

NAPA 214

WRITER



What my friends think I do



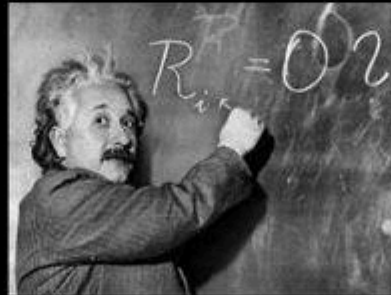
What my mom thinks I do



What society thinks I do



What publishers think I do



What I think I do



What I really do

N'APA Official Organ #214

Next deadline: 15 May 2012

N'APA is the Amateur Press Alliance for members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F). As it is distributed in PDF format, there are no dues or postage fees except as necessary for mailing paper copies. It is open to all members of the N3F within the restrictions stated below in the Rules and Regulations (copied from the last collation and updated). If there are members interested in joining who have no computer access, special arrangements are possible. Check with the official collator, who is currently Jean Lamb, who may be reached at tlambs1138@charter.net or by snail mail at 4846 Derby Place, Klamath Falls, OR, 97603, or on Facebook (I check it once a week, though).

Currently the frequency is every other month, with the deadline being on the fifteenth day of odd-numbered months. The mailing will normally be collated the following day or the closest weekend, considering Jean still has a day job. Undecided members of N3F may receive the collation without contributing until they decide one way or the other.

N'APA has been in existence for a number of years and recently transitioned from being a paper APA to an electronic one. Unfortunately there has been an interruption in its existence and only recently has been revived after three years.

#

Missing this time are—well, a lot of people. Unfortunately, this is Laurraine's last issue. If any of you know anyone you'd like to see join us, please don't hesitate to try to recruit them. And so has Sarah Harder, waaah! Come back, Little Sheba! (and if you're old enough to remember where this is from, well, heck... I do plan to issue a notice on the N3F website and in the newsletter about this apa and why we need new members.

#

Cover artwork or photos are invited from all and any members. (including from icanhazcheeseburger, heh).

Current Membership List

Member Name	First Contribution	Last Contribution	Cumulative Page Count (up to #214)
Sarah E. Harder	N'APA #190	N'APA #207	17* now gone, perhaps to return
Jean Lamb	N'APA #190	N'APA #213	271
Owen Lorion	N'APA #207	N'APA #208	7
Heath Row	N'APA #195	N'APA #205	14
David Speakman	N'APA #191	N'APA #208	46* now gone, perhaps to return
Jon D. Swartz	N'APA #190	N'APA #213	165
Jefferson P. Swycaffer	N'APA #190	N'APA #213	168
R-Laurraine Tutihasi	N'APA #190	N'APA #213	101 Final zine
Keith Walker	N'APA #191	N'APA #210	75* temporarily absent (we hope)

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Rules and Regulations

1. Every other month (January, March, May, July, September, and November), write a fanzine and send it to the Official Editor by midnight of the 15th of the month.
2. At a suggested minimum, submit at least two pages at least every other issue. Of course, more pages every issue are encouraged
3. The contents of your zine are left to your imagination. You can write about your life. You can write about your activities in fandom. You can (in fact are encouraged to) write comments to others regarding their zines from the previous issue. You are also welcome (encouraged!) to include original artwork (including cartoons). Please, do not include material copyrighted by someone else, unless it is brief excerpts or included with permission of the author/copyright holder. It's probably safer to include an article or story done by a friend or relative than something that has been professionally published.
4. The N'APA-zine will be published in PDF format, which will be distributed by email. Eventually, the zine may also be available on a secure web site, where only Neffers can access samples.
5. The Official Editor may make a snail mail version available to those members who cover the postage.
6. The use of pen names, alternate snail mail addresses (perhaps PO Boxes), or e-mail accounts devoted to N3F are suggested but not required. These are to protect you from spam and other nastiness that might be out there. It is possible that copies of the zine could be sent to persons serving time in prisons.
7. N'APA has a cap of 25 participants each mailing, in order to make it easier to read and respond to everyone. This mailing may be sent to persons who are currently serving time in prison, persons who formerly served time in prison, persons who ought to be serving time in prison, persons who may one day serve time in prison, persons who other persons think deserve to be serving time in prison, persons whom Ken Starr is trying to put in prison, persons who once drove a Subaru Impreza past a prison, persons who either once imprisoned a person or impersonated a prison, persons who can be unduly impressed by a prism, parsons who are currently serving thyme at Princeton, or Persians who are hurriedly hurling chyme that's risen.*

*I didn't make this up.

Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 214
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9 March 2012



Gearing Up for Con-Dor

Looks to be a good'un. The ConDor Committee is getting a little blasé; we're pretty much "mailing this one in." We've all been doing it for so long, we've gotten good at it. (Of course, watch the gods punish me for this hubris, and this will be the year that everything goes horribly wrong!)

Later: Nope! It was a good'un! ConDor has come and gone, and it was quite successful. I got to be one of the three judges at the Masquerade, and that was one heck of a challenge. The Masq. consisted of eight entries, several of more than one person. Trying to sort out four prizes to awards was remarkably difficult. One always dreads committing some form of injustice! Otherwise, it was the usual small SF con: discussion panels, parties, a great Art Show, a really yummy Con Suite, and a chance to chat with lots and lots and lots of fun, interesting, and/or silly people!

Robert W. Chambers

I'm still on an absurd Robert W. Chambers jag, reading everything I can find of his. And there's a lot! And it's free! Project Gutenberg is just about my best friend these days! Chambers...isn't. To be honest, I'm not sure why I'm sticking with him, and not giving him a rest. His romances are fun, but highly stylized. Reading any one is very much like reading any other.

Still, he surprises now and then. For instance, once in a while, he'll toss in a tragic ending -- the young lovers die! -- so there remains a bit of suspense in his yarns.

On the other hand, not all of his surprises are pleasant. His novel In The Quarter, which seems somewhat inspired by George Du Maurier's Trilby (both feature beguiled young opera singers of miraculously wonderful voice... The latter, by the way, is the origin of the wonderfully evil mesmerist and villain, Svengali) drips with the ugliest possible antisemitism. Unfortunately, hatred for Jews tinges several of Chambers' books. The King in Yellow opens with a

luscious description of an almost utopian United States of the near future (1920!) which includes this:

"... the exclusion of foreign-born Jews as a measure of self-preservation, the settlement of the new independent negro state of Suanee, the checking of immigration, the new laws concerning naturalization, and the gradual centralization of power in the executive all contributed to national calm and prosperity."

Who's writing this stuff? Michelle Bachman?

But...no sooner do I criticize him, than he redeems himself: I'm now about halfway through "The Hidden Children," an historical romance set in the American Revolution. He travels with mocassin and tomahawk through the same woods that James Fenimore Cooper described in the "Leatherstocking Tales," and yet travels them more deftly, more wisely, with greater historical accuracy, and with infinitely more literary skill. (God in Heaven, did Mark Twain ever score a bullseye on Cooper!) This book, then, purchases my respect anew, and promises me that his garish blunders in that other book were an exception, not a rule.

Talbot Mundy

I'm still on my absurd Talbot Mundy jag, and finding him vastly more appetizing. I found a whole new trove of his stuff on Project Gutenberg...in Australia! This sister site has loads of wonderful stuff not on the American site.

Talbot Mundy's adventure yarns, often written in obvious and conscious imitation of Kipling's, are set in India, or the Near East. He has a series of books about "Jim Grim" which are mostly set in and around Jerusalem, directly after the war (WWI) where the intrigues of the French, the Turks, the organized Saudi kingdom, and

countless small tribal Arab chieftains, are all dealt with by one British intelligence officer with a preference for subtlety. No James Bond, this bloke!

One of Mundy's finest touches, in my opinion, is his sly references and linkings between his books. For instance, several books feature "Yasmini," a seductive and secretive intriguer in India, in the years leading up to WWI. Mundy was able to create this cycle of (at least) five novels, making them a series proper, yet with such independence between the books that it doesn't really matter in which order one reads them.

In my opinion, this is the single most valuable property of a well-written series!

U.N.C.L.E.

I got the DVD boxed sets of the old Man from U.N.C.L.E. tv series, and the spin-off, The Girl From U.N.C.L.E. I loved these when I was a kid, and I find them still entirely enjoyable today. When I was a young'un, I hadn't realized how campy, how goofy, how light-hearted, how doggone flippant the show was. A shame, because, to be honest, I prefer my spy drama to have a bit more gravitas...

I'm happier, therefore, with DVDs of Secret Agent, aka "Danger Man," with Patrick McGoohan romping around in affairs that are, while still often somewhat light-hearted, at least not entirely goofy.

But my favorite, I think, has to be The Sandbaggers, which was gritty and cold and nasty and brutal. It dealt with the "bureaucracy" of the spy biz. The ugly political decisions, and the compromises, trade-offs, and heart-breaking budgetary limitations, which often left the people on one's own side as much "the enemy" as the opposing forces behind the Iron Curtain. I love this show; every episode left me with a cold shiver running down my spine.

Walkies

Still hiking about for my health. And for the joy of it. Good combination! I've been out on trails in Pine Valley, Palomar, the Laguna Mountains, and other places dotted around San Diego County. Nothing very vigorous, I'm afraid: I'll never be able to do twelve miles in a day. My youth is behind me, never to be seen again. But I can do six miles -- and suffer for it. I can toss off three miles like nothing, so I've got that much right with me! For a "bread and butter" walkabout, I still haven't exhausted the Mission Trails Regional Park, actually within San Diego City Limits.

Writing

I finished "When Angels Fall." Finished it, after a seventeen year hiatus, right in the middle! The trouble is.....I don't like the ending! I think it's way too "talky." Too much yammer, not enough explosions! Very distressing.

Oh, well... I have my "writing committee" reading it over, to tell me if it can be saved.

Tintin

The recent Adventures of Tintin was brilliant! A superb adaption! Spielberg did a magnificent job here. I was worried about the animation style, which is close to realistic, but still stylized enough to support the caricature that the original so abounds in.

The phrase "Valley of the Uncanny" was tossed around a lot in discussion, before the movie was released, based on the trailers. Ruben Bolling took a jab at this in his comic strip, "Tom The Dancing Bug." (Bolling has, for years, been parodying the Tintin adventures anyway.)

As it turned out, I settled right in to the characters, and wasn't distracted by the animation style. The voices were also superb. I didn't see the film in 3-D. I did send off, immediately, to pre-order the DVD!

The clever opportunists took the opportunity to re-release the traditionally-animated half-hour The Adventures of Tintin TV series episodes, from 1991-92. I got these and found them pretty good, but not great. Frankly, the new animated movie is much, much better. The voices in the TV series are execrable! Captain Haddock, in particular, is just wrong. Thompson and Thomson are also awful.

Both the TV series and the movie are notable for one interesting difference from the original comic books (graphic novels, we would call them today.) They de-emphasized Captain Haddock's stupidity, drunkenness, and bumbling. In the books, he is constantly tripping, falling, getting stinking drunk, dropping things, and making near-fatal blunders. The animated series and movies have played this down, deleting numerous instances of his grotesque antics. This, I thought, was definitely an improvement!

Mailing Comments:

Cover: Gadzooks, I know exactly the feeling!

R-Lauraine Tutihasi: To date, no after-effects of concussion. I can quip that, the way my life has gone, a bit of memory loss would be a consolation, not a detriment!

re glasses, I'm using "progressive" bifocals. Never actually tried cut lenses, but I can easily see how the lines would be extremely distracting. This is one of those very simple little technologies that, nevertheless, go a long way to making our lives better.

Jon D. Swartz: As noted, I'm still reading Chambers, and still enjoying him. But, I suppose familiarity will breed contempt, and, the more of him I read, the more his flaws become apparent.

This will be true, inevitably, of any author one studies, rather than those one merely reads in a more superficial way. I definitely would not be able to withstand having my own writing studied closely!

Alas and Woe! I read the first half of W. Somerset Maugham's The Summing Up, and, with many regrets, set it aside at that point. It is of some interest as an autobiography, although it is only a sketch, and leaves out much that would be of interest. However, all through the book (as far as I chose to read,) Maugham explicitly confesses that he doesn't know what to say. He says that he doesn't really have anything to say. He denies having any wisdom, or insight, or viewpoint, and he makes this quiet clear in what he writes. He is, at least, wholly honest in this: he is unwilling to puff and pose. When it comes to the larger issues, especially of creativity, which the book ostensibly focuses upon, he admits outright that he doesn't know. "I don't know what to say" seems to be the central wisdom of the book.

One is reminded of Socrates' wisdom, in being the only one who knew that, in truth, he knew nothing. Maugham's direct honesty is refreshing. But, for me, the book was empty of value, for the very reason that the author confesses: he has nothing of value to tell us.

I very much apologize for obtaining nothing of value from a book you recommended highly. I feel as if the shortcoming must certainly be my own. Your own insight, wisdom, and philosophy are quite likely the superior of my own -- I, myself, readily confess to being very much as Maugham said he, himself, was! I know my education is spotty, my insights at best facile, and my philosophy Epicurean. (I have no respect whatever for Stoicism and Cynicism, and Platonism gives me indigestion!)

Maugham does not elude me entirely; I enjoyed Moon and Sixpence, and that without realizing, until near the very end, that it was a lightly fictionalized biography of Paul Gauguin.

(The San Diego Maritime Museum recently had an exposition of Gauguin's works, as part of a triplicate display on the contributions of Cook, Gauguin, and Melville. "Three Voyages to Heaven" was the title, with emphasis on three phases of learning: scientific, historical, and artistic.)

Of course, no one ever dreamed that all of us share the same tastes. I just feel a bit badly that my tastes failed to meet your expectations, so very broadly and badly. You know have carte blanche to scorn something I adore! (As if we were keeping score!)

Jean Lamb: The Color Green! Yay! I love computers! They are a never-ending source of puzzles and riddles! Thank you for helping me solve this one!

re Talbot Mundy, I do have to agree that the "Tros of Samothrace" books were slow, and too long, and too wordy. They have a kind of genius that calls me back again and again, and I will probably be re-reading them on my deathbed. But...yeah...slow of plot. At least his other books have the advantage of brevity, and most of them are faster-paced also. I'm still having a ball reading everything of his I can find -- and I had to grin at your phrase "Project Gutenberg: aka the Mother Ship."

rect me target shooting, I do enjoy BB and pellet shooting, but those guns have such a high degree of windage that I can't exercise my skill to the limit. The gun's intrinsic inaccuracy is noticeable before my own inaccuracy is evident. In contrast, when I fire a .22 rifle at a target, and miss, I know that it is I who have missed, and not the rifle!

And, alas, my sister's ranch is crowded upon on all sides by neighbors, so that even pellet shooting would be uncomfortable. (Although at least one of the neighbors, himself, isn't shy about firing guns for hours during the day. But he's on the edge of the development, and has a hillside to shoot safely into. My sister's ranch is square in the middle, and not sufficiently hilly.)

I'm being horribly lazy, and haven't really sat my butt down to get going on my outlining. I hope to have a real "Chapter One" for next N'APA. I might have a short prologue upcoming in this. Or might not. Lazy. (Still, of all the sins, I'd rather sloth than wrath, envy, pride, or lust!) I like the idea of a spreadsheet with characters' ages; my outline, such as it will be, will be almost entirely via spreadsheet, even if mostly in the form of "text boxes." It isn't the optimum use of the medium, but it is wonderfully flexible.

re X-Men, the schism was a pretty good plot development. I don't know if I mentioned, but I knew Kieron Gillen before he became a big famous comics writer; he was a member of a small superhero APA, at the same time I was also. Really fun to see him go on to become a hot X-Men writer! (And, yeah, I'm awfu' jealous! But not envious, you understand!)

Enjoyed this installman of Dead Man's Hand. I think my favorite exchange was:

"SO, YOU INTEND TO WEAR US DOWN
WITH STUBBORNNESS?"

"Harin's head ached from the sound of the
booming voice. 'If I must. It's all I have.'"

You have a grand knack for writing characters who are likeable... His suffering, then, in this chapter is very rough reading. (Not bad reading, I hasten to add. The suffering of protagonists is the heart and soul of drama. It is our sympathy for them that makes the drama work.)

The opening of my next novel... "The Computer Ferrets."

Prologue

"Tell the court, in your own words, what you did, and what you saw, next."

"I had been with him -- the lawyer, Mr. Collins -- for some time, and... Ah... I asked to use the...ahem...the bathroom."

"Did he permit this?"

"With ill grace. Indeed, he put one of his men there, outside the door, to secure me. It was pretended that the men were secretaries, but I was never fooled. There is that manner of men who are secretaries, and there is that manner of men who are hired for their brawn."

"Would you say, then, that these were the latter?"

"There is no question in my mind. I...hm...I made use of the facilities, but, drying my hands after washing, I discovered that one of the pieces of the wall paneling, to which a towel rack was affixed, was loose. It vibrated...rattled...when touched. This, to my mind, was unusual, and I wondered at it. On nothing more than a whim, I pulled at the towel rack. The entire section of wall panel swung loose under my hand."

"As you say, unusual. What did you discover?"

"It was like a doorway, but where it led to, I had no idea. It was as dark as Satan's tomb...if you will pardon me for saying. I was frightened to explore. I swung the towel around inside, and examined it, thinking to find it filthy with spider webs or other dirt. But it came back clean."

"What did you decide to do then?"

"It was foolish... The man was waiting outside the door. I knew I couldn't have more than a few minutes. But I was still angry at their treatment of me, and of their disregard for my own dignity. They seemed to think that my acquiescence was a matter of settled

fact, and that I would, perforce, having no option, accept their offer. Perhaps anger gave me courage."

[Here, an objection was lodged, but overruled.]

"Well, I went inside. It was a narrow passageway, no more than two feet in width. My arms brushed both walls. The first thing I encountered was a heavy curtain of stiff, thick fabric, some kind of broadcloth. It closed off the little passageway from side to side, and blocked any light."

"Did no light shine within from the room you had just quitted?"

"Only the very least. And, once I had pushed past that first curtain, none at all."

"What, then, did you find?"

"To my amazement, the passageway went on. It was as if there was a secret house within the house. I do not doubt that I could have reached any part of the house, any room, any floor, by exploring onward. But I resolved to look only a little farther before I returned, as I dared not tarry overlong. The man outside would certainly come to investigate my absence. Yet a sense of curiosity impelled me forward. I passed another curtain."

"How far would you say you had progressed."

"I'm not certain... Ten feet, fifteen feet. I had to go slowly, in order to make as little noise as may be."

"Of course. Where did you find yourself?"

"It was just a section of the passageway, no different from what I had seen. Yet, in the darkness, I bumped into a stool."

"A stool?"

"Much like a bar stool, made of wood, with four legs, with transverse rungs between the legs. The height was around two and a half feet. It seemed to me to be suggestive."

"In what way?"

"Why would anyone wish to be seated in such a place? My mind was working, as fast as it ever had in my life. I had been exploring in that darkness for less than a minute, I'm certain, although to my fevered fancy it felt as if a quarter of an hour had

passed. I did not take the time to seat myself upon the stool, but, instead, took to feeling at the wall adjacent to it."

"Why would you do that?"

"It seemed the thing to do. An intuition was upon me. My thoughts were flying, faster than I could articulate. But, as it turned out, I was right..."

[Another objection was lodged; the record does not show whether it was sustained or overruled, nor the grounds, only that it was put forward.]

"It was a moving block of some sort, and slid aside to my touch. The faintest glimmer of light shone through it. I bent my head to peer. I saw a room, just on the other side of the wall. I seemed to be looking through a shadow, a scrim, perhaps a piece of netting. I concluded that, on the other side, it served to disguise the opening of the peep-hole. The room was furnished as an office. I saw a desk, with a lamp upon it, although not lit. There was a crystal inkwell, a blotter, and a pen. Papers were spread out as if someone had been perusing them, and a book was lying, held open with a shining brass ruler lying across the pages. No one was in sight.

"Was it the room in which your interview had been held?"

"No. It was very similar in appointment and decor, but it was not the same room."

"Are you certain of this?"

"Yes, sir. There were differences. Also, the direction was wrong. I have a very good sense of direction, and the room where Mr. Collins spoke to me was behind me, not before me."

"What did you do then?"

"I was growing desperate at the time now elapsed. I stood back from the peephole, and made shift to plug it. But I was prevented, by what I thought then to be a remarkable discovery."

"What was that?"

"The rays of light from the peephole were strong enough -- and my eyes had become accustomed to the dimness -- that an image of the room opposite was projected onto the far wall of the passageway. It was inverted, and somewhat reduced in scale, by a ratio, I think, of three to five, but was otherwise perfect in

astonishing detail. I would not say that it would have been possible to read the writing on the papers upon the desk..."

[Another objection, this time sustained.]

"What did you do next?"

"I moved the block back over the peep-hole, and hastened back to the...ah...the sanitary chamber. It was the effort of an instant to replace the section of paneling. I rinsed my hands again at the taps, and crossed to the door."

"What did you find?"

"The same man waited, patiently minding the door. He looked at me, and there seemed no undue suspicion upon his countenance. I cannot know, of course..."

[An objection, on the grounds of speculation, was lodged, and sustained.]

"Did you make any other discoveries?"

"I...cannot say. It seems I may not speak in conjectures. I was escorted back to the room where Mr. Collins, and his associates, waited. They resumed their negotiations, or so I can call them only with much charity, for they consisted more of threats than of offers. I looked about myself, to try to see if I could identify a place, against the inner wall of this room, where a similar viewing-hole might be located. I saw a number of possibilities, but nothing that I could be assured of."

"Then, of course, lest we invite censure, we can make no certain conclusions, is that not correct?"

"It seems to me -- if I may say so -- that as I was never alone in the room, but was always in the company, which I was coming to loathe, of Mr. Collins, Mr. Jacobs, Mr. Lerner, and the other man, whom I take to have been a bodyguard, that surreptitious observation would have been pointless. The surveillance peepholes could only serve a meaningful purpose of looking upon -- and listening to -- those who thought they were alone, to take them in the sharing of confidences."

"In the end, did you accept their offers?"

"No...but I made out as if I were undecided, and showed a pretense of being tempted to agree. At first, I had scorned to practice

deceit, but knowing their own degree of dishonesty, I was led to no ethical obligation to respect the mores of legitimacy and respect."

"And yet, we have only your word as to the existence of these passage-ways and peep-holes."

"Since the burning down of the house in the fire, that same night, it would seem that no corroboration could be made."

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From the trial transcripts, Collins versus Hanken, in the County of San Bernardino Superior Court, California Ledger 1902, taking the testimony of Charles A. Hanken.

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Escondido, Black Mountain, and the Ocean, seen from the shoulders of Stanley Peak, Daley Ranch, Escondido, rain beginning to fall.

THE E-ULTRAVERSE #214

by
Jon D. Swartz

TO ALL: We need to get some more members. Jean, if you haven't already done so, why don't you send special invitations to Heath Row and David Speakman. I believe both of them said at one time that they intended to return to N'APA when some of their other projects were completed.

JEAN LAMB: Congratulations on wining the NaNoWriMo competition this year! And a total of 51,345 words! Wow!

I've been trying to catch up on your chapters of *Dead Man's Hand*. Although not my cup of tea, what I've read so far has been quite entertaining, and I plan to get to the rest of the chapters Real Soon Now.

My rule on surgery: Don't have it unless it's absolutely necessary. I put off my sinus surgery until I could no longer stand the pain.

JEFFERSON SWYCAFFER: I'll be interested to see what you have to say about Maugham's *The Summing Up*. I haven't read it in many, many years; but I remember thinking it was worth reading when I read it. I may have felt that way, however, because reading it was related to a school assignment. So please tell us what you thought of it. I seem to run into Maugham all over the place. For example, the 1946 version of *The Razor's Edge* was on TV's Classic Movie Channel last night, with Herbert Marshall playing Maugham. I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that Marshall was in several movies based on Maugham's stories.

I had never heard of Olaf Baker. I'll look him up. Maybe he's a relative. My mother was a Baker, and I have scores of Baker relatives all over the United States.

Genre critic E. F. Bleiler wrote that Robert Chambers was the link between the work of Poe and the modern writers of supernatural fiction. Other books of Chambers' science fiction/fantasy stories are

In Search of the Unknown, Police!!!, and The Repairer of Reputations. Chambers studied art in Paris and had his work exhibited in the Paris Salon. When he returned to New York he succeeded in selling his illustrations to magazines such as *Life*, *Truth*, and *Vogue*. Then for reasons unclear at this time, he devoted most of his time to writing. He began writing romantic fiction in order to earn a living, and was one of the most successful popular authors of his period. His son, Robert Husted Chambers, also gained some fame as an author.

R-LAURRAINE TUTIHASI: I don't envy you your snowfalls. At my age in life I crave warm weather.

Thanks for the news on Bob Sabella. I hadn't heard he died, much less suddenly of a brain tumor. I used to read his stuff in various fanzines.

Sorry to hear you're leaving us. Please reconsider. I'll miss your great photographs very much!

TO ALL: Here's my twenty-first "Neglected Genre Author" article, originally published in my print fanzine, *The Ultraverse*, dated March, 2012. The observant reader will see that my N'APA contributions have now caught up with my "neglected author" articles in *The Ultraverse*. I'll have to think of something else if I continue to participate in N'APA every two months. Since a couple of you are now reading Robert Chambers, perhaps I'll share the article I wrote on him, although I didn't consider him a "neglected" author when I wrote it and don't now that so many others I know are reading him.

Neglected Genre Author #21: Don Wilcox

Cleo Eldon Wilcox was born August 29, 1905, in Lucas, Kansas, and died on March 9, 2000, also in Lucas. In addition to Don Wilcox, his best known pen name, he used the pseudonyms of Buzz-Bolt Atomcracker (one story), Cleo Eldon, Max Overton, Miles Shelton, and Alexander Blade (a house name). His wife's maiden name was Helen Miles Shelton, so the source of two of his pseudonyms is

obvious. He and Helen had a daughter, whom Wilcox described in an *Amazing* interview as "furnishing diversion" when he was trying to write. The photo of Wilcox that accompanies this article was in the same issue of *Amazing* as the interview.

Wilcox published most of his science fiction in *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures*, when both were Ziff-Davis publications under the editorship of Ray Palmer. (Wilcox wrote once that he began writing science fiction after a chance meeting with the editor of *Amazing Stories*). At one time he was Palmer's most prolific and popular contributor, averaging over 40,000 words a month of published stories. Wilcox also had stories published in *Mammoth Western* and *Mammoth Detective*, two other Ziff-Davis magazines. Wilcox graduated from The University of Kansas, and then earned an M.A. in sociology (not journalism or drama, as has been reported by others). He taught English, creative writing, history, and sociology in several junior and senior high schools, at the Chicago campus of Northwestern University, and at The University of Kansas -- and later he edited newspapers. In 1932 he and his wife began writing plays for high school classes, and he began writing feature articles for the *Kansas City Star*. He was also a painter, but early in his career gave up painting in order to have more time to write. Late in his writing career, he wrote a series of young adult novels about an Indian boy attending Haskell Institute (now Haskell Indian Nations University) in Lawrence, Kansas (e. g., *Joe Sunpool, Basketball Star*, 1956).

Wilcox also wrote scripts for television programs, including *Captain Video*. In explaining his science fiction writing, he told genre historian Mike Ashley that he seldom read other science fiction authors, but got his ideas for stories from museums, planetariums, ancient histories, and sociology textbooks.

Genre Novel

The Whispering Gorilla (World Distributors, 1950) [as by David V. Reed/reprinted with *Return of the Whispering Gorilla* by Gryphon Books in 1999]

The story behind *The Whispering Gorilla* and its sequel, *Return of the Whispering Gorilla*, is an interesting one.

Wilcox wrote the original story, and it was published in the May 1940 issue of *Fantastic Adventures*. It was a very popular story, and over the years readers kept requesting a sequel. Ray Palmer, editor of *Fantastic Adventures*, had another of his writers, David Vern (aka David V. Reed), write the sequel "with the kind permission of Don Wilcox." The story appeared in the February 1943 issue and was also popular with readers. Palmer wrote that "Reed" had worked with Wilcox on the original story and "rewrote the final draft," so he was a logical choice to write a sequel after consulting with Wilcox. Wilcox later disputed Palmer's account in several important ways: he hadn't worked with anyone on the original story, and there was no rewrite by someone else. In addition, he hadn't been consulted about writing a sequel, and any consultations that took place "must have been between Palmer and Reed"! When *The Whispering Gorilla* was published as a novel in 1950, it was credited solely to David V. Reed, Vern's pseudonym. Gary Lovisi's Gryphon Books corrected these errors in 1999 with the publication of both stories as *The Whispering Gorilla* -- and crediting both Wilcox and Reed.

Short Genre Fiction

"The Pit of Death" (1939)
"Dictator of Peace" (1939)
"The Gift of Magic" (1940) [as by Miles Shelton]
"The Robot Peril" (1940)
"Let War Gods Clash!" (1940)
"Mirrors of Madness" (1940)
"Mystery of the Mind Machine" (1940)
"Champlin Fights the Purple God" (1940)
"The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years" (1940) [aka "The Voyage That Lasted Six Hundred Years"]

"Three Eyes in the Dark" (1941)
"The Invisible Wheel of Death" (1941)
"Secret of the Stone Doll" (1941)
"Invisible Raiders of Venus" (1941)
"The Lost Race Comes Back" (1941)
"Taxi to Jupiter" (1941)
"Secret League of Six" (1941)
"Queen of the Living Puppets" (1941)
"The Stevedore of Jupiter" (1941)
"The Man from the Future" (1941)
"Mr. Eee Conducts a Tour" (1941)
"The Deadly Yappers" (1942) [as by Max Overton]
"Rainbow of Death" (1942)
"The Perfect Trap" (1942) [as by Miles Shelton]
"Dwellers of the Deep" (1942)
"Bull Moose of Babylon" (1942)
"Mademoiselle Butterfly" (1942)
"The Man Who Turned to Smoke" (1942)
"The Eagle Man" (1942)
"Robotcycle for Two" (1942) [as by Max Overton]
"An Angel with Four Faces" (1942)
"The Leopard Girl" (1942)
"The Hollow Planet" (1942)
"Chariot of Death" (1943)
"The Great Brain Panic" (1943)
"World of the Paper Dolls" (1943)
"Fair Exchange" (1944) [as by Miles Shelton]
"Magnetic Miss Meteor" (1944)
"Man from the Magic River" (1944)
"Cats of Kadenza" (1944)
"Invasion Dust" (1944)
"Woman's Island" (1945) [as by Miles Shelton]
"The Sapphire Enchantress" (1945) [as by Cleo Eldon]
"The Devil's Pigs" (1945)
"Taggart's Terrible Turban" (1945)
"The Singing Skulls" (1945)
"The Scarlet Swordsmen" (1945)
"The Voice from Venus" (1945)
"The Serpent Has Five Fangs" (1945)

"The Land of Big Blue Apples" (1946)
"March of the Mercury Men" (1946)
"The Red Door" (1946)
"Great Gods and Little Termites" (1946)
"Confessions of a Mechanical Man" (1947) [as by Buzz-Bolt Atomcracker]
"The Secret of Sutter's Lake" (1947)
"The Kettle in the Pit" (1947)
"The Ocean Den of Mercury" (1948) [as by Miles Shelton]
"Secret of the Serpent" (1948)
"The Rikits of Mars" (1948)
"The Iron Men of Venus" (1952)
"Queen of the Floating Island" (1952)
"The Battle of the Howling Hatchet" (1952)
"The Man Nobody Knew" (1952)
"Fifty Thousand Nuggets" (1952)
"Too Old to Die" (1952)
"Mars Invites You" (1952)
"The Slave Maker" (1952)
"Orphan of Space" (1952)
"Tombot!" (1954)
"The Fires of Kessa" (1956)
"Graygortch" (1957)
"The Serpent River" (1957)
"The Smallest Moon" (1964)
"Visit the Yo-Yo Falls" (1989)
"Blueflow" (1992)

Note: Stories are listed by year of publication, from earliest to most recent.

Stories Reprinted in Genre Anthologies/Periodicals

"The Voyage That Lasted Six Hundred Years" in *Looking Forward* (Lesser, 1953)
"Tombot" in *Two Complete Science-Adventure Books No. 11* (Spring,

1954)

"Graygortch" in *Fantastic* (April, 1957)

"The Smallest Moon" in *The Boy's Life Book of Outer Space Stories* (Editors of *Boy's Life*, 1964)

"The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years" in *Amazing Stories* (April, 1966)

"Secret of the Serpent" in *Fantastic* (October, 1969)

"Secret of the Stone Doll" in *Fantastic* (February, 1970)

"Mademoiselle Butterfly" in *Fantastic* (December, 1971)

"The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years" in *Amazing Science Fiction Anthology: The War Years, 1936-1945* (Greenberg, 1987)

"The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years" in *Skylife: Space Habitats in Story and Science* (Bedford & Zebrowski, 2000)

Note: Stories are listed by date of the anthology/periodical in which they were reprinted, from earliest to most recent.

Some Concluding Comments

Almost forgotten today, at one time Don Wilcox was a mainstay of the Ziff-Davis science fiction magazines and very popular with readers of both *Amazing* and *Fantastic Adventures*. He was said to write science *fantasy* rather than science fiction, but he had many readers who thought of themselves as science fiction fans.

One of these fans was future science fiction writer and editor Terry Carr. "Give Us More Wilcox, Please!" begged Carr in a letter to *Fantastic Adventures* in the early 1950s.

When his writing career was nearly over in 1975, Wilcox retired to Florida and resumed painting. At the time of an interview with Mike Ashley in the late 1980s, he had created 300+ paintings, most of them portraits.

Several authorities (e. g., Clute & Nicholls; Hawk) claim that his real name was Cleo Eldon Knox and that Wilcox was a pen name. This is disputed both by his daughter and the U. S. government (who sent him social security checks under the name of Wilcox). I'll leave his "real" name to others more knowledgeable, but I find it hard to believe the government would send social security checks to a writer's pseudonym – unless the writer had legally changed his birth name to his pen name.

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Jon D. Swartz

N'APA #214
March 15, 2012

DESERT FELINE #24

Desert Feline #24 is a zine created for N'APA #214, March 2012, by R-Laurraine Tutihasi of Oracle, AZ, who can be reached at Laurraine@mac.com or 520-896-2058. I have a web site at <http://www.weasner.com/>. © 2012 by R-Laurraine Tutihasi except as noted. This zine is formatted for viewing on screen. Photo p. 3 by Mike Weasner. Started 21 February 2012, finished 26 February 2012.

I would like to start by announcing that this will be my last zine for this APA. I've joined a church choir, and I really need to have more time for it and other activities that have been neglected of late. If any members of the APA would like to receive a paper copy of my currently quarterly fanzine, *Feline Mewsings*, please let me know. The electronic version is available online; you can link from efanazines.

January and February have been milder and dryer than November and December. We have had a little rain but nothing to compare to before. We even had some snow, but it was on a day when the temperatures never dipped below freezing. It was just a bit weird. Lately the temperature has even reached 70° F.

We continue to have problems with leaks and are waiting for a fix. Unfortunately the man who got our skylights has had a stroke recently.

My TV watching has been lightened by the fact that Fox still

hasn't decided whether or not to continue *Terra Nova* and CBS abruptly pulled the plug on *CSI: NY*.



The sf book club discussed Stephen King's *Under the Dome* in January. We generally liked it with a few quibbles. I found it well written and easy to read despite the length.

The opera and theatre seasons have started up again. The Arizona Opera Company performed a pretty good version of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. The sets were done well, and the performances were very good. Only the singing and orchestra could have used some improvement.

The Arizona Theatre Company still shines. They did a Pythonesque comedy version of *The 39 Steps*, inspired by the Alfred Hitchcock film rather than the original book. It was hilarious. One scene paid a tribute to many of Hitchcock's films.

My replacement persimmon trees arrived at the end of January, and we got them into the ground the next day. Meanwhile the daffodils have started to bloom.

I seem to have developed an allergy to one of my asthma medications.

Mailing Comments on N'APA 213

Jefferson P. Swycaffer (Archive Midwinter): I found the story about Airplane Monument interesting. In the outskirts of Phoenix are several mountains that get hit by planes more frequently than we'd like. If we ever get up to the monument, I'll try to remember about the beehive.

I agree with you about a public health care system being a good idea. In its absence, though, some people are not doing enough. Fred Patten had the resources to save money for his retirement and to have good health insurance. He really had no good excuse for what happened. Other people are uncovered for reasons totally outside their control.

I'm sorry to hear you're still unemployed, at least as of your last zine. At least you're keeping up your physical fitness programme.

Jon D. Swartz (The E-Ultraverse #213): Fortunately we have access to pretty good dental insurance at a fairly reasonable price. For a year of dental insurance, we pay less than we pay for a month of medical insurance. I'm a pretty heavy user of dental insurance, Mike less so.

I try to stay socially active. Mike would be just as happy

to be a hermit.

I'm afraid I didn't know Fred Patten well in the context of his comics fandom.

Jean Lamb (This Spud's for You #23): I like Regency romances, so I hope you'll let me know when yours is published.

Congratulations on the upcoming nuptials.

The exercising continues off and on. I manage to do at least some almost every day.

Sorry to hear your Nolacon 88 was spoiled for you by a shampoo. Mine wasn't that much better. I was in the masquerade, but my costume all but cut off my air supply. I ended up with one of the worst headaches of my life. The costume was a success, so in the end it was worth the suffering. I was disappointed by the cancellation of some events.

I hadn't heard of the effect vitamin C has on mucous, though I really don't want to increase my intake. I cut back to four grammes a day from six, I think.

I also only use Claritin occasionally when I need it.

* * * * *



The photo above shows the crescent moon at right and Venus at left during broad daylight.

Good-bye, all, for now. I've enjoyed my time with you.

Laurraine

THIS SPUD'S FOR YOU, for NAPA 214.
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MAILING COMMENTS, NAPA #213

Cover: I'm having fun looking for cute pictures to put on the front. And since the Friday directly before the due date for the January APA was the 13th, it just seemed right.

A bit of business: Our membership is slowly dwindling. I plan to write up a recruiting article for the N3F pointing out our advantages over other apas and why we would love some new blood—and why people would enjoy this amateur press association. For one thing, everyone here now does mailing comments, which has always been a little bit of a sore spot for me, anyway. I also plan to personally contact a couple of members we haven't seen for a while and see if they can at least send us an update on their lives.

Natter: Still working at Jeld-Wen, with steady paycheck, medical insurance and all that good stuff. But I will have DEAD MAN'S HAND up on Amazon a month from now, for \$5.99 (it is over 200K, after all). Here's what the cover will look like—



Malcolm Horton is the artist, from the UK (found him when I was looking at fantasy art sites. He was quite reasonable, all things considered, and I plan to use him for future volumes). I have two

other novels which are the first book of their separate series (I tend to think in the series length), and which I will probably have him do the covers for.

Mike is still busy teaching school and still involved with both the teachers' union (he's the building rep and a representative on the political action board) and the local Republican party. Since most of the leadership in this county would consider Attila the Hun a socialist liberal, he enjoys twisting their minds around and explaining that in Oregon, the Republican party used to be a hotbed of moderates, and perhaps that might explain why they used to win elections on the state level back then. Brian is signed up to take a beginning line drawing class, since he enjoys drawing cartoons and wants to do more of it, only better than he is right now. Cathy is still in the first year of her doctorate program, which means she rarely gets to see the sun, even while living in Florida. However, she has been to several conferences to present papers, which is likely going to pay off when she finally hunts down a good position. Her fiancé Adam has two books up on Amazon now, and which seem to be bringing in a nice little side income. He's using a pen name (or why I had a devil of a time finding him, but anyone who decides to take a look at a book called *PLUCKING CUPID'S BOW* will be richly rewarded. It's a hilarious urban fantasy (ok, the humor is quite dark at times, but it's still cool) about vampires, two truly incompetent demons, and a zombie Ty Cobb with the same anger management problems as the original. I feel so sorry for the priest who ends up in the middle of all this...<G>

Archive Midwinter for Napa #213 (Jefferson P. Swycaffer): I hope the weather has changed enough that you're feeling better, though it must be nice to hike in winter without bundling up a whole lot (global warming isn't here nearly often enough, though admittedly the bits we do get seem to be associated with drought).

Nice memorial for the plane crash (one can imagine what archaeologists from the far future might make of it, though. Could be a story in that, especially if the beehive is still there). "Our primitive forebears sometimes combined mechanical artistry in their shrine for an extinct species of bees..."

Glad you're enjoying *Dead Man's Hand*. I plan to have the whole thing up on Amazon et al in April, and here's the cover I commissioned for it (insert cover here). Nice and spooky, yes? And of course I have another chapter here this time around.

As for Chambers having good people be good-looking, bad people ugly, etc., well—Rowling got away with it. You just know the only reason the Malfoys were allowed to live and Snape to die is because of their looks, no matter that Lucius was a *real* Death Eater and Snape a spy for the Light. Actual morals don't matter, at least not to her (James Potter and Lily were supremely virtuous because of their beauty and Potter's wealth, despite his bullying and her total lack of compassion to anyone she was through using). The Weasleys are nice to Harry, so their poverty doesn't hurt them as much as it normally would (note that they're purebloods, though).

Ahem.

I have *The Annotated Alice*, too! It's delightful. Now if I can just find it <G>.

As for a proper public health system, unreliable rumors hath it (Charlie Stross's blog) that the Cameron administration wants to junk the NHS and basically throw Britain to the wolves of our wonderful system. Um, yeah, that will work so well. Not. You think the Tories are getting hate mail *now*...even Thatcher didn't dare go that far.

I like the idea of fictional fiction. Tonio, of course, knows a lot of songs, some of which are not to be sung in polite company, while one of my characters (in the sequel to *DEAD*

MAN'S HAND) is a writer of operas, who is basing his new one on the events when Beast Kercherian's army occupied Argnon during the Breakup. Wait till he hears from one of the actual survivors about his accuracy ratio, heh.

DESERT FELINE #23 (R-Laurraine Tutihasi): I love *Daddy Long Legs*. There's another book by the same author up on Gutenberg that is sort of vaguely related to the first one—a friend of the heroine ends up in charge of the orphanage where the heroine came from, and fireworks result.

Becoming allergic to an allergy drug—that's kind of a perfect storm, isn't it.

I'm glad you're reading DEAD MAN'S HAND as well. Hope you decide to buy the whole thing when it's available.

The movies we've seen lately: *Wanderlust*, because we needed something light because our brains felt fluffy. Well, this movie was your basic romantic comedy with some serious stuff going on. Sort of. Earlier this year, we saw the new Sherlock Holmes movie, which I thought was excellent (though the moment they said 'Reichenbach Falls' we all knew what was up). We also enjoyed *Puss in Boots*, because I adore Antonio Banderas and we all like the Shrek movies. The newest Three Musketeers movie was quite steampunk in execution, though I think the entire audience had a great deal of sympathy for Cardinal Richelieu when he was desperately trying to educate the King about foreign policy. *The Tower Heist* was good, but the ending was kind of blah; everyone in the heist ended up rewarded except for the leader (Ben Affleck), and that kind of rankled. They could have showed him leaving prison and having a whole bunch of gold left over for him. Oh, yes, and we also saw the new Mysterious Island movie, and the 3-D version was worth it (even with the silliness of the pec-pops). Park your brain at the door for this one, though, since there were some serious plot holes even without all the Verne weirdness. However, if your brain is *really* fluffy, CHIPWRECKED is just right. So I like Alvin and the Chipmunks.

And I can't wait to see *Hunger Games*. I've read all three books, and you could drive the Millennium Falcon through the worldbuilding, but the story will still set your hair on fire.

The Artist was brilliant! You have to pay a lot more attention to it because it is mostly a silent movie, but it was so good. I'm just glad it came through our town at all (saw it the afternoon of the Oscar presentations, or as I call it my Superbowl).

Still think Andy Serkis wuz robbed. Grr. Not to mention Alan Rickman in his continuing role as Snape in the Harry Potter movies. Billy Crystal opened his monologue well, but I think everyone was expecting more than what actually happened. The show was still pretty decent, though.

We will all really miss you...(sob, sniff). Wish you could stay.

The E-Ultraverse #213 (Jon D. Swartz): Hope you've had time to read some of the chapters. I also hope the dental work is going as well as it can.

It sounds like Mr. Beyer was an extremely active individual even without the writing. One suspects that his writing was not his main focus in life, despite a decent ten or so year run at it; if anybody ought to be able to construct a mystery, a cop should be at the top of the list. But it seems like his action/adventure SF was more fun, both to write and to read. I'll have to check someday if my dad had any ARGOSY magazines in the boxes of stuff I inherited.

See you all next time.

Oh, yes, another chapter of DEAD MAN'S HAND.

Chapter 7

Tonio Vitor huddled in a corner of the boathouse, shaking with terror. *Why? Why am I so frightened?* He wasn't surprised to see that bravos had looted the place and used it for their own pleasure. They'd smashed holes in some of the walls and defaced what was left. The invaders had also cooked food and left empty bottles about, though Tonio was so hungry and thirsty he devoured what few scraps were left with relish.

They had not spared the *Wing*. The poor ship lay half-sunken in its slip, salt waves washing over its tilted deck, and tattered strips of the sail hanging over the side.

He should be angry, not afraid. He'd seen uglier ruins climbing up through the wreckage of his home. Tonio forced himself to stand up and take a step towards his ruined vessel. The smell of the ocean was strong as the evening tide washed in. He almost bent over in nausea. What was wrong with him? He loved the sea! Perhaps he should have gone to the Grove for safety, instead.

He edged forward step by step, almost as if someone were pushing him from behind.

Then one end of a board tore loose, tipped him over and spilled him into the water. He shouted as he fell with a mighty splash, floundered for a moment, and steadied as his feet touched a ledge to one side of the slip. He caught his breath. Then he laboriously made his way through the water to the edge of the wooden walkway. His shoulder complained when he levered himself out, though not as much as when he'd nearly fallen inside the house earlier.

He cursed under his breath as he shivered in the cold evening air. He'd catch his death if he didn't get dry clothes! Suddenly he realized he wasn't afraid any more. He shook the chill water from his hands and went hunting for something to warm him up. He wished he could light a fire, but the holes in the wall would give him away to anyone watching. Most of the chests had been torn open and thoroughly cleaned out, except for one which held musty sailcloth set aside to be repaired. He hung his wet clothes up to let them drip, and wrapped himself in the canvas scraps. He'd have to find some fresh water to wash himself off or he'd itch like fury later. *But it didn't hurt*, he thought. He smiled a little at his own foolishness.

Despite hunger and thirst barely dented by the scraps and drops he'd been able to find, he gradually dozed off once he began to warm up. *The crypt is probably safer for me*, he thought as his eyes began to close from exhaustion, *but I can't go back*.

He realized he was dreaming when he saw himself standing in the Grove. His hands looked unscathed when he glanced down at them. Tonio quickly felt his face and sighed with relief to realize that he was whole again.

Then he saw he wasn't alone. In fact, he was standing in a crowd of men, including Father and Anderay. Everyone looked so young in the gray-green light streaming from the center of the throng. He was fairly near the center, but many of the figures toward the edge were translucent, as if they were fading away.

Why, there was Nonna! It had to be her, though she was covered in pale veils. He tried to talk to her, the way he'd tried to talk to Father and Anderay, but no sound came from his lips. It wasn't fair! The others were clearly murmuring to each other, but he couldn't distinguish the words. Nonna was the only one, in fact, who actually looked at him.

Then he saw Harin. His cousin glowed with life. At first nobody moved to let him in. Then one of his ancestors shuffled aside, and a few others followed him, making a sound like the rustling of branches. Tonio remained rooted to the spot.

Harin was clearly saying something, then listening, but Tonio couldn't hear either side of the conversation. As time passed, he began to see the others as double images. Father seemed to be a strong, mature minta tree, while Anderay was one just beginning to fruit. Nonna was gnarled, yet vital, like the trees planted closest to the sea that thrived on the salt spray, and whose roots were strong enough to split rock. In the center of the Grove were the Eldest Ones his father had told him about--a round-faced, full-lipped woman whose skin had a greenish cast, and a man whose face matched the portrait of Libadan Vitor, the founder of the House.

And what kind of tree was he? *Am I dead?* he wondered. Harin's face was a mask of agony now. Tonio was startled to see flames arising from his own hands, as if he were ablaze once more. Yet he looked the same to himself once the fire had died down. But how did he appear to the others? A charred skeleton with twisted bark?

Then he saw Harin raising his arms and letting the Eldest Ones in the center seize him. *How dare he! That is my place!*

Nonna stepped forward and talked with Harin for a few moments, after which his cousin departed. Then she came over to Tonio and said, "I'm so sorry, *cherlo*. This is all my fault. I should have listened to you the first time you spoke of the Grove."

"It's all right. It was my choice to go to the boathouse." What did *that* mean? Of course he had to go there and see if the *Wing* was intact. How else was he going to restore the family's fortunes?

Nonna smiled, and kissed him on the cheek. "Harin knows he owes a great debt, Toni-mi. And someday you'll be able to collect it."

He looked around. All the men were gone, replaced by the trees they had now become. *This is the heart of Siranna,* he thought. *But I chose the sea.*

Tonio woke up. What a strange dream! He comforted himself by holding the Master-Ring in his hand. *Should I leave it in the Grove for safekeeping?* he wondered. Yet if his night-vision was true, the ancient trees could have accepted Harin as the real Master. What should he do?

Tonio glanced at the small bundle of jewels left him by the dead. He still had a responsibility to their spirits, no matter what happened in the Grove. Siranna needed gold to prosper, and he had a better chance of gaining it than Harin.

Once he made repairs on the *Wing* and found supplies, he'd go to Argnon. He knew where to get the best price, and more importantly, the gems would not be known there. After that he could begin gaming in earnest to increase his fortune. Perhaps he'd find that Shadow Lord and discover if the fellow needed someone who knew how to run the Chute into Lutan when the Emperor's picket ships weren't watching.

Morning light began to filter into the boathouse. The longer he looked, the more he realized that he wasn't going to go anywhere in his beloved ship for now. She was a lost cause. The only reason she wasn't sinking was the shallowness of the waterway.

Tonio shook with weakness as he dressed in clothes that were still damp. He had to find food and water soon, or he'd be too weak to do anything. Once he felt better, he'd figure out a way. And he'd better move fast. Dawn was coming, and he didn't want to be caught outdoors once the sun rose. Colinna had a well, and with luck, some extra clothes the bravos might not have taken or burned. At least he'd be able to rinse the salt off his skin before it drove him mad

with itching. He was starving, too. No matter how much he ate these days, it was never enough. It had been over a full day since he'd had a decent meal.

He began walking towards the farm. Fortunately it was cloudy. Tonio shivered in the light drizzle and promised himself dry clothes and something hot to drink. Even this was better than sitting and brooding. He couldn't help but remember his Nonna's death, coming on top of all those others...

A slow walk with a couple of rest breaks brought him to Colinna's farm before it became too light for safety, despite the rain now coming down. He hated being so weak. At least the barn was still standing, though the house looked like a stiff breeze would knock it over. He searched for scraps of food. Of course the hens were gone, wretched things--no doubt they'd ended up as the bravos' dinner. He should have served them up in soup weeks ago. He nearly crowed with delight when he discovered the collectors hadn't found the trapdoor to the tiny fruit cellar. It was easy to miss, considering that the chickens in their infinite wisdom enjoyed using that corner to mess in, despite all that Tonio had done to dissuade them. He'd cursed the feathered idiots for it, but now was happy.

There wasn't much left, but couldn't stop himself from devouring everything he found. Once his stomach was quiet, he eyed the remains and shook his head. He'd need more supplies than that to sail. The harvest had been poor this year, and the collectors had taken so much.

He peered outside for a just a moment. It was dark and gloomy, despite it being full day by now. Colinna's house was still standing, though the outer walls were scorched. Tonio carefully looked around through a crack in the barn wall, and risked going across the yard to the place. A different hunger gnawed at him now.

Tonio stepped carefully once he was inside. He knew all too well how a floor could look firm and yet collapse. Nonna's room was the worst. No doubt one of the thieves *had* knocked over one of the lamps he'd left burning for the *mori-donni*. Most of the wall was still smoldering, despite the rain coming in through the roof, and all of the furnishings were blackened. *Death-Lord, what am I doing here?* he wondered to himself, and went to see if Colinna's room was in any better condition.

He glanced down at the section of floor which lifted up for the entrance to his former sanctuary. Nonna might have hidden some supplies down there. Wood creaked as the house swayed from the wind. It didn't matter. Tonio opened the trapdoor, and the stairs were still intact. He swallowed hard, as his longing became more than he could stand.

Suddenly he was on his hands and knees scrabbling through the straw that barely covered the dirt, crying like a child. "Where is it?" he screamed. He knew there were a few pots of the syrup left. He sighed with relief as his fingers closed on one of them. Without a moment's hesitation he unstopped it and drained it down to the bottom.

Bliss spread through his body as if he'd just won a huge jackpot, had a sweet young woman, and finished a bottle of wine. He forgot his grief and pain. Only the beautiful warmth within him mattered. Nothing hurt, nothing at all--and even if it did, the joy he felt now kept it far, far away.

He lay down on his old pallet without thinking and let himself sink into the darkness, a blessed emptiness shielding him from the despair so much death around him.

Only--it wasn't empty after all. The old farmer's face stared into his. Then Palo Colinna slowly shook his head. "I died so the Master of Siranna could wallow in the muck like a pig? A fine lord of this land *you'll* make!" The deep voice dripped with contempt.

Don't you understand? Tonio thought to the ghost.

"You're just running away again. I thought you were braver than that!"

Suddenly, he was ashamed. Of course he'd dreamed of someone else taking Siranna from him. It was a warning sent by the Prophet of what would happen if he let dreamflower become his master, the way some let strong drink overpower their souls.

Tonio woke up with a blazing headache and a mouth that tasted like the hen yard. His first impulse was to get more syrup. "No," he whispered to himself. "I have to stop."

He crushed the pots into the dirt with the heels of Colinna's old boots, though he wept as he did so. The whole place could have burned down around his head and he wouldn't have cared. His family would have died unavenged.

Then he stared down at the shards of pottery, and the moist dirt around his feet. What had he done? He could have rationed it out and made it last for several days. Why, he'd need it to work on the *Wing* and make it worthy.

Who was he fooling? He was that lowest of creatures: a slave to the dreamflower. Argnon had them, and so did nearly every other city Tonio had gone to. Some were nobles, some were dockside scum, and some were in-between, but all were linked by the need for this terribly seductive drug. He couldn't go to the Grove like this. His own ancestors would spit on him as soon as they learned the terrible truth.

He had to go out to sea as soon as possible. Perhaps work and sailing would distract him from the craving. He still needed water and food to take on the way. He left the cellar, and discovered it was night-time again. Colinna's room was nearly as bad as Nonna's. The clouds had left and the light of the moon was enough for him to see as well as he wished. What the bravos hadn't taken, they had ruined, and only rags were left. Well, clean rags were better than salty clothes, at least until he could rinse them off.

Fortunately the well was in shadow. He drank as much water as he could. That had always served him well with other hangovers. It helped a little. He gathered the rest of the preserved food from the fruit cellar and returned to the boathouse.

He couldn't sleep. His body had gotten a taste--well, more than a taste--of the dreamflower, and demanded more. Why not put his restlessness to good use? He spent the night roaming from farm to farm, taking only a little from each one. No doubt they had been visited by the bravos, and needed all they had, but he certainly couldn't help them the way he was now. He'd reward everyone as soon as he returned.

Only once did someone stop him. A woman's angry voice interrupted him as he was inspecting a closed barn door and wondering if the place had a dog. "I've had enough!" she said, her approaching footsteps from inside the barn sounding heavy. "I don't care any more, this is going to stop!"

He said, "If I were a collector and had my friends here, you wouldn't have a chance anyway."

"What? Who are you?"

Then Tonio finally recognized the place. "Aren't you Colinna's daughter?" he asked.

"Yes, but what does that have to do--damn you! My father would still be alive if it weren't for you!"

He bowed his head and sighed. "And I'd be dead without him. Nonna--I mean, the *mori-donni*, might still be alive, too, if she'd gone to my cousin's instead of taking care of me." Tonio heard sounds as if she were unbolting the barn door. "Don't open it. You don't want to look at me," he said hastily. "That way, if someone asks, you can say you never saw a thing."

"Why shouldn't I turn you in?" she said, but she didn't sound enthusiastic about it.

"Do what you like," Tonio said, gambling that she'd keep on listening. "But I want you to know that your father is buried in the crypt as if he were my own uncle. The collectors didn't get the *mori-donni*, either. I laid her out with my own hands." He couldn't hold back his tears thinking of it. "And they will be avenged, if I have to come back from the grave to do it. But first I must sail off and return with riches, or there will be no Siranna left. What good is vengeance if it leaves a barren waste?"

He heard quiet sobbing on the other side of the door. "You really are him," she said. "Speak your need and you will have it, even if we starve for it."

"That wouldn't be right, mistress," Tonio said. "If you have some of your father's clothes, and a cloak, that is all I ask. I have taken but a little food from each place I've gone to. As soon as I can, I'll be gone." Then he decided if he couldn't trust this woman, he might as well be dead anyway. "I have to make repairs to my ship in the boathouse. So if someone asks, I would appreciate it if you could tell them I was last seen heading towards Terferan with a knife in my hand and blood in my eye." Not that it was such a bad idea; but Uri would have to wait. Despite the Mintaran arrows with odd gray fletching he'd found near the manor house, Tonio had no doubt about which clan was going to benefit. Nonna had taught him that revenge was best when carefully planned, despite his own desire to see the Delcoros family suffer *now*.

"Of course, *donno*. I will bring what you want in here, leave the door unbolted, and go back into the house," the woman said.

"Thank you," he said. Tonio leaned against the side of the barn, exhausted as if he'd run a couple of miles. Oh, how he hated being a beggar! He owed debts to so many already. How was he ever to pay them all back?

After a bit he heard a door opening and closing. He ducked into the barn and quickly changed into the trousers, shirt, and cloak left there for him. They hung loosely on him, but they kept out the wind, while his feet practically shouted their approval of warm, dry stockings. Despite what he'd said, there was also food left for him, a cheese still in its wax along with a loaf of bread only a day old at most.

He went straight back to the boathouse after that, and impatiently waited for enough light to start repairs. Before he'd been given the *Wing*, he'd learned on a much smaller sailboat. He'd promised to restore it before leaving for school, and had neglected since he had sailed to Argnon in such haste last year. After a loud argument. Father had refused to believe that Tonio wanted to go back just because of his studies, and had demanded to know the real reason. *He was probably terrified I'd fallen in love with someone totally unsuitable. How right he was!*

Once he could see properly, Tonio found the hull of the small vessel upside down underneath a pile of boards the hoodlums had kicked over. He could probably use part of the boat to patch the *Wing*, or so he hoped. The single mast on the larger ship was snapped in two, so he wouldn't be able to fully rig it anyway.

Tonio's desperation drained as he bailed out the *Wing* with a vengeance. His shoulder and back ached like fury, and he found tears running down his face as he worked. Yet he couldn't stop. He'd made a promise.

Oh, he could always go to Harin and trade the Master-Ring for help. Tonio would rather *swim* to Argnon before he did that! Only if he returned with enough wealth to save Siranna would he dare go to the Grove and ask the spirits of the trees to choose between them. *This is all your fault, Nonna! Every time I wanted to go to the Grove before, you put me off. Once I was well enough, you were too weak for me to leave you.* Why, he'd almost turned tail from here and gone to the trees for strength until some force had pushed him into the water. *Is this your plan,*

mori-donni? *To raise up Harin with one hand and dispose of me with the other? Well, it won't work! You chose him as your heir, but the Grove will choose me! You'll have your vengeance against the Tyrant of Allante someday, but on my terms, not yours. Siranna comes first!*

Somehow, he fell asleep on the only dry part of the deck of the *Wing*. He'd only meant to lay his head down for a moment or two, but it was dark again when he opened his eyes. The water's sound and smell was soothing.

How clearly he saw things, even so late! Unfortunately, he noticed that the water level had caught up to his bailing already. He started again, his heart sinking. If the hole was that big, he might not be able to repair it unless he could get the ship out of the water entirely. Even if he patched his boat instead of the *Wing*, he needed things from the larger vessel that the bravos might have missed.

As he worked, he thought about his route. If he sailed straight north, he'd be noticed. The lanes were full this time of year of ships making their last voyages before winter storms made sea travel too dangerous. Also, there were few islands between here and Argnon. If he had to use the *Gull*, he didn't know if he could carry enough supplies.

Straight east? Perhaps. Some islands in that direction were under Mintaran control. He could gather information to begin the hunt against those who'd murdered his family. Maybe he could use his looks to his advantage there. Southerners didn't like ghosts much, and he knew from the looking-glass that his face was something to conjure with.

Besides, dreamflower syrup was cheaper in Mintaran lands... Tonio shook himself. No. He couldn't go anywhere near the stuff till he was free of its lure.

He grinned to himself, despite the way his shoulder hurt again, as he considered how his assumed name, Ravin Gambrell, might affect people in Allante. Why not sail northeast to one of the lesser islands of Pelago, Lyrarai perhaps, and find out if they remembered the old stories?

The first leg there was a bit long, but that way he could do his screaming into the sea. Judging by the cramping pain in his guts, the worst of his fight against the dreamflower was yet to come.

Tonio stopped to rest, and eat if he could keep it down. It was getting near dawn, and others might notice activity in the boathouse if he weren't careful. He'd heard hammering in his sleep. Perhaps workmen were being sent to finish the fall of the house of Siranna.

In a day he'd patched the hull of the smaller boat, detached one of the masts of the *Wing* and fastened it onto the *Gull*, and found a spare sail in the bottom of his old ship. Then he pieced together the canvas scraps that had been one night's refuge and set up a canopy on the boat. At last he'd given up on bailing, and had simply gone diving for anything he could find. One treasure he'd come up with was a single unbroken bottle of wine the bravos had somehow missed, seal still intact.

The next morning he found a small parcel of food near the door of the boathouse, and fresh water in a jar so close to the wall it looked like part of the building. Tonio didn't know what he would have done with the help of Colinna's daughter, or how she managed to avoid being spotted by the workmen he heard this dawn. He had little appetite save for the one thing he should not have, so most of the food added to his supplies. His thirst, however, was enormous.

At last he was nearly ready, and just as well. He shook so badly that he knew he must leave soon. It was becoming hard to remember what to do! One thing at a time. First, he fixed a line to the sail so he could adjust the small boom with one hand while his other was on the tiller in the stern. Then he loaded his meager supplies. The jewels were in a pouch that he tied around

his waist, and the little gold he had in a pouch around his neck. The sea-knife he'd salvaged from the *Wing*, along with its sheath, went on his belt.

For a moment he held the Master-Ring in his hand. Then he put it on the fourth finger of his right hand. "I am Tonio Vitor, the Master of Siranna," he said hoarsely. Oh, what a brave fellow he was, declaring it in the middle of night in a voice too low for anyone to notice! "I will be known as Ravin Gambrell till I can return to say it loud enough for all of Cuda to hear." He reluctantly took it off, ashamed of his cowardice, and put it back in the waist-pouch with the rest of the death-gems.

He gave the boathouse one last look. He'd hidden in this makeshift womb for long enough. It had more light and air than Colinna's cellar, yet it would mean his death if he stayed here. If he were truly brave, he would offer up the cries of mourning that his family deserved as their final tribute--but for now it was better to depart in silence.

The late-rising moon was so bright it dazzled his eyes even though it was waning. It was all he could do to hold his course steady in its light. The spray blew in his face, but the cold water braced him.

The wind was in the right quarter, which helped him stay on course. Then he looked down. Water was already seeping into the bottom through the patch. Tonio tied the tiller down and began bailing. He'd have to beach the boat if he wanted to rest. Then again, he felt so wide awake now he didn't know if he would ever sleep again. He shuddered as the itching became worse. He'd already tried rinsing his skin with plain water, and it didn't help at all. Just as well he was at sea. Anyone he asked for help around here might guess who he was, and he doubted everyone was as loyal as Colinna's daughter.

At least he was heading northeast. Soon the Maiden would rise too high to shine directly into his eyes. If a clear night sky bothered him so much, it was a good thing he'd hadn't tried to sail by day.

His back and shoulder ached beyond belief as he was forced to keep bailing. He was too far out to sea after a couple of hours to turn back. True, the leak was a slow one--but how deep would the water become if he slept?

If he woke at all. That was a tempting thought. Death would bring peace of a sort, and reunite him with his family. He shook his head in denial of that siren call. He was going to live, and avenge the ones he loved.

He paused a moment, and looked upwards. Tonio was enthralled by the blazing stars. Each light was a guide, if one knew its name and place, while the numbers he was so proud of let him find his way no matter where he was. Only a fool sailed at night in waters unknown; but he had a long way to go till he reached his limits. Ah, were it not for his pledge to Siranna all the Inner Sea might be his!

He bent back to bailing again. The itching all over his body became even worse, if that were possible, and his hands trembled so much he spilled half the water he meant to dump over the rail. Tonio began talking to himself. After all, he had to practice his Allanten accent. He'd teased Nonna by imitating hers for years, but he'd never kept it up for long, till now.

"I have to remember who I am now," he said. Who could hear him so far out to sea? "I am Ravin Gambrell, and I have been away for quite some time. I will never say where I've been, and look annoyed when people are insistent. I am interested only in gambling and pleasure...Damn, both my shoulders hurt now! But I can't stop, I can't stop, or the water will rise too high and I'll drown. Maybe I should have gone to Harin for help. Nonna did make him her heir, and never withdrew it.

"But Siranna is mine! And when I come back, I will take it from him, no matter what she said!" He burst out weeping and realized how weak he was.

"How can I be the Master like this?" he asked the wind. "I am a freak the way I look! And I would kill for just one sip of dreamflower syrup. Nonna was right. Harin should rule. I am nothing, nothing, nothing now..."

"I have to be Gambrell. Tonio Vitor is dead. He died in the fire, he died in the cellar, he died crouching in the crypt too frightened to move." He was terribly thirsty, and drank one of his containers dry. After what seemed like hours of this raving, he finally lost his voice. The wind died down, and he was too exhausted to bail. He needed some rest.

I am Ravin Gambrell, he thought to himself, and gazed up at the sky once more. It was so deep, so far. The sea was nothing compared to the infinite depths of night. For one too-brief moment his soul was up there among the stars, looking down on his small boat and the smaller man inside.

Then he was back again, inside a body that itched and hurt and cried out for a drop, just a drop, of dreamflower to soothe it. *Well, I don't have any!* he sternly told himself. *And just as well. If I slept as deeply as I did in the cellar, I might not ever wake again out here.* He rejoiced in the tiny measure of peace that had been given him. *Oh, Star-Lady, surely You are watching over me tonight.* The water still oozed into the boat, but slowly enough after his makeshift repairs so that he might sit and rest for a few moments. All his senses were so heightened that it seemed he sailed upon a sea full of diamond glitter reflected from the sky upon the waves. The waves around him flowed unbroken by any shore, while the wind was but a whisper. Perhaps--perhaps he might let himself sleep just a little.

He awoke with water creeping up to his knee and the dawn sun in his face. He thrashed out, not fully remembering where he was at first, and nearly fell overboard. Gambrell panicked and began to bail quickly. The sun's light was so strong he could barely see out of the dazzling white shadows that surrounded him. He quickly raised the canopy. That helped a bit, but not enough. He fumbled with the small storage compartment, found a length of thin cloth and wrapped it around his head so that it shaded his eyes even more. *Ha! I'd love to see the face of anyone spotting what looks like a blindfolded man sailing this boat!* he thought.

He was thirsty again. Gambrell knew he had to ration his water, but he couldn't help finishing off yet another container. Sweat ran down his face despite the cold wind. Fortunately some clouds moved in and eased the strain on his eyes. He scanned the horizon. Still no land. If he remembered the charts he'd studied--oh so long ago, it was another life!--he had two more days' sail yet to go, and that was if he stayed on course. He doubted his ability to do so.

A surge of craving distracted him again. Perhaps it was just as well he wasn't close to landing. Everyone knew the islands of Pelago sold anything to anybody as long as they had gold. Was he so lost that he would offer up the jewels of the dead for the taste of balm?

Yes. Yes, he was. Right now he would trade his last drop of water for one sip of dreamflower. He was glad no one could see his shame.

He made landfall on Kirettos three days later. Gambrell docked in the poor shore-town close to sunset, and waited till full dark to make his way to one of the local taverns. The jewels were still in the pouch around his waist. He dare not leave them on board where a thief might steal them. Perhaps he should have taken the coins that Harin left on Nonna's eyes, but he'd make do with the golden pair that had been meant for Palo Colinna. It was up to him to make the two breed more.

By dawn, he still had both coins and they'd managed to give him three bright children, though he'd been careful not to be the biggest winner. He spent one of them on a better cloak and more supplies, but carefully avoided asking if they sold dreamflower syrup. He was afraid the answer might be yes.

Gambrell shook his head in wonder as he walked back to the wharf. It'd been so *easy*! His senses had been so sensitive that his fingers had felt the minor differences in the edges of the cards, while his eyes had caught every twitch in the faces around them. They hadn't liked looking at him, even with the hood of his cloak up. Only one of the group had appeared to recognize the name of Ravin Gambrell, and he'd gone away happy as the big winner of the night.

Should I stay another night? Or will I be safer at sea? The closest island, Limnos, was to the south. If he followed that route, he'd end up circling around to Argnon the long way.

I should go, Gambrell decided. Whoever ran the Shadow Guild here might ignore a one-night winner, especially one as careful as he'd been, but would likely pay him too much attention if he overstayed his welcome. It *was* a relatively short sail.

He stopped and stared when he found the *Gull*. The boat had been pulled all the way up onto shore and ransacked. Fortunately there had been little left on it worth taking. Gambrell took the opportunity to complain to a local dock worker and get the hole re-patched. It had even been conveniently flipped over, which made repairs all the easier. It cost him another silver coin, but he was still ahead--and now he wouldn't have to bail any more!

He cast off the next day, better rested than he'd been for a long time. Gambrell decided the long way around was his best bet after all. He repeated the process on several other islands, though he certainly didn't win every game. After a couple of weeks, his cache was a bit more respectable. Wine took the edge off his senses to let him sleep when the daylight was too bright, though he usually stopped somewhere for that. The islands were too close together in this part of Pelago for him to risk dozing off while sailing. In larger ports, his docking fee paid for a guard who kept thieves away.

The worsening weather began to affect him. He was still reluctant to stay more than one night on each island, even the larger ones. Gambrell dosed himself with hot tea so he wouldn't cough so much, but even then he was turned away from a couple of games and told to seek a healer.

He began skipping islands and spent more time at sea heading west towards Argnon. Despite eating better than he had nearly all summer, he felt himself becoming so weak he couldn't even shuffle cards properly. Playing dice was out of the question--now *that* was too much of a gamble!--and he was afraid his concentration wasn't good enough for picwin. One night on Regea he learned the hard way that it was gone, and lost nearly everything. On the next island he got lucky at cards, but knew it was only good fortune, and not anything he had done. If only there was a way for him to get the coins out of his box at the Dancing Cat without revealing that Tonio Vitor was still alive.

Who could he trust? Healers often had enough magical talent to see into the minds of their patients. If he couldn't make money at gaming, he was better off with the winnings he already had. In Argnon, mages were sworn to the service of the Prophet and refused to get involved in feuds even if the one they helped came from a rival family.

He forced himself to stay on Dios for a couple of days with no gaming in a decent boarding-house. It was nearly a week in a ship the size and speed of the *Wing* from that island to Argnon, and he had to be as fit as possible before sailing that far in the *Gull*. The autumn storms were dangerous this time of year, and he'd hate to fail when he was so close to his goal.

Perhaps he ought to abandon his vessel and buy passage on something safer. He wasn't sure. Then again, people were beginning to talk about him, when they weren't complaining about everything else, a possible war between Mintar and Argnon included. It might be dangerous for him to be trapped on a ship with people he didn't know, especially if the other passengers or crew were nervous about the weather.

Dios was one of the harbors his ancestor Ravin Gambrell had sacked a century ago. In his final game a couple of islands back, someone had pointed out that the last time anyone had seen the pirate was generations ago. Gambrell had laughed, and said, "Some necromancers aren't too careful what else they raise from the deep when they're looking for treasure." That had stopped further comments, but now he thought his sharp wit might come back to bite him.

He preferred sailing during the day. His eyes were less sensitive now than they had been as he lost most of his craving for dreamflower. On this final run, he'd have to strike north and follow the shores of Azdab and Mayellin before he came to Argnon, since the weather was worse than before. If only he had his charts! But they'd turned to soup in the watery hold of the *Wing*, along with his glorious ship plans.

Gambrell awoke one morning, counted his gold, checked the pouch of gems one last time, and knew that he must leave. Clouds hid the sun, which was just as well. A clear day's light still hurt.

Later that day, he winced as he forced the tiller to hold in a heavy sea. His shoulders and back were still weaker than they used to be, and the scars pulled whenever he needed to use them much. A week or so ago--on Ipalla, he thought--there'd been a nasty fight in the public room of the tavern when one of the losers had tried to get his money back the hard way. Gambrell had already learned that he was no good any more with a sword or knife, and he'd been forced to defend himself by tipping over a table.

Perhaps he ought to find one of those lads who'd attacked him on the streets in Argnon and take lessons in foul fighting. He shook his head at the thought of using a crossbow or some other coward's weapon. After all, he was no longer a Vitor who had to uphold the family honor. He was Ravin Gambrell, half-crippled, who must defend himself however he could.

At last he entered Argnon Harbor, so weary he could barely stand. The pilot smirked and said, "Two gold!"

"What!" Gambrell said. "I could buy a new boat--newer than this one, anyway--for that much! It was only five silvers last spring."

"The Guild raised my dues. And winter traffic's heavy."

"But this boat's too small to need a pilot! I certainly don't take up that much room, not like those river scows." How desperate did he look, anyway?

"Part of my fee is to keep some idiot in one from swamping you," the pilot replied. "One gold, five silvers."

"What makes you think I even have that much? Do I look rich to you?"

"No, you look like a drowned sewer rat. One gold, three silvers."

"Seven--no, eight silvers, and only because I believe you about the Guild. And they say robbery isn't legal." *At least the man isn't making the sign against evil at my face*, Gambrell thought.

"Only when a Guild official does it, friend." The pilot thawed a bit. "One gold, one silver. If you've been around as much as you look, you know that winter rates are higher than summer ones."

"One gold," Gambrell said reluctantly. "And the next scream you hear will be my pouch complaining when I take it out."

"Done."

They gossiped a bit as the pilot got in, took the tiller, and guided the *Gull* to the section with smaller berths. "You sailed this little bugger all the way from Dios? In this weather? You must be out of your mind!"

"Tell me about it. I'm through with all those islands till spring, I swear, but I'll find something to line my pockets while I'm here. Legally, of course. I have no wish to visit the Duke's cellars!"

"Yes, it's said he likes to age his wines properly," the pilot said dryly. "And his prisoners. But it takes gold to make gold, it's said."

"I might be able to work out a loan," Gambrell said. "Forgive me if I don't say much more."

"Don't blame you. I always go to Beyuda, myself, if I run a bit short. He's on the second street past the main gate into the city, and he gives a decent price even to foreigners."

Tonio Vitor had heard of him, too. Several times. There had never been any trouble, just courtesy and a truly outrageous rate of interest. Oh yes, and discretion. Father would *not* have been pleased. *If only Father were still alive to shout at me!* he thought.

Once docked and the pilot paid, Gambrell made arrangements for the guard who watched the area to keep an eye on the *Gull* as well. Then he went to Beyuda's.

He was tired and cold. The walk nearly finished him. The old man behind the counter blinked as his latest visitor walked through the door. "No, gentle sir, I am not the Death-Lord," Gambrell said quietly. The accent of Allante now came so naturally to him that he didn't have to work at it any more. "May we do some business?" Unfortunately he ruined the effect with a coughing fit that nearly made him sick to his stomach.

Beyuda bade him sit down, then looked at the jewelry. His face betrayed no excitement, but his eyes widened. He set up a line of credit, to be paid back within a year, and a healthy fee to paid on top. In return, he'd keep the gems safe and wouldn't sell them.

Gambrell reluctantly brought out the Master-Ring of Siranna once that part was done. "This is not for loan," he said, and brought out a few extra coins to help pay for safe-keeping. "Should I die, or fail to return within a year, this ring must go to Harin della Rovere of Cuda. I must ask your silence in this matter. It would not be healthy for me should anyone know I have this ring."

"Does it have a curse on it? You sound pretty sick," Beyuda said, and fetched hot tea.

"No, or I never would have made it here." Gambrell drank the tea with pleasure. "If you could name me a healer who is as discreet as he is skilled, I would appreciate it. A healer, a good bathhouse...and, of course, a good tailor."

"I won't start the calendar till you're well," Beyuda said, his voice gentle. "If you should die, I'll send all the jewels where you wish me to. There is enough profit in life that I won't take it from the dead."

"I used to think that, too," Gambrell said softly. *Do I look so ill? Perhaps I am near death.* He had to fight for each breath, though the tea helped a bit. "All of it to della Rovere, then. And tell him...tell him that his friend wanted to say good-bye."