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and

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A Wild Surmise

"Do you feel that you are dreaming now, Mr. Hooten?" Dr. Scott asked gently.

Timothy Hooten evaded the psychiatrist's eyes.

He fingered the smooth leather of the chair arms, found the sensation unsatisfactory, and turned his head to gaze out the window at the Empire State's tower.

"It's like a dream, isn't it?" he said evasively.

"What is?"

"That." Hooten nodded at the needle-Eke mooring mast on

the top of the tower. "Imagine mooring a dirigible to that thing. They never did, did they? It's just the sort of thing that would happen in a dream. You know. Big plans, and then somehow everybody forgets about it and starts something new. Oh, I don't know. Things get unreal."

Solipsism, Dr. Scott thought, but suspended judgment.

"What things?" he murmured.

"You, for example," Hooten said. "You've got the wrong shape." ;

"Can you amplify that, Mr. Hooten?"

"Well, I don't know that I can," Hooten said, looking with fault alarm at his own hands. "I've got the wrong shape too, you see."

"Do you know what the right shape is?"

Hooten closed his eyes and thought hard. A look of astonishment passed fleetingly across his face. He scowled. Dr. Scott, studying him closely, made a note on a desk pad. "No," Hooten said, opening his eyes very wide and assuming a negativistic attitude. "I haven't the least idea."

"Don't you want to tell me?"

"I-ah-I don't know. I simply don't know."

"Why did you come to see me, Mr. Hooten?"

"My doctor said I should. So did my wife."

"Do you feel they were right?"

"Personally," Hooten said, with an air of quiet triumph, "I don't feel that it makes the least difference what I do in a dream. Imagine walking on two

legs!" He paused, startled. "Maybe I shouldn't have said that," he added.

Dr. Scott smiled slightly.

"Suppose you tell me a little more about the dream-"

"About now, you mean? It's just that everything's wrong. Even talking. Wiggling the tongue this way." Hooten fingered his jaw exploringly, and Dr. Scott made another note. "I'm dreaming, that's all."

"Are you ever awake?"

"Only when I'm asleep," Hooten said. "How strange that sounds. I wonder what I mean."

"This is the dream world?" Dr. Scott asked.

"Of course."

"Can you tell me what your problem is, Mr. Hooten?"

"I haven't any problems," Hooten said, surprised. "If I had, they'd just be dream problems, wouldn't they?"

"Do you have problems when you're-awake?"

"I'm sure I must have," the patient said. He looked thoughtful. "It seems to me I've got a psychiatrist in the real world, too. That's where my conscious mind is. This, of course, is my unconscious."

"Can you tell me a little more about that?"

Hooten closed his eyes again.

"I'll try," he said. "When I'm asleep, you see, when I'm dreaming, the conscious mind is unconscious. That's here and now. Well, in the real, waking world-the other world-I think my psychiatrist is trying to probe into my unconscious. What seems to you like my waking mind."

"Very interesting," Dr. Scott said. "This other psychiatrist, now, could you describe him? What kind of a man is he?"

"Man?" Hooten said, opening his eyes again. He hesitated. Then he shook his head. "I don't know, exactly. I can't remember what things are like in the real world. Different. That I know. Quite, quite different." He spread out his hand and regarded it thoughtfully. He turned it over and looked at the lines of his palm. "My, my," he murmured. "What won't they think of next."

"Try to remember," Dr. Scott urged.

"I have tried. You dream-people keep telling me to try. But it's no use. I must have a block in my mind," he finished triumphantly.

"We must try to find out what this block is, then. I'd like to try a little test, Mr. Hooten, if you don't mind. I'm going to show you a picture, and I want you to tell me a story about it."

"Make up a story, you mean?"

"Exactly," Dr. Scott said, and handed Hooten a large card, on which were inartistically depicted two ambiguous and semi-shapeless figures.

"How strange," Hooten said. "Their bones are inside them."

"Go on."

"They're two psychiatrists," Hooten murmured. "Anyone could see that. One's awake and one's asleep. One's real and one isn't. They're both treating me. One is named Scott and the other-the other-"

"Go on," Scott said.

"-is named-"

"What is his name?"

"Rasp," Hooten said faintly. "Dr. Rasp. I have an appointment with him at two o'clock in the morning, when I'm awake."

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"Do you feel that you are dreaming now?" Dr. Rasp telepathized gently.

Timothy Hooten evaded the psychiatrist's faceted gaze. He swung his oval body around to stare out the sky-slit at the distant polyhedron of the Quatt Wunkery. Then he waved his antennae gently and clicked his mandibles.

"It's like a dream, isn't it?" he said evasively, though naturally not audibly. "Imagine building a Wunkery simply to pleat Quatts. Of course they never showed up. That sort of thing could happen only in a dream. Oh, you can't convince me; This is a dream. Imagine walking around on all sixes."

^~^Dr. Rasp scratched a memorandum on his left wing-case.

"How do you think you should walk?" he asked.

"I wonder," Hooten said. "I do it all the time when I'm awake, but this is one of those recurrent dreams where I seem to get amnesia. I've tried and tried to remember what it's like, but it's no use. It's like trying to pleat Quatts in a Wunkery. Oh, how idiotic."

"Just what is your problem, Mr. Hooten?"

"Well, this absurd body I'm wearing, for one thing. My bones are in the wrong place." Hooten's faceted eyes glittered in a startled fashion. "Did I just say that? A minute ago, I mean? It reminds me of something."

"No," Dr. Rasp said. "What does it remind you of?"

Hooten irritably scratched his belly with a hind foot. There was a sharp, scraping sound.

"I've forgotten," he said.

"I would like to try a little test," Dr. Rasp said. "I'm going to project a

thought, and I would like you to tell me what it makes you think of. Are you ready?"

"I suppose so," Hooten said.

Dr. Rasp projected a curly nebular thought Hooten studied it.

"That's my conscious mind," he pointed out presently. "It

might be an Angry Curler-the kind that live in the Antipodes, I mean-but what it reminds me of is my conscious mind, because of the psychiatrist swimming around in the middle of it."

"Psychiatrist?" Dr. Rasp inquired, surprised.

"He's treating my conscious mind-I think," Hooten explained uncertainly. "He lives in the waking world with my conscious. You and I, Dr. Rasp, inhabit my unconscious, here and now. This other doctor-he's treating both of us."

"This other doctor does not exist," Dr. Rasp telepathized rather sourly. Then he caught himself and went on in a more professional tone, "Tell me about him, Mr. Hooten. What does this psychiatrist look like?"

"Tartuffe," said Hooten, to the surprise of Dr. Rasp, who had never heard the name. "No, Tartan. No, Scott. That's it. A psychiatrist named Dr. Scott who lives in my conscious mind. I have an appointment with him at two P.M. tomorrow, when I'm awake."

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Timothy Hooten looked out the window at the Empire State Building. He was taking a word association test. "Home," Dr. Scott said. "Estivate," Hooten replied. "Sex." "Eggs." "Mother" "Larva." "Psychiatrist." "Bugs," Hooten said. Dr. Scott paused. "Larva," he said. "Clouds of glory," Hooten said briskly. "Trailing." "Bugs," Dr. Scott said. "Awake." "Glory."

"Nuptial flight," Hooten said rather dreamily. Dr. Scott made a note. "Bugs," he said. "Appointment. Two A.M. Dr. Rasp."

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"This word man," Dr. Rasp said. "It keeps cropping up in your mind. Exactly what does it mean?"

"I haven't the least idea," Hooten told him, looking through the sky-slit at the Quatt Wunkery.

"What does it make you think of?"

"Being awake," Hooten said.

Dr. Rasp rubbed his right mandible.

"I'd like to try a little experiment," he said. "You've been coming here for nearly twelve glitters, and we still haven't got past that block in your mind. You're resisting me, you know."

"I can't help it if I'm dreaming, can I?" Hooten demanded.

"That's the exact point. Are you trying to evade responsibility?"

"Certainly not," Hooten said with dignity. "Not when I'm awake. But I'm not awake now. You're not real. I'm not real-at least, this ridiculous body of mine isn't. And as for the Quatt Wunkery-!"

"The experiment I'd like to try," Dr. Rasp said, "is a matter of quasi-estivation. Do you know what this is?"

"Certainly," Hooten said glibly. "Hypnosis."

"I don't think I know the word," Dr. Rasp said. "What does it mean?"

"Quasi-estivation. My conscious mind blanks out and my unconscious mind cuts in."

Dr. Rasp suppressed whatever reaction he might have had to this lucid explanation. "Very well," he said, extending his antennae. "Shall we try it? Just relax. Let your wing-cases hang. Open your mandibles just a little. That's right." He crossed antennae with Hooten and looked fixedly into the patient's faceted eyes with his own. "Now you are estivating. You are in a burrow. It is warm and delightfully musty. You are curled up and estivating. Are you estivating?"

"Yes," Hooten telepathized dully.

"There is a block in your mind. Something in your mind is fighting me. Something keeps insisting that you are dreaming. In a short time I shall order you to wake up. Will you obey me?"

"Yes."

"Will you be awake then?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because you're a dream," the estivated Hooten said languidly.

"Who says so?"

"Dr. Scott."

"There is no Dr. Scott," Dr. Rasp said with great firmness. "Dr. Scott is imaginary. Your unconscious mind has created Dr. Scott, to protect itself. You do not want to find out what is really troubling you, and so you have created another psychiatrist to fight me. But he does not really exist. There are no such creatures as men. Their world is imaginary. Dr. Scott is just a censor in your mind. He is not real. Do you understand that?"

Hooten's antennae twiddled.

"Y-yes," he said reluctantly.

"Is Dr. Scott real?"

"Certainly," Hooten said. "I've got an appointment with him at two P.M. He's going to give me narcosynthesis." He added kindly, "That is a form of estivation."

There was a pause.

Then Dr. Rasp said, "You will return to this office at two P.M. You will not keep your appointment with Dr. Scott. You will undergo quasi-estivation again. Do you understand?"

"But I... yes."

"When I count to minus one you will wake up. Minus ten, minus nine...."

At minus one Hooten woke up. He looked uneasily at Dr. Rasp.

"What happened?" he inquired.

"We are making progress," the psychiatrist said. "I think it wise that we continue the treatment as soon as possible. Suppose you meet me here at two P.M.

"Two P.M.?" Hooten said. "What an unearthly hour."

"I have a reason," Dr. Rasp said.

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"I'm sorry to be late," Hooten said, coming into Dr. Scott's office. "I guess I was daydreaming or something."

"That's all right," Dr. Scott said. "Are you ready for the narcosynthesis?"

"Oh, I suppose so," Hooten said. "But I've got a funny feeling."

"What kind of a feeling?"

"That I'm beginning to wake up."

Dr. Scott looked pleased.

"Well, suppose you take off your coat and roll up your left sleeve. Lie on the couch there, that's right. Now I'm going to give you an injection, and you'll begin to feel sleepy. Simply relax. That's all you have to do."

"Ouch," Hooten said.

"That's all there is to it," Dr. Scott said, withdrawing the hypodermic. "Suppose you look at something and tell me when it begins to look blurry."

"All right," Hooten said obediently, staring out the window. "The Empire State-you know, it doesn't look right even HOW. It's got the wrong shape. Not like a Wunkery at all."

"Like a what?" Dr. Scott asked.

"A Wunkery. Dr. Rasp's sky-slit has a fine view of a-

"You know there is no such thing as a Wunkery, don't you?" DrTScott broke in with a slight touch of undoctory impatience. "Dr. Rasp is a creation of your unconscious mind. When you go to sleep you simply dream like anyone else. There is no world full of Wunkeries and Rasps. All that is just a defense against me, isn't it?"

"No," Hooten said drowsily.

Dr. Scott sighed. "Do things begin to look blurry yet?"

"No, but I'm... I'm beginning to...."

"To what?"

"To wake up," Hooten said indistinctly, and closed his eyes. "Hello, Dr. Rasp."

"There is no Dr. Rasp," Dr. Scott said in an impatient voice. "Dr. Rasp is imaginary."

"Dr. Rasp says you don't exist," Hooten murmured, his eyes shut. "Yes, Dr. Rasp...."

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Hooten opened his faceted eyes and stared through the sky-slit at the Quatt Wunkery. He shook his head dizzily. "What's the matter?" Dr. Rasp asked.

"Dr. Scott just gave me an injection of sodium pentothal," Hooten said.

The psychiatrist made a quick note on his wing-case. Then he crossed his antennae with Hooten's again and turned on the juice.

"Dr. Scott is simply a defense," he pointed out. "There is no Dr. Scott. There is no such thing as sodium pentothal. You are going to estivate now, do you hear me? You will be deeply asleep, so deeply that Dr. Scott cannot wake you up. You will obey me, not Dr. Scott. I tell you to estivate. Do you hear me?"

"Yes . . . but I'm afraid it isn't going to work very well. You see, if I estivate I'll just wake up in Dr. Scott's-

"There is no Dr. Scott. Forget Dr. Scott."

"But-

"Estivate. Estivate."

"All right. Now I'm ... oh, hello, Dr. Scott."

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Dr. Scott reached for another hypodermic and used it.

"Just relax," he said gently.

"I'm beginning to hate this," Hooten said pettishly. "I'm caught right in the middle. Something's going to give if we keep on. I don't know what, but-can't we postpone it till tomorrow and let Dr. Rasp have his innings?"

"I am your doctor," Scott pointed out. "Not Dr. Rasp. You refer Dr. Rasp to me if he tries to-"

"Oh, those antennae," Hooten murmured. "I can't-I-"

"Just relax," Dr. Scott said. "There is no Dr. Rasp."

Hooten struggled feebly. "This can't go on," he protested in a drowsy voice. "I tell you, something will have to give. I-oh, for God's sake, Dr. Rasp keeps telling me to estivate."

"Hush," Dr. Scott said, looking thoughtfully toward the hypodermics.

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"Estivate," said Dr. Rasp.

"Look out!" Hooten said wildly, struggling. "He's going to give me another shot"

Dr. Rasp curled his antennae tightly around Hooten's and poured on more juice.

"Estivate," he said, and then had a sudden idea. "You too, Dr. Scott. Do you hear me? You're going to estivate, Dr. Scott. Relax. Stop struggling. You're in a warm, comfortable, musty burrow. You're beginning to estivate, Dr. Scott. . . ."

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"Now he's trying to make you estivate," Hooten said, squirming on the couch.

Dr. Scott smiled grimly. He bent forward and fixed Hooten with a compelling gaze.

"Relax," he said. "I'm talking to you, Dr. Rasp. Relax and sleep. I'm going to give you another shot of pentothal in a moment, and that will put you to sleep. Do you hear me, Dr. Rasp?"

"Oh, God," Hooten said, blinking his eyes very rapidly indeed. "I feel as though I'm on an alternating current. What's going to happen? I warn you-we'd better stop this before-"

He squealed faintly as Dr. Scott punctured his skin with a hypodermic, filled, however, with nothing but a harmless and ineffective solution designed for psychosomatic purposes only. Hooten was already at the brink of tolerance for sodium pentothal and should have been fathoms deep long ago.

"Go to sleep, Dr. Rasp," Dr. Scott commanded in a firm, confident voice.

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"Estivate, Dr. Scott," Dr. Rasp ordered.

* * *

"Sleep."

* * *

"Estivate."

* * *

"Sleep!"

* * *

"Estivate!"

* * *

"Wow!" cried Timothy Hooten, springing to his feet with the certain conviction that something had at last, quite resoundingly, given.

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In the middle of Dr. Scott's office the air was still quivering around a buglike form that staggered on all sixes. Dr. Rasp's antennae vibrated almost to invisibility as he fixed his faceted stare in dazed disbelief upon the window, the Empire State Building, and the absurdly bipedal form of Timothy Hooten.

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Dr. Scott in a shimmer of disturbed space-time gazed in wild surmise at the figure reclining before him, all six legs curled in comfortable relaxation, faceted eyes staring. "Hallucination, of course," he told himself dizzily. "Of course, of course, of course...."

He turned his head for the reassuring sight of his own office around him and his eyes fell upon the sky-slit and the view beyond. The first glimmers of awful conviction began to dawn. He had never seen a Quatt Wunkery before.