, and staring skulls. All around me I saw other violated graves lying open to the elements. Were the preachers right after all? Had the Trump of Doom sounded?

Then a strange-looking orange machine came chugging and clicking into view, followed by a truck of more familiar design. As I watched, the forklift scooped up a tarnished bronze casket and deposited it in the back of the larger vehicle, upon a pile of other caskets. Hastily I retrieved my notebook--I think with a confused idea of using it as evidence against my murderess--and crept behind the Fogarty tomb. The clothing I wore was not only inadequate, it was falling apart with every movement I made; disintegrating, turning to lint and powder. Naked save for dust and shreds of tattered cloth, I huddled in a spot of sunlight, clutching my notebook and shivering.

I stared for a long time uncomprehending at a big colorful sign affixed to stanchions nearby. *This Area Being Cleared for I-95 Expansion*, it explained. *All Human Remains Will Be Reverently Reinterred*.

I whispered, "But you will not reinter me."

Then I heard a sound and turned. An enormous Negro man in workman's attire was staring at me. He tipped back his helmet, which seemed to be made of celluloid, or maybe that miracle substance called plastic.

"What the hell you doin' here?" he demanded. "Where the hell you come from? Why the hell you runnin' round bare-ass in a condemned graveyard, anyways?"

Every question was cogent, yet I could answer none of them. I could only whisper, "I'm cold. I'm hungry."

He approached, bent down, picked me up like a child, and carried me back to the truck. There, he and the other workmen wrapped me in odds and ends of their own clothing, poured hot coffee into me, and called--on a telephone *without wires!*--for a curious-looking square vehicle with the word AMBULANCE spelled backward across the hood. Why, I wondered as it drove me away, backward?

\* \* \* \*

And so I came to Maryland General Hospital, the ER, the ICU, and the locked ward.

I have absolutely no complaint about my incarceration; the hospital saved my life, and gave me time to get my bearings. Through the hospital library I was able to catch up on the events that had taken place during my epic snooze--the wars, revolutions, and massacres, the scientific discoveries and adventures in space, and the vast accumulation of trivia that had filled the last five-and-some-odd decades.

All this was dumped randomly into my head, like odds and ends of nutriment thrown into a hobo's cookpot--large events and small equally hard to comprehend. Could it be that movie stars now routinely appeared in films *stark naked*? That H-bombs gave our notoriously unpredictable species the power to destroy all life on Earth? That those great pals of World War II, Russia and the USA, had almost liquidated each other in something called the Cold War? That men had left footprints on the moon? That Negroes could vote, even in Mississippi? That homosexuals were demanding to be treated like human beings?

Wow! I thought. You never know.

Despite all the good that Maryland General did me, soon I was anxious to leave it. The air in the ward was none too savory, the company none too stimulating. And as for the food--well, the microwave was new to me: in past times only a really bad cook could produce meals that were simultaneously frozen and

overcooked. Now, owing to the ceaseless march of progress, anybody could do it in a few seconds.

Hoping for release, I developed a useful amnesia about precisely what personal problems had brought me into the graveyard near naked and starving. Otherwise I exerted myself to appear sane. Since I was clearly no danger to myself or anybody else, I might have been discharged except for the old, old problem that had shaped my whole life. My sleep habits fascinated the "shrinks" (as everybody called them), and they kept delaying my release in order to study me.

Hospitals love to awaken people at ungodly hours, but in me they met their match. The doctors speculated wildly about my condition--was this catatonia? Narcolepsy? Catalepsy? Some other, unknown lepsy? I feared to reveal the truth, for they might take my claim to be a Hibernating Man as a sign of lunacy, and keep me locked up indefinitely.

Finally a sympathetic young resident asked me if I would like to volunteer for tests at the Johns Hopkins Sleep Study Laboratory. Hardly had the words escaped him when I cried out, "YES!"

Next morning, the notebook--my only possession--was solemnly returned to me. Apparently nobody had bothered to read it. I received clothing collected for indigents by some charitable association, and an ambulance took me to Hopkins. There I learned with amazement that I could earn a modest stipend merely by going to bed with wires glued to various parts of my anatomy!

Eagerly I signed the necessary papers, and retired to a quiet cubicle to do what I had always done best. Soon I became the star of the laboratory.

Sophisticated tests revealed that in deep sleep my body effortlessly recycles urea, accounting both for the fact that I don't die of uremic poisoning and that I am able to synthesize new proteins continuously, thus maintaining muscle mass. Like wintering bears, I go through periodic contractions that revive the muscle tone lost in sleep. And I perform chemical manipulations with glucose and lipids that filled the staff with admiration.

How did this curious mutation come about? The researchers think that I am the end-product of an evolution possibly centuries in the making. The critical genes dwell on the X chromosome, so perhaps they are transmitted by the female, but only become activated in the male--an insight that explains so much about Mama, her brothers, and myself that I accepted it at once.

Of course I said nothing about how long I'd lived--there is a limit to what even scientists can be made to believe. Yet how much I owe those earnest, humorless people in their white lab coats! At long last I felt I understood the central mystery of my being, and at last--in the phrase now so popular--achieved closure on the traumas of my early life.

Filled with new and sober self-confidence, I signed myself out of Hopkins, while agreeing to return for further tests. It was time to try my wings. I hit the street with a few dollars in my pocket and no clear idea how I was to survive. As in my far-off youth, I needed to make my living--but now I had an additional aim: to seek justice from the woman who had tried to murder me, if I was not too late.

\* \* \* \*

On a warm May day, an intern dropped me off in the middle of town. For hours I stood at the corner of Charles and Baltimore Streets, leaning against a post and gawking.

One thing became clear at once: the pace of life had picked up. People rushed by like the flickering figures in a Charlie Chaplin comedy--heading where, and to do what, I couldn't imagine.

Their attire dismayed me. Young people in particular looked ghastly, wearing outfits that seemed to have

been blown on them by a passing tornado. I did not see one single woman who was properly dressed--not one. Here they were, displaying themselves in public with no gloves, no hats, no veils, no nylons, no makeup worthy of the name!

The flashiest sported haircuts like mini-haystacks, for which I later learned they paid enormous sums to establishments with names like Hair We Go Again. What had happened to the feathery short bobs of the twenties and thirties, the shimmering long ones of wartime?

And the gentlemen! On a warm day like this one, where were the white linen suits, the two-toned shoes, the straw skimmers? Had the Destroying Angel wiped out every stitch of seersucker on the planet? And the Panama hats, had they all been blown away by the winds of change?

The traffic was fearsome. The little cars were certainly sleeker than the flivvers of yore, but the big ones were gross and boxy abominations. Where had all the Duesenbergs gone? Where were the Hispano-Suizas, the Packards, the Lincoln Zephyrs, the tonneaus with stiff uniformed chauffeurs up front and tiny old ladies perched in the rear like stuffed birds?

In place of Elegance, there was Inflation. A *Sunpaper* cost me more than a meal had during the Depression, while a meal cost more than a hero of World War II earned in a month. President Roosevelt himself would have been delighted to take home every day what a fleabag hotel charged me for a room with one dirty window and a vista of an airshaft!

Clearly, I had to make money, and quick. Of course I turned to the ancient and noble science of beermaking. Fogarty's Finest Foam had vanished from the phone book. But microbreweries had seized an important niche in the market by the perhaps unfair expedient of making a superior product. In my first shot at seeking employment, I got a job with the Edgar Allan Poe Beer Company, whose brew patriotic Baltimoreans swill by the pint, gallon, and cubic meter at Orioles and Ravens games.

Brewing had changed greatly in fifty years, but fortunately the Poe company followed current retro fashion by proudly doing everything the old way. I knew a great deal about doing things the old way, and my skills quickly raised me to the post of Assistant Braumeister, with good prospects for promotion to the highest technical post when the incumbent retires.

With my livelihood secured, I began to seek another kind of closure. I visited Mama's grave, shed a tear, cut the weeds and planted a rose. Then I embarked upon a darker quest.

At the Pratt Free Library on Mulberry Street, a black lady ruling the desk introduced me to the Internet. Through it I began hunting Myra. Though my mind was filled with thoughts of vengeance, I steeled myself for disappointment: in all likelihood, she had long since died.

Well, I can only say that my life has been a series of surprises. The black lady helped me to enter Google, I tapped in FOGARTY, MYRA MEANS--and behold! what a rush of information!

Clippings told of Myra the businesswoman, extracting fifteen million dollars from a suds conglomerate when she sold out Fogarty's Finest Foam; Myra the politician, organizing the harridan vote for Richard Nixon; Myra the philanthropist, setting up a foundation to promote right-wing causes; Myra the minor celebrity, visiting the White House at the age of ninety to meet Ronald Reagan, and remarking of the seventy-five-year-old president, "I always did like â€˜em young!"

That's true. She did. I remember. The most interesting item was only a few months old: a clipping from a Nell Gwynn County weekly, headlined *Oldest County Resident Feted at Nursing Home*. Myra was still alive and kicking--vigorously--at the age of 107. "County Executive John Mudd Mumford presented the ancient lady a Key to the County, whereupon she demanded, â€˜Who let this hamhock in,

anyway?â€™™"

Yes, whoever or whatever Google was, it had the right Myra Fogarty. The following Saturday, I set out to find her.

\* \* \* \*

A county phone book gave me the address of the nursing home, and I traveled there by bus through endless suburbs where Burgville, Baltimore, Annapolis, and Washington had all merged into one formless whole.

At the end I found an anonymous building of poured stone, festive with blooming impatiens on the outside and eye-watering with the scent of disinfectant within. To a coolly feminine young blond minding the desk I explained that I was Myra's grandson, and presented a newly purchased ID to prove it. I said that a long estrangement within the family had separated me from Grandma, but now I wished to feast my eyes upon this ancient limb of my family tree.

"No other relative has ever visited her," said the blond, and would have put on a look of deepest suspicion, had his curiously masklike face been capable of expression.

"I think I should tell you, sir," he went on, "that all Mrs. Fogarty's wealth has been signed over to AFLAAF, the America First, Last and Always Foundation, which pays her expenses here."

"I am totally uninterested in her money," I assured him.

He gave me a yeah-right glance, pointed at the elevator, and said, like a guide to the Inferno, "Level nine."

In this Hell you went up instead of down. I stepped from the elevator into as depressing a sight as I've ever seen. About thirty ancients, bundled into wheelchairs, were watching a television without a picture. Only multicolored snow, and the paralyzingly loud soundtrack of a hip-hop program called "Phat City."

Behind a counter, a nurse wearing earphones and a Walkman was performing the complex medical procedure known as "paperwork." I had to tap her arm to get her attention; she removed the earphones and shouted, "YOU THE TV GUY?"

I explained myself in a roar, and she pointed me down a liver-colored hallway between doorways with opaque plastic curtains. At the very last of these, I pushed aside the curtain and entered.

A heart monitor was beeping. Something like the fossil of a large ancient bird lay on its side in the bed, covered with a blue paper sheet. Myra's head was almost hairless. I drew near, reached out and touched my wife's dry, papery face.

Her eyes opened. One was a frozen blue puddle, but the other focused on me. Her gums moved: perhaps she was trying to ask who let this hamhock in.

"I am Edward, your husband," I intoned in a sepulchral voice. "I have come for you, Myra."

The eye stared wildly; then, like its glassy companion, rolled up so that only two half moons of yellowish white remained visible. The heart monitor hesitated for a moment, then emitted a thin batlike shriek.

At the nursing station, a warning light was blinking unheeded. As I entered the elevator, the nurse shouted, "SO HOW'S YA GRAMMAW?"

"HIBERNATING!" I shouted back.

"SHE'S A PISTOL, THAT OLD BROAD!" howled the nurse as the elevator doors were closing. Had I been in charge of arrangements, those words would have been inscribed on Myra's tombstone.

\* \* \* \*

Since then--little by little, with much twisting and turning--I've accommodated myself to my new world. After all, it's neither worse nor better than all my other worlds. Only different.

Nowadays I rent a small condo on Baltimore's Inner Harbor. On weekends I like to enjoy a long, slow breakfast while gazing over the water toward the brightening East.

Have I lost my old urge to emulate the snoring dormouse? No, I have not. My friends the doctors supplied me with wakeup pills, but after experiencing some rather frightening side effects, I stopped taking them. Then two modern inventions--the clock-radio and rock'n'roll--solved my old problem. In my thickly insulated bedroom I set the radio every night to a heavy-metal station, the alarm to 5:00 a.m. Never yet have I been late to work, nor waked to find myself in another century, nor in the grave.

At first I adopted this expedient merely in order to keep my job. But there's more to my new lifestyle than that.

On this quiet Saturday, the pleasure craft--masts gently swaying--lie moored along the quays in a pearly mist just touched by the sun. Gulls soar, dip, and cry out in harsh voices. The low murmur of traffic is the sound of the city's heart awakening.

There's something about the transparency of morning light that gives cool perspectives upon life and death. Maybe I would have matured sooner if I hadn't slept through all those dawns.

Nothing about the Twentieth Century worked out as I foresaw. Never will I write the Great Book I once planned. Never will I reveal the secrets of human destiny, because I'll never know them. If anybody asks me to predict the Future--no one has--I can reply only, "It won't be what you expect."

Prophets, I've found, are generally without honor. And for very good reason, too.

Looking back, I'm inclined to think that hibernation, though proper for bears, toads, etc., is not a desirable mutation for a human being. It becomes too easily a refuge from--as Dr. Lynwood put it--Life and Duty.

It's true that I snoozed my way through a series of wars that might have killed me. But I also slept through humanity's moments of joy and triumph. I took no part in the great struggles of the century, against fascism in its many forms, against racism and tyranny and ignorance and delusion.

I did not share the adventure of the moon-landing--as all the waking world did, at least vicariously--and by avoiding so much I remained a good bit of a fool, and only narrowly escaped a horrible death. What I want now is what I've never had: an ordinary life in the present. Henceforth, my business is with the here and now.

After pouring my third coffee, I unfold a Washington paper that I subscribe to solely for its thick Personals section.

My eye flits down the array of longing ladies. "DWF ISO hairy-chested Capricorn, 25-40, with whom to prance and gambol in the free, fresh wind." Well, I hope she finds her goat, but he won't be me. Nor am I drawn to the Amazons who dress in vinyl, nor the nymphs who relish water-sports.

And then I read: "WWF, full figure, 2 grown children, an old-fashioned girl who loves organ music, ISO a gentle, caring WM with whom to enjoy fully the ripe autumn of life."

A scenario flickers before my mind ... an ample, motherly sort of woman ... a first meeting at a Georgetown bistro, to show her I'm not an axe murderer ... then perhaps a three-way date with Bach at the National Cathedral. If we get along, a night at some plush hostelry in the Capital ... a decision to live together as modern people do, with or without matrimony ... a small, quiet home in some spot convenient to both Baltimore and Washington--say Olde Burgville, whose refurbished Victorian townhouses are again fashionable....

After all, I'm only an hundred and eight years old. Don't I have needs, too?