



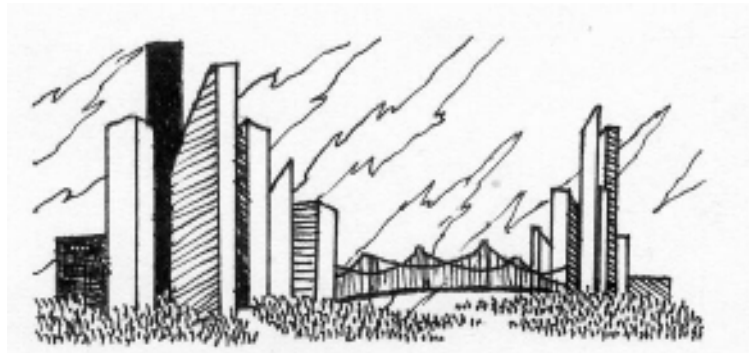
Michael Coffey's Jewish Leprechaun

by
Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr.

'Tis an old tale, but not often told. And whether or not the Irish tale-teller is in green Ireland or dusky New York City, how could the outcome be different?

Michael Coffey is a tried and true-green believer in Leprechauns and, unlike most New York City inhabitants, he can spot them -- wearing all sorts of disguises! Some, he says, look Jewish, some Afro-American, some Polish, and so on, and there's even some who look Irish, believe it or not!

Well, every faithful servant of good-old-Ireland would be less than faithful to the green sod, not to mention the blarney stone, if he didn't consider it his god-fearing duty to find that pot-o-gold which, as all good Irishmen know, those pesky, untruthful, deceitful liars all have hidden from honest Irishmen!





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I

Trembling with a terrible frustration, face streaked with tears, his chin shivering as with a dangerous, feverish ague, Michael Coffey carelessly wiped white beer foam from his pressed lips. "Go on outa' that, John O' Dancy. You be like all the others. The Little People are here, in the good ol' U, S and A. Indaid they are."

John O' Dancy walked up and down the long bar pushing out foamy, cold mugs with handles big enough for the kind of men that inhabited Irishmen's. Although he was tall and rather muscular, he was a gentle, good natured man, who offended no one deliberately, but listened quietly when listening was to be done, and told the truth as he saw it whenever asked.

A man of average height compared to most, and also to those gathered about the afternoon discussion, Michael Coffey had just asked for an opinion, which John O' Dancy rendered as soon as he'd pushed up his red sleeve-garters, his common habit before speaking. "Yer daft, Michael," he answered kindly, wiping away spots from in front of David Israel at Michael's right hand. "Here in New York City, in the heart of Manhattan, at Thirty-fourth and Seventh, in the grand Irishmen's saloon, here in broad daylight, what with all these foine business men looking on and all, I say it again — and mind you, now — there's to be no hard feelings — Michael Coffey — a man must tell things the way seen, and not mollycoddle along — so I say it. There just ain't no Leprechauns in this here tavern, this here block, this neighborhood, this here foine city, nor in this U, S and A, nor the world over, for that matter."

David Israel — who always wore a pull-over black, Siberian, fur cap, even inside Irishmen's, -- snickered. So did those others gathered about the long, curving bar, grunting or chortling according to kind. David had been talking pleasantly enough to a friend, Simon Green, once named Greenstein, both commiserating over the lot of certain races. "How miserable is our race," the smooth faced Simon had commented, blowing foam from his fresh beer. "Pograms, quotas, plagues, discriminations, Hitler, Stalin, Ku Klux Klan, Black Muslims, White Muslims, Fundamentalists, Palestinians, religious cults, exclusion clubs, and now the rise of the American Nazis again. . . . Better had we never been born."

David had answered, "That's so," nodding his covered head vigorously, and also blowing hard on his beer, so that the foam made white spatters across the shiny black mahogany bar. "Who has so much luck? Not one in one hundred thousand. . . ."

It was always thuswise, whenever Michael Coffey got to drinking a tub or two. He'd start on Leprechauns. Dancy, when asked, would deny their very existence in his soft, sweeping way, unintentionally getting Michael all upset, so's Coffey's cheeks reddened and his heart quickened; and David, if he wasn't picking on Michael for almost religious assertions about Leprechauns, was idling away the clock with fanciful often true stories, Jewish humor and gossip, or commiserating with one of his peers.

Dog, rough-hewn and powerful, towered over Michael glowering like a puffing inferno. No one knew his name, except perhaps Michael, the same that Dog had followed since early childhood, they say. Since Dog talked seldom, if at all, one must rely on Michael's often dubious judgment as to what Dog thought and felt, except at times like now, when it became clear that Dog resented unthinking laughter at Michael's expense.

To avoid Dog's close attention, and Michael's inane fixation, each man turned toward his neighbor. By now Michael's fists were clenching and unclenching and big tears still tumbled carelessly. Had they not seen it all before? Well, even in New York City a paying drunk has been known to be removed from the premises for obnoxiousness and similar crimes.

So all the men turned to each other, except Simon Green, the elderly, wizened little fellow with a green, French beret atop his head that reminded of either a yarmelke, or maybe what artists wear to keep paint from scattering through their hair while they paint. Simon was new at Irishmen's. Claiming to know much of



the world from worldly travels, he practiced peace — whatever that was — and sought to heal hurts and unite divisions, so he asked Michael, very pleasantly of course, if Michael understood Gaelic, thinking to change the dangerous subject away from imaginary Leprechauns.

Michael wiped a dirty, brown jacket sleeve against dripping eyes, and though he was bewildered at the turn of subject, he could see no reason not to answer. “Aye. If it’s in good ol’ U, S and A American.”

Well, when they all guffawed again, Michael clamped his mouth as tightly as he could without hurting the red fever blister there, and he pushed Dog toward a vacant table near the Thirty-fourth Street window, and away from unholy disbelievers and jokesters. “I was born Irish and have been so ever since,” he mumbled with some discomfiture at Dog. “A man’s heart can take but so much. Then noses has gotta’ be rubbed in,” he finished cheek-red.

Michael usually mixed metaphors because, in truth, he was born a New York City Irishman. Dog was a simple-minded person believing implicitly in Michael, and now that the careless, stimulating laughter was no longer directed at them, his own heavy features relaxed, jowls drooping lower, eyes widening and fixing on Michael almost exactly like a large blood hound who cares. Such faithful attachment escaped Michael’s attention, of course. He’d saved Dog’s life several generations ago, and never ceased reminding Dog, overlooking very nicely numerous repayments in kind. “It was all down in me grandfather’s book.”

Dog nodded.

“Am’t ye’ve seen it?”

Dog blinked.

As though an artist’s brush had suddenly wiped across Michael’s reddened face, making it golden and cherubic, he smiled brightly. Waving his broken, dirty fingernail at Dog, he began to sing low:

“Tiddley, tiddley or not,
I saw the man and his pot,
Leprechaun high,
I saw him go by,
Right near this very spot.
Filled to brim with gold,
They had all they could hold,
Day by day,
They traveled away,
From Ireland’s famine road.”

With progressive iambs, Michael’s voice got louder, so that soon John O’ Dancy’s wiping arm stopped. His red hair flicked backward between parted fingers when he glanced at Michael. Others heard, too, and they turned. Unknowing, and, if the truth be known, uncaring, Michael sang ever louder:

“Tiddley, tiddley or not,
I cry for the men and their pots,
Leprechaun high,
Naiver again t’ go by,
Right near this very spot.”

Holding in his right hand his beer mug that was foamed to the top again, David Israel advanced halfway toward their table. George McGarth, the reputed broker from Wall Street, who made the Irishmen’s trek every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, tried to turn David back, but his slender hands and arms were futile against David’s. Laughing and shouting viciously, David snickered with, “That’s your proof, daft Michael Coffey? A little piddling kid’s song about Leprechauns?”

When Dog started to rise, steaming again through deep, black eyes, Michael, whose mood was strangely calmer, stayed him with a hand.

Michael, himself, rose, facing David Israel squarely, while everyone else watched and nodded. Said



Michael belligerently, "Aye. And what if it is? Mind ye, I'm not saying am't or not. Just what if 'tis?"

Almost leering, David waved his mug carelessly this way and that. "Tiddley, tiddley or not, indeed. Tiddley winks or not, more like it. Then he guffawed loudly, repeating, "Tiddley, Tiddley or not," several times, each one more obscenely spoken.

Those that looked closely could see Michael's fists closing again, at the same time as the squinting of his eyes. "Alright. So's 'tis. Me own grandfather passed the truth in full, and just as I told it t' ye all. 'Twas the potato famine what did it," he said. "If the Irish had little enough to eat, and immigrated here, to the U, S and A in 1845, what d'ye think happened to the Little People? Hardly 'nough to feed themselves, they did, those what stayed behind, so how were they t' feed the Little People? Huh? Tell me that?"

"So the Little People came here, to the U, S and A, just like me respected and deceased grandfather said."

David Israel had had just enough liquid Bar-Mitzvah supplements for his brother's boy's sake that he was unaware how dangerously he lived. "What did they look like?" he asked, most soberly.

Well, Michael had to answer, because the question sounded civil enough - -and everyone else was watching and listening, too. "They're at most no higher than a knee, and sometimes that high, with long, straggly beards. Before they came to America, they lived in old tree roots and caves and places where tall folk wouldn't."

"And what of their little pots of gold, Michael Coffey?"

"Aye. That too! They brought them right along."

"And they're amongst us, Leprechauns, just a foot or so high?"

Michael's face reddened. He was puffing again, as though winded, and his big fists began to clench and unclench again. And his mind hurried and scurried about, too, listening carefully to his grandfather's explanations. He sighed: "No. They look taller, they've learned. They've found some way to grow."

David's shrewd trap was closing, and he sort of hunched down, like so many New York Jewish people do when they've got their quarry marked and ready for the paradox. "And you can tell them apart? Isn't that so, Michael Coffey? You can look among us here, and tell which ones are the Leprechauns and which ones the real tall folk?"

Michael nodded dumbly, because this was the part he couldn't explain. Or if he did explain, where no one believed. He said, "It's the way they behave, and walk, and how they mock and swagger about when they've the upper hand," his grandfather had explained.

He could hear it now, his grandfather, explaining and tipping, that old-country jug bonking with each tittle, and the thin trickle, trickle as fresh liquid was siphoned back in 'til the old jug brimmed again. So he nodded dumbly, tears welling upward, symbols of frustration and love for a beloved, old man, so long ago.

David spilled beer when he doubled over hooting loudly, a sound that might have echoed from tall mountain peaks and along deep-rifted valleys, given access to New York City streetways.

Everyone else chortled and hooted too.

Michael and Dog pulled up their collars and faced the whistling outdoor wind, a thing they'd rather do than listen to the humping and hacking and chortling back at Irishmen's.

Everything would have been alright, or at least the same as every other day in New York City, if David Israel hadn't outdone himself. Just as Michael Coffey and Dog were leaving, David ran up to the doorway, spattering most of the rest of his mug's contents on the way, and laughing loudly still, shouted, "I suppose you'll be bringing us one of the Little Men t' see, soon, Michael Coffey?"

Peals of unkind sounds swept out of Irishmen's, into the cold, blustery daylight, and seemed to press like sharpened sticks against their backs.

Even so, this one incident alone would not have prompted Michael Coffey to do what he did. Having



spent most of a life-time in New York City, or at least hustling in the small cracks that go to glue the tall buildings together so's taxis can thrive and trains can rumble, Michael Coffey was not actually so easily roused.

While David Israel's mocking was unusual in its severity, it was also of a nature experienced by most fellow New Yorkers, and could have been easily slept off with a simple bottle of Plain Label Wine.

Michael and Dog could have pushed against the chilling east wind two blocks to the Empire State Building, where friends would gather with them, sharing and sharing alike from Plain Label. Or they might have headed hurriedly west one long block and up to Forty-first, where in the Port Authority Building they could ramble along slowly, keeping comfortably warm, except they dare not tarry for fear of being moved outside again by the ever-present New York's Foineest who inhabit the large building like trolls waiting beneath a bridge. Or they might have strayed onto seventh avenue, into Times Square, where tourists often take pity on those with scruffy appearances by dropping coins into pleading hands.

Reflecting on his plight and feeling sorry for himself, Michael wondered if half the lies that people tell about us are not all true, and so he tramped with Dog in a most desultory manner up to Forty-second Street and Eighth Avenue, where so many of the new porno photos were displayed behind large glass cases.

And though it was still daylight, Michael's inner vision viewed the multi-hued, garish night lights that lined the streets up and down just as clearly as he could see the image of a true Irish Leprechaun given him by his foine grandfather.

They halted so Michael could better study a large billboard advertisement, a photo-artwork of a most interesting female of the opposite sex who, even though exposed to the view of every scurrying party, was portrayed with very little that covered bumps and curves save two small diamond points and a tiny patch no bigger than would fit the eye.

Dog stared, too, but few knew whether his blood surged like Michael's, which was not unlike other normal New York City male's blood, with some exceptions, those that lived at the Y, M, C and A, and a few other known places.

While they conspicuously gawked at the scantily clad female photo, a German Shepherd dog with shiny silver-and-black coat had earlier somehow freed itself of its legal leash and was sniffing about the same Eighth Avenue, but probably for a different reason. In New York City there are so many conflicting odors that it's easy to understand why such a dog, with all of its full, fine, mature responses at ready, would be confused, and especially when the mistress' hand is no longer at the reins, so to speak, to give proper signals.

His name was Tufftuff — an unlikely name for a German Shepherd — and he'd lived in a public building at Twenty-third and Seventh Avenue all of his life. Now he'd strangely wandered far afield, each block, each step, each sniff both an exciting adventure and an extraordinary and painful experience.

Just as Michael Coffey's interior blood began to warm and flow smoothly from the concentrated viewing of Sally Tease, the smiling girl glassed against the theatre marquee, and the wall, too, Tufftuff sniffed his way to Michael's pant-leg, huffed, and, apparently on verifying just the right pheromone, humped one leg asprawl and discharged a long, yellowish stream on Michael Coffey's right leg.

It was warm and Michael tried to ignore the familiar sensation, but when the wind blew, and the sensation of cold penetrated, he looked downward just as Tufftuff's right leg also came down and the dog wandered off, probably to be picked up for illegal loitering not long afterward.

Michael cursed. "That bitch!"

Though Dog's head was covered, he scratched at it through the dirty knit weave, because he thought Michael was cursing the picture.

"Look at that," Michael continued, pointing at the scandalous dog with trembling finger. "The bitch pissed over me right leg. It was me only pants, too!"

Dog glanced down, growled, and then menacingly looked about for the female woman accused by



Michael Coffey, but was unable to tell who among those hustling by were probable culprits.

“A dog, Dog. A German type bitch, you blithering idiot!”

Tufftuff was male, not female, and so had Dog spotted the frightened apartment-habituated animal, he would have remained confused. He probably would have stayed just as confused, anyway.

Well, that was the second thing that helped to change Michael Coffey's peaceful life, that and David Israel, whose unflattering, piercing laughter still pressed against Michael's back.

Coincidentally, David Israel's black, warm, glossy furred Siberian cap came bobbing through bustling throngs, and that was the third thing that helped change Michael Coffey's life. At first he wanted to scrunch down and backward, into the theatre doorway, until he noted that David's head was down, like everyone else's, and that Michael hadn't been spotted at all. So Michael's eyes followed David, taking in the slick, new, black jacket, the high leather boots that always gleamed brightly, except during rains and snows when slush splattered everything, and especially he viewed with envy the neatly pressed, dry pants that walked with Israel, matching each step.

“I thought from the beginning this was the end of it,” Michael said to Dog from the side of his mouth, “and I was right for it is not half over yet,” and he tugged at Dog's tattered coat, ordering, “Come. No one in New York City will notice if they have a follower, and no one cares, least of all smug, busy-minded David Israel.” That began and half ended the third incident which changed Michael Coffey's life forevermore.

II

Michael Coffey and Dog squatted beside the low-bulging sky-light They could easily spy as Michael's tormentor strode into his own apartment, carefully locking everything behind him, pushing bolts, snapping buttons, hanging chains, until the apartment was properly sealed.

When Michael began his daring trek behind David Israel, Dog led, because if there was any part of Dog's brain that was the least bit active, it was the part that got itself involved with following trails through New York City. Sniffing, Dog could almost distinguish one scent from among tens of thousands that hustled everywhere along blockways, down through gloomy subterranean caverns, across shaky bridges and through echoey tunnels, into stalwart buildings with glamorous apartments, or sleezy hotels crawling with cockroaches, and every kind of throbbing business establishment.

It was uncanny. When Michael was younger, and he'd first put Dog to test, they'd followed a Wall Street messenger and his little brown envelope, from the A, T and T offices to the United Nations building, through Queens Midtown Tunnel, back again, through and around Grand Central Station, into subways and back out in the late evening to Central Park, where they'd finally been able to snatch away his little brown envelope, the Central Park being a sure place for such activities.

Whenever Michael had known they'd lost the diminutive fellow, Dog would scratch his head, look about like some soulful ape who's been caught away from a beloved jungle, and he'd sniff once or twice, and point, and off they'd go. Sure enough! The prey would be found!

Whether t'was by taxi or train or bus, Dog could distinguish the spoor.

That's the way it had been that first time. And everytime Dog recovered the scent, so to speak, Michael's imagination came equal to the exploit, building in his mind visions of untraceable stock certificates, bundles of syndicate money tied together with little paper bands, or, at the least, nice white, crystalline powders that could be swapped on the streets for almost anything.

When they did get their hands on the messenger's little brown envelope, swooping it out unexpectedly from beneath his arms, it contained one half-eaten sandwich and an apple core, which was often Michael's luck, making him feel at the time that his cup of miseries was filled to the brim, and already half empty.

Still, that first time had been a keen, invigorating experience, what with Dog peering and sniffing, and Michael at first quite dubious, and then warmly grateful, and then wildly enthusiastic. He'd pounded Dog's back, saying “Dog. You got class, mental telepathy, or something the same, and as good as a dog's. Why, I'll bet you could follow any animal through any jungle in this whole, foine city!”



Dog hadn't lived long enough to receive praise from the world, what with considering his birthright and environment and other problems. He'd let his big, soulful eyes sparkle, and he'd stiffened up his back which was otherwise humped just a little as if he'd been pushing against all the city's wild sins, and he'd swaggered.

They was close, was Michael and Dog!

So here they were, on the apartment rooftop, with the chilling winds from the cold Atlantic Ocean shifting dust and swirling confetti from New York's last spectacular parade. They squeezed together tightly for warmth, and to reduce their visibility even if David glanced upward, which was unlikely since it was dark now. David Israel would not see well through the skylight from the inside.

David removed his black, Siberian fur cap.

Michael gasped. "Why would you look at those ears!"

Sure enough, there was just the slightest of pointing to them.

Next came off David's heavy wool scarf, and then his slick, new, black jacket and high leather boots, and so on.

David finally plumped himself into bed, and got the lights out. All was quiet, except for the comforting din from the streets below, the whir and buzz and growl of automobiles now and then garnished by the frightful banshee wail of police car or firetruck traveling without regard for human life or limb.

Mulling over those near-pointed ears stirred Michael's thinking into a fierce heat, and when he added David's large, round eyes that could every once in a while squint until they were evil slits, the blaze roared upward, and when he thought of David's peculiar ways of behaving, the blaze consumed every Irish passion, which is difficult for any thought to do.

He remembered how David had thrust himself forward as though to attack, and then back again with a light dancing step and a frolic that embellished a terrible arrogance and demanding mockery.

And what of the gleeful jeering at Michael's rational explanations on the Little People? What of chortling and hacking at Michael Coffey, himself? All the way to Irishmen's doorway, David had followed, he had, and there, mug in hand, he'd shouted obscenities into the very streets at Michael's back! What of that little, peculiar twist and mischievous grin when he cocked his head to listen, and so many other smaller but equally strange behaviors that now came crystal clear in Michael's inner visions? Quietly speaking to Dog, he said: "That David Israel has all the symptoms me foine grandfather taught. He's Leprechaun!"

And so that's how Michael Coffey came to build a barrel about a bunghole, while purifying his mind with thinking and other highly combustibles.

Dog merely grunted. He was not all that knowledgeable about Leprechauns. Indaid, he was not all that knowledgeable about most things.

Then it suddenly dawned on Michael Coffey that he held the explanation in his big, Irish hands as to why David Israel was so eager to ridicule him at Irishmen's. Thinking on how clever were Leprechauns, and how dangerous, and all filled with frightening magic, Michael shivered. "Why if me mortal soul weren't protected, it might be endangered right now!" he whispered with amazement at his new, startling insight, also thinking of the thrice blessed St. Gerard's medal that hung on a thin chain about his neck. St. Gerard, the patron of lost causes, had joined him during childhood when he'd won a cataechism contest.

"I'm givin' ye this," Father McLaughlin had said, shaking his curly, red hair bewildered, but with a vigor he did not feel, "because ye've bested the best, Michael Coffey. It's for lost causes and ye' deserve it."

Father McLaughlin never did learn how during the test Michael had carried wee, tiny notes in his palm's hand, so Michael had won fair and square.

Michael and Dog worked their way down cold, iron ladders, and home again, which was an empty basement in an overlarge building at Broadway and One Hundred and Fourteenth Sreet. Inside, all about them, were old couches and chairs, cages and ropes, ladders and paint, buckets and canvas, fence wire and



iron rods, plumbing supplies and used appliances, and so on.

Michael's dreams were normally not of the ordinary kind — like where death claws upward from ancient coffins at legs a'tremble, or when spirits fly by His Honor while his Honor's arms flap vigorously up and down like a fearful, plummeting bird, finally toppling and bouncing or caroming from stiff protuberances, such as stately buildings and other natural obstacles. This day was the same because the night was no different, and when he and Dog turned in, crawling between assorted blanket layers taken from rows of shelving, the terrible nightmares returned.

He tossed and turned about and the visions finally came to the forefront of his mind, but receded again just as he was about to understand them. He had to awaken, finding that he sweated profusely, even though the temperature was not much above outside's despite the burning of dry kindling bundled from the breaking up of old furniture scattered about.

After downing a goodly swig of Plain Label Wine, and again wishing it were grandfather's Dublin Irish Whisky, Michael roused Dog. It was nearly daylight anyway, and while swigging at Plain Label he'd come to a marvelous decision. Handing Dog the near-empty bottle, he said: "Look. That David Israel owes us something. Does it matter that he's Leprechaun, if he owes us something?"

Dog kept drinking, downing most of the remaining shares which, since Michael hadn't stopped him, was surely already approved. And since Dog hadn't corrected Michael, Michael congratulated himself for being such a wise man that has his after thoughts first.

It is not always possible to distinguish between overcast skies and sunshiny morning on Manhattan streets, but Michael could tell it was mid-morning by the ebb in traffic flow, which reaches its peak just before nine o' clock, when everyone strives to make it to their business places at the same time.

By the time Michael and Dog had returned to Israel's skylight to find that the devilish mocker was gone, and no one else about, sunlight had almost penetrated Manhattan's upper reaches, which, by itself, is quite an achievement.

Michael poked Dog in the ribs with a sharp elbow, a signal used so often before that Dog needed no further conversations. He went to work at once, while Michael wandered about in search of "constables" and a safe look out, as was always his thoughtful way.

Just as Dog had no peer in tracking above, through, and below New York City, he was also an expert at window cutting, lock picking and various enforcement arts, which expertise he put to use on Michael's signal.

When Dog was younger others made daily mockery of his size and clumsiness and slow thoughts. He'd been surrounded by The Tigers, other young gentlemen nine, ten, eleven and twelve years old that had banded together for self-protection and to emulate their older brothers, The lions, the same what ran the whole, foine neighborhood. Dog had wanted to join with The Tigers, but his clumsiness stood in his way, so to speak, causing him to cough at the wrong times, or to stumble or to do something embarrassing that would surely prevent gang members from swiping candy or snatching a handbag, or something. They'd all descend on him in anger. The last time they'd kicked him down his hand had fallen on a doorknob which it spasmodically clutched and brought upward swinging wildly to bust heads and scattering the bunch in all directions. By the time their stitches were plucked out he was permitted to run with The Tigers all he pleased. While this new adjustment led to Dog's inner satisfaction, outsiders would sometimes shake their head wonderingly, while insiders acted frightened of him, like as if he hadn't all his marbles, or some such. They'd quiet down when he arrived, or spaced themselves some distance away, even during exciting and profitable gang ventures.

The doorknob had become shiny over the years, like polished gold, and Dog still carried it in his outer coat pocket, or, if the weather were warm, in his right hand pants pocket, where it bulged suspiciously.

Dog and doorknob had been through much together: It'd gotten him permanently out of school when



the principal had locked him in a special room. He'd used it to pound through glass and wire-mesh windows; he'd knocked out the older Big John Morrell once, after Michael Coffey was beaten to a bloody pulp; he'd played with it, throwing it up and catching it over and over, whenever nervous or disturbed, or if he just couldn't find anything better to do; besides being heavy in his pocket nest, he'd often clutch at it simply to be reassured.

So now Dog at Michael's signal took out his precious brass doorknob and battered the skylight window until the hole was big enough for them both. Never mind the falling glass, or the crashing noises, because no one would bother to check on disturbances, and even if they did, so what? No sane New Yorker would interfere, or get involved, though daylight it was.

Dog hung by his hands and dropped first, after which he caught Michael.

Michael headed first for the closet where was stored foine clothing, the same worn and displayed from time to time by David Israel. In almost a flash he'd discovered pants whose press must have come from the saints, so sharp were they, and blue, too.

He whipped off stained trousers, and popped into Israel's pants, though they fit tightly, indaid.

It took Michael hardly no time a'tall to get himself completely accoutered: brilliant yellow shirt, with silken and green tie, canary yellow suitcoat with vest, shoes of the softest black leather—and when he was finished, and admiring himself in the long mirror hanging on the inside bathroom door, he was a different Michael Coffey. "There are no foiner gentlemen than us sow's ears," he said, overlooking the fact that Dog couldn't fit into Israel's clothing a'tall.

Dog was rummaging through utensils and supplies in the corner near Israel's sink. He found the liquor supply and squeezed three bottles of expensive Scotch beneath one arm. He was stooping over so's he could slip a bourbon beneath the other. Normally Michael would have been delighted. Not today, not in these foine, colorful clothes that made a new Michael Coffey stand out like a young paradise bird.

Disrobing and laying his new duds carefully on David's bed, Michael ran water in the tub until suds were high. He slid in, and scrubbed himself thoroughly, after which he dressed again from inside out in all of David Israel's tight-fitting finery.

"'Tis a pity there's none for you," Coffey told Dog as he ordered the big man to bathe, too.

Well, now, Dog wasn't averse to cleanliness, so long as he could swig his drink along with it, or along with anything else for that matter, so he popped into Michael's water, soaking and swigging.

While Dog swigged and soaked, Michael Coffey rummaged, pulling out drawers scattering their contents every which way until the place looked like vandals had entered, which they had, in a way.

Now and then he'd pick up something, peer at it carefully, and stuff it in one of his new, clean pockets.

Once he found a whisky bottle containing hundreds of bright, shiny coins, and he set it aside for Dog to carry.

When he found a secret compartment where everyone always has secret compartments, below a dresser drawer, he was virtually speechless. Hundred dollar bills! Hundreds of hundred dollar bills! Quick as a wink, and before Dog could see, he stuffed them in his new coat pocket, nervously patting at the bulge.

A tiny bit of avarice must have cropped up in Michael that day, because he wasn't satisfied still.

They ate freely as they searched, and Dog drank heavily. Michael impatiently broke open suitcases, poured out cannisters of sugar and flour, drew out oven racks, flinging them across the floor, spilled over the garbage cannister from beneath the sink and pawed through the litter—though carefully so's not to soil his new attire—opened pictures from behind with a foine switch blade he'd found, cut open mattresses and chair and sofa cushions. . . .

When he found the biggest prize, it was laying right on top of the dresser in a little picture frame, just like that letter he'd heard about once in school, that pearl-lined one, written by Edgar Po'boy.

It wasn't the picture that was strange, being just some hills all covered with green grass and a sprinkling of yellow and white flowers. It was the frame, designed with heavy, yellow metal, maybe gold itself, or



at least gold-covered.

At one corner was embossed a perfect four-leaf and green clover. Beneath the clover was the pot o' gold, coins heaped hands high above the pot, and shining like the glitter that was in Coffey's mind and eye ready to tinkle and clink as the heavy pieces drained through his thick fingers.

"Now what, according to St. Patrick, would a New York City Jew be wantin' with the lucky clover and pot o' gold?" he mused.

The clatter of pans and clash of glass came loud from the kitchen alcove.

"Sure, and if that isn't their emblem!"

His brain had fired up again, and he was more than ever determined. He threw clothing from the closet, and searched everywhere, high, low, side to side, until at last, on the very top closet shelf, he found another honest clue. It was a walking stick. It's shaft was strong, unbending, cleverly crafted from a gnarled root that could only have grown dangerous thornbushes in Erin. As his thoughts boiled and burned, he culled one passing, so to speak, where his dear old grandfather had explained about "They're funny old men in green caps and they live directly beneath thornbushes, pulling green sod over their holes so's no one can find them."

Michael studied the stick carefully, finding that at its one end, where the hand easily fit into its natural shape, it was big enough to knock any tough Irish head to the ground, and on the knob, just like on the golden picture frame, was the lucky, green and four-leaf clover and also the fascinating, glittering pot o' gold.

Michael grinned, and then cackled, and then laughed uproariously, swinging the stick to and fro and twirling it, and he jigged, too, while he sang:

"Tiddley, tiddley or not,
I see the man and his pot
Leprechaun high,
I'll get him by and by,
Right near this very spot."

III

Wizened, little Simon Green was now considered an old-timer at Irishmen's, and now and then he'd taken to removing his yarmelke-like cap, hanging it on the hat tree like other full-blown ones. He was holding his beer mug in his right hand as he leaned against the polished bar, staring at the nearly undressed figure that John O' Dancy had hung, along with a calendar of the new year, not more than a fortnight ago. "Oy, what are morals coming to," he said to no one at all, except maybe John O' Dancy, who was up to his usual wiping and polishing and minding of his own business.

Bar work was slack, it being too early for the early morning rush, and too late for the late night slaggards, so only Simon and John O' Dancy were together.

"I've not noticed your head turnin', Mr. Green," O' Dancy reminded.

"I'm staring only so my eyes won't forget what my heart has learned from the *Torah*."

"The *Torah* teaches cheesecake?"

"The *Torah* teaches everything."

Puzzled but for a moment, John continued wiping out ashtrays and polishing glasses, and then he asked, "But if it teaches everything, then why hasn't it taught your heart how to avert your eyes?"

Just then the door swung open and a breathless David Israel steamed inward and beat at the bar.

John O' Dancy pulled out a glass, poured and pushed the foaming mug into David's place. David was saying: "It's a holocaust. My place! It's torn stem to stern when I got home last night. You should see the place! Drawers emptied, and garbage strewn, clothes scattered, and bottles and cans and. . ."

"A holocaust should not be named lightly," Simon reminded grimly.

"A genuine pogrom!"



“With your body still kicking about, you’ve had a pogram?”

“Clothes were stolen, mattresses torn, and couches and pillows, and feathers like one was readying for tar and feathering. A blizzard of feathers everywhere, I tell you! They broke through my skylight. A tragedy, a terrible tragedy!”

“The Diaspora was tragedy!”

“Thieves!”

“Goniffs? So tell me, what did they take?”

“Ten thousand dollars, and new coins I’d saved for my nephew’s chupeh!”

“Oy! You were right the first time,” Simon Green said, hollow eyed. “A holocaust! Here, John O’ Dancy, buy my nebich friend David Israel another beer,” and he clattered some more coins on the countertop.

IV

As to Michael Coffey, well, he first got Dog to shed his street-soiled garments, and Michael dressed Dog in finery almost equal to his own. Dog, himself, took to looking in mirrors or window glass. His sporty new suitcoat, though just a wee bit small, was checked yellow and black and most attractive, and showed off his big muscles and broad shoulders better than a proper fit might have done, or so Michael told Dog. Like Michael’s, Dog’s neck was all decorated and protected by a green scarf. Michael’s was held together nicely with a foine three dollar pearl stickpin, while Dog’s with a zirconium that glinted and sparkled and drew the eyes together with its size and brilliance.

Michael had relieved the walking stick from Leprechaun bondage, and now — together with his brilliant yellow shirt, newly purchased green cravat, canary yellow suitcoat with matching vest, black, soft, leather shoes — he whirled and twirled the black knoberry stick with a passion that swept aside those approaching like the King and Queen of England themselves.

What a great, wonderful man was Michael Coffey!

And wouldn’t he soon purchase more lovely clothing?

And another thing. He and Dog gave up Plain Label Wine. Their new apartments on Sixth Avenue and Forty-fourth Street, where lots of writers and such hung about telling tall tales to one another, suited them and their fancy collections of Irish Whisky.

Michael was aroused early every morning by a personal call from the desk. He’d shower and shave, and dress in foinery, after a swig or two of genuine Irish Whisky, and then he’d make final adjustments in the big dresser mirror while he waited on Dog.

They’d buzz for the elevators, step inside lively, and maybe Michael would hum a little Irish ditty while dropping slowly downward.

Michael always tipped the elevator boy handsomely, pushing at his new broad-brimmed, black hat with his knoberry cane, as he’d seen done in the movies once or twice.

And he tipped those same polite gentlemen who opened doors and whistled for taxis and the like, never failing to be appreciated and being thanked with a smile, a bow, and an ingratiating manner which was quite foreign to Michael’s past way of life.

Irishmen’s was off limits — for obvious reasons — and so they’d taken up at Torney’s Pool and Billiards at Kenmare and Cleveland, near Delancey Street. Neither Michael nor Dog played pool, and so they’d pass on into the backroom which was locked to all except special guests, and where Baldy Jivers, Jim Torney, himself, Luke McNivers, Afro John, and several others pushed out their capital and strived for gains, just like Wall Street stock investors.

Oh, Michael was more than welcome by good friends at Torney’s Pool and Billiards!

By and by, though, it came to pass that Michael Coffey’s purse suffered. He awoke one morning in a terrible sweat. “When you lay down with fleas, there’s usually a dog around,” he mumbled while shaving and thinking of those scalawags at Torney’s who’d topped his king-high straight with a red-heart flush.



Counting his money, which consisted chiefly of pocket coins, he growled (although some might have said he whined) at Dog, "Come here."

Dog obliged, nervously scratching at his uncombed hair and feeling around the pockets of his sagging pajamas for his brass doorknob.

"D'ye see this money?"

Dog nodded, even grunting a response.

"Sure, and 'tis all we have between us and pure, adultered starvation. What are we to do, Dog?"

Since Dog had never had much say about what they was to do before, the thought scattered his thinking further, and he scratched his head harder.

"This money came from the Jewish Leprechaun, turned normal, Dog, and it's up to us to find out the secret."

Whether or not Dog understood was not too important. The conversation turned on a significant point, the money in Michael's hand, and their need, and their goal, and a worthy goal it was. Dog relaxed.

Michael's vision enlarged again, as he stared at his proud visage in the big dresser mirror. Inside the new gleam of his vision was a huge iron pot all filled with sparkling yellow light that came from big, round, golden coins.

Michael had begun to realize that many people were actually Leprechauns, but there was only one full grown adult that Michael Coffey was sure was Leprechaun grown tall. So it was toward David Israel that Michael directed his increasingly nervous attention.

He got to hanging about Irishmen's again, sporting clothing that rivalled George McGarth, the alleged Wall Street broker who looked every thread and button the I, B and M salesman.

Except for George McGarth, who came on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and David Israel, who popped in mostly the same days, and Simon Green, and two or three others from various places, both near and far about Manhattan, only John O' Dancy, the bartender and half owner, remembered Michael Coffey and the towering, silent Dog.

John O' Dancy — who was always wiping away beer foam, or cleaning the big mirror on the wall behind the bar, or shining the bar itself with a polishing rag sprinkled with a red liquid whose scent wrinkled the nose — looked up, startled at the sudden appearance of the two, and for a moment he just stared, mustached-mouth gaping and then at last said: "Why, it's Michael O' Coffey and Dog! How can that be? Apparel bedazzling t' the eye. Sure, now, ye've had a bit O' luck, Michael Coffey."

Michael needed and absorbed that very greeting, for he at once thrust out his chest and walked toward the bar as a man of means, which he surely was. To tell the truth, he'd been just a bit fearful that old cronies would scorn his ways again.

"Aye. 'Tis Michael Coffey, for sure," repeated George McGarth. Having completed his fifth round of suds his feelings were mellow and cordial. He'd also spilled beer on his pin-stripe suitcoat, and he'd forgotten to close his fly completely, and he'd wiped his left sleeve in bar rings that John O' Dancy had not yet cleaned. Compared to the immaculately arrayed Coffey and Dog, McGarth's appearance was, to say the least, sleazy.

George McGarth had lived most of his lifetime in a stolid concrete condominium across from Central Park, near the Traverse at Sixty-fourth Street, he'd been explaining to John O' Dancy. "It's comfortable, without too many strains and worries, except that wife of mine who nags, and a jealous lady-friend, both most difficult to keep apart from one another."

Such stories were old and natural barroom undercurrents at Irishmen's, so John had grumpled and nodded and gone on his busy work.

"Now you take daylight hours, such as Tuesday and Thursday," McGarth had continued. "It's upearly and off to General Motors offices where I say hello to everyone coming and going. I hang up my hat and coat just like everyone else, only my closet is personal and an expensive, recessed ebony panelling. I seat



myself in a plush executive chair and then begin answering personal mail — well — I don't answer it, but I do decide which of two secretaries will. Then its off to visit with Tom Littleby of Standard Oil, New Jersey, just across the street, and together we go to Cameo Fries' at American Telephone and Telegraph, or to any one of a dozen other offices. You know what? Everyone has a bar. Yes sir! And either we drink there, or we go out, to some swanky place, where ordinary drinks like yours, John O' Dancy, cost ten bucks each. Yes sir! I'm not jockeying. Ten bucks!

"But you know something? It's Irishmen's that I like. It's you, John O' Dancy, that I come back to, again and again."

"Well, that's foine, Mr. McGarth. And we like your company, too."

"It hasn't spoiled me. Not a bit. I mix with anyone. I'm democratic."

"Sure you are, Mr. McGarth. Now tell me. Did you have just a sniff, maybe, of something a little stronger than beer today?"

McGarth changed the subject, sidling up to Michael. "How have you been, Old Man. Got rid of those Leprechauns yet?" And he chortled and banged at the bar something fierce.

Dog began scratching his head and doubling up his fists, and he made a noise deep in his throat.

Patting Dog gently, Michael raised his left fist for attention, having forgotten that he'd had to leave behind his wonderful cane. As others besides McGarth gathered about, Michael's inner thoughts fluttered like squawking blackbirds. "Sure, and 'tis still truth. Why, I've known Irish atheists who wished to God they believed in God. Now the truth, Mr. McGarth! Can you be Irish and not believe in the Little People?"

"Ha! Ha!" McGarth slapped the countertop and reared back. "Little People buy up stock, and we fleece 'em. Sure I believe in Little People, and why not?"

"Look about you George McGarth. What d'ye see?"

Sipping and winking at John O' Dancy, McGarth answered, "Why two fine gentlemen. What have you done with yourselves, Michael Coffey?"

Michael sighed. It was going to be easy. "Well, now. When a gentleman wears foine clothing and eats well and domiciles comfortably, would you say he's changed his life about?"

David Israel had not been seen by Michael, and was now closing, mug in hand. "You're surely not daft any longer, Michael Coffey? You've gone straight, and brought to hand a success story?"

For a moment Michael's heart quivered. He was back on the streets again, hand held out for any coins, with an Irish beggar's coat, made of holes sewn together, the ragged cloth fluttering wildly in the cold, east Atlantic winds, eyes watering and sniffing. Then he saw that David Israel, the true Leprechaun grown tall, was merely testing him. "Aye," he answered bravely. "'Tis the truth. No more chasing after the Little Folks, David Israel. Me mind is touched with more important things," and he crossed his fingers behind his back as he said it.

David, reflecting but briefly, grimaced and said: "That reminds me of the fool who went to his rabbi, saying 'I know I'm a fool, Rabbi, but I don't know what to do about it. Please advise me.'

"The Rabbi said, 'If you know you're a fool, then you are no fool!'

"Then why does everyone say I'm a fool?" complained the man.

"The Rabbi said, 'If you don't understand that you're a fool, but only listen to people say you are, then you surely are a fool!'"

Well, even though the little story wasn't too well understood by Michael Coffey, it broke the ice, so to speak, and everyone began talking, drinking, and passing stories and lies about like they were popcorn, peanuts or free pretzels, which is what places like Irishmen's is for.

George McGarth talked on about stocks and bonds, and his great life on Wall Street.

John O' Dancy turned up the TV set, and they all stared at the World Series, one shouting for one, another cursing and shouting for the other, which is what the World Series games are for.

David Israel, like some others, moved back to his old, favorite location at the curved portion of the bar,



his mouth stilled and his brow furrowed with deep thought that seemed to darken whenever he caught Michael's big, guilty eyes glancing his way.

Dog, like Michael, warily guzzled one brew, and then another. Being more used to good ninety proof — or higher — the light alcoholic content passed on and through them both not unlike a cool, light, spring breeze.

In time David Israel paid his tab, shouldered on his great coat, and stomped noisily out, carelessly saying goodbye to anyone who cared to listen.

Shortly following that, Michael Coffey and Dog also departed, scurrying as fast as possible to catch up to the sight of David without being seen doing so.

Dog sniffed out David's trail all the way downtown, nearly to the edge of the Hudson River, until they stood outside a doorway, inside a hallway, inside a modest, grey office building. The discretely labeled door-sign announced: *A. Ashville, M.D.*

"Now why in the whole, gloomy world would an Irish Leprechaun, turned Jew and tall, come all the way down here to Exchange Street to visit a doctor without clients?" Michael mumbled to himself and Dog, not expecting nor getting any answer from either one.

It wasn't true that Dr. Ashville had no clients. Even as they stood outside shuffling and scratching and moving about to make themselves inconspicuous, several patients came out, all dressed like I, B and M salesmen. Others walked in, too, dressed in the very same uniform: hat, suitcoat and vest, neatly pressed pants, white shirt and discrete tie usually fastened with a fashionable Windsor knot.

Puzzling deeply over this bewildering development, Michael developed a terrible thirst, so he and Dog skittered down to Beaver street where was found a place that could salve it.

When evening settled over the upper reaches of Downtown, there was little activity in the streets, except maybe a few night watchmen going and coming, some cleaning crews, and hustling taxis and such.

Michael remembered his mission despite many thirst quenchers. So Dog and he leaned toward one another as they worried their way back to A. Ashville, M.D. Michael sang a bit, and then in his kindest, most humble tone, paid Dog a great compliment, saying: "You know, old friend. It's men like you who can save their ill-gotten gains, that makes the world turn about," and then he hiccuped.

Dog jingled the coins in his pocket next to his precious brass doorknob. The coins were those originally taken from David Israel's jar and given to Dog that momentous day by the very generous Michael Coffey, himself.

By the time they'd reached the same grey building, darkness had descended between the buildings, leaving most of the streets eerily lit with taxis rumbling and spewing odorous exhausts, the customary wail and whine of police car or ambulance hustling lonely off in the distance. . . .

Michael straightened both of them before the tall building, pushing imaginary wrinkles from his clothing, and he cautioned Dog to walk straight, and then he brazenly led his faithful companion directly toward the seated guard, and around the guard, and to the elevator doors, where he pressed for a car.

"Dress well and act arrogant, like a true American," he'd often explained to Dog, "and they'll not notice you everytime."

And so it was all true again, like all truths, good for the moment.

They rode upward. On egress from the elevator, they faced a locked outer lobby door.

The rest was up to Dog, and his specialized and wonderful New York City knowledge.

Click!

The outer door was opened.

Click! and Clunk!, and they were past the outer lobby and into Dr. Ashville's private office, where they could lurch about without fear of being overheard, so thick were the rugs.

While Dog searched for something of value, like a bottle containing properly aged spirits, Michael aimed himself at an imposing filing cabinet beside the glossy desk, and he began a careful search,



accompanied by a low muttering monolog. When he found a file that said just as clear as language could, “Israel, David”, he whooped, and then caught his traitorous mouth with his hand.

Shushing Dog, who had yet to make any noise at all, Michael noisily tipped over the bulging cabinet, gathering the files into armloads and pushing them into a large, plastic wastebasket, at once setting them to fire with the doctor’s own desk-lighter, a pair of intertwining serpents given to the physician by a medical supply salesman, his company’s name also inscribed thereon by phosphorescent colors that could glow brightly in the dark.

Michael shoved the “Israel, David” file beneath his shirt, and together they hustled out to the hallway where they bounded down flights of stairs, sometimes stumbling, but usually able to take them two at a time. But before they reached ground floor, and like a well rehearsed team—which in a way they were—Michael held up a hand that stopped Dog and gingerly opened the doorway from the stairwell to a fourth floor hallway.

No one was to be seen, so Michael waved Dog onward, and together they searched, and, located a fire alarm. Michael triggered it, and they rushed into the stairwell again and downward.

They cracked the bottom stairwell doorway, peering about its corner like mischievous boys—which in a way they were, except they were older—and they waited nervously for the guard to respond to their alarm.

The whole, grand ruse worked, or almost.

The entranceway guard left his post to enter an elevator which, now that the alarm had sounded, could only be activated with a special key.

Michael and Dog got free of the building, alright, and bumped into one of New York City’s stalwart policemen, who collared Michael without trouble but had yet to reckon with Dog.

Once, long ago, Michael and Dog had been in similar straits, except that instead of one of New York’s polite, under-paid foinest, they’d been surrounded by a gang of wild ones who swarmed like lemmings about and around the avenues and streets looking for thrills, power, money, kicks, blood, or whatever floated by for the moment. In this last instance its leader was a half-crazed Puerto Rican who loved to taunt victims before ordering in his mob which consisted of Chicanos, Blacks, and some few scarred Caucasians. He always began his harassment with practiced, theatrical style, having pieced together his act from portions of television programs that featured hard-line, fundamentalist gospel preachers. These TV shows were always on at his decrepit apartment home because his grandmother got her kicks from watching them go after sin: homosexuals, prostitutes, murderers, drug dealers and users, alcoholics. . . . She could identify easily with much that was boldly preached, and often explicitly represented, so that it stimulated and turned on her ancient juices.

Who’d want to watch an ordinary ballgame with those fascinating alternatives?

The Puerto Rican, whose name was Dom Emanuel, had pointed a shaking finger at Michael Coffey and Dog, and he’d shouted: “Miserable men, putting hollow halloween masks over faces and features given you by God! Who among us makes himself into beasts? How could your mother know you? You are gluttonous and sinful. No Christians or proper New Yorkers would allow themselves to be caught as have you two. You are neither Baptists, nor Christians, nay, not even New Yorkers, and I shall have your heart. When your souls belong to me, I shall eat, and grow strong. Get down on your knees you foreigners! Get down and pray, I will at least give you that.”

Some of Dom Emanuel’s boys crossed themselves, as he liked to have them do during such rites.

Some of the gang members got their switch-blades readied, snicking them loudly, and when Dog had seen and heard those, he was at least sufficiently New Yorker to know that he’d better not wait on Michael’s directions and approval for self-defense, and since his hand was already inside his pocket holding onto his golden ball, he withdrew them together, and he began a dreadful, fearful battering that seemed to bowl over all the praying and non-praying alike, without regard to their status before God.



On viewing the descending wrath, Dom Emanuel had choked something that sounded like “Ulk!” and then he’d scuttled into dark side streets as if the wail of a police siren had at last centered on him, and New York’s foineest was already pounding at his tail, which, in a way and manner of speaking, it had.

Well, here we are now, with Michael who’s been caught by his own good coat collar, fair and square, and here is Dog, his hand just coming from his pocket even as the policeman’s nightstick is being raised toward him.

Dog’s reactions, the more naturally instinctive and swifter, pelted the doorknob into their captor’s head, and the stick was heard clattering loudly against the hard cement walkway at the same time the policeman came down, his head having collected a new bump for his efforts on behalf of civil peace and order and the foine citizens of New York City.

Like Dom Emanuel had done, Dog and Michael quickly took advantage of the policeman’s fall, and scuttled into sidestreets. When they exited the narrow, dark and dirty lanes they collected the very first taxicab and then home to Sixth Avenue and Forty-fourth Street.

Michael congratulated Dog, patting him on the shoulder. ‘Ye’ve done the right thing again, me big pal!’”

Dog felt warm and he grinned broadly, such was the rarity of Michael’s Irish commendations.

They were in their lair again, nicely settled with a cold glass of Scotch. “Ye’ve true Irish spirit. No man from the old, green sod is at peace except when he’s fighting.”

And so, with that paradox, Michael began studying the “Israel, David” folder where, of course, the words were often complex, and the writing was nearly legible, it being that of a duly licensed and certified medical doctor of the healing arts profession, although Michael did seem to grasp its essence. Visits occurred once each month, usually every thirty to thirty-four days. With each visit a record was inscribed called CC which seemed to go into the folder after David’s name each time. And each time it was the same, a certain number and then the mysterious CC, then some big name, perhaps a foreign language, or maybe even a secret code. . . .

“Well, now,” he spoke to Dog, who was watching *Sesame Street* on TV with the sound turned low so’s Michael wouldn’t get upset. “‘Tis all scientific. How am I to make sense of this wholly garbled account?”

Dog impulsively loosened his tongue though his head and eyes hadn’t turned toward Michael, and surely knew not Michael’s dilemma. He growled, simply, “Rusty!”

Surprised and delighted, Michael slapped at his leg. “Ye’ve got it. Rusty is clever, having been caught but once or twice with the goods, and they say he studied at college, too.”

The name was Rusty Delevocchio. Some rumors held that Rusty was connected with the Mafia Delevochios, but Michael Coffey paid little heed to rumor. Any Mafia person worth his keep would certainly have a better stake in life than had Rusty, who might be found on Bowery Streets one night, or in the foineest nightclubs the next, depending on pickings.

The Mafia Delevochios spelled their name Delvecchio, although Michael’s thoughts were keen enough to recognize that such careful distinctions were not often reliable. His great grandfather’s name had been O’ Coffey, but when his grandfather, His Honor Himself, had come from Ireland’s green shores, the immigration person had unwittingly changed it to Coffey.

The immigration official had been named O’ Stuyvenson, which itself had been changed to Stivenson by an earlier German official, presumably one whose name had also been changed, and so on.

Rusty Delevocchio traded in anything that could be converted to liquid assets, such as genuine U, S and A coins or greenies. He never called U, S and A dollars “dollars,” or even hundred dollar bills money because he insisted that they were not “real money.” Money is gold or silver, not printed pieces of paper, no matter how nicely engraved,” he’d argue to anyone, with great erudition.

“But the U, S and A has said ‘tis money,” Michael had bewilderingly argued back. “Besides, you can



spend it, and get whatever one desires for it. So how is it not money, if that is what money is?"

Rusty's glasses were old-fashioned, steel-framed, and thick-lensed, and he was skinny, with a long face that reminded some of a horse, but not Coffey. His arms and legs were skinny, too, as was his body trunk. Every once in awhile Michael thought of Communists, because surely, anyone with Rusty's appearance and his attitude toward money that bought things, must be communist — like Republicans, who always spouted about "preservin' the Constitution" - - anyone who talks like that must be communist.

Rusty would say: "Sure. You can buy things with it, Michael Coffey. But consider the following: By controlling prime interest rates, which is the rate that banks must pay to borrow greenies, they control the inflation rate, that and the federal deficit. Did you know that the inflation rate for greenies is exactly equal to the amount of deficit spending?"

"No!" Michael had said, still trying to understand the very first thing explained, that thing about "prime interest rates," and so his mind hadn't quite opened all the way as yet, although his mouth was surely open enough.

"Well, when the banks get their prime interest defined by the non-federally controlled bank, then they set their lending rates, and that determines how much they'll charge you for a loan."

Michael still waited, 'cause he'd never had a loan, and so was still foggy.

"The amount of greenies loaned out to people like you and me determines how many greenies there are in circulation, and the amount of greenies in circulation in excess of our earnings determines the inflation rate. See how simple it all is?"

"What's wrong with inflation?" Michael innocently asked.

"What's wrong? Well, man, it's a means of enforced taxation. Last year this little old greeny here was worth, say, ten dollars in purchasing power, or gold. This year it's worth nine dollars. Where did the extra dollar go?"

Michael looked, but the bill seemed to be the same size, and it still said, "Ten." So why was a dollar missing? "I dunno, Rusty. Is there a dollar missing?"

"You blithering idiot. You dumb Irishman. Haven't you heard what I said?"

Scratching at mental memories, Michael had come up with, "But I heard that the government was working on the problem. They said it was oil prices, or demands for higher wages, or some such, that forced us to live with inflation."

"You know, you're just a big, dumb Mick after all. You believe all the garbage that's spilled on you from television and radio by the very people who create inflation, the politicians, the people who spend more greenies than the U, S and A Treasury has, and then use inflation on us people to tax us without our permission." Shaking his head, Rusty spit and looked away. Then he tried again: "Look, Michael Coffey. If I steal money from you, and tell you someone else did it, that's the way inflation is. Understand?"

Michael nodded. He could understand stealing. But what did that have to do with making ten dollar bills into nine dollar bills? He'd never seen a nine dollar bill!

"Now look. If inflation makes greenies buy less, which it does, then who gets robbed?"

Michael shrugged.

"The widows and orphans, the poor, and the lower middle class, that's who gets robbed. If you've got enough property, like corporations and rich folks, inflation merely makes the value of the property stay steady, even though the greenie value seems to get greater. But if you're poor, like you and me, and we have no property, or if we've got a hundred greenies in the bank, then we suffer. Our greenies aren't worth as much as the bank pays us in interest after a year, and we've no property to rise with apparent value during the inflation."

That's how Michael knew Rusty was a Communist. Rusty always got back to wanting to talk about the effect of inflation on poor people, and that's exactly what that Communist back at Bryant Park had done that day he and Dog had stopped to listen.



While some shuffled about listening with a keen ear, contentedly absorbing it all, others had hissed. The Communist had had a long, straggly beard and a coat as tattered as had been Michael's and Dog's, so he couldn't have known much, or even all of it.

The way Rusty talked to Michael about inflation, and called him a "big, dumb Mick," and all, Michael Coffey knew he was a Communist, and so he went about finding Rusty as seldom as possible, or even less.

He sighed. "I guess it's necessary." Dog's attention was wholly devoted to *Sesame Street*, so Michael's forefinger tapped his glass on the bureau's top. "Half whisky and another half added," he reminded Dog.

V

They tracked Rusty Delevocchio to a small coffee house in Greenwich Village, which was to be expected considering the man's dangerous philosophies. On viewing the pair decorated like modern, strutting, peacocks, Rusty whistled, and ordered two coffees 'specially doctored, and paid for them too, which was a sign of Rusty's recent good fortunes.

Paying the waitress, Rusty shrugged. "It's just a single greenie," he commented, probably trying to get the conversation back to how the U, S and A screwed the general public and lied to them about inflation causes.

Michael, determined to make Rusty stick to his own difficult problems, flipped out the "Israel, David" record, but with the name blacked out.

"Ah! Someone's medical record. Yours, Michael Coffey?"

"No. I'm doing this for a friend, I am. Tell me what that little squigglin' line says, right there at the end of me finger. He thinks the doctor is steppin' out on his wife, he does, and maybe that's salt and Peter, or some such, written in Latin or Greek or some other foreign language. Can ye do it, Rusty?"

Rusty peered at the writing closely, his eyes through thick lenses large, like owl's. But even he could not determine the nature of the meanings, pronouncing the words clumsily.

"Find someone who knows, and what it does. I can pay you, Rusty."

That was a magic word, and it also introduced Rusty's favorite subject. "With what? Greenies?"

"Aye. Now tell me, how many dol—, uh Greenies, will it be costing me, to know what that writing is, and what it does to people, and how it's being used on me friend?"

Rusty rubbed at his chin. "Well, I don't know. I've got a pocket full of greenies already. They're decreasing in value every second, you know. If I tell you I can do it for a hundred, by the time I get answers back to you, I'd be getting less than a hundred. . . ."

"Well, now. How much in gold. I can always buy a little, and bring it back to ye."

Rusty really wanted to talk about inflation, so he was caught unprepared, and he asked for an ounce, knowing full well that the ounce was going to cost more than his original estimate of one hundred greenies, and besides, by the time he got Michael's answer, the gold would cost Michael more. "Can you afford it," he asked, still wanting to change the subject, and thinking this a wedge.

Unfortunately Michael accepted the price. Rusty sighed. The duo departed abruptly. On the way Michael puzzled through hard thoughts on the raising of Rusty's fee. "It's back to catwalking and burglary, so's we can pay our honest contract when due," says he.

VI

Now that Michael Coffey had proof that David Israel was indaid Leprechaun turned tall and Jewish, he and Dog proceeded to set their trap for his capture.

They moved back to and reorganized their old, hiding place at Broadway and One hundred and Fourteenth Street. Beneath the knick-knacks and rubble they found enough wire and assorted iron bars and ladders so's they could make a respectable cage.

Rusty had taken a long time to discover that David Israel was receiving hormonal shots, some strange, new, chemical substance that was originally derived from pituitaries, or some such part of animals and cadavers, but now manufactured through chemistry, and that the shots were "regulating," that they were



just as necessary for David Israel's daily well-being as would be heroin taken from the street, or alcohol to Coffey and Dog.

"Why 'tis plain, ordinary hooked, he is," Michael had responded to Rusty's highly technical information.

"I don't know about that, but I know that it cost a bundle to learn what I've given you. Ordinary pharmacists don't know, because the stuff isn't on the market. When I inquired of my chemist friend, that I rely on for explosives and special mixtures from time to time, well, he didn't know anything either. Says the *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics*, or any of the standard pharmaceutical references, had no mention of it, either. Says its organic. Claimed to know that. Then he had to write away to some foreign chemist friend.

"It's listed as a vital research agent in certain foreign medical journals, but even those are hard to come by, and so I went. . . ."

"But what is it good for? What does it do? Man, I don't understand all those words that you be heavin' about. What does it do? What's it good for?"

"You're just a big, dumb, Mick," Rusty said, wondering why he had this terrible compulsion to explain about greenies versus genuine money or any of his clear expositions to imbeciles. He was ready to move out to the mountains where there was nothing but clean air and billy goats. But then Rusty could hardly imagine the way to the mountains, so he did his next best, calming Michael's rapidly reddening and puffing cheeks with, "A special type of growth hormone!"

"Aye, growth!" Michael repeated, his eyes clearing and face whitening again. "What is this hormone thing?"

"Body chemicals, fluids that we all have that make us get our proper size. Some people have a deficiency, so they never grow up, and they stay midgets. But if they get pituitary extracts early in life, they come to proper size."

"This be pituitary extracts?" Now his eyes shined, probably scattered reflections from the closer pot o' gold.

"Not exactly. It's more involved, but certainly related." Rusty sighed. How could he explain such complexities to one who'd never had elementary chemistry, or could not understand his own country's monetary system? "It does the same thing, but it's different. Take my word for it. Foreign research papers show that when applied to animals, like mice and rabbits, it makes them grow."

Well, now, that was all Michael Coffey was really paying to hear, so, with eyes wide open and glowing brilliantly from reflected yellow light shining brightly in his visions, he passed over a full ounce of gold to Rusty Delevocchio, and neither the waitress nor the complacent Dog could have told whose eyes were the shinier, Michael's or those that reflected the newly earned gold.

When Dog and Michael returned to their secret, rent-free basement at Broadway and One hundred and Fourteenth street, they drank together to celebrate, and then they made a cage from scraps that were to be found in their free basement home. Michael got Dog to tie the whole rickety wire and ladder arrangement to overhead pipes, so there'd be no crawl space anywhere, and then he got one of the stored refrigerators running by tying into active electrical lines that ran helter skelter and then upward somewhere.

Since Dog had managed to locate and later sell to a chop-shop a Ford panel truck that had no one guarding it at all, they had enough money to stock the refrigerator with food and beer, and then Michael sent Dog after a small portable camp stove.

Michael stood back to admire their work, looking every which way for cracks and small places through which a little one might escape.

He also tested the wired bindings, finding that they held even when he levered them roughly with a rusty crowbar.



In his mind's eye he'd already captured the Jewish Leprechaun, and had him caged before him. David's eyes looked out between makeshift bars, pleading that he be freed. A tear dropped big enough to drown a cat. Wrinkled hands that got more lined by the minute, as Michael stared, clutched at bars and wires. Michael guffawed and then cackled, bending over to slap at his thighs. "Well, now," he said. "You won't be hidin' behind your Jewishness very long."

The eyes seemed melancholy, and when David's image spoke, wasn't that a quiver in its voice? Michael was exuberant. He took another nip and that made his vision stand out better. Then another nip, and another. Soon he was dancing about like Paddy O' Toole in a fiddlin' contest, singing lustily:

"Tiddley, tiddley or not,
I see the man and his pot.
Leprechaun high,
I see them go by,
Right near this very spot.
Filled to brim with gold,
They had all they could hold.
Day by day,
They travel away,
From Ireland's famine road.
"Tiddley, tiddley or not,
I cry for the men and their pots.
Leprechaun high,
Naiver again t' go by,
Right near this very spot."

Sure, it was against all reason that Michael should see David Israel when he wasn't really there. And it was against all reason that he'd built the cage, too. So now why would it be unreasonable that his ears should begin to hear David Israel speak, and argue about their relationship?

"That's a pretty little ditty, Michael Coffey," the voice seemed to say. "But we're no longer Leprechaun high. And why would we carry our pots of gold? No one carries gold any longer. And haven't we mixed and hidden ourselves with normals, taking on disguises in every race, religion and nationality? You must be very clever to figure it all out with no help at all from decent people."

It seemed to be just the touch. Michael Coffey expanded visibly. "I don't mind telling ye that me school days were filled with exciting interesting science and such."

As Michael seemed to speak, the image of David Israel began to shrink. Slowly the man changed from Jewish to wrinkle-faced Irish, and his chin sprouted a long, tangled beard, and his head got bigger with a funny looking and tall cap on it. His skin got to looking like a bleached, dried prune, but green. His ears became long, until both the ears and the long beard flapped with each little movement.

"Ah ha! I see you for what you really are now. I got you. Now I want that pot o' gold, the whole pot, mind ye!"

The sad eyes shook with its pumpkin head. "That gold is earned honestly, through the repair of shoes. We cobble footwear for fairies, and they give us fairy gold. It would do you no good, Michael Coffey."

"No good? No good, you say? Now why wouldn't fairy gold do me no good?"

"Fairy gold is different from ordinary gold, being gathered from sunsets and the wings of moths and the dust of the flowers in Yin Ti Lodland. If sunlight should reach it, it'll turn to a yellow liquid-like butter, and you'll never be able to unstick the sticky goo forevermore."

Just then Michael took another nip, and as his eyes were averted, the little fellow seemed to have vanished. Michael cursed: "I forgot that once you take your eyes off a Leprechaun you naiver see 'em again.

He began looking all about the dingy basement, a funny feeling having come to his back that he was



being watched.

“Sure, and ‘tis probably King O’ Quinn hisself,” Michael told himself.

The way a marsh frog is constructed, its eye and muscle are triggered whenever a fly approaches at just the right distance for its tongue to reach. There need be no confusing signals to the brain to mediate the response. In the same way, when Irish Michael O’ Coffey saw the real visage of the great and clever Leprechaun, who was probably shrewd King O’ Quinn hisself, Michael’s big muscles and heart triggered.

And just as Michael’s reflexes had sprung, he knew so had the King’s, for nothing so heartens the long days and cold fog-ridden nights than the fun of outwitting the Irishmen called dull, for spite.

Thousands of years in outwitting and—the truth must out—just occasionally being outwitted by such stubborn Irishmen—could not remove the glory and fun of it all. The King of the Leprechauns was sure to’ve felt that inner surge, that certain instinctive response, just as Michael was now feeling.

Such feelings can probably be known and felt by certain Irish personalities and the Irish Leprechaun as they face-to-face match wit and canniness, each with weapons forged by aeons-long mutual pummeling.

Alas! Good King O’ Quinn proved the canniest and wittiest again, because Michael’s whole, glorious vision disappeared, just as had the little encaged one, when Michael stumbled and fell, and blacked out, snoring loudly in a drunken stupor.

When Dog got back, he held a case of Irish Whisky and the camp stove and he was about to set them down and uncork a bottle, but Michael, waking with a fierce headache, made him store it for another “more propitious occasion,” and he added, “‘Tis good or bad luck that Irishmen celebrate and we’ve had a lot of it, so now let’s make way for the other kind.’”

Well, Dog knew what Michael meant, so it was later that evening that they were again leaning against the newly glazed skylight at David Israel’s, the cold Atlantic wind hitting their backs and making them shiver.

Dog did his thing with his precious brass doorknob, new glass crashing and splattering below, and then Dog lowered Michael downward, jumping himself after first hanging by his long arms. Michael was just that much closer to the big pot o’ gold, and feeling jovial.

As soon as Dog straightened, wiping thick hands on soiled pants, Michael went directly to the wall switch, flicking it on.

All bedlam broke loose. Whistles blew, horns honked, lights flashed on and off, and the screeching of metal against metal worked its way through the cacaphony.

Bewildered and—if the truth be known—scared, they stood their ground, peering this way and that beneath the sudden, harsh glare.

When an intensely sharp popping explosive report sounded, they were fighting for their very lives. Something strong and heavy and with as many hands as an octopus had risen over them and crowded them together and tugged them inexorably upward.

No matter how they pushed and shoved and jounced about, their feet found no purchase. They were bagged and netted proper, and hung halfway up the ceiling by means of a tough, thick steel cable. Nor could they cut through the fabric of the netting with their New York City street knives, it was that tough!

Imagine how depressed they must have been, hanging by the hour amidst cold air that poured like Niagra Falls from the broken skylight, Michael first leaning on Dog, and then the other way, nothing to be heard but the terrible persistent drip of sink faucet, the lonely whistling of the raw wind, and the wild screech and clash from streets far below.

It was a seriously chastized, crestfallen, humbled Michael Coffey whose eyes seemed to plead when David Israel came home at last.

For Israel’s part, he held no shocked expression, no grimacing features. If anything, he almost seemed to mock that Leprechaun dance Michael had imagined of late, kicking heels together, and prancing about,



smiling and grinning, and then laughing loudly. He said: "So. It was you, Michael Coffey. I thought so!"

"Aye. You have us David Israel. You'll be sending for the constables now, I suppose."

But David wasn't done yet. He had to prance about and clap his hands, and turn his head this way and that. "What have you done to require the police, Michael?"

"Well, now. It's obvious, isn't it? We've broken into your place, unlawfully I might add. And so now you've caught us."

"But why did you break in? Why pick on my place, Michael Coffey? Aren't we good old drinking buddies? Why my place?"

Michael had thought on that for a long time while the Atlantic wind chilled their bones, and he was still unsatisfied with the reply. "Accident, you might say. Had I known this place was me foine friend and drinking companion from Irishmen's, why Dog and I am't not likely t've done it."

David actually seemed to follow the reasoning for he stopped smiling. "There is that, I suppose. But aren't you two the same gentlemen who were here before?"

"Not on me grandfather's coffin."

Well, then, you won't mind if we just make a fingerprint comparison, will you Michael Coffey? Here. Stick out your right hand, through the netting there, and I'll quickly take your prints. If they're different, you are as free to go as a canary, and nothing more will be said."

Michael knew when he was beaten, so he confessed to it. "Aye. I'm your man. So bring on the constables."

"Not so fast, Michael Coffey. Why have you come here twice? Why have you picked on your old drinking companion, David Israel?"

Michael sighed again. "I confess it. We stole your money, David, and we've lived off it. I'll see that every cent is returned, I will, won't we Dog?"

"So it was money, was it? Tell me, Michael Coffey, were you and Dog the same gentlemen who invaded my physician's office, and walked off with my personal medical folder?"

Well, up to now Michael's features had been as calm as a lap poodle licking sugar from its master's fingers. He'd been in and out of the slammer many times, and though it was not as pleasant as might be, it was endurable, and could somehow be lived through. But how to explain the physician's office? If he said "no," there'd be the unfair and dirty matter of fingerprints, so he spoke what bubbled to mind at once, so to speak, saying, "Aye. Dog and I followed, hoping there'd be more commercial transactions at trail's end, or, glory be, more cash. Glory, glory be, David Israel, we am't never seen such amounts of money, and we just got greedy."

"Greedy was it, now. Tell me, Michael Coffey. Why did you get so greedy with my personal medical file? Did you sell it, maybe? For how much? And who to?"

"Ask Dog, 'tis the truth. We burned all the files."

"Ah, I was afraid you'd say that, Michael Coffey. You see, the police guardian for that building got into the office in time to extinguish your small blaze, and when records were reconstructed only mine was missing, they said. How do you explain such a coincidence, Michael Coffey?"

Michael was caught, he knew it, and the Eastern Atlantic wind was chilling him no warmer. Before long constables would search, and they'd find Rusty's report, and they'd know that he knew about the hormonal thing. So he had to confess it. Gulping, his voice tremulous, he said, "You're Leprechaun, and we've caught you fair and square."

"Caught me?" The prancing and prissing below the net ceased. David looked up grimly. His eyes had jiggled. Now they stilled, and drilled into Michael like little laser beams burning through and through. "Leprechaun? So now I'm Irish?"

"Aye. Like me grandfather said, you've grown tall and made yourself Jewish, and all."

It seemed that David didn't know whether to let his eyes cry or laugh. He wiped them to satisfy both



conditions and then turned most serious. "I remember a story told among our people. It happened when the Nazis were conducting their terrible holocaust that began after Krystal Noch, when all Jewish windows were smashed to bits to terrify us. A group of the monsters had surrounded one of us, an old man, and asked, 'Tell us, Jew, who caused the war?'

"The Jew, being sharp, thought quickly, and said, 'The Jews,' and then also added, 'and automobiles.'

"The Nazis did not understand, so they asked, 'Why automobiles?'

"'Why Jews?' asked the old man.

"Do you understand the point, Michael Coffey?"

"Aye."

"Then answer it. Why Jews? How do Leprechauns get to be Jewish, and tall?"

Michael, gulping, quickly explained, "They disguise themselves. They got ways."

Reflecting deeply, David at last said, "Thank you, Michael Coffey, for the truth. We'll not let the cops take you, my friend." David's head was turning slowly back and forth.

Michael began to smile. "You're daft, did you know that, Michael Coffey?"

Silence.

"Daft men are put away?"

Michael frowned.

"When daft men are put away, they never, never again get seen by polite society."

Michael cleared his throat to speak.

"Won't do any good to plead. My mind's made up. You're so daft that you need professional help, and the State of New York has designed, constructed, and they maintain a nice, special place just for people like you."

Frightened at last, Michael croaked out with, "I'll tell! I'll tell them all about you and your hormonal shots, and how you was a Leprechaun and how you used shots to grow tall, so's you'd look normal, and then you disguised yourself to look like an ordinary Jew. A Leprechaun is what you are, and turned Jew, is what you are. Leprechaun! Leprechaun!"

"I want you to tell, Michael Coffey." David shouted back, swinging his arms both ways and looking fierce. "Tell everyone. Tell about it. Let the secret out. I'm counting on that!"

VII

"Tell me all about the Leprechauns again," Dr. Samuel Benovsky kindly asked the saddened Michael, who was seated on the hard chair in a way so that window light blurred sight of the physician's face, as it shafted directly into Michael's.

Michael was wearing a loose cotton and white gown, and he was already weary from repeating the story. Now why did all doctors -- and nurses, too, for that matter -- want to see a man's bottom from behind?

Perhaps Dr. Benovsky was weary of the ineffective interrogation also, but he refused to let on. "Yes. I want to hear all about the Little Men from Ireland. The ones that came over during the Irish potato famine of 1845 and brought their pots o' gold. You know," he urged perhaps over politely. "Tell it to me again, Mr. Coffey. And don't leave out the part where the Little Men, after getting their — let's see," — bent over notes, squinting — "their hormonal shots and become tall, and then, ah, hurrmph, Jewish."

Michael squirmed. Now he realized he shouldn't have told the truth. There was no one to believe, excepting maybe Dog, who'd gone on to City Jail because he was certified not crazy, and his own grandfather believed, may the Saints preserve, and, yes, David Israel, the scoundrel himself believed.

Michael's mouth got dryer while the doctor waited patiently, folding his hands over a soft, bulging belly.

"Well," the doctor prompted.

"I-I-guess I was just making up a tale, Soir. That was something me old grandfather did when excited. I did the same as he, is all. There — there am't no Little Men, no hormonal shots, or anything like that, Soir."



“Making it all up, Mr. Coffey?”

“Aye, Soir. Indeed, Soir.”

“Then why did you steal Mr. Israel’s medical records?”

“Well, now, I didn’t know how to read what was inside, and thought there might be a clue to more of Israel’s wealth. It was an honest mistake, Soir. I be an honest robber, and that’s all.”

“Ah, yes. I suppose it could’ve been like that. Do you mind if we make some tests, Mr. Coffey?”

Michael beamed. “No Soir. Of course not, Soir. Any tests a’tall, a’tall.”

“That’s fine, Mr. Coffey. I believe if you pass the tests, and after a short observation period, we may find more suitable quarters for you.”

“The tests, Soir. Will they be long in the making?”

“Hmmm. Well, I’d say perhaps three to six months should do. Observations and all, you know!”

There it was, a period longer than Michael could tolerate, and no way out! He was placed in the open ward with others to be observed, and though he wasn’t warehoused in a cell, except at night, there were bars about windows and doorways, and guards in white uniforms, and stern-faced nurses that gave out pills and directed activities and made notes from time to time about how everyone behaved.

Terribly despondant at first, and wandering from corner to corner, Michael’s eyes hardly saw what was before them. He spoke seldom. Little by little as he became acclimated, he began blending in with others. There was a little wasted-away fellow who insisted on wearing his bed sheet over clear nakedness. Guardians and nurses were kind enough to permit the shameful sight instead of popping those horrible pills in his mouth every few hours. He walked about staring and repeating phrases over and over. He confronted Michael with that terrible stare, hands trembling, and said, “You were born elsewhere!”

“Aye, that I was.”

“Were you progressing upward or downward?”

Puzzled, Michael tilted his head.

“Animal, vegetable, or mineral?”

“I’m sorry, me foine fellow, I don’t understand.”

The hollow-cheeked one grinned grotesquely. “Upward! Ever upward! I sense your incarnation. During the last life you were bandha, and my brother the lizard.”

He stuck his tongue in and out repeatedly, until Michael had to back up. Then, “My brother is dead, but he lives,” said the strange one, first shedding big tears, and then drying them and grinning widely. “You are my brother.” He clutched Michael’s shoulders, hugging him closely. Michael warily tried to disengage. Backing fast, he bumped into a young man who couldn’t keep his privates covered, and every time the patient let it all hang out, someone had to come over to him and cover it all up again. Apparently words were ineffective, because it was all done in silence.

Michael scurried away, but the first one caught up, pacing him quite normally, and saying, “It’s been eighty-four thousand years, you know.”

“Has it now!”

“We were tiny then, fighting over fish scraps. Remember?”

“Aye, that I do,” Michael humored him.

“But then you gave up your life for mine, and I for yours. Wasn’t that a beautiful, honorable thing for both of us?”

“Aye, that it was.”

“And here we are, on a higher plane, on our way to mukta, to greater freedom. Isn’t this wonderful, my Brother?”

There was another patient who bounded about Michael like a kangaroo, and though he didn’t talk, the nut bothered Michael as much. It was the jolting and bouncing that disturbed Michael’s peace, it was.

In one corner, near the early morning windowlight, two played checkers, and Michael enjoyed



watching them until he realized that they were every-other-move playing alternate sides. Michael's eyes shed tears, which he wiped away with thick thumbs, at the same time glancing sadly about the room. One fat man rocked back and forth, holding knees with his arms. Another little man tried to catch flies that were unseen, zooming and snapping his arms and hands fast after them.

Several played cards near the steam radiator, and got to arguing something fierce between each play.

Michael seated himself beside the window on a low bench where he could look outside and sigh, feeling sorry for himself. Sure and it'll be a long, long three to six months for observation.

A patient close to his own middle-age, with a head mostly bald but bristling here and there with stubby hair that sought to penetrate the baldness, sat beside him. He whispered: "Me name's Patrick Kavanagh. You be the new one, Michael Coffey?"

Warily, Michael agreed, wondering what religious or mental freak had appeared now to harass him and make life more miserable. "Aye."

"Shhh, man. Don't talk loud. They'll hear you."

"Who?"

"The watchers for the Little People, is who."

It had to be a trap, and part of the observation and tests. "Are ye daft, man. What Little People? I see that one little fellow over there, trying to suck all ten fingers, and nevermind whether or no he hears us."

"Ah, you're the sly one. Knowing all about those Leprechauns that come over from sweet, dear Erin during the potato famine. I says to meself, now there goes a man what can be trusted, a genuine man of the old, sweet and green sod, a man who's seen the truth and has fought his way through hard times to bring it to the real people, just as I meself did.

"Tell me, true, Michael Coffey — and don't be fudgin' it." He peered slyly from beneath thick eyebrows, "'Tis your file I peeped into." Then, lowering his voice, "'Twas one of the Little Folks that sent you here and locked you up, for true, wasn't it?"

For the first time in his memory Michael's tongue was tied up so's he couldn't speak. If he said yes, this might be a spy for the physician, and if he said no, this man already knew he was a liar. Consequences of lying to the insane, and in this hell-hole of a place, were most difficult to comprehend.

"Patrick Kavanagh can be trusted," came another whisper from the side of the man's mouth. "You just hear me out, and hush. See if me tale is to be believed." He looked about to be sure one of the guardians hadn't sidled closer. Then, "It was at the Wal Mart Stores Executive Offices I worked, a master janitor and all, when I stumbled on this gigantic organization made up of corporation executives. I got behind in me duties, and not thinking anything wrong with it, stayed behind to finish up. "There I was, sweeping in a small room, and polishing and emptying out overflowing ashtrays right beside the large auditorium. Then I heard dozens, no, hundreds of voices and snuffling and feet scraping and banging down of seats. There was a small door between the auditorium and me and naturally I was a wee bit curious, and so I stuck me ear to the door after cracking it slightly, and heard them call off names. D'ye know what I heard?"

Michael shook his head, that he didn't.

"There was the Chairman of the A, T and T, and others from Exxon Mobil Corporation, Ford Motor Company, General Electric Company, Chevron Texico, ConocoPhillips, Citigroup, IBM, American International Group, . . . "

"Hold on, Patrick Kavanagh. Ye've memorized the yellow pages of the whole telephone book."

". . . Hewlett-Packard, Verizon Communications, Home Depot, Berkshire Hathaway, Altria Group, McKesson, . . . " continued Patrick without a halt, and so on, through ". . . Cardinal Health, State Farm Insurance, Krogers, Fannie Mae, . . ." and onward to list the whole of the unblest Fortune 500, and some 600's, too.

Patrick paused and nodded, pleased with himself. Still whispering, he joggled closer. "They was all Leprechauns, every one that attended. Said so themselves. Called themselves the United States Confed-



eration of the Little People from Ireland, and they discussed things, they did.”

The thin man with his bed sheet was too near. On being noticed he came over to them, holding hands high and pronouncing: “Each thing has many aspects. Do not take a one-sided view. Those with perverse belief shall become perverted. Those who avow shall become vowless; stay your anger, pride, deceit, and greed, do not disturb the soul, the shedding of karmic particles. . . .”

“Come,” said Patrick, tugging at Michael’s gown. “That be Gustav Bergman. He’s nuts.”

Michael went along, but he was clearly disturbed. He wondered who was really nuts? He, himself, wasn’t crazy, for sure. What of this Patrick Kavanagh? Patrick spoke with the same mother tongue, in a manner of speaking, and he knew much about the Little People. Did he get his knowledge from Michael’s medical folder? Or was Patrick, like himself, duped into this place, victimized as an inmate, or by the Little People themselves?

They found a quiet corner again, not far from the man who twitched. “Old man Sladek hasn’t moved except to jerk since I been here, which is going on a year,” Patrick whispered.

“A year!” Now Michael was disturbed. “A whole year, just for believing in the Little People?”

“Aye. Like you, I told all truth to the physician, and I went about telling everyone. The more I told the truth, the daffier they called me. Then they started me on pills until they saw progress, they said, but in truth, the pills damaged me, as they must have known they would.”

Michael shivered.

Patrick looked about, screwing up his mouth’s corner. He whispered, “Know who else attended?”

“No,” Michael’s eyes were already as big as they could get.

Again the catalog recital came spontaneously to Patrick’s long-sealed lips: “Boeing Company, AmerisourceBergin, Target, Bank of America, Pfizer, JP MorganChase, Time Warner, . . .”

“Hold it! Hold it!” Michael declared loudly, with a wave of his hand. “I don’t need another catalog.”

“. . . Proctor & Gamble, Costco, Johnson and Johnson, Dell — that computer company — Sears, Roebuck, SBC Communications, Valero Energy Corporation, Marathon Oil, MetLife, Safeway, . . .” So, undaunted by inmate Coffey, Patrick’s recital went to the very end, covering every continent, every large corporation. Explaining further, he said, “Don’t you understand? All the biggest international cartels. From Netherlands, Britain, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Italy, France, Japan. . . .”

“What has those big companies, those cartel things, have t’ do with the Little People?” Now Michael was whispering.

“They’re controlled by the Little People, and each was there at that A, T and T meeting, and each was a Leprechaun, disguised, and grown tall.”

“No!” Michael’s face whitened as he looked every which way for spies.

“Every single one a Leprechaun!” repeated Patrick, so that Michael’s bones seemed to grind together.

“Every nationality, too! Black African Leprechauns, Swedish, German, Arabian, British, Oriental — every color and race — and all Leprechauns grown tall and powerful.”

“The truth?” Michael’s palms were sweating. Sure, he knew one Jew that was Leprechaun, but so many? Yellow and Black, too? Swedish and German and French and Arabian?

Maybe David Israel had disguised himself, but certainly not the whole world? No. This Patrick Kavanagh was clever and had peered into his thick medical folder. Stories was all, to get close to Michael, and then later he’d snitch to authorities, and Patrick would naiver, naiver get out. Michael decided he’d do best to disassociate himself. Clearly Kavanagh was crazy, like all the other people locked in here that twitched and jerked and spouted devilish foreign religions -- if he wasn’t a spy. Michael grew fearful of contagion, for it had begun to seem that maybe the whole world was crazy, except, of course, himself, and maybe Dog. At last, having thought it through carefully, he stood up, patted Patrick’s shoulder, and said, “It was nice meeting you, Patrick Kavanagh. Perhaps we’ll meet again sometime.”

And he walked away.



It didn't help. Patrick came trundling after. "You haven't heard the worst, Michael Coffey," his voice husky in Michael's ear. "Hold, now. I got one more thing to tell ye."

Well, what else could Michael do? The man was virtually hanging onto his gown, and attracting attention, so Michael seated himself again.

"What d'ye see on me head?"

"It's bald as a hen's egg with little sprouts trying to start up again."

Patrick nodded. "When I kept on about the Little People, they shaved it, and put me through electric shock. Called it therapy."

"Electric shock?"

"Yes. They put grease at your head and temple, and then shoot strong electric currents through your skull and brain. It scrambles memories and makes you forget, but not before you clamp down your tongue and get rigid all over and nearly bust your gut."

"They did that?"

"Aye. Several times. That's why I whisper. I don't want them to know that I still remember about the Little People."

VIII

Dog was out of Prison at last, having come that route by especially good behavior, and also because he was just too abysmally ignorant to know that one doesn't protect guards when another prisoner attacks.

He wasn't too unhappy in his cell, with three others, because they had television, and nice walks, and, if one wanted, could work at something, which wasn't too bad for passing time. What irritated his insensibilities was that no one else watched *Sesame Street*, and it was difficult to follow some of the other programs heavily laced with violence and profound, complex plots.

Since Dog hardly ever talked, and since he had an uncanny ability to be big without being obtrusive, he got along well with most everyone. There's some to this day that can't remember his appearance, or anything about him, except his nickname, "Dog."

The warden's office couldn't identify him by any other name than Dog, and so they gave him a number, 7345629, also calling him Dog Doe, so's he'd have a first and last name just like everyone else, although when they wanted him they'd call for 7345629.

Dog rambled along from day to day complacent and nearly as content as if Michael were still directing his thoughts and energies.

What broke the comfortable pattern was Big Joe Turk, a beefy oriental and one time show-wrestler, who went after one of the guards.

There isn't much to say about the guard except he was medium height, wore a brown shirt and grey pants like all the other guards, was elderly, perhaps sixty-two, and seldom smiled.

Big Joe Turk claimed innocence for his armed robbery conviction, which was probably true, considering the nature of our judicial system, its lack of objectivity and reliance on plea bargaining and fictional "truths" which are essentially courtroom lies, that is, testimonies for which there happens to be no immediate, verifiable rebut.

Whatever the case, no one would ever learn for sure whether or not Big Joe Turk happened to tell the truth about the lies told in court, especially the warden, the guards, the judges, the prosecuting attorney, his own free attorney, or anyone else above or below the green sod. He says it began that day seven years ago when he was making the class-A wrestling circuit. He'd accidentally brawled with the Masked Marvel — a beefy bodyguard of one high up in the syndicate, and scheduled to become world champion wrestler. The planned ballet arrangement got accidentally out of hand, starting the trigger that put Big Joe Turk into prison with Dog. He says that the Masked Marvel — Joe Pulovotche — was a vindictive son-of-a-bitch with connections, and he, Big Joe Turk, was to be the next fall guy for him.

Of course the courts told him not to use that kind of language, and he sputtered and fumed trying to



think of an appropriate adjective which would also be accurate, 'cause he'd sworn to be truthful, and, since it was a jury trial, he was never again able to explain the circumstances properly. "I was framed," he finally told them.

He had also explained to the attorney general, and hadn't been believed.

When the robbery had taken place, a night watchman was slugged from behind and the neck deliberately broken. Joe Turk's towel was found near the scene, with his name embroidered red on blue. A coffee cup with his finger prints was also at the scene, and \$17,167.67 missing from the truck-stop safe.

From there it was a quick slide into prison, where Big Joe Turk's bulging features simply fumed day by day, waiting for any little pin-prick to burst out the full explosion of his buried resentment.

The guard wasn't thinking when he pushed his forefinger into Big Joe Turk, asking him to step back in line. Had he thought, he'd have known better than to touch any prisoner. He'd been told, for sure.

So he touched Big Joe Turk and that, together with the machismo of males pent up together, and the furiously boiling resentment pushing against Big Joe's biceps, altogether it caused an explosion, and Big Joe Turk began throwing the slightly built old man about like a soft rag doll, growling and posturing as if he were auditioning for a Tarzan movie.

Dog didn't think either, and it would have been a miracle from St. Patrick if he had. He reacted most quickly. Somewhere buried deeply in his early memories must have been a figure much like the elderly guard's. He bounded over to the dying man, huffed and puffed several times, and wham! Big Joe Turk was down on the iron walkway, his back being grilled by the cold steel.

Other prisoners stirred. Since they really didn't care who created the added mental stimulation: Big Joe Turk and the thin, elderly guard, or Big Joe Turk and Dog—they were quite happy.

"Kick him in the balls," one shouted at Dog.

"Kill him, Turk."

And likewise.

Other guards had seen the first action, and they were already on their way.

Dog, of course, had long ago converted nearly every ounce of mental energies to physical, and even though Big Joe Turk was muscular and skilled, he was no match.

Well, the short of it was that the guard lived. And, after extensive study and review and evaluation and reevaluation, Dog's part was praised, and he was let from solitary confinement and honored by a dinner with the warden, who afterward did what he could to get an early release, which included returning Dog's precious brass doorknob on departure.

Afterwards Dog took to hanging about Irishmen's, more or less unobtrusively. He wanted news of Michael Coffey.

The Salvation Army was another of Dog's favorite hangouts, where he'd do anything: sweep, clean, peel potatoes, keep the unruly in line, and altogether was a valued helper in return for board and keep. And, he could watch *Sesame Street* on an old, black and white TV set, which was alright, because it wasn't colors that provided his mental stimulations, but the rapid change in subject matter.

Well, one day at Irishmen's he overheard David Israel talking to Simon Green and John O' Dancy. Simon Green, blowing foam from his beer, was telling about his recent experiences on the jury, saying: "Oy, what a time! The state prosecutor rose to question us, and he went down the row one at a time, asking names, ages, relatives, religion. I tell you it was a grilling. Was I a thief?"

"No one could think that," David said.

"The prosecutor asked, 'Do you know the accused?'"

"I said, 'How could I know him?'"

"He said, 'Have you seen him before?'"

"I said, 'Why would I see him?'"

"Then the judge spoke, and he asked, 'Why do you answer every question with a



question?"

"I asked, 'Why not?' and the judge dismissed me.

"Oy, what a time!"

John O' Dancy got quickly busy at the other end of the bar, rubbing and polishing and turning his face so that no one would see his face laugh.

David nodded, and supped at his own brew, thinking over Simon's plight and the weird ways of courts. Then he remembered Rabbi Breitbart, and his recent experience with the schlemihl robber. "It was near Passover when Rabbi Breitbart was passing through this dark neighborhood with his pocket full of money when he suddenly found himself looking into the hole of a robber's gun. 'Hand over your money,' said the robber, a tall, gangly youth with pimples on his face.

"What could Rabbi Breitbart do? He handed over the money.

"As the robber was pushing it in his belt, the Rabbi pleaded: 'How will I buy clothes and food for my family? Passover is here. Do you think my wife will believe I've been robbed? She'll say I've stayed out and spent it on drink!

"So what?' said the young hoodlum.

"Can't you help me a bit? Make it look like I've really been robbed?"

"What is it you want, old man?"

"Here, I'll take off my cap and coat, and you put bullets in them, just through the edges. Nick them. Please.'

"Well, the young hoodlum obliged, each time Rabbi Breitbart pleading with him, saying, 'Please! Just one more. It's got to look real!' "I can't,' the schlemihl said at last. 'My gun's empty,' "After which, Rabbi Breitbart laughed and pummelled the rascal until he'd gotten all his money back, and the gun."

"Oy! And why not?"

John O' Dancy ceased his eternal wiping for the moment to join in, and he and another named Sean O' Faolain got to listening to all the stories, and telling some of their own. John said: "That reminds me of Frank McHugh who used to hang about the old neighborhood bar when I was a kid, always snatchin' at the pickled eggs and pretzels. There's some what says that Frank McHugh lived on pickled eggs and pretzels, and I guess it was true.

"Anyway, in those days there weren't many cars, except among the rich, and certainly no roads, either. All the Irish wakes were big and bountiful, like they do in the Old Country, taking half the day and most of the night, too. See, when the horses began toward the cemetery, they had to be watered frequently, and what better place than the closest pub? So Frank McHugh always managed to hang in there, living on pickled eggs and pretzels until a big wake came by, which was often in those days. He'd join in, and carry on at the burying like the deceased was one of his close relatives they was burying. None could cry and carry on like Frank McHugh, so considering the shape they was all in by the time they got that far with the ceremony, most were relieved and proud to have Frank McHugh with them.

"Well, this certain day was a protestant funeral, which didn't seem to bother Frank McHugh at all, and he'd managed to join in on the one solitary carriage that had spirits hidden aboard. Tumblin' out of it and joining the all protestant crowd, he and the others were quite a sight, crying and blowing their noses and carrying on.

"Naturally Frank McHugh thought it was to go on all night, 'cause he hadn't noticed it wasn't an Irish burying; and he was already too far into the good spirits to notice all the cold stares.

"The Episcopal Bishop mournfully prayed his last, saying, 'God Giveth and God Taketh Away,' just as the poor soul was lowered downward.

"Frank McHugh's eyes shed copious tears then, like a floodgate had loosened, and he turned to face the startled protestant mourners, shouting out with 'Now what the hell could be fairer than that?'"

That tale got Sean O' Faolain quoting old proverbs, like "Death is a poor man's doctor," and "A crow



thinks its own young white,” and “Never was door shut that another was not opened,” and so on.

Well, one thing led to another, swapping stories back and forth, some Irish, some Jewish, some stories from one of the lesser nationalities and races, until David got around to mentioning what Dog wanted to hear.

“That daft Michael Coffey will rot in the crazy house for all I care.”

It wasn't news to John O' Dancy as he wiped away the beer foam, shined the glassware, served another beer to a new customer, and cleansed glasses again.

But to make polite conversation, he asked, “Where is Coffey?”

David Israel told him and George McGarth, who'd come in right behind, laughed, and slapped both Simon Green and David Israel on their backs.

Dog may have been slow, and he may have been dull, and he may have been just the least bit stupid, but he was no idiot, and he had surprising attributes which were used now and then. Now he knew where Michael Coffey was, and he knew that David Israel — maybe even George McGarth, the reputed stock broker — had something to do with it all, though he wasn't clear in what way.

Many years earlier, when Dog was tall, muscular, youthful, he'd been walking along Kosciusko St. in Brooklyn, hands in pockets, hunched and pulled inward like the wind was chilling him and he'd shriveled to conserve heat, which it probably was and he probably did. A sudden scuffling and short, choked-off scream had caught his ear. Turning to look behind he saw a young woman wrestling with an older man, probably a wino or one of the other standard street variety. One hand was about her throat, the other about her waist. Her legs were striking backward and flicking forward ineffectually.

Dog would never be criticized for anxiety over his neighbor's problems. Like so many others of the New Yorker breed, he was complacent regarding street life, his unspoken, un verbalized motto being, “Let the Strongest Dog live!”

So, while he had some mild curiosity as he walked toward the struggling couple, he was not unduly curious.

She broke loose, running toward him. She clung to him, babbling hysterically.

When Dog instinctively straightened, the man completely misunderstood Dog's intentions, and so skittered in the opposite direction, leaving the young woman clinging frantically, and crying bitterly.

Such was Dog's life!

Just by being, and exercising his many muscles now and then without strong volition or motive, he stolidly marched safely through life's many pitfalls.

That brief encounter had blossomed into a relationship no less strange than the one between Dog and Michael Coffey. Marsha Fairmont quite naturally matured into womanhood, and came to own the largest auto parts yard in Brooklyn, called the Neely-Bend Parts Place.

There are some who'll tell you it is as difficult for a used auto parts place to grow in Brooklyn as it is for a young girl, or a tree, but those are disparaging remarks made by outsiders, people who visit the Greater New York regions but once or so every ten or twelve years.

Marsha Fairmont was a woman grown in Brooklyn, and there is a tree in Brooklyn, probably out near Forest Hills, or near the Aqueduct Race Track. And the Neely-Bend Auto Parts Place is right down adjacent to Twenty-fifth Street and Ninth Avenue.

She was a most effective auto parts manager, with the ability to tear any vehicle apart and put it back together again in a matter of days. She had all the necessary tools, the heavy equipment, and the aggressiveness, and she had a mind to use them.

As a female in man's dominate universe, she acted tough and was. Whenever men flirted, she got tougher, not that she didn't like the attention. She did. She was afraid, however, that just a little encouragement would bring about the wrong kind, and so she was a tough moll among predominately male workers and customers and all.



All, that is, except Dog, and Dog could do no wrong, reminding one or another of a Great Dane, a Laborador Retriever, a German Shepherd, and so on.

So when Dog heard David Israel talking about “They’ll never get him out,” and laughing with the reputed stock broker, George McGarth, over Michael Coffey’s plight, Dog’s inner visions brought to foreground the early greying hair and wrinkled eyes of Marsha Fairmont. He proceeded to her business place at once.

She was amidst the intricate task of splicing together two different car bodies, the welding torch sputtering and burning with a frightful, blue light that pierced unprotected eyes. Dog waited patiently, and when she lifted her dark protective hood, her eyes were the first to light up by his unexpected visit. “Why Dog, you old salt. Come on in,” she invited him to her inner office, where most of the floor was piled high with old generators, alternators, starters and voltage regulators.

Taking his tattered coat, she “Tsk, tsked,” and sputtered about until she found a coat beneath piles of old papers where she’d laid it months earlier, anticipating his eventual visit. “Take this,” she ordered, rolling up his old one and tossing it into an open waste drum.

He seated himself where she pointed, hanging onto the new, light-brown coat as though it were a sensitive teddy bear, both arms folding over it, but only after placing his precious doorknob into one of the pockets.

“Dr. Pepper?” she asked.

He shook his head, no.

“Ah, then a cold brew?”

He nodded, yes.

And so it was by jerks and indirection — a one-sided conversation, if that’s what it was — that Dog came to communicate about Michael Coffey’s plight.

“Now let me understand clearly,” Marsha repeated. “Michael Coffey is being kept in the asylum?”

Nodding, yes.

“Is he crazy? You know. Does he act queerly? Differently? Is he dangerous to others?”

Shaking head, no.

“Why did they put him there?”

Clearing throat, wiping sweating brow — for long speeches made Dog hot as though with fever: “Stealing. We break, enter. Jail me. Take Michael.”

She laughed huskily. “Stealing? Breaking and entering? Crazy?” her hands waved all about the old generators, alternators, starters, and above on shelves and on nails where carburetors and fancy hood ornaments and gleaming-bright chrome hub caps piled high or hung loosely. “Look at those. Which are stolen, and which not?” How many customers bring parts that are stolen? How many get caught? How many caught end up called crazy?”

Dog’s brow furrowed. His mind was unable to connect all the questions, and besides they’d come too fast.

With a sensitive, motherly motion, Marsha patted his shoulder. “I’ll look into it, Dog.”

IX

Marsha Fairmont had hired her own attorney, Heinrich Pale, III, who was of the firm Abernathy, Abernathy, Long, Long, and Willistein, and since the matter was between the State and Private Rights, David Israel’s rights not being involved at all, it had become a matter of constitutional law to easily spring Michael Coffey.

Besides, the courts were already chock full, and so plea bargaining was in order in light of the faulty documents revealed to’ve gotten Michael Coffey committed in the first instance.

Beneath the great, gray building at Broadway and One hundred and Fourteenth Street they felt safe, at home. Certainly here, among the discarded debris of a generation, amidst scuttling small creatures that



peered discreetly from behind bright-reflecting eyes, there was no need for the farce and veneer due civilization, which in Michael Coffey's case was more a defensive posture than anything else more refined.

Michael Coffey threw hard his empty Plain Label Wine bottle at the far wall, where it crashed into scattering glass. "We owe that David Israel, that misbegotten Leprechaun another thing or three, Dog," he grunted almost incoherently.

Since this was the seventieth or so utterance of like kind, Dog grunted. He would have merely grunted in any case.

Coffey's eyes, now reddened and glittering, danced across the wire cage they'd pieced together of iron ladders and wired together odds and ends. He sighed. "Ah, Dog. We'll get our man -- sorry, Leprechaun -- we'll cage 'im yet. That we will. Mind ye now, I'll not be so vindictive that he'll suffer overmuch. Just a touch, mind ye', to remind him not to mess with the O' Coffey's, the true Irish from the green, green land. "Pass me another Plain Label. That's a good lad!"

Michael and Dog celebrated, beneath the large, gloomy, empty building at Broadway and One hundred and Fourteenth, their permanent home, so to speak. The more Michael drank, the more his eyes glittered, and the more he could envision David Israel inside that makeshift cage. "He'll grow smaller and smaller, he will."

He flipped off the wine bottle cap, flicking it at the makeshift cage, and pushed the bottle to his feverishly waiting lips where he gulped at the necessary fluids. "So small, I'll hold him in the palm of me hand, I will."

Dog had gotten the old TV jury-rigged into the wiring again, and *Sesame Street* featured Kermit the Frog who announced something about Little Red Riding Hood. Dog's attention now raptly glued, could no longer be swayed by Leprechaun talk.

Michael glanced about the impenetrable gloom before whispering, "There are thousands of 'em, Dog. Learned it from another Irishman falsely declared looney just 'cause he uncovered them down at the A, T and T building.

"Think o' that! Thousands of 'em. And each with their own pots o' gold!"

X

Michael Coffey took to following David Israel again, Dog leading and snuffing, Michael watching, being ever so cautious. "We've got to stay away from the Leprechaun's apartment, where the traps are," he unnecessarily reminded Dog.

Down into subways they went, where pale lights flickered and strange people hustled from stairwells to doorways; and through streets they elbowed, protecting themselves from being thrown rudely into streets crowded with horn-blowing taxis where engines raced and spewed their nose-sniffing odors; and they darted hither and thither into any small openings before another pedestrian took prior advantage; and they wearily flowed with crowds into department stores with weary shoppers and snapping clerks; and they hopped into jerking, snarling buses that brazened a way, making openings in the cluttered streetways.

Sometimes the very cost of it all kept Michael Coffey and Dog out 'til wee hours, just locating enough loot to pay transportation expenses. "Never you mind, Dog," And though he did not understand it's meaning, Michael would say, "We'll get all of our hard earned money back, and with U, S and A interest, too."

Dog would clutch at his brass doorknob, grunt, and off they'd go, searching out another apartment where the door could be easily jimmed, and another radio set, sound system, VCR, CD player or television set would mysteriously disappear with them.

When they did capture David Israel, it came about only by accident and coincidence together, so to speak. They were trailing behind David near Penn Terminal, at Seventh Avenue and Thirty-first Street, when David stopped to peer upward.



Israel had taken to carrying his new cane with him, a duplicate of the kind Michael had fairly found inside David's apartment that day and had so cleverly "liberated." It was clearly embossed at the hand knob-end with the lucky four-leaf clover and the little pot o' gold. David was swinging it first one way and then another, as though he were a blind man making his way down Thirty-first Street.

The stick stopped waving, and David Israel stopped, too, when he looked upward, following the building's height as far as eye could go.

Beside them was a van, its sides in golden letters proclaiming, "Mana's Pizzas." The van's rear doorway was open, and no one was about at all, which was certainly an error for anyone delivering anything on Manhattan streets.

Michael and Dog noticed the two things together, like the well-oiled and polished street-team they'd learned to be — David's pausing at just the right place, and the van's doorway being open — and together they applied their normal good sense and more primitive instincts.

First was David Israel, swinging his Irish stick side to side and suddenly stopping, and then there was the van, standing quietly as though waiting for this lucky moment.

Michael's whisper directed Dog to "Look to see there are keys, and if the motor's running."

Since David's attention was distracted upward, where two men sat on a scaffolding, either cleaning windows or scouring brickwork, Michael had to watch both their proposed victim and the van. Dog easily lopped into thick traffic to the driver's side, and, pushing his head above the van, nodded that it was ready and running. He waved an affirmative at Michael.

Michael waved back hoarsely half whispered. "Get David."

Rushing behind the screen of people shielding them from David Israel, Dog's trusted doorknob rose and came down so suddenly that when he caught David's unconscious form and stick together, those scurrying about must have thought he was helping the stricken figure. They were unlikely to interfere in purely private business matters in any case, this being New York City.

Dog easily toted David Israel inside the van. Michael slammed the rear doors, turning the latch, and then hurried to the driver's side where he made the engine roar once to get the motor's feel, and then they squeezed out into the slow-trickling traffic, and soon were away.

It all came back easily, the shifting and thrusting, the twisting and watching and fast accelerations and quick stops. Why, he felt like a mighty Irish King as he sat up so high overlooking yellow taxicabs, pushing and thrusting regally through the confused stream. "I got him!" he shouted to no one but himself and Dog, who could hear through the open vent between them. "The terrible Jewish Leprechaun is mine!"

And all the way back to Broadway and One hundred and Fourteenth Street he sang "Tiddley, tiddley, or not, I got the man and his pot. . . ."

David Israel was thrust into the makeshift cage, and when he awoke he looked miserably about, straining to see through bleary eyes. He touched his head with his right hand, feeling there a large lump that made him wince. Lights glared at him from several sides and at his back was a damp brick wall. He was lying on a cot that sweated mustiness and careless spiders. Springs squeaked with each bewildered motion. "Where am I?" he brightly asked, and "What's happened?" all as though mumbling through a bad dream.

Dog sat quietly beside his precious television, watching how to make cream pie from carrots and celery and other things supposed to be good for people, including Dog.

Michael rocked silently in an old rocker, trying to time the back and forth movements with the squeeks in David's bedstead, and thereby moving peculiarly.

David stood, his legs rubbery, and he lurched forward until his hands found and clutched at iron bars of the ladder and railings that made up his cage. "I don't understand — I'm at Seventh Avenue and Thirty-first looking up at workers, and now this, now here? Where am I? What's happened?"

Michael's tongue was struggling between his duty to confess and his satisfactory welling of pride that



wanted him to gloat. It was indeed a moment of great power and revenge for Michael Coffey. And what better way, then to quietly wait and to watch what the little magic person would do in these unusual circumstances?

“Turn the lights downward,” David Israel squeaked. “They’re blinding.”

No answer.

“Where am I? What’s happened?”

No answer.

“I hear television — or radio. Someone’s out there. What’s this all about?”

Still no answer.

David looked about, eyes big and soulful. Michael could not keep his tongue from chuckling, and he had to bite down.

“I hear you out there! I heard someone laugh. Who is it? What’s all this?” David’s voice rose higher. “Answer! I demand it!”

Well, that last was too much for Michael’s struggling tongue, and it gave up to a golden moment for gloating. “Demand is it, David Israel! Demand, now, is it?”

“Is that you Michael Coffey?” David’s voice had slightly softened, but was still harsh, striving for a domination he did not feel.

“Aye, and it is that daft Michael Coffey. What d’ye have to say for yourself now, David Israel?”

David’s features might well have been poured from rubber. He stepped backward. His eyes grew overlarge. He peered about, and then had to squint again, because harsh lights glared into them. He shook his head and shook it a time or two more. “No. It can’t be! What have I, David Israel, son of my father Israel, done to offend The Almighty? On my mother’s grave I swear no harm to any living creature, nor to one Michael Coffey.”

“Harm is it?”

“What harm, Michael Coffey, except to laugh from time to time at your daft ideas about Leprechauns turning Jewish.”

Michael was up from his rocker now and clutching at the bars so that David saw a face filled with greed and hatred and one that might have frightened the gracious Statute of Liberty herself. “Look at me,” Michael shouted rascally, drowning out Dog’s program. “I’m me! Michael Coffey! Coffey of the O’ Coffeys! Me! One foine gentleman that was called looney and put away as looney. Who did that thing to me, David Israel?”

Seating himself on the squeaking bedsprings, David took out his white handkerchief, and wiped sweat from his wrinkling brow. “You did that yourself, Michael. It was your daft story that got you there.”

Well, there was truth in what David Israel had to say, and had Michael’s eyes and inner vision not been filled with the Old Country’s pot o’ gold, sparkling and glinting beneath the gloom of the basement, he’d probably have listened and released the pathetic smaller man. But that golden light led him deeper, and it became the only subject to dominate, like a fiendish, shadowy figure chasing after some weakling’s immortal soul. “I mean to have your gold, David Israel,” Michael’s teeth permitted.

“My what?” David’s shout was so loud that it echoed back and forth through the remainder of the dark basementway causing little feet to patter and skitter along the walls and into corners.

“Don’t be belittling me, David Israel. I mean to have it!”

Well, their captor was maybe the world’s finest actor, or perhaps just a man who simply couldn’t understand New York English. “You’re daft again!” he’d shout, or “Please, please. Don’t make this mistake. Kidnapping is a serious charge, a federal charge. You’ll land in the Big House. They’ll throw away the key. You’ll not be released for ages, and you’ll be stooped and old. Michael, I’ll swear I’ll not say a thing to another. Just release me. I’ll go to the bank and draw out three thousand - four - five. . . .”

But through it all Michael’s greed and lecherous eyes spoke louder. “The gold or nothing,” he’d repeat,



until it became a refrain, a hymn, a whole song and story spoken together.

It took the whole day, and that night, until the next night before David Israel was convinced that Michael would only be satisfied with a pot o' gold, though Michael had never mentioned what size was the pot supposed to be. And David decided that Michael must be humored the best possible under these degrading circumstances.

The glaring lights, at last, were turned off. Michael pushed a bowl of some soft substance through the ladder-bars for their captor.

"What is this?" asked David, pushing gingerly at the warm stuff with an index finger.

"Gruel," Michael answered pleasantly enough.

"Gruel?"

"Porridge. Oatmeal. The very best Dog could buy."

"Oatmeal?"

"Sure, and isn't that what Little People like? According to me own grandfather. . . ."

"I'm not Leprechaun!" screeched David again, jumping up and down with frustration. "Michael Coffey, you big, dumb Mick! How can a Jew be a Leprechaun? Answer me that?"

Michael placed his right finger to his right nostril. "Aye. I know all about it. You've all taken hormonal shots. Disguised yourselves as businessmen, ye have. From I, B and M and from A, T and T, and du Pont, General Motors, and all the other business enterprises, ye have. You've disguised yourselves, for protection, as Jew, or Negro, or Puerto Rican, or Polish, or German, or Arabian — aye — and even as Irishmen.

"And then there's the little matter of your shots. Ye take them each month, David Israel" — Michael's finger was now wagging at the bewildered prisoner — "each thirty days. And if ye didn't ye'd reverse back, and that's what this is about, it is."

"Reverse back? To what would I reverse back?"

"Aye. When we deprive ye of those hormonal shots, ye'll get your proper size, you will. Ye'll be Leprechaun again, and that's what this is about."

Clutching at his makeshift bars again, David's face reddened and he near-spluttered while he forced himself to speak, softly, saying, "Now listen to this Michael Coffey! I'm reminded of an old Jewish tale, Michael. It demonstrates futility and foolishness. Two rivals over a young female suitor were waiting at the bus stop. One says to the other, 'Where are you going?'"

"Downtown."

"Ahah!" said the other, "You tell me it's Downtown because you want me to think it's Uptown. But I happen to know its Downtown you're going, so why do you lie to me?"

"There's no way facts will convince you against your will, Michael Coffey."

"Aye. It's only the whole truth I'm for, and maybe more," said Michael quite agreeably.

David Israel spluttered and shook and threw his mush at Michael. The bowl was caught by twisted wires wound through the ladder bars, and the porridge was flung outward over the pleasantly gleeful and self-satisfied Irishman.

XI

General Motor's President John Sebastian was about to turn the clock back a century and a half, though he wouldn't have imagined it, and would have denied it had he imagined it. Sitting in his tower-high, plush office, facing the eastern sun, and all surrounded by shining chrome, moss-soft carpets, eiderdown sofas and a swift computers, modern communications networks that had almost magically worked its way into cartels and trading blocks and industrial agreements worldwide, and faced by three of the most beautiful and most efficient secretaries in the whole, wide world, why would he, John Sebastian, want to turn back the clock?

He had the standard business attire and was hair-trimmed like other corporation presidents, the same



copied so diligently by those lower salesmen: neatly cut and combed short businessman's haircut, no beard or mustache; slightly taller than average, though not too tall, either; pressed suits, razor sharp, and lint-free and fresh-new appearing with white shirt and tie, though the tie was not too loud of color; vest with pockets long outdated and of use to no one; a plain, neat face, nose not too long, nor too short either; eyes that were dark and that could look steadily into another, ferreting out whether or not a lie breathed alive between them; and so on. . . .

John Sebastian could shake hands with anyone while making them believe they were special, and he could carry on polite conversations, always leaving "details" to "others," and often he'd brag that he could "buy degrees," implying a soft disdain but tolerant attitude toward the academically oriented which served to place the better educated, the "specialist" in proper places and niches.

If constructed and designed and functioning so perfectly in the Madison Avenue image, then how and why would he want to turn back the clock?

It was really Michael Coffey and he together who did it. And while in its own way it was a kind of miracle, the experience was neither miraculous nor extraordinary, but ordinary, reminding of ancient memories buried deeply, of another place, where the air smelled sweetly and clean, and where green grasses tasted of honey, and where one's life was not all caught up in the hurry and monstrous effort to make money work for money, and people, too.

Sebastian was seated at his great, shiny, solid black-walnut desk with its sensitive push buttons, on an early morning with the eastern sunlight just catching the top offices, when his video-phone purred, saying, "Gary Isaacs on the line, Mr. Sebastian."

Well, that was ordinary enough.

President Sebastian activated the video-scanner, whence Gary Aloysius Isaacs, called Gary Aloysius by close friends, shouted most hysterically: "David Israel is caught and kidnapped!"

"Wait now. David Israel who?"

"David Israel. Do you hear?" Isaacs' voice shrilled like a banshee crying lonely and scared late at night.

John Sebastian sat back, pushing his fat further into soft cushions until they hissed back. Thinking hard, he tried to remember the name, but alas! There were just too many, and too long ago. Then it came to him. Israel was a nephew on his mother's side. The man was once named Secretary or Treasurer or something of The Organization, now dubbed The Org, and David'd been more or less instrumental in seeing that critical debentures were properly handled, and. . . ." He interrupted his own thinking: "You mean. . . .?"

"Yes. Some crazy Irishman wants gold. Here! In this twentieth century and all. Daft he is! Crazy as a loon. Thinks that when he keeps David Israel caged long enough, he'll revert to size and come out Leprechaun and, with the truth out, all of us will be easily amendable to blackmail.

After a long, terrible, unpunctuated silence, staring at Gary Aloysius' drawn scanner visage, Sebastian sighed and said, "Come on up, Gary."

The long, terrible silence stretched even further as John Sebastian's mind toyed with the whole, dreadful concept. Was it from one of Walt Disney's movies? Or from his own mind? Where was it that fresh westerly winds blew salt spray across green meadows, and were so strong that gusts seemed to blow his thinking back to the good, green sod? He seemed to fall on his face tasting the green surf, when his mouth opened with a sudden fear as O' Toole's big hands reached for him.

Windy gusts seemed to catch at his tall hat, spinning it away like a wizard's cone in the gloom, never to be seen again.

The wind of memories blew over and about his inner visions, setting the sky turning at a frightening speed, and the Irish sod mixed with it until the stars and tiny white moss flowers changed places in big, silent swirls.

Had it been a long time? Or false memories? Another country? Reincarnation? Had he really escaped O' Toole's fat clutches.



He chuckled, the winds of his vision bringing to ears and feet a fast fiddle, and tasty honey-sweet/sharp drink to his tongue, and dark, deep, happy caverns that echoed and jumped with liveliness.

A muffled sound brought him from his deep reverie, and then a loud, indignant voice, "You can't go in there!"

He sighed. he'd forgotten to tell his first and second secretaries.

His third secretary was saying, politely, "May I help you, Sir?"

Then his door flung open so that the disheveled, sharp-featured youth with long sideburns and semidetached nose — as some said it — could hurry toward him.

"Get the dragons out!" the newcomer shouted as he jerked a thumb toward the three following ladies, each face severely perturbed.

With practiced ease, as though waving a magic wand, President Sebastian waved his pudgy arm at the three, ending with a polite gesture that pointed Gary toward the ornate, overstuffed chair nearby.

Gary's clothes were race-track garish: bright red stripes that swept upward and downward, lemon-yellow pants, wide, pink layers on dark black covered his silken shirt.

Again John Sebastian sighed. Oh if he could but trade his conservative business suit and plush offices for Gary's role! Here was youthful Gary, caught at not more than twenty-seven. Dark black hair, shining white original teeth, surging testosterone, abundant with energy, fresh, excited. . . .

And where was he? At least forty-seven, destined to sit in stuffy board meetings until time's ending, or at the end of time, whichever. . . .

Gary stared, saying nothing.

"What is it?" asked John, perplexed.

"Your dragons. Can they hear?"

John chair-swiveled his huge bulk forward, flicking two switches with his right hand. "Secure."

Wiping his forehead with a brilliant purple handkerchief, Gary's eyes moistened, so he wiped them, too.

Sebastian leaned forward to listen.

"Michael Coffey's his name. Called no more than an hour ago. I was balancing a lovely pan of golden eggs and bacon with one hand and holding the receiver with the other when the voice says, 'I've got your close friend, David Israel'.

"I said, 'Who?'"

"David Israel. I'm holding him for gold."

As if he were playing a fine piano, Sebastian's fingers tapped away, stopping now and then with certain words. Shocked, annoyed, he asked, puzzled, "Gold?" and then his fingers tapped again.

"Gold!" Gary's head nodded wildly.

"What did you say? What did you do? Promise anything?"

"I'm not exactly stupid. I said, 'Are you drunk, man?' and 'David who?' followed by 'What d'ye mean gold?' and so on."

"That should have settled anyone, except maybe a crazy Irishman. So what happened?"

"I finished my eggs and bacon. Worried some. Maybe David Israel was having a little joke, in his cups early, you know.

"Then I got to thinking about David, how discreet he was with his drinking, and how sober he acted most of the time. 'Would David Israel play such a joke' I kept asking myself. Couldn't get through the racing sheets, it got so bad."

"And?" Sebastian prompted.

"The call came again. Same voice. Determined and mad. 'Listen t' this recording', it says, voice slurred, and so I listened. No mistaking it. David's for sure."

Sebastian leaned back, making his chair squeek just the slightest. His fingers stilled their almost



noiseless drumming.

“They’re letting me record this, Gary,” the voice says, weak and echoey like. ‘Michael Coffey. Crazy as a looney bird, he is. Thinks I’m an Irish Leprechaun turned Jewish and normal. Holding me until I go back to size, he says. Gary — man — you’ve got to help. You know what happens if I don’t get my monthly shots. . . ,’ and then the voice got shut off.”

Sebastian swiveled again, so he could look outside. Faint, pink contrails seemed to tie together two of the tallest buildings as the morning light came ever brighter as it crept into their steep canyon walls. “God!” whispered the expletive, his mind already racing over measures that would recover David Israel from a mad man’s clutches. His mind worked swiftly, incisively, having already ticked through possibilities and personalities for his beckoning. Pudgy fingers plunged toward the computer buttons that tied complex lines of communication into a worldwide network.

When he’d brought into motion a dozen forces he again looked up at Gary, whose thin hands were wringing one another indecisively. Sebastian’s tone was strong and authoritative when he asked, “How will he contact you? Or you him?”

“He’s to call again at two p.m.”

That answer set more wheels in motion. This time, when Sebastian was through, there was just a bit of smugness. He said, “Perhaps the crazy Irishman is unaware that modern computers identify and trace every telephone call, and we’ll know his number and location instantly. Once the location is known, the Org will move in.

Well, now, Michael Coffey was not aware that modern computers and switching networks could instantly trace any telephone number, and know the call’s origin at once, too. His vision of a telephone trace was that of a tough, beefy, cigar-chewing detective who got on one telephone and ordered an operator to “trace that call!” and then sat about chewing on the cigar, and getting strange, provoked looks on his face while his fingers twiddled with something at an overcluttered desk. Usually, according to Michael’s memory, the telephone operating system took so long to trace the call through such a snarl of mechanical switches that by the time a man held a decent conversation, the trace was made only through the major relay stations, which did the mean, cigar-chewing detective no good a’tall, meaning that in the end detectives had to rely on wits, afterall, if any.

Knowing that his own wits were sharper than any race-track tout like Gary Aloysius, he only needed to watch carefully the time expended on a distant pay-phone. According to the movies he’d seen, not more than two minutes were safe. So, at two o’ clock, he set his big, open-faced watch on the telephone stall’s shelving, and he dialed Gary Aloysius Isaacs’ number. “It’s me, Michael Coffey,” he grandly announced, his eyes big and red, but also yellowing with the glitter of gold.

“Yes. This is Gary Aloysius.”

“You know what I be after, man. The gold. Do we make a trade?”

“How much gold?”

“The whole pot, man!”

“The whole pot? How big a pot? How many cubic inches? How many ounces? Man, nobody uses pots to measure gold, or anything else. . . .”

“Don’t be tryin’ none o’ your sneakin’ tricks on me. It’s the whole pot or nothin.”

That’s exactly when Nyrere’s large paw descended on Michael Coffey’s shoulder and he was captured by the Org for sure.

George Nyrere was a man nearly as large as Dog, with strong-lined facial features that posed a craggy face made from skin as black as his African heritage permitted. Tight, kinky, black hair and big, brown eyes hovered over Michael, who was forced to drop the reciever.

The black man, though genetically African and Polish, was nonetheless from Sutphin Boulevard in Queens, where he’d been born, educated, and still lived. As a child he’d wanted to study horology, but soon



learned that the trade of repairing time-pieces was a dying art, modern manufacturing processes and technology having bequeathed mankind throw-away watches and clocks.

He'd later worked for the New York Police Department, which, though served with honor and dignity, could not satisfy his questing mentality.

The opportunity to serve President John Sebastian on his personal guard was welcomed, and paid well, too.

Surrounding Michael were smaller men, but still larger than Michael. They clustered together and about so that passersby would not see the sudden abduction, for that's what it was.

One man waved an arm. A hearse, highly polished, somber black, darkened windows trimmed with bright chrome, pulled alongside the curb. Another grim faced and quietly efficient youth opened rear doors from the inside, and Michael was virtually tossed inside, and zoom! They were off.

Three men sat quietly about Michael's two sides, a third at his feet, a fourth at his head. Clearing his throat, Michael said, timidly: "Well, now. It takes eight Leprechauns to hold one ordinary mortal?" No one spoke, no one smiled, no one acknowledged that Michael existed, other than as a protected package.

XII

"Ye'll not be gettin' David Israel this way, you know!" Quiet. "Ye can torture me, and I won't talk. Might as well give up now!" Steady stares. "Did they take away your voice when they passed on your height?" Nothing. Shrieking loudly, like a frightened banshee: "It's the gold or nothin'! Ye hear? Gold or nothin'!" The ride got uncomfortably long, bouncing and stopping and turning swiftly. Although the hearse was airconditioned, it was not turned on, and the windows were cracked enough to permit some air circulation. Michael sweated, running his hands around his stiff white shirt collar. His tongue, too, ran around and about, all along the inside of his cheeks and lips. At last their hearse seemed to go down and down, circling around as they descended. When they stopped, Michael was roughly jerked out in some huge, echoey dungeon where surrounding bright lights intimidated him. They passed swinging overhead dim lights down dank hallways, doorway after doorway, until at last they crudely thrust him into a small room where steel rumbled and clashed loudly as a ponderous door closed behind him.

"Mother Mhachree," he whispered to himself. "'Tis the looney bin again, for sure, or near enough like it."

He turned and shouted a last epithet through the grill at the door: "Ye'll not be gettin' David Israel back.'

Nothing. No whisper, no shoe steps. Silence.

XIII

President John Sebastian had blanketed the city with men like George Nyrere. There was an old, true saying, that what was good for General Motors was good for the U, S and A and it went equally well for what John Sebastian ordered to be done: Good for Sebastian equalled good for General Motors equalled good for U, S and A. Q.E.D.

Next he'd called on an associate, a man obscure to the common citizen, but high up in the communications industry, whence orders came down like plummeting geese that a certain telephone was to be located geographically, the address to be relayed to a certain person at once, by the magic of computer speed.

So when Michael had called, he'd no chance a'tall, really, because even though Manhattan is a large, complex warren, General Motors together with all the other Fortune 500 is larger still. Setting about men here and there in strategic locations, and tracing the call instantly, brought one or another group within tens of seconds from Michael's pay telephone.

Sebastian had not reached his eminent position by leaving big decisions to inefficient board meetings and careless committees and conferences. Oh, he did from time to time call meetings and let them quibble and kibbutz on little things, which was alright, so long as they arrived at what he'd already decided.

And he'd already seen to a long string of yes men who, though outwardly huffy and puffy and



independent appearing, inwardly they were as meek and gentle as well trained corporation executives, sales representatives who reported every industrial nuance up their heirarchy in a manner not too unlike the military's intelligence system.

He leaned back in his chair, never noticing that it still squeaked, he was that preoccupied. The problem: A daft Irishman held David Israel, nephew on his mother's side. David needed his monthly medicine, his shot. The crazy Coffey wanted gold. Make a note. Why gold?

Opening his drawer, he fumbled for an antacid, popping one in his mouth. Solution: Strip away the daft Irishman's veneer. Find David Israel. Medics to stand by.

Meanwhile, outside the small, private cubicle that made up Michael Coffey's prison, Doctor Amendus Dullea carefully scribed notes as he secretly watched the frantically frustrated Michael Coffey pacing up and down, hands clasped behind back, pacing, pacing, like a nervous tiger. The patient's hair was uncombed, his tie loose and hanging, his white shirt collar open, and his suitcoat tossed carelessly on the small cot.

Of course Michael had no idea he was being observed. Had he known he'd have stopped his nervous pacing and thumbed his nose at the air, and he'd have shouted more frequently, saying, "If it's David Israel you want, you pay for it!" or "Me dander's up, begorrah!"

After John Sebastian had decided on his private action to capture Michael Coffey, he'd called for Dr. Dullea, author of *The Psyche Turned Inward*, *The Correlative Phenomena of Brainwashing Here and Abroad*, *The Secrets of Madison Avenueism*, *How the People's Airwaves Condition the People*, *Imprinting the Bare Psyche*, and another twenty-three erudite articles in professional publications.

It was whispered that he'd been trained in Russia or China, and also with Youngman himself, of the Youngman, Youngman and Youngman Advertising Agency of Manhattan.

Truth was, he was merely a bright, astute specialist with mother-in-law problems, and he sometimes drank too much which, for a native New Yorker, is not in itself very unusual.

"I'll need more background material on the subject," he'd informed Sebastian.

When the President snapped his fingers, George Nyrere took Dullea's note and handed it to a young lady with long, brown hair and flashing blue eyes, who smiled easily. She left the room with it.

"How long will it take?" Sebastian asked of Amendus.

Tapping his ball-point pen against a cheap yellow pad, Dr. Dullea made just the slightest effort to frown. He paused. Then, "Hard to predict. Perhaps five, six weeks."

"Good Lord, no! David Israel needs his medicine before that. Thirty days at the very outside, according to his doctor. And what if he's not fed during those thirty days?"

"I know. I know. I'll push it, but I can't swear we can strip his mind so fast."

Sebastian sighed, a fifty or fifty-sixth time, he'd lost count. He patted Dr. Dullea on the shoulder. Rising to leave, Sebastian added, "Do your best, your very best. I'll want to learn about this peculiar request for pots of gold."

XIV

Until Dog's strange attachment to Michael Coffey, the latter had been pummelled and pounded from one end of his territorial imperative to another, and so he was not unused to punishment. Had they begun with mere torture, he might have sustained his wits.

They got to him through food and drink.

One evening Michael Coffey was resting comfortably, though swearing at their blindness and stubbornness not to see that David Israel would be released unharmed soon as his demand for the pot o' gold was met. The next, he was sprawled across the cot, eyes glaring upward, wide open, as though the very gates of hell had switched places, and flames had spewed wildly, hungrily toward him, which, in a certain way, it had and it was.

"Michael Coffey!" a low, booming voice seemed to speak, as if it'd come from hollow tombs and had



squeezed through moldy sepulchres.

“Michael Coffey!” It was long, drawn out, echoey.

“Aye,” his mind answered without apparent volition.

“You are at the center of an infinite chaos. It has no form and is unknowable. No matter how you strive to break outward, there is increasing turmoil. You cannot think, nor can you will to form a thought. Your desire is ended, Michael Coffey.”

“Aye. Me desire is ended.”

“Very good. Now listen carefully, Michael, for your very soul depends on what you do.”

“Aye. Me soul depends on what I do.”

“Very good. When you awaken, Michael Coffey, you must name the address where David Israel is held.”

“Aye. I must name the address where David Israel is held.”

“If you create the slightest thought, the smallest desire to break from the sigil that binds you, a crawling chaos shall erupt and you will evaporate like an evil vapor. Do you understand me, Michael Coffey?”

“Aye. A crawling chaos.”

“Now you will sleep, Michael Coffey. But you will awaken with this sound,” and there was a sharp finger snap.

Michael Coffey’s eyes closed and he snored a gruesome sound, now and then turning and jerking across the cot, one hand flopping downward, the other across his chest.

The door opened and the voice’s owner entered. It was, of course, Doctor Amendus Dullea.

Trailing closely, a young, petite woman, with big blue eyes, carried a miniature recording instrument and assorted white handbags. She seated herself beside the flabby Amendus, who also carried two small folding stools which he placed beside the grumbling Michael.

Amendus took up Michael’s right arm, baring back large, blue arteries, while the young lady set up certain devices. “The balance, it must be just sooo. . . .” Amendus explained.

While Doctor Dullea quietly set up his diabolic chemicals and modern rites to force entry into Michael Coffey’s mental condition, Dog got to worrying the best he could, which was not in the usual sense of pacing and chain-smoking, or twitching and cursing.

His favorite television program had blanked out for some unaccountable reason, both Plain Label Wine and imported Colorado’s Coors Beer stacks were depleted, and also David Israel was taking advantage of Michael’s long absence with an avalanche of talk, all designed to get him -- Dog -- to release the prisoner.

“Now listen to me carefully,” David Israel pleaded, his fingers tightly grasping the concrete reinforcing bars, rebar, that made up one end of his cage. “You can’t chew with someone else’s teeth. They’ve caught your daft Irishman. Even now they’re searching through his mind to find this address, and when they come, they’ll bring a dozen, perhaps two dozen of New York City’s policemen. When the kettle boils over, it overflows its own sides.”

Dog grunted and turned his head just enough to acknowledge David’s presence, and then he felt for his big, brass doorknob inside his new coat pocket, a universal answer to all things unpleasant.

“It’s off to jail. Prison. Inevitable! Maybe to the sanitarium. They’ll probe with medical fingers, your skull will burn. They’ll change things, Dog. If a jug falls on a stone -- woe to the jug! If a stone falls on the jug -- woe to the jug!”

Dog got up, shuffled to the TV, and slammed against it with a hand that could have taken off a horse’s head. For a moment it flared with raster, and then died again.

“You’re paying me no mind, Dog. Do you like those hot, sweaty cells, crowded with inmates of ill repute? Do you like beans and potato soup? What of the long shower lines and lack of alcoholic beverages.



No lady friends at all. If the arrow-maker is killed by his own arrow, he is paid out of his own work.''

Dog pulled the electric plug from the jury-rigged overhead socket, and pushed it in again. The television still would not work.

Well, Dog's mind simply wasn't being sufficiently stimulated. David Israel's chatter was not especially confusing. He knew his duty, as given him by Michael Coffey, so Dog paid no mind to it. Besides, he didn't understand all the complex allusions, which fact was equally difficult for David Israel to absorb.

Dog faced a bleak period, with no *Sesame Street*, no brew, and nothing else except the gloomy, dank and damp dark all filled with the slow drip of wall-clinging moisture, the soft scampering and skittering of hidden feet, and echoes that mounted themselves inside the head until they sounded a fierce din that seemed to reverberate with an increasing crescendo — well, Dog was unusually, unavoidably irritable.

He sat still, staring at the blank TV screen, hearing only the long, hollow echoing of David's logical pleas and irrational homilies. Then, suddenly, as though a toggle switch had been joggled, he heaved himself upward and stomped out, with David shouting at the gloom, "Better you ask the way ten times, than to go astray at once!"

David did not feel like shouting at the skittering mice and silent television set, although he was beginning to understand that the resulting effect might be the same as shouting at Dog.

Now that Dog was out of sight, David at once began working twisted wires and shaking the cage to find a weak place, his face grim and set, nevermind cuts and bruises sustained by his searching fingers and arms.

Meanwhile Michael Coffey's pH level was minutely adjusted by injection. His temple and portions of his head were greased, where electrical probes were placed, leading to an apparent electro-encephalograph whose impulses fed into a small computer set beside the pleasant young lady.

Somewhere in Michael Coffey's dim genetic past must have been either a great magician, or a medieval mystic, or perhaps ancestors who'd bedeviled The Great Ones, those who come from between angles, outside of man's own space and time. It was also possible that Michael Coffey, whose life had been saturated, so to speak, with fairy tales, both grim and pretty, with alcoholic beverages and also weak living, was now experiencing his body's delayed reaction to the many foreign, unnatural drugs placed into his system.

Archetypes hovered through the fringes of his calculating processes, so that it seemed that Old Ones from dark stars breathed their spawn into his soul, which became the primal earth from which multitudes seemed to swarm upward and outward, until the mightiest rose up from the deeps and frowned with a scurrilous fury on all mankind, mostly made up of duplicate Michael Coffeys.

His eyes opened wide and staring at the crisp snap of Amendus Dullea's puffy fingers.

"Michael Coffey, respond when I ask you questions," the voice droned.

No response.

"What is your name?"

"Michael Jonathon O' Coffey."

"Very good. Where do you live, Michael Jonathon O' Coffey?"

Obvious effort to answer. No response.

Amendus checked the dials at his feet, increasing the flow of certain chemicals.

"Do you live in New York City?"

"Aye."

"Manhattan?"

"Aye."

"What is your street address?"

Obvious effort to answer. No response.



Amendus frowned. "It's too early," he whispered to his pretty, young assistant. "We're rushing things. Too definitive. Not enough background. Maybe he lives in the streets."

"Do you live in the streets?"

"Aye."

"Do you have a permanent place?"

Obvious effort to answer. No response.

"Damn," Amendus swore beneath his breath.

"Do you know David Israel?"

"Aye."

"Where is David Israel?"

"Safe."

"He is safe where?"

"In a cage."

"Where is David Israel's cage?"

"Safe, it is."

"Where is David Israel's safe cage?"

Obvious effort to answer. No response.

Amendus adjusted flows and frowned again.

"Safe - safe - safe -," Michael's voice repeated until it became a mumble that slowly died. His head drooped and his eyes closed, and he did not even twitch when they laid him down for honest rest.

Then, Glory be! the good news happened. By the time they'd completed their sterile computer runs and statistical and medical evaluations, David Israel was found!

Having twisted wires until they'd weakened and parted, he'd pushed through the cage's makeshift wiring with a furious haste, scampering from the basementway and running full tilt to the nearest bus, which took him among the great Whiteway throngs to where he'd called his friend, Gary Aloysius Isaacs.

Well, now, the emergency was off, and David Israel was safe and sound, except maybe for a bit of denting of his vanity, and scrapings at knuckle and fist.

Gary Aloysius patted him and hugged him and near-cried.

President John Sebastian called his legions back, leaving but one instruction for Dr. Amendus Dullea.

To George Nyrere he explained that he had "certain definite plans" for the crazy Irishman, and he put the troops under Nyrere to work at other worthwhile projects.

"What of Dog?" Nyrere asked, worrying over the size of the man.

But Sebastian ordered that he, too, be forgotten. "He's a follower. Won't do anything without Coffey's orders. Leave him be."

Doctor Amendus Dullea got immediately busy. Certain chemicals and arts go hand in hand and do not require the crackling flow of electrons to stiffen muscles and to force the mind's forgetfulness. Amendus donned his white cape and hood, opened up his modern alchemy book, prescribed and mixed and administered, and when Michael Jonathon O' Coffey was at last released at Christie and Canal Street at one o' clock in the morning, he was just another tottering bum, brown paper sack in hand, Plain Label Wine bottle mostly empty inside, sweet, cheap wine dripping from bewhiskered chin and oozing from tattered dirty clothing. . . .

Ah! The lot of the Irish who chase after tricky Leprechauns for fairy pots o' gold!

XV

Even large corporation CEOs make mistakes, though admittedly seldom, for such would be the embarrassment that the very fibre of our free, capitalistic enterprises would shiver. There are times, of course, when gigantic monopolies simply fail to gather together enough votes to provide protective tariffs, or to keep down little, pesky entrepreneurs who believe in a literal-minded way in "free enterprise." Or



sometimes they might overlook the appropriate stimulation of state legislatures so that licensing monopolies “for the good of the people’s health, safety and welfare,” will keep prices high; or they might on the national scene fail to get congress to vote enough money for not raising crops, or livestock, or for not manufacturing automobiles, or for not supporting one mode of transportation against another, or to vote in a special energy subsidy, or by not keeping syndicates and unions happy by supporting the vast, intricate, trillion-paper generating products of the tax collecting industry. . . .

Any one of these little political failures might count against the executive from time to time, causing some little embarrassment.

Those kinds of events and failures are to be expected, now and then. But in-house, inside the panelled, deep-pile-bedecked furnishings, the offices and boardrooms, where a man’s dignity, position and prestige are directly correlative with the size of seat bottom (comfort the softest and swivel radius the most) the square footage rugged over, windows (numbers and where placed), quantity and youthfulness of gopher girls, and so on — the place where real power lies — errors there are inexcusable, if caught.

So whenever small errors are noted that might cause some little chaotic perturbation, they are brought to the immediate attention of a main man. Then is great scrambling, a huge concern, a hullabaloo that permits the hurrying and scurrying of much honest work: reports, committee meetings, new directives and rules. . . .

But, once President John Sebastian commanded, his will was done. Thereafter no one, not a person, would again mention the possible peril that Dog posed. On looking backward one or another might remember the oversight, and perhaps wish they’d somehow brain-washed Dog, too. Such people would also fail to remember that Dog’s brain had been washed at birth and remained clean throughout his total life span.

Michael Coffey, meanwhile, lived on, a hulk and a dilemma at the Bowery, a common figure at the Salvation Army soup lines.

Dog fretted and was saddened and disconcerted, a shambling and searching animal grieving for his master.

Manhattan is huge, and an impossible place to search thoroughly, except for the genetic freaks like Dog who probably are easily explained as descendents of other Manhattanites who, following Darwin’s laws related to survival of, and variations of, species, are better fit to survive in such otherwise abnormal surroundings. He sniffed and peered, and moved about from the island’s tip to toe, and side to side, knowing in his slow pounding heart that Michael was alive somewhere. He could feel it. His bones told it. At night he’d dream of a place to search, and sure enough, he’d find the place, and look under ashcans, through boxes and debris, scattering mice and cats and dogs and humans alike, all to no good findings.

Michael lived, Dog was certain. Michael was on the island. And he, Dog, would find Michael. No more loyal follower had man.

Meanwhile Michael had taken to panhandling. He’d thrust forth a grimy wine-washed paw and pleaded for a dime for “acupacoffee.” More often than not he’d be turned down.

Several times during a day he’d strike it big, with sufficient income to purchase Plain Label Wine, after which would come those glorious moments when wild demons could be turned off: abhorrent haunted forests, cities made of dream substance inhabited by evil, twitching thugs and things and witches and little men with golden tongs that ripped out swollen tongues and forced them into strange geometries, so that no word made sense a’tall, where space twisted the senses and skewed thoughts into more horrors — anguish, perturbation, dread, menace. . . .

Michael often seemed to lie bound in some terrible labyrinth and just beyond, some unpronounceable, unspeakable formlessness lay in wait should he break his bindings.

She was an elderly, thin-faced Salvation Army angel, and she’d often seat Michael Coffey beside a



dirty window overlooking despondent shufflers, and there she'd speak softly to him, asking, "What is your name, Sir?" as though he were somebody other than a common New York wino, and on his way down.

There'd be a long, long pause. He'd stare into her soft eyes. There'd be a quizzical puzzlement and wrinkled brow with blinking eyes. Then, "Michael — I think."

Another pause. Men scuffling at the line. Plates clacking. Voices whispering. Fan blowing. Then with more certainty, "Michael — uh — Coffey."

"Here, let me help you with your bowl." She'd push the vibrating metal utensil back to Michael, whose fingers were near shaking it off the table's edge. Then she'd ask, "What did you do, Mr. Coffey? To what skills are you trained?"

He'd screw up lips and wrinkle forehead again, and he'd think hard, which is when those terrible supernatural forces loosed, and he'd save himself in the nick of time by clamping teeth and jaw, forcing the horrible thoughts to flee.

The kindly woman's name was Prudence Carnera, and some said that she was indeed related to Primo Carnera who, in 1933 had knocked out the great Jack Sharkey in the sixth round, a New York City fight of some note. During the same year he'd also beaten Paulino Uzcudun going the fifteen rounds in Rome, only to be knocked out by Max Baer in 1934, also a New York City fight.

Maybe she was related to the great Carnera. Who knew?

She was so tiny, so wizened, so utterly motherly and feminine that no one accused her of the relationship to her face for fear of embarrassing either herself or her.

In a way Prudence watched over Michael Coffey, seeing to a certain daily nourishment when she could, and trying now and then to bring back his muddled senses. Since her motherly instinct covered a multitude of daily hordes just like Michael, or worse, she was exhausted by day's end. Still, between her and a second female angel, Michael would regain his senses, and again take up his ancestral hunt, so to speak.

The second woman was Russian, and if it hadn't been for the terrible Russians that terrible New York winter, Michael might never have regained his old confidence and senses. Likewise, without the terrible Russians, Dog might never again have found Michael, which is not to belittle Dog's sniffing and searching abilities or talents, for New York City — Manhattan — is indeed a huge place. Why, a man like Dog might spend a lifetime snooping in alleys and behind dark hallways averaging as many as fifteen per day, and still not have half covered the mighty island.

Michael's recovery began quite simply. One of the United Nations ambassadorial staff members, a young woman named Modest Dargomizhsky-Bellingshausen, a composer by birthright and inheritance, an aide by political survival, jockeyed back and forth between New York City and Volgograd.

Since her real name was simply Dargomizhsky — that is her father's name — and the same composer who'd been ousted from official Soviet circles during her early childhood, and the same who'd been discredited and had thereafter mysteriously disappeared, Modest took the name of her step-father, a scientist who had had unimpeachable Soviet connections and was placed in a favored position subsequently also supported by an independent Russia. So her name had become Modest Bellingshausen.

Later, when she'd gotten old enough to reason things through, and to realize that all was not as it appeared in Mother-Father-Uncle Soviet Union- new Russia, she'd gone to great trouble to attach the name Dargomizhsky to Bellingshausen, thereby becoming Modest Dargomizhsky-Bellingshausen.

While poets were being jailed, and great writers were being ousted from their homeland, and scientists being forced to rethink reality, and so on, Modest rebelled in her own peculiar way. She'd lived for long waiting on that sudden, harsh knock at her door, that quiet surrounding of officialdom that would probe into her secret thoughts and expose her for what she really was. When it did come, she was, to her surprise and bewilderment, asked to become an aide to an important United Nations official.

Such was her step-father's mighty influence!



By now, of course, she'd worn her hyphenated name so long it would have brought about suspicion and investigations had she changed it back.

So, let sleeping goats bleat! as goes the old expression.

Back to Michael Coffey. In a way, then, Modest Dargomizhsky-Bellingshausen was directly responsible for Dog's successful search — her and the big, Russian airline, Aeroflot, and sacred Mother-Father-Uncle Independent Russia, and a wee, tiny bug so small that not even the sharpest Irish eye could have discerned it without a most powerful microscope, called a virus, which caused the "Russian flu."

Michael's past sicknesses might very well have included the Hong Kong flu, the Vietnamese itch, the German measles, the French scurvy, the Swedish polkadots, or any of a hundred germs and viruses and other diseases, but none gave him immunity against the Russian flu.

So you see, in a very direct way, the coming together again of Dog and Michael was brought about by the new Russian revolution, the earlier Communist pronouncements, and those very early libertarian French men who, during Marie Antoinette's era wrote *The Manifesto*.

Further back than that is difficult to trace.

Michael came down with the most horrible shaking and fever, and at first Sister Prudence Carnera thought he was simply suffering from the snakes again. The symptoms begin with an over-indulgence of alcohol coupled with a depletion of vitamins and minerals, often accompanied by insufficient nourishment and general weakening of the immunological system, although in truth, Plain Label Wine has been known to attack perfectly nourished folks, too.

The nervous system begins to chitter and fire away at things unseen and unspoken, and to some extent a small, wee portion of social paranoia creeps inward.

The eyes, blood-shot and weak, look outward to stare at walls and ceilings, where comes to life the most grotesque shapes and shadows; long, slinky red worms striving with broad undulations to reach the projector; great scabrous arms that come from necrophaguses of the most ancient and dusty lineage; long, silent, gliding wings with claws red and dripping; faces that howl and eye sockets that stare empty and with foreboding; spiders that crawl until the skin tries to shed itself, shivering, shivering, endlessly shivering.

...

Mis-firing nerves shake the muscles so that limbs twitch and jerk — vocal cords let out ear-piercing shrieks and calls.

Sometimes the affected will lurch upward, eyes open and staring, body dashing through the post's railings and tables and glassware, scattering them wildly in all directions, ignoring bumps and cuts and bleeding wounds. . . .

Sister Prudence's thin hands fluttered to her mouth when Michael's bloodshot eyes got wide and staring. "They've got me!" he roared through the mission house. And then he'd sing, "Tiddley, tiddley or not; I found the man and his pot," laughing uproariously, so that the men below standing in the soup line would also began to shiver and scrunch their necks beneath turned-up collars. Some crossed themselves, and turned away, fearing that evil spirits had gloomily set upon them all.

Well, in time, Sister Prudence came to the wise conclusion that a medical doctor was necessary and, not able to reach their regular physician, a doctor Salvatore Bivoni, she took it upon herself to call a brash young man just beginning his practice at Catherine and Henry Streets.

"It's the Russian flu," Dr. Johan MacFarlane explained after a quick diagnosis, blinking his youthful eyes in the dungy atmosphere. He at once prescribed rest, aspirin, vitamins and minerals, and plenty of liquids, which seemed strange to Sister Prudence because Michael's main problem seemed to be an excess of fluids.

"Of course! Water and fruit juices," she caught herself in time, sighing and clapping her tiny, nervous fingers together.

She also made arrangements for the New York Public Health Service to see to shots for all of her



“boys.”

Fevers are strange, interesting symptoms, not yet fully appreciated by either man or medical profession. Sometimes feverish minds will bring to forefront archetypes of days aeons past when man's ancestral lines merged and struggled for dominance, until one or the other twisted DNA/RNA strand won over, bringing about new modes and senses and abilities. These gene shadows may be seen as monsters that want to swallow us alive, or as benign motions that move soundlessly with a placid unconcern for us watching nearby. Occasionally one side or the other of the chain dominates, and we follow with our minds along evolved narrows where no man or beast will ever follow, nor would want to. These shadows within shadows are less than spirit; more of a mathematical probability hardly capable of being foreseen.

The fever may strike at the roots of our pleasant childhood, bringing to mind fresh, sweet odors, mother's love, the beckoning hands of older guardians with the good taste of flour and honey on them; or perhaps to remember friendly fun-filled days running and shouting in schoolyards, ball bats swinging and friends shouting and competing, shrill laughter and occasional cries with fountaining tears. . . . Such visions are common, and pure and lovely, if they are of pleasant times.

Again a fever can burrow itself deeply within the flesh, finding misbehaving cells, killing off some, weakening others, leaving miracle of miracles, a man sanely alive who was not long before doomed by the finest seers. Such has happened with syphilitics and some few cancer victims, to name but two kinds of cases.

Fevers, while cleansing a putrid soul, or clearing a burdened conscious, can also weaken and bring to death's gateway a lovely soul, where visions from man's inner sights are projected against dying ectoplasm, where angels sing and play harps all day, daily, and, where loved ones look down on us, smiling, casting no fear, beckoning, beckoning. . . .

Then there is the fever that prophesizes man's lot, and from which comes the springwells of spirit, the great religions, the great religious leaders, and aye, fanatics. For what is a great religious leader in one context, from one childhood conditioning, is to another a zealot with strange ideas and a warped sense of humor.

Those who suffer the kind of fevers that project into time's winds may see the very stars revolve about, taking billions of years with each cycle, and they may see here and there the sprinkling of life that may yet be, may never be, is now, never was.

These wells of religious consciousness and conscience draw upon our beingness and, when they are not misleading us into foolish rules and sigils, they draw together our genes, our cells, our fibers, our organs, our organizations, our personalities, our spirits, ourselves, and make us strive to follow an ideal image.

Such happened to Michael, for the fever not only cleared away the foreign drugs and suggestions introduced by Dr. Amendus Dullea's hypnosis/drug/pain implants, but it sought to bind together Michael's genes with his soul, leaving Michael a winded but sane Irishman, if the two terms don't conflict with one another too much when used together.

It also left him with a vision.

All that was after Dog found Michael, who had lain groaning and crying and shivering and sweating for days.

Dog had pretty well covered all the old haunts, and some very, very old haunts, and he'd pleaded for help in his sound-stingy manner from Marsha Fairmont at the Brooklyn Neely-Bend Auto Parts Place. Marsha had tried to find Michael Coffey, too, without success.

The way Dog and Michael were brought together is complex in the telling — like any good Irish Fable will be — but nonetheless a true series of Lucky Irish coincidences. Modest Dargominzhsky-Bellingshausen arrived at the Kennedy Airport at 2:00 p.m. Tuesday. When her baggage had passed customs, using her diplomatic immunity and without being inspected, she tipped a porter an American dollar bill that had



rubbed itself against an open lipstick inside her purse. That lipstick had been temporarily borrowed by Madam Anna Diaghilev of the Russian Ballet, and Madam Diaghilev was just passing through the infectious stage of the Russian flu, though she herself was not sick, or only lightly so.

The porter, whose assumed name was Gustav Mackensten, and a short, thin, middle-aged male Vietnamese (name changed) who'd immigrated to America not long before, had a favorite habit of kissing his day's first tip, which he proceeded to do at once with Modest Dargominzhsky-Bellingshausen's dollar. He also contracted the Russian flu, and thereafter generously passed along his luck to every person he was near.

It happened that Modest Dargominzhsky-Bellingshausen was not yet through helping to bring Dog and Michael together. When the Russian flu was in full swing about New York City, having been vectored in by one or another traveler after Gustav Mackensten's splendid helping start, she was again ordered to take papers back to Mother-Father-Uncleland, from the United Nations building at First Avenue and Forty-second street. At the hotel close by, she commandeered a taxi to take her first to a place at Allen and Canal Street. Dog was there coincidentally and about to turn left, having already scoured certain blocks nearby in search of Michael. When the taxicab carrying Modest darted into a rare, open space, it caused Dog to stop suddenly and turn his head slightly.

By such a random, unconnected experience, Dog turned right instead of left, whence his heart began pounding rapidly, his hands and feet began to sweat, and his nose wrinkled. He'd suddenly developed a demanding compulsion to sniff. And, it was true! He had Michael's scent at last!

He followed his instinct — which was now concentrated in his nostrils — straight down the street to a decrepit sign and sparkling clean windows where milled about many foine New York citizens waiting to enter the mission for shelter and food for the day. There it was, inside, that Dog spotted Michael Coffey at last, resting on a cot, but now and then shouting out wildly, with eyes strangely glazed and open at the same time.

It was a sad experience when he found Michael Coffey sick and dreaming such wild and horrible visions that even Dog knew were untrue. Sister Prudence, finding all of a sudden such big, soft, caring hands to wash and to wait on Michael, prayed her own soft, silent prayers that night, for she did dearly dread losing one of her "boys". She'd always have a fondness for the sight of one human taking care of another.

"Shh! He's sleeping now, poor dear," Sister Prudence told Dog, who merely grunted, although a close watcher might have guessed at a tear in the eye's corner.

When Michael awoke days later, his first vision was that of the faithful Dog hovering gently over him and placing cool towels at his fevered brow. Michael indeed knew himself and that he was healed, his mind being clear of things ancient and terrifying, his body being cleansed of dreaded chemical and hyponotic implants that were supposed to last a lifetime.

His eyes sparkled and his captivating Irish grin lit up the dingy room where a bare light bulb hung from a long-frayed electric cord. "Glory be," he said with a cheerful, lilting voice, "it's all true. The Little Folks, and their gold!"

Reaching over to take Dog's thick wrist and squeezing it tightly, he whispered, "Don't breathe a word, me foine friend. Just you and me!"

Thus it was that Michael Jonathon O' Coffey's sanity, so to speak, returned, and Dog and he were together again.

XVI

At the beginning bellhopping one of the biggest hotels near Times Square was pure delight for the reformed and mostly sane Michael Coffey. Sister Prudence Carnera had seen to his changing ways, taking pride in the saving of a soul, and a body, too, for that matter.

Michael wore a glorious, red uniform with double rows of brass buttons and red pants with white stripes that lined legs both inside and outside. Oh, he did blink once or twice when he first saw the little



red hat he must don on his Irish head. The bellhops hat reminded him of Saul Antonio's little monkey's hat. The little creature would posture and grimace for pennies to be placed in a tin cup while Saul turned the crank on his hand organ.

Otherwise Michael appeared to be content, what with a way of surviving, and with his newly won and secret knowledge. Why would Little People go to such troubles over him if the pot o' gold were false?

Ah, well! Biding his time, he dressed himself daily according to his new supervisor's instructions, pressing the sharp pant legs between two fingers whenever necessary and brushing imaginary lint and hairs from his splendid, red coat.

He was a handsome figure of a man, not hardly into middle age yet. He'd admire his stance and new uniform in the big mirror behind the bellhops' closet door. He'd stick out his tongue, noting with pride that it'd lost its white coating, though — alas! — not its wavering ways. He sighed. Between Sister Prudence and Gerald Tan, his new supervisor, he might have to die sober. . . .

He couldn't quite ascertain Sister Prudence's motives. His own female relatives had had ways so foreign — or maybe it was the other way about — that Michael Coffey, himself, had become strange and foreign. Now why would a little, thin wisp of a woman like Prudence want to clean up the Bowery riff and raff? Why would a female with the energy of St. Patrick himself want to use it on their likes?

He shook his head, noting that the jowls no longer flabbed back and forth from excessive, slack weight.

A buzzer signalled over the mirror, which must have come from the supervisor's cubicle, facetiously called a desk, but appearing to Michael no more than a stall for a horse that's been cut off at the belly so that only two legs are necessary to be housed. Michael frowned. That Gerald Tan was something else. No sense of humor, always snapping his fingers this way and that, then pointing at baggage or taxicabs. Then Michael's face relaxed, for the queer oriental had promised to consider Dog the very next opening, and Michael needed Dog, especially to carry the heavier items.

Feeling somewhat ambivalent — which is a normal condition for an Irishman — Michael hurried outside. Inwardly he was still His Honor, the most clever Michael Coffey, and one of the very few in the whole, wide world who knew of Leprechauns, and how they'd taken over a whole world, but outwardly he was just a splendid middle-aged bellhop, with just a touch of greying hair, who was fast learning ingratiating manners, and who perhaps as a bellboy relied too easily on his past street-panhandling skills and experiences.

Guests began coming in by taxicab loads. One after another they came, suitcase by suitcase, trunkload after trunkload. "Glory be! And for sure it's a big convention," Michael at last deduced, for he hadn't learned to find and read the posted signs and literature scattered liberally about and telling of coming events.

During the hustling up and down, Gerald Tan called him over to a quiet corner where he asked that Michael contact Dog, explaining in an accent that could only have come from New York City, "Get your frien' ovah heah right 'way. Didn't 'spect Charlie t'be gone, or Louie, neither."

Gerald Tan was a quiet, small, thin man, a college graduate from the College of the City of New York, who lived originally in the Bronx. When the Yankee Stadium had been built, his grandparents were living in a lean-to-shack behind a large junkyard with a fence all about so high that only those who knew the inside could interpret the sounds. They'd come from mainland China years earlier, and considered themselves fortunate to be in America, the land of great opportunities.

Gerald's mother had been a shy child with eyes that reminded of big, black almonds, and soft ways that might have won any emperor's heart. Unfortunately she'd lost her first three children and, without telling anyone at all, including Gerald's father, she'd found a way to bring home little Gerald Tan, origins now lost in antiquities. His mother — foster mother — the quiet girl — had died young, and Gerald had had to be raised by two aging foster grandparents and his foster father, Randal Tan, a strong-willed, muscle-bound ditch digger, before the times of backhoes and other excavating machinery.

Randal had insisted that Gerald become educated, which he did. Now he was ensconced safely in this



big, sleek hotel, where chandeliers sprinkled shadows and soft lights against costly tapestries and thick, bright rugs, and the slow trickling whisper of running water from the large foyer fountain disguised harsh city noise.

Having taken the job as bellhop to pay his way through school, and having succeeded, like his father wanted, he found that liberal arts degrees are poor skills from which to earn one's living. "At best," he'd say frequently, "they train youse to be a corporation yes-man. At worst, they keep youse from earning a wage-niche in society for four years."

So Gerald Tan never quit his bellhopping position, and when the superficially jovial and aging Negro, Sylvester Roosevelt, retired, they placed Gerald Tan in the key supervisory slot.

Strangely different from most New York City bellhops, Gerald believed that basic salaries should cover everything, and while he didn't discourage tipping, he insisted that nothing be done to encourage it. Many who attempted the by-passing of this extremely strange ruling in "Gerald Tan's Hotel," left soon afterward. It is life's blood, tipping is, to New York City bellhops, and without it, the job is just not the same, lacking sparkle and appeal, or the daily challenge in life.

Of course those who could adapt to Gerald's ways, and who expended energies on sly and devious ways to work out tips, still made out, the secret challenge becoming even more enjoyable to some.

Alas! Michael Coffey was not such a one because, except for visions of gold and the "very necessities for survival which all men had a right to help themselves to" Michael was an honest Irishman — if those terms are not too much in conflict. Poor Dog was even less able to wheedle tips in secret, because if Michael pointed to a trunk or set of bags and told Dog to fetch, Dog would do just that, never looking up or down or sidewise or in the least expecting the tip, grateful in his own way to have someone decide for him, and especially to have it also be Michael.

So I guess it was the small size and quantities of his tips that kept Michael's nose and vision, so to speak, on the Little Men and their hidden wealth.

This surging convention was another experience that tied Michael's nose and vision together. He carried in bags for one royal couple whose card said, President John Sebastian, General Motors. Just that! Simple, unembellished, clear, black on white: President Sebastian, General Motors.

Think of that!

And his woman was clothed with the finest cloth, silky and finely spun, designed with a smooth suavety seen only among the very finest lady's magazines like *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Mademoiselle*, and so on. Her stole must have cost hundreds of golden coins — whoops! — there it was again, right in Michael's mind. Even while he stood at attention and quietly behind them, one hand at the baggage cart, staring at some poor dead animal's discarded skin and fur about the lady's shoulders, his mind had slipped unwittingly toward the most desireable shiny substance, the gold.

Then there was another little fellow, wizened and wrinkled with big thick glasses, and Michael learned that he was from the Microsoft system.

Think of that!

Almost like being from the head of the whole U, S and A!

As the baggage piled up at the lower entranceway, the babel about the check-in desk increased. Michael's thoughts hurried and scurried about as did his feet.

In Michael's mind was a faint sense of *deja vu* a feeling that perhaps he relived an ancient experience. He asked himself, *Now where have their faces been seen before?*

"Boy!" came Tom's quick shout and finger snap, and Michael was through with futile daydreams again.

One conference room overflowed with charts and graphs and machines constructed interestingly, flashing and chattering, and also booths decorated with unfurled, overhead banners, announcing various commercial products. Men and women inside each cubicle smiled and nodded and demonstrated wonders.



Some passed out literature about stocks and bonds and gains and declinations and such, none of which interested Michael, or, if the truth be known, none was understood by him.

Open rooms here and there were reserved for small panel meetings. In one, a Sears Company lady told of their efforts to keep at least fifty-one percent of their merchandise top of the line.

Now why wouldn't they go for one hundred percent? Michael asked himself in passing, but then he'd never been inclined to merchandising, except taking what was needed for ordinary living purposes.

Later he had to carry an amplifier to the banquet room where an executive from General Motors directed traffic. Michael was asked to get six chairs placed in a string behind the table on a dias which overlooked hundreds of other smaller tables.

Everywhere people clustered together and broke apart again. On each person big tags embroidered in green and decorated with the leaf of a small plant — “Glory be! “ Michael's eyes widened — the Irish Shamrock! — told all who each was by name and who was their parent company. Michael counted Mary Lloyd of Mobil Oil, Frank Gresham of I, B and M, William (Bill) Cleveland of Ashland Oil, Fara Proh of Gulf Oil, Sandy Barile of. . . .

Later that evening, as Michael Coffey stood near the fringes of the huge conference room, he again noted the lucky clover with its identical four leaves hung directly behind the Master of Ceremonies, a nearly bald United States Steel executive calling himself Jacob Huysmans.

Just as Jacob Huysmans rose to speak, grasping the microphone at the center of the speaker's table, Michael had the sudden and sure realization of who these people truly were and what they must be about. It was like a stark, cold, frightening chill that ran from the tips of his toes up and up, to make rigid every muscle all the way up and including those that must be now locked in his brain.

He could almost hear Patrick Kavanaugh from the Asylum whispering in his ear again: “Tell me true, Michael Coffey — and don't be fudgin' it, . . . , it's the Little People what sent you here?”

And then in that very same ear he heard that very same Patrick Kavanaugh list off all the names of America's biggest corporations, and then onward to begin listing names of all the biggest conglomerates in the whole, wide world. “Don't you understand? They're all of them controlled by the Little People, and each of the Little People Leprechauns grown tall.”

Oh what a terrible, terrible bit of whisperin' it was!

Michael had been standing beside the door to the huge banquet room in case he was needed. He stood at attention, but now so stiff he'd become that St. Patrick might have used him like a stick to drive out snakes.

Jacob Huysmans began speaking. They'd eaten: fried chicken, wrinkled, cold and green peas, aluminum-wrapped baked potatoes, lettuce salad, and such. When Jacob had risen and clinked a teaspoon on his near-empty waterglass, the thrums and hums died.

Jacob began talking about something called “new product lines,” which meaning Michael failed to penetrate entirely, considering his state of mind, and Jacob Huysmans went on to embellish a certain point with a tale, saying: “The minister was asked why parables are so prominent in the bible, and why they are listened to more than straight narrative. The minister replied that he'd answer the question by means of a parable:

“Truth, — said the minister — usually walked about the street unclothed, as naked as the day he was born. Everyone, of course, was scandalized and wouldn't permit Truth in their door. Whenever anyone saw Truth walking around, they turned and ran away frightened.

“As Truth wandered about lonely, he one day met Parable. Parable was clothed in fine, bright materials that dazzled the eye and was a pleasure to look at. Parable asked, ‘Why do you walk about naked and with such a sad expression on your face?’

“Truth shook his head and replied sadly: ‘I'm getting older every day and everyone avoids me. I've no friends and my life is going fast.’

“‘That's not true,’ said Parable. ‘They don't avoid you because of age, but because you have no



clothes. I'm older than you, and they don't avoid me. People find me attractive; they run to speak with me and to visit for long. Let me tell you the secret. They don't like things plain and unvarnished, but dressed up prettily and even a little artificial. I'll send you some of my clothing and you'll see what a difference it makes on your relations with people.'

"Truth followed Parable's advice, dressing in his gay clothing, and behold! Truth was no longer shunned. People welcomed him and he, like Parable, also became the life of every party.'

Michael had to get away from it all. Such a direful, confusing, untruthful gathering!

While Dog was bound to Michael Coffey by strong emotional ties, and while he'd follow Michael about here and there, and even search for him when separated overlong, and while they would help one another when in trouble, Dog simply could not follow Michael's new, strange, teetotalling habits. Inside Dog's big, red uniform that nearly burst from bulging muscles whenever he bent to tote, was a pint flask cleverly designed to fit flush against his broad chest, curving just enough to hug it closely.

Michael dragged Dog down to the boiler room where his own sudden sweat would not be noticed in the hissing steam. Dog pulled out his flask to sip at it. Wiping his brows repeatedly, as though moisture were accumulating rapidly, Michael huskily whispered: "Tis them! Hundreds! All with their little green four-leaf clovers, and giant clover behind the banquet table, too!"

They seated themselves at a scruffy, used sofa, placed there by Bernard Shifley, the Black Chief Custodian, whose scarred desk was also next to it. On Bernard's cluttered desk was a small calendar whose leaves could be removed or turned with the passing days. Dog burped and pointed his thick forefinger at one of the leaves facing them. It said "St. Patrick's Day, Observed by Irish Societies and With Parades," and also, printed in red, "March 17".

Michael followed Dog's pointing, and he sighed: "Aye. Tis the very diabolic nature of the Little People. Am't ye seen it, Dog? They's Jews and Protestants and other wicked religious up there, and they's Hungarians and Italians and Africans, all mixed up together. So they use the very day set aside for Ireland's grand and glorious Saint, named Patrick after driving off snakes and heathens, and they band together. D'ye really think that protestants and heathens would be celebrating this day?"

Dog blinked, saying nothing. The demand of thoughts on his brain often caused it to freeze up, just as the thought of certain Little People caused Michael's heart and soul and fiber to focus, to vibrate in rhythmic unison.

"I've the word of a compatriot on it, too, named Patrick Kavanagh. Told off names of every one, he did. Like scripture, he did. No man would memorize the whole yellow pages of the telephone books unless it were true!"

Dog tiptoed some more.

Michael's tongue twisted and turned and wanted out, but he clutched at it with sharp teeth, looking the other way. "What are we to do, Dog?"

Such decisions were his, anyway, so the question was purely out of politeness and habit. He got up and began pacing: through the long, sweaty pipes that bled hot water up to every room, back past rows of tanks gurgling and siphoning, around and about the small storage area piled high with boxes of cheap, hard toilet paper on rolls, and also small soap cakes individually wrapped, cleansing powders and liquids and brooms and mops, and then he'd soar about the gas heater roaring blue flames to make steam, and then back again to Dog, whose flask rose higher at each nip.

Michael could stand no more, and he grabbed the silver vessel from Dog's thick fingers, pushing it to his lips, gurgling down swallows large enough to make his wrinkling eyes water with relief, after which his tongue behaved properly — at least for an Irishman — again.

Well, Michael and Dog sipped quietly together, just the soft hissing of a leaky steam vent filling up echoes. When the flask was empty, Michael's mind was as clear as Dog's, and he knew what had to be done. "Burn 'em out!" his slurring tongue repeated, and so together they saturated the storeroom with oil



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MICHAEL COFFEY'S JEWISH LEPRECHAUN

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XVII

Sister Prudence Carnera's soft, empathetic eyes once again watched over Michael during his second recovery. His bleary eyes at last opened to a world of coughing and hacking and creaking of cots, where open bulbs dangled from long, frazzled cords, and glared harshly into weakened eyes. He was confused, but still able to release two important thoughts: *The Little Men? Did they all burn? And Dog? Is he safe?*

Just then Dog shuffled by, large hands tightly wound about the handle of a broom which he pushed back and forth between cots and along the narrow walkway. Michael sighed, relieved.

Prudence leaned forward from the hard, narrow bench beside the cot, permitting a hopeful flicker to cross her patient but lined face and she pursed her lips.

"One must give them a second chance, and a third, and a fourth, forevermore," she often quoted whenever asked about repeaters.

"I'm so happy you've come about," Sister Prudence said now to Michael, propping his head with his oil-soaked and smoke-grimed bellhop jacket that could no longer be seen as red.

Michael felt himself, pushing shaky hands along legs and feeling his belly, punching inside and about. "Aye. That I am, Sister Prudence. But how did I get here? There seems to be a bit of a blaze and smoke and fumes roaring every which way, and me and Dog crawling up narrow cement stairwells. . . ."

He remembered a little more, like when he danced about their makeshift conflagration shouting and cursing at the Little Ones. No pagan Welchman could have hooped and hollared so well with flames leaping their ancient rites about overturned boxes. Groaning, he grabbed at the pain in his head when he tried to rise.

"I'm so happy you and Dog survived," Prudence said, patting him back down. "Why, you might have been killed in that terrible blaze."

"Indaid," Michael agreed. Then, with a glance sidewise, and wary, "The others? Did they. . . ."

"Don't fret yourself. They're all safe. Every one of them. The fire was restricted to the basement storeroom, and only smoke drove them out temporarily. I understand that you two will be rewarded for calling the alarm and showing such presence during the danger. You're both heroes, you know."

Startled, Michael could not remember a single blessed thing for which they should be rewarded.

"Why, if you and Dog hadn't started the firehose in the narrow hallway, getting water down early, the whole basement might have blazed, perhaps the whole building."

Thinking back through the pain, he remembered the pagan dance, and the coughing and hacking, and finally he and Dog crawling up the stairwell. Now where did the firehose come from? Pain struck at him something fierce, when he strived to remember, but even so he faintly recalled clutching at something for a firm hold and then falling down the stairwell after it. Had he turned on the water? Or had Dog? It was just too much for his mental state, so he groaned louder.

"You poor, dear, man. Hush and sleep. I won't mention the smell of you-know-what on your breath. Rest, and get well again. You've become a hero, Mr. Coffey. You and your friend, Dog!"

And so it came about that they were called heroes again, standing before Gerald Tan, who himself stood small and erect, eyes front, and both facing Paul Howe, the hotel chain's president and board chairman, a tall, thin, gangling man who had flown in from Miami, Florida just for the brief, expansive occasion. His dress was impeccably correct: single-breasted and white sport coat, matching white pants, white shirt with a silken sheen, hand-painted tie, white shoes that glistened beneath flickering foyer lights, a big diamond ring on both hands and a watch with platinum band embellished by pearls and rubies. His hair was smoothed straight back, and like many men his age, he'd taken to secretly darkening his greying hair with a treatment so that now his head was almost as black as if he were again thirty years of age. His face had been nicely lifted, so that the skin was nearly as smooth as his younger self. Only his bearing and brown skin splotches at the back of his wrinkling hands told his true age.



Behind Michael and the bewildered Dog were other bellhops, even those from the late afternoon and night shifts, and they were all standing in a straight row, erect and proud.

Paul Howe was reading: “. . . to you, Michael Coffey, and to you — ah — ahem — Dog —,” he looked quizzically at Gerald Tan, “That right? Dog?”

Tan nodded, eyes attentively straight.

Howe continued after clearing his throat: “We’re proud to give this medal, this badge of our proud tradition. Service beyond call of duty, and bravery, forestalling a terrible tragedy,” He looked up, glanced from right to left, and adlibbed, “Why the whole building might’ve been damaged,” and then Michael was ordered to step forward where Gerald Tan pinned the medal on his right breast, after receiving it from Paul Howe, and then the process was repeated for Dog.

Now he, Michael, was a hero, and Dog, too, for that matter!

Michael fingered the lovely gold-gilded medal after they were alone in the small room newly provided for them “for life.” By now he was as confused as was Dog’s normal condition, and so he flopped down on his side of the room, rolling over and over in the soft mattress. Then he fondled his bright golden medal again, pressing it between near-trembling fingers.

Pushing a chair before the color-TV, Dog slouched himself and dialed and punched in *Sesame Street*.

“Sure this is a soft kind of living,” Michael told the room, itself. “And this medal is shiny and pretty, but will it buy anything? Look at it, Dog. See the gleam? Why I could scratch it with me penknife and there would be pure dross and probably mostly so.”

Dog found the proper station and settled in.

Michael’s inner eyes viewed that huge pot o’ gold again, the very same first seen and later described by his deceased grandfather; and also there fluttered to Michael’s mind the image of David Israel, who’d been nearly forgotten in all the horrible grand excitement. He clenched his newly won medal so tightly that President and Board Chairman Paul Howe’s profile nearly squirted off of it. “Aye, and we know a thing or two about the Little People.” His eyes squinted dangerously, as though they’d been gone on a long, long journey, and at last they’d come home.

XVIII

Carlin Nelson was a short, mostly stocky street hoodlum not more than eighteen years old with brown unruly hair, sharp facial features and with a gift for imitation and gab that often distracted Michael from his reasoning.

Dog was quite naturally seldom distracted.

“You’ll take this stolen car, see,” Michael was instructing Carlin, “and we’ll follow the mark until he gets off the Broadway bus.”

“Which number’ll he take?”

“Never mind. We’ll watch. Whichever he takes, that’s the one we follow.”

“It’d be easier if we went directly to his pad, you know, like I done for Tootie and Libeth, you know, where we got the kitty that brought in the scratch. Me and some boys could, you know, get this little Jewish fellow and bind him, sack him, and no one’d be wiser.”

“No, no!” shouted Michael, eyes widening. “Am’t his apartment off limits?” His face reddened and he puffed out sweaty cheeks. “We can’t go to the building. I can’t tell you why. Just take my word on it, we cannot.”

“I know some very good boys. They’re cool, man! Cool! It’d be much simpler. . . .”

“No, no, no! Nobody is to know. Just me and Dog. Me and Dog. Understand!”

Well, in time they got Carlin Nelson to understand that he was to drive the stolen car with Michael and Dog inside until David Israel got off near his apartment building and then, in just a blink, they were to drive up beside. Dog was to snatch the mark, and wham! The door was to close and they’d skitter off as fast as



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MICHAEL COFFEY'S JEWISH LEPRECHAUN

55

Carlin was an expert at this line of work, but Michael had seen the whole plan work to perfection in at least a dozen movies. One waited patiently inside one's automobile sipping on coffee from a plastic container and munching stale rolls until the mark showed. Then one followed discretely, the mark never turning once to see that he'd picked up a follower. Whenever convenient, one placed one's automobile so's the mark's car couldn't get by. Then one hopped out, plucked up the mark, shoved him in your own car, and roared off.

There was the alternative, one waited until the mark left his or her vehicle, and then the swooping and plucking could be done, doors flying open, hands reaching and grabbing, then stuffing the mark in one's own vehicle, and then racing away. That's what Michael's mind envisioned, that last, and he'd seen it successful on wide screen, too.

Everything seemed set and foine. Carlin got the stolen car alright, a foine, black limousine with floor space for the proposed hidden mark.

Right afterwards, everything went bad.

First, Carlin couldn't get the car through New York City traffic fast enough to pick up David's trail at the right place, being Irishmen's. Dog solved that problem, correctly sniffing out bus 406 which took off toward The Great White Way.

David debarked at a busy intersection, and it was simply impossible to park, so how could they wait patiently?

When Carlin, at Michael's shrewd orders, tried double parking, a tall, broad-shouldered New York City policeman appeared as if by magic.

"Glory be!" Michael exclaimed while Carlin was being bullied and ordered to move on, "I thought they all hung out about the Port Authority Terminal."

So they missed the place David entered, and Dog couldn't get out right there to sniff him out.

When they did get parked off on some remote side street, and set out on foot, they were too late, and Dog was unable to pick out the bus number from just odors and intuitions alone.

When David detrained again, and they accidentally spotted him, and he'd scooted underground, Carlin began cursing violently.

"Now, now, me man!" Michael soothed. "There's other days, and nights, too, for that matter. 'Tis only the fool has luck!"

But that didn't calm Nelson, the sight of big dollars having already stimulated his thoughts and mouth sufficiently, so he cursed more loudly.

Next day was another, and so was the next, according to Michael, and so they were and it was. Because of risk in keeping the same stolen automobile, they changed license plates each day. Then they were off again, after poor little David Israel!

Luck was truly Irish this day, and they were able to follow David all the way to his home block where Dog was to get out the right side when they slowed. He was to hustle up to David, and Zoom! they'd be on their way.

The problem was that Dog hadn't quite learned his left from his right, or, at best, he got confused and methodically had to straighten everything out in his mind before selecting one side or the other, just like he'd learned on *Sesame Street*. Meanwhile, since he was rushed by Michael's prodding and must make a choice, he got out the wrong side. David was just about to open his apartment door.

Waving arms and whispering huskily, Michael spattered angrily, "Over there! Over there! You big lout. He's gettin' away!"

The luck of the Irish, which is not always bad, but sometimes good, was not good on this next attempt. David Israel had long been on the lookout for just this sort of unpleasant maneuver, and he hadn't ridden up and downtown without precautions. So, just as soon as Dog got straightened, and Michael was sighing



with some relief, Carlin Nelson was roughly snatched up from the driver's side while Michael, was snatched equally crudely from the passenger's side. Dog was being battered by four or five strong-armed men and one genuine canine type dog that snarled and growled and bit deeply into the calf of his leg. Michael must rely on Dog, who at last began slinging bodies about the streetway like used confetti fluttering at Macy's Christmas day parade. One beefy detective—for that's what they were—Private Eyes—went flying through glass that had recently advertised Chinese and Jewish foods together.

Another detective flew, sprawling before a yellow taxicab that skittered with sudden screeches stopped by the curbstone.

A third was slowly rising up from scraped knees when, in a crouch, he lunged low to tackle Dog and the real dog together, causing the German Shepherd to snap and tear deeper into Dog's flesh.

Dog was terrific, but no match for foive determined and brave men. So between Michael's frantic, uncontrolled pummeling and Dog's wild, superhuman energy, they managed to shake loose, except for the real dog's snarling and growling as it chased them helter skelter down the darkening street.

"Here!" Michael shouted, and Whoof! They were saved by a quick revolving door.

Whatever happened to Carlin Nelson is not known to this day.

XIX

Dog kept rubbing his leg where the bandages had covered the German Shepherd's deep bites. Meanwhile Michael paced back and forth in the small hideaway shack, now and then stopping to kick at the woodbox next to the stove, or at the makeshift table that slanted so that utensils wanted to slide down one end; or he whacked away at the loose planks that let as much wind come through as wanted to. "Organized, they are," he kept mumbling, but still loud enough to ooze from the shanty's thin slats. His brow was knit into deep lines, and his hands and fingers were red from where he'd beat them into one another. "Organized, they are!" Again he kicked and slapped, with feet and hands.

Taking a six-pack from a brown paperbag near his elbow, Dog broke out one can, popped it, and swallowed with huge gulping motions, returning to rub his leg with his hand when freed.

Michael said, "Organized, they are!" as he kicked at a can on the floor.

At last a gleam of Irish brilliance came to Michael's eye and mind. "Now why didn't I think of that before?"

Dog was trying hard to remember the *Sesame Street* character who lived in the garbage can: Oscar? Groucho? Oscar the Grouch?

"Sure, Dog, and why shouldn't we do it, too? Why not organize?" With the enunciation Michael's eyes widened and glowed and he began a dance that was his New-York-bred interpretation of an Irish Jig, though more likely a cross between old time square dancing and modern free-form.

When he tired of the tuneless stomping, he stopped to twist his head in a certain way that made him feel clever, and he squinted his eyes to make thought come easier. "There's this fellow, a real gentleman, an Irishman t' boot, that'll join with us. Patrick Kavanagh. Knows all about the Little People—who they are—what they do—he does."

Then the whole beautiful plan flowered full into Michael's mind, and Michael Coffey sang for the first time in many a day, rendering with: "Tiddley, tiddley or Not, I'll get them in my pot."

It was lusty singing, it was, and somehow freshening, and between him and Dog they cleaned out three six packs before the details were laid bare.

If one travels west, crossing the Hudson River by tube, bridge, or ferry, one reaches places so far from civilized society that not long ago Red men inhabited the place, and they left behind odd names, like Weehawken, Hoboken, and so on, and those newer pioneers who inhabit the places have named the whole "New Jersey".

Somewhere on Weehawken's western outskirts was the junkyard. In the very center of many elaborate



devices scattered helter skelter was the ancient, abandoned shack, their new hideaway made of packing crates and sheet metal and slats, with a tall, rusty smokepipe protruding through its roof at such an awkward angle that makeshift guywires had been attached to hold it upright. Still it wobbled and fluttered in slight breezes, sometimes making the shack itself thrum fiercely.

All about the shack were odds and ends that creaked and groaned with the wind: sheet metal, wet and sagging packing crates, old mattresses that hung from metal bars. Several ragged tires burned sulphurous, black smoke. Whenever it twisted inward by light breezes, the ugly cloud stifled noses and watered eyes. Here and there rats peered out from beneath dark, long channels that wound beneath mounds of ancient litter.

After the terrible attack on Michael Coffey and Dog they'd fled the Big City, and they'd come to these alien New Jersey shores where was found this little-used junk yard containing everything from old rusted automobile bodies to concrete rods and old stoves and tanks and bedsprings and small odds and ends that seemed as scattered and numerous as beech sand, and the whole bound by a tall fence shielding passing cars.

They'd taken to living in the shack, Dog dreaming of *Sesame Street* and television sets, Michael dreaming of sacred revenge to be brought upon the Little People now grown tall.

"They're all in it!" he'd deduced. "One cockroach knows another," and "Who can afford detectives?" he argued. "Not little David Israel, Leprechaun turned tall and Jewish!" And then just as illogically he'd dream of that big, heaping mound of gold that Leprechauns hide from true mortals, such as Irishmen and Michael Coffey, himself.

Later it was, in the mad fruition of Michael's new plan, that Michael and Dog found themselves outside the Sanitarium in New York City, the same where Michael, himself, had been incarcerated. The dark gloom of night had set in, broken by the harsh glare of artificial streetlights that seemed to dome over the fearful sky with yellowish, cavernous ceilings. Michael's fingers to lips cautioned Dog, for his big feet did seem to make more crackling noises than a normal person's.

Dog's right fist clutched at his doorknob. His eyes, big pupils and watchful, revolved slowly, and his ears cocked to listen.

"OK," whispered Michael, "This is the first gateway. Cut through with the hacksaw, but be careful. Use oil so's there's no squeeking."

That Dog did, the bar being nothing but ordinary soft iron that was designed to keep the outer iron grillwork together.

They slipped quietly between shadows cast by well-clipped hedges until they were crouching beneath a certain barred window of a certain dormitory where Dog silently sawed through until they could remove a whole square of iron bars.

"Now the glasscutter," Michael whispered.

Dog used it, and soon he was able to push one end of the glass inward so's the wire embedded in the glass could be twisted back and forth until it was worried free, leaving a hole big enough for Dog to work with other tools on the inside lock at the window's baseboard.

The lock clicked, and the window swung open. Dog and Michael both pulled upward and crawled through the dark opening where long moonlight shafts made angular figures across the floor of the quiet room which was the recreation area during daylight hours.

The floor squeaked, and Michael and Dog stopped to listen. There was only the tick-tock of an antique clock from the nurse's office, that and the hiss of steam from wall radiators.

Michael sniffed the pungent odors and wanted to vomit, shaken by his internal stresses and unhappy memories here. He waved forward and they crept off through the swinging doorway, down the hallway, passing closed doors until at last they stood before the correct one.

Michael motioned, and Dog worked again, this time taking more time to probe delicately within the



heavier lock. There was a loud “Click,” and both froze, for surely the loud sound reverberated everywhere! Nothing. Nothing but the soft sibilance of hissing steam and a faint “tick-tock.”

Michael motioned again, and they slipped inside. There he was. Patrick Kavanagh, himself, mouth opened and snoring lustily. Michael motioned again, and Dog covered Patrick’s mouth to keep the noise from surprise from coming out. Then Michael poked at Patrick’s ribs.

His eyes opened, in fright. Patrick struggled, but Dog clamped tightly. “Hush man! It’s me. Michael Coffey. We’ve come t’ free ye, at last! D’ye want out, man?”

Having been repeatedly electrocuted by the best, well-meaning attendants perhaps Patrick Kavanagh had a right to glare and to be suspicious. Then his eyes softened and his struggles ceased as the moonlight shafted downward, permitting him to recognize Michael Coffey for true.

Dog still held tightly. “Tell me quick, d’ye want out? D’ye want a chance t’ organize and fight for real people against the Little People?”

Like a wild animal caught and held unmoving, Patrick Kavanagh tried to shake his head up and down. At last Michael noticed and he beckoned for Dog to let up.

Hacked phlegm came up and Patrick spat into one corner on sitting up. “What is it, man? Say! It’s really you. Have they got you again? What is it? How did you get in me room? Where are th’ attendants?” And so on.

“Shhh! Dog and I come to take you out. Are you comin’?” Michael flung tattered clothing at the man.

Patrick indaid wanted out, and he grabbed at the clothing with a frightful speed, and soon they worked themselves backward, and in less time than it takes to describe, they were dropping to the soft, green turf, and already Patrick’s eyes jiggled at the gloriuous sights of freedom, though mostly it was merely the streetlights shining through the hedges and iron bars at the gateway.

XX

Inside the wind-shaken, leaky shack was a space no larger than a hotel room where was gathered a semicircle of trusted acquaintances and friends. Here was Big Joe Crabbe, a dwarf whose body proportions were outre’ when compared to the size of his attractive head. “He’s safe,” Michael had explained when Patrick Kavanagh started to object, “because if he were one of the Little People, they’d’ve made him big and disguised him like an executive.”

At Joe’s right was Jean Dee, an aging woman who habituated junk yards or back alleys to collect free valuables. She wore baggy pants summer and winter. Kids called her “Madame Whee Hee Dee,” and sometimes she chased them, which was probably why kids called her names.

Patrick certified her. “She was like me very own mother,” Patrick explained. “When there was nothing but old, empty railway boxcars to house us, Jean Dee kept us going, she did.”

Beside little Big Joe Crabbe’s left hand was Phoenicus, an exceptionally slender and tall man with large, protruding eyes. He and Big Joe had worked carnivals together for twelve years, and before that they’d been with the *Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus* for three years. Earlier than that, their parents had been circus folks, both having died in the July 6, 1944 Hartford, Connecticut blaze, when the crowd stampeded, killing one hundred and sixty-eight and injuring four hundred and eighty-seven. Since both were youngsters at the time, JoJo, the fire-eater, had raised them as if they had been his own.

Had all been well with circuses and carnivals, little Big Joe Crabbe and Phoenicus would have been in Florida for winter training. Sad times had fallen upon the circus, and there was little place for more than a given number of dwarves to pile in and out of small automobiles, or to whack about the bigger clowns.

Likewise, there were only so many “slenderest” people in the world, and there were some who thought Phoenicus wanted too much salary to actually represent “the slenderest”.

Jean Dee smoked constantly. Some said it was pot, but others shrugged, unbelieving, reminding that she picked up most anything burnable. She’d go behind buildings collecting rainwater “for washing hair,” and she’d pick up copper wire here and there, or aluminum plate and cans, or bottles or cardboard, or, in



fact, anything that was loose and not attached to an ownership sign — and sometimes even the sign itself.

Her age was closer to fifty-five than the forty-two she claimed, although her agility was respectable. She had an uncanny ability to determine if anyone was about, so that it was impossible to state with any certainty whether or not Jean Dee had taken a certain item or not, she being one look ahead of others, so to speak.

As a matter of fact, and gladness that warmed Michael Coffey's Hibernian heart, they were all quite adept in their ways. He told them so, explaining attributes of each to all, ending with, "Patrick Kavanagh has seen their inner workings, he has. He can name every corporation and company incorporation and limited that is owned lock, stock, and gun barrel by the Little People. I'm proud to be associated with such a foine group of defenders of the great American freedoms of our U, S and A. Naiver has such a tiny group gathered to defend so much against so many."

As Michael's golden tongue and bright eyes wandered from face to face, Jean Dee squinted and puffed, holding her stained cigarette like she was about to shoot marbles. She edged her box closer to Phoenicus, who's face twisted at the end of a slinky neck that reminded of a swan or giraffe. Sunlit shafts opaqued and cleared with each of Dee's big puffs. An old, yellowed calendar advertising the Weehawken National Bank, fluttered from an occasional breeze through slats at the back. Dust puffed about in random swirls.

Behind Michael was a wobbly mattress spring with a flat plywood board atop, and on the board, dirty blankets. On these the quiet Dog lay on his back, and he also tore at a plain, brown wrapper, producing a background noise that made the volume of Michael's voice unconsciously heighten. The scent of dampness -- molds and rot -- lay heavy. Patrick Kavanagh watched Michael's lips, his eyes moving with Michael's head and grand speech.

Little Big Joe Crabbe looked to Phoenicus, who stretched and blinked, and then Big Joe asked: "How does Patrick Kavanagh know such things? How does he know that Little People took over the corporations?"

Patrick's answer was momentarily interrupted by Dog, who'd finally unwrapped the Irish Whisky. "Glory be! Two liters," Patrick explicated, eyes big and round.

Well, they had to pass the bottle all about before Patrick got back to answer the diminutive Big Joe. Then Patrick said, "I've seen their meetings, all secret and hushed. It was them, alright."

Michael took a second big swig, passing the bottle to Jean Dee. He asked that Patrick explain in detail, which Patrick did, even naming the corporations by title who was party to the U, S and A and indaid, the international deception.

"Aye, it's all true! All true!" Michael added, while the others made the bottle go around.

Michael began to notice something peculiar about little Big Joe Crabbe's behavior. They were talking and drinking from the first bottle, and getting along famously, making all sorts of plans, and every so often either Patrick or Michael, himself, explained about hormonal shots, and how the drugs worked.

Little Big Joe seemed to scrunch down, as though he'd been swatted with a hard paper roll.

Now why does he do that? asked Michael of himself, but never answering himself, either.

The bottle was nearly empty, Phoenicus having taken the last swallow and rising amidst a cloud of dust to hand it back to Dog, whose junky bed springs squeaked each time he moved.

Little Big Joe tapped hands up and down on his crate making thumping noises that mingled with the creaks and excited plans. he said: "How can they make an Irish Leprechaun Jewish? Or Negro? Or Swedish? Or Italian? Or anything else for that matter?"

"A reasonable question," Michael nodded to Patrick.

Madame Jean Dee asked for "More beer!" which seemed a non-sequiter.

Dog got the second Irish Whisky opened, took a big swig and passed it on to Phoenicus, who had gotten up and started a slow, halting two-step dance. Boards groaned and vibrated, and the whole shack



began to bounce and shake with a thunderous resonance.

“Isn’t that reasonable?” Michael asked Kavanagh again.

“Aye, and that it is. Big Joe Crabbe is a very, very reasonable man. He may be little and mis-shapen, but we don’t hold that against him, do we Michael?”

“So how is it possible,” Big Joe asked, his brows furrowed and his mein stiff and serious.

“If I can’t get more beer in this joint, I’m going home!” Jean Dee said louder, also puffing thick clouds in every direction, so that an outsider might have thought the damper had been closed and fire burned inside the shack’s small wooden stove.

“Why don’t you answer our new partner,” Michael told Patrick, friendly and close. “He deserves an answer, he does. Don’t you think he deserves an answer?”

“Aye.” Patrick waited impatiently on the bottle again.

Big Joe Crabbe stamped his right foot.

“Beer. More beer. Or even whisky!” Jean Dee shouted loud enough now so that everyone else had to shout louder to be heard, even as Phoenicus stomped louder, too.

“Aye. That’s their very cleverness,” said Patrick, wiping his lips and turning toward the angry man. “Am’t you heard of plastic surgery? If they can make little folks tall, why not hormonal shots, surgery and chemicals and such things to color the skin, change bone structure, coarsen hair and the like?”

The bottle passed more swiftly, its level dropping rapidly.

“Beer! Beer! Or even whisky! The more we beer the more we leer!” sang Madame Dee, swinging her arms wildly this way and that. Michael noted the hands were reaching closer to Phoenicus.

Little Big Joe, having received attention, and a proper, civil answer, relaxed and even smiled after his next swig. “Between Phoenicus and me, we’ve seen most queer things. There was Harvey the Rubber man. He could stretch arms and legs about his torso until he looked like a round ball. Hee! Hee! Tomus, the Iron Strongman tried to bounce him once! Hee! Hee!

“Then there was Gretta, the half man, half woman. . . .”

Phoenicus’ shirt was being opened by Madame Dee who still sang lustily for “Near, Beer, here! Or even whisky!” and inside Phoenicus’ shirt was a second shirt which contained a small mouth harp in its pocket. Ignoring Madame Dee, Phoenicus halted his bouncing long enough to fish out the harmonica and began blowing loudly, playing *The Star Spangled Banner*.

“She showed all behind the adult tent late at night, and got drunk on ordinary milk,” Big Joe was saying. “Then there was Bilk, the Sword Swallower. You know he actually ate glass and tacks and small nails? Swallowed a sword as long as his throat, neck and torso?”

Dog unwrapped another package, which contained another six pack. He threw one can to Madame Dee, who caught it and looked at it strangely, with head cocked to one side, as though she wondered what she’d suddenly gotten into her two hands.

“N’Gumba — real name Jim Johnson — was the Alligator Man. Hee! Hee! Usta’ make his skin scabrous and dungy with vegetable die and flour paste. Then there was Popeye. Took out his teeth and made his face look just like the real Popeye, and. . . .”

Phoenicus struggled away from Jean Dee’s roaming fingers, and her voice that continued to sing “Beer! Beer! My dear! Come here!”

After the next gulping swallow, Big Joe mellowed, taking from his pants pocket a jaw harp, “Once called a Jew’s harp, but now renamed on ‘count of integrational problems,” he explained, and then began wanging away at the harp, keeping up with Phoenicus’ *Blue Tailed Fly* played lively on the harmonica.

“It’s proof ye be wantin’?” Michael wavered before Patrick, neither hardly sensing the other. “Well, that gets us to capturing one of ‘em. Now I’m the expert, I says. Anyone challenge that?”

Madame Jean Dee had gotten Phoenicus’ second shirt unbuttoned, only to find a third. Besides, he was thumping and moving about so’s she could hardly keep up with him.



Patrick stared steadily at Michael, listening attentively to each burp and golden utterance.

Wiping his eye with his handkerchief, as though to shed a tear, Michael continued with, "Aye. Close we was. Just that close!" He held up thumb and forefinger, no more than a hair-sight apart. He laughed and bounced up and down on his own crate, making the shack vibrate more. "There he was, hands clutched at bars and wires and begging to be let go. Am't that so, Dog?"

Snoring and turning over during the nap, Dog caused those irritating bedspring squeeks again.

"Oh if I could only have seen the sight!" Patrick gloried. "Simply marvelous!"

"In warfare, where is the enemy struck?" Michael asked.

Phoenicus and Big Joe were playing another lively tune, though not so easily identifiable, and now both scurried around and about one another, each in turn dodging a most persistent Madame Jean Dee.

"Where they is least expected, is where!" Michael proclaimed grandly, sucking at the last of the bottle's fluids.

Patrick nodded eagerly, and he grinned.

"Where is they least expected?"

Michael puffed out his chest, taking a big breath. "They least expect us at the top. Why pick on Little David Israel when we have the whole wide world's corporation executives to select from?"

Dog got wakened from all the floor thumping and other noises and he blinked, sat up, and he also began stomping his feet to the lively rhythm. The shack was really shaking.

"We have to go where the Leprechaun is, not where he am't," Michael shrewdly deduced.

Well, the matter was settled, so Patrick and Michael together formed a pact, holding their hands over the empty whisky bottle in the age-old Irish sigil, but actually it looked more like they was selecting who was to bat first.

After that was settled, Michael got up, and raised Patrick up, too, each leaning on the other. "We'll sing," he announced, both of them ignoring the other ruckus surrounding them. "It's a little tune me own grandfather taught. Now listen." And so Michael began teaching Tiddley, Tiddley or Not, making up additional rhymes as they sang along:

Tiddley, tiddly or not!
We'll get the corporate pot,
Executive sighs,
We'll hear by and by,
Right near this very spot.
And,
Tiddley, tiddly or not!
The men and their hormonal shots,
We'll tie their tail,
In this very jail,
And go after the golden pot!

Well, the dancing and shaking and pounding and singing must have become too much for the old junkyard shack, and it suddenly splintered, tumbling apart at every seam, as though a bomb had gone off inside, making the walls explode outward, and the ceiling tumbled downward, after which they all slept peacefully and comfortably, amidst the debris, they were that tired from their careful, clever strategizing and planning.

XXI

Just when Michael had all his plans made, and their strategy set, and he was organized against the bigger corporations, so's they could capture an executive Leprechaun grown tall, everything seemed to fall apart again.

First Madame Jean Dee disappeared. She was supposed to find a safe place to cage the captured



executive, and she and Phoenixus together were supposed to build a tight cage until the tall captive corporation executive, deprived of monthly shots, shrunk small.

The cage was also supposed to accommodate the Leprechaun's new smaller size, too.

Little Big Joe Crabbe disappeared about the same time. He was supposed to come up with a van that could be used for the capture. They'd already mapped out their route, taking the George Washington Bridge as probably the safest and most patriotic one, except that Patrick also felt the Lincoln Tunnel was equally patriotic.

That left Dog, Michael and Patrick to do the whole thing.

Now they were cruising about in a foine, long, black hearse that Dog had acquired somewhere near Jersey City, also with newly lifted license plates. Patrick was speaking, after sighing heavily, saying: "I dunno, Michael. You and I, we've patriotism, and the kind of old-country stick-to-it-ness required for such a job. Your little friend, Big Joe, and Phoenixus always did strike me as being sort of strange and foreign. Foreigners got to be watched."

"Well, what of Madame Jean Dee?" Michael rebutted. "It was you that vouched for her. Anyone that smokes so much and chases strange, foreign men like Phoenixus and little Big Joe Crabbe can't be all patriotic neither."

Patrick sighed hugely again. "I suppose we're both right, Michael. You and I should make a pact, we should. Naiver to rest, nor to leave one another until we've brought the Leprechauns down, or at least have hold of the pot o' gold."

That sounded reasonable and foine with Michael, so as Dog drove about, cruising this wealthy neighborhood in upstate New York, where lay golf courses large enough to raise a thousand head of cattle, and a clubhouse and other structures big enough to house them, they reviewed makeshift plans.

Patting Dog on his right shoulder next to him, Michael turned back to Patrick, who was seated on a small bench behind. He said: "We can get along without those who don't believe, and have so little knowledge of the real world and faith in us. With Dog, here, we'll make out just foine. Dog knows Manhattan like the inside of a wine bottle, and he's already spotted a tenement house that's vacant and burned and so won't be bothered for years."

Patrick was about to respond with his brand of empathetic sympathy and mixed bravado when Dog slowed the hearse, also pointing. There, just a half block distant, was the car they'd come to see, a big, black one, with darkened windows that hid whoever was inside, except for the chauffeur. This car came from between wide hedgerows, trimmed and green, that opened into iron-scrolled gates where a small brown cubicle housed a uniformed private guard. The guard-house controlled access and ingress to an enormous estate. Clean, branching trees could easily be viewed from the city streets. The egressing car swung about toward them, and slowly, ponderously, but easily, moved outward and onto the public streets.

They followed discreetly, and shortly afterward Michael, having decided that the glitter of gold was stronger than his fear of re-capture, shouted loudly in Dog's ear, "Now!"

Dog quickly passed the slow-moving limousine, swung around it quickly, and squealed tires to place their hearse across the roadway, blocking and stopping the other big car from its front.

All three scrambled outward, Dog leading, then Michael, with Patrick trailing the other two.

Before the limousine's startled chauffeur and passenger could respond, Dog had the chauffeur's door opened and the man was dragged out, slamming him hard against the limo's shiny hood and knocked unconscious by use of his ever-handy doorknob.

Meanwhile Michael, having reached the rear, right door, opened it, and strongly clutched the man inside, pulling him out and shoving him over to Patrick. Between the two of them they hustled the shocked, well-dressed gentleman into their hearse, where they at once bound him tightly and stretched him along the floor.

By then Dog had come up with another occupant who had crouched low behind the front seat on the



floor. This one was squirming mightily in Dog's stern grip and hollaring loudly to be left alone, and shouting, "You'll rue the day! Kidnaping is a federal offense!" and other like exclamations of no importance whatsoever.

Michael stuck his concerned head out. "Glory be! And if it am't David Israel himself."

It was true! They'd gone after high executive Leprechauns and accidentally came out with little David Israel, too! While Irishmen do not always have good luck, this catch was surely the luck of the Irish, indaid!

Well, together they turned about and scooted, following their grand plan over the patriotic George Washington Bridge and then to the Stuyvesen Apartments, but timed themselves not to arrive before nightfall, when the limousine-hearse would not be so easily noticed.

Wheezing from the terrible climb upward, Michael inspected the burned-out rooms which was up on the tenth floor. There were no loose objects left inside for prying, so they untied the two captives, shoved them inward and nailed slats across doors, having first nailed shut the single window.

Shadows wobbled across the far wall as Michael shined a three-cell flashlight up and down the eldest. He was dressed in nicely tailored clothing reminding Michael of I, B and M executives, which seemed to be his stereotype for any dress suits with shirt and tie, so far as Michael's mind could encompass. The captive was a large, pudgy personage, perhaps a man who'd lived softly, with easy comforts.

David Israel, rubbed his wrists and gritted his teeth even while talking, saying, "Michael Coffey, you're not ony daft, a crazy Irishman, you're dangerous to all mankind and the community, too."

It was a kind of Irish bull, and even though from a Jewish Leprechaun, was sure to make sense to the daft Coffey.

"This is that Michael Coffey who holds us?" the other strongly timbred voice said in a voice tinged with surprise.

Michael probed the flashlight beam from one to the other. "Well, now, Your Honor. We caught you fair and square. And which of the Little People be you?"

Wind whistled through the building, making images seem to dance through gloomy rooms — or at least inside fearful minds. Michael heard a snort which must be one of derision. It was the older man, who said, "Little People? This man belongs in a sanitarium again."

That set it off for Michael, as he could smell the chlorine and iodine spread with wild abandon on every floorway with the cleaning and scrubbing fluids, and the very stench made his stomach heave. Also the regimentation, loss of freedom, absurdities of those terrible, terrible companions. Red-faced, angered, he answered: "Am't ghosts speaking?"

"Ah, Michael Coffey. You, of all people. Ghosts indeed!" David Israel was almost crying again.

John Sebastian had not acquired his position as head of General Motors without demonstrating staunch resiliency. Now that the shock was gone, and the long, wearing trip was over, being prodded up the rubbled stairwell by sharp fingers as well, and now that his wrists and ankles had regained circulation, his fire and determination returned. "This is kidnapping, you know. The FBI will find you and you'll be imprisoned for life."

"For kidnapping the Little People?"

"He's thinking we're Leprechauns, John," said David, twirling his hand in a circle at his head, and speaking as kindly as gritting teeth permitted.

"John is it? That wouldn't be John Sebastian? The very same who is grand president and leader of the band at General Motors?"

Patrick Kavanaugh, if the truth be known, was somewhat awed by their secret undertaking even now that it had been successfully pulled off, and he was perhaps a wee bit worried over such laws as the F, B and I cared to inflict on them, if caught. He clapped his hands at his thighs. "Glory be! It is John Sebastian, indaid, and the same we set out to capture."



“Aye,” Michael glowed, though none could tell it in the dark. “And Little David Israel as an extra prize and reward.”

To be sure, Patrick took the light from Michael’s hand, flashing it on David and squinting carefully into the latter’s eyes. “Aye. He’s Jewish.”

Trying reason, Sebastian asked, “Haven’t you bothered Mr. Israel enough? He’s ready to come apart at the seams? What is it you want, Mr. Coffey. Why not sit down and discuss matters like gentlemen?”

“Now it’s `gentlemen’, is it? And what of my insanity? What of my painful trip to the sanitarium?”

“What would you do if men kidnapped you from your automobile, or apartment house? What would you do if men broke into your home, and stole thousands of dollars, and then claimed your victim was a mythical Leprechaun? Think, Michael Coffey! Think! Is the story reasonable? Is the action normal?”

It was a telling point, which Michael reflected on. His mind scurried about, fumbling and tripping in an honest effort to feel Sebastian’s thoughts. In the darkness gleamed the yellow hand-held light, steady and strong, compelling Michael’s fluttering thoughts as a candle flame to a moth. He sighed. “Aye, there’s something in that, alright. Let’s reason, Mr. John Sebastian, and General Motors Head. What of our reward?”

“They want a pot o’ gold,” David’s tortured lips explained. He wanted to scream out, but contained himself bravely for the time being.

“Pot o’ gold?”

Michael handed Patrick the flashlight, bidding him to shine it toward the captives. Searching, through a seedy and baggy pocket he found a long, well-wrapped cigar, which he handed to the apparently composed Sebastian. Michael lighted one of his own, blowing thick clouds toward the slats barring the two captives.

Sebastian gracefully accepted the cigar, unwrapped it, carelessly crumpled the wrapper and dropped it to the floor. He snipped one end of the cigar with a small, golden clipper hanging from a golden chain at his vest. He inhaled deeply after lighting the cigar, and blew smoke toward Michael, saying, “Michael Coffey, you’re a nuisance, as I’ve said before. My wife’s nephew, David here, and I want to get you off this thing, this conviction that he’s really an Irish Leprechaun. That’s absurd, you know. A fantasy.”

Michael’s glower could not be seen for the dark.

Patrick pushed at Michael’s shoulder and seemed to growl.

“You’re not very well off financially, are you, Michael Coffey? Not a great deal of money or income?” said Sebastian.

“Aye.”

“Had a nice room at a swank hotel, one that you and Dog saved from fierce conflagration.”

Now Michael placed the figure and voice. Sure, and he’d taken their bags, while hoppin’ the bell, too.

“I was there, my wife and I. We might have died in that fearful blaze were it not for yours and Dog’s quick actions. We’re grateful, Michael.” Sebastian pushed up to the wooden slats, leaning against them heavily. “We’re extremely grateful. We’ll fix things so that you never again must work. Why, we’ll give you enough stocks and bonds in some of the finest, biggest industries so that all you’ll have to do is clip coupons now and then, and you’ll live in grand style.”

There it was, the very first offer!

Michael had heard of the Little Folk’s tricks, like sending an honest Irishman after the pot o’ gold at the end of the rainbow, tellin’ him if he went all the way to the end, he’d get his gold. Catch was that rainbows have no endings. From up high, in an airplane, one can see rainbows are circular, without ending. No one could ever get to their end. Such Leprechauns were lying and tricky, not to be trusted. John Sebastian, like David Israel, was Leprechaun, an executive at the great General Motors that believed that what was good for General Motors was good for the U, S and A, and therefore, it followed, that John Sebastian was tricky, not to be trusted. In Michael’s mind could still be heard Rusty Delevicchio explaining



away about “greenies,” and if U.S. and A dollars worthless, then what of the even more poorly understood abstract stocks and bonds?

“I’ll not fall for any o’ your fancy tricks,” Michael said, at last. “It’s the gold or nothing.”

XXII

Now came another of those coincidental events that so control and shape the course of Irishmen everywhere, and in particular Michael Coffey’s life, and Dog’s, too.

Michael was determined to wait out the thirty days required for the shrinking of Sebastian and David Israel. Ten days had passed. No one had discovered their foine hideout in the burned out Stuyvesant Apartments, although from time to time Dog had to scrounge up another vehicle, as neighborhood tyrants tore up first one stolen vehicle and then another.

“It’s a tough neighborhood,” Patrick Kavanagh would explain as they munched peanut butter sandwiches, or something Kosher that Michael would bring “out of respect for David’s religion.”

Michael and Patrick together were sitting on makeshift stools made from surrounding rubble, the wind blowing through the window boards in moderate gusts. They’d squeezed blankets into John Sebastian and David Israel, who, by now, could find little else to plead.

Michael was describing as how he’d buy himself a grand home with a saloon bar that had all sorts of drinks and mixes and in particular an automatic organ for distributing Irish whisky. “It’s the fancy liquor organ I’ll be wantin’,” he explained with hands and arms to imitate how the whisky flowed from hose and spout when one presses an ornate handle.

“Aye, and that’s grand enough,” answered Patrick Kavanagh. “I’ll just dig me a hole to hide in, and count the yellow-gleaming stuff from time to time, letting it run softly through me fingers until the yellow starts to wear.”

And so it went, day by day, night by night, when the gloom began again, settling like banshees at midnight over a cursed graveyard.

Dog’s turn to watch the prisoners had come. He was to guard while Michael and Patrick performed certain unnamed important duties, but it was also his regular period, shifts having been devised some days earlier.

Dog had little to entertain him, except the hard, brass doorknob inside his coat pocket, which he kept squeezin’ and pushin’ on. He got up and shuffled about, kicking boards and bricks with hard-toed shoes. On one wall was graffiti that said, “Only God knows the answer so ask me the questions.”

He stared at that for a long while, never quite figuring out who he was to ask. *Where is God?* he wondered. And, *Did God really write that?*

Just below was the saying, “Warning! Your local police are armed and dangerous!”

Well, he already knew that. Didn’t everyone? So he passed on, reading, “If you are sunny or not, I love you. Even if I hurt you, I have many, many hang-ups and they cause hate. And they cause love.”

That was too complex. It made his head swim.

The next wall said, “God is a 6,000 foot tall red jellybean!”

Well, there! He knew that wasn’t so! There wasn’t any such size jellybean. He squeezed at his doorknob for comfort.

A third wall had inscribed, “How come nobody’s written on this wall yet?”

Why was it every time he got things figured out, confusion set in again? He shook his head and let his mind blank out, and he moved on.

There was also, “Death will stunt your growth!” He stared at that one but just when he thought he had it figured right, well — something was wrong with it!

“END DISCRIMINATION. HATE EVERYBODY!” Dog understood that one. It was like belonging to a gang, and not caring whether or not the guy in the other gang was white or black or yellow, you overpowered or hit him.



“The Government is expanding to meet the needs of an expanding Government.” A blank.

“Get a new car for your wife, if anyone will swap.” More blankness.

“IS THERE LIFE AFTER BIRTH?” *Well, of course there was. Everyone knew that people who were born as babies grew up.*

“CANCER CURES SMOKING.” *Why?* He didn't understand.

“GET FIRED AND NOBODY WILL CALL YOU A QUITTER.” Dog was fired several times and nobody ever called him a quitter. So why brag about it?

“join the war again violence I hate bigots crime wouldn't pay if'n the gov'ment ran it.” Too many words, too complex.

“Improve our prisons. Send a better class of people there.” Dog could agree with this one. He'd like a classier bunch in the hoosegow next time he was in. Maybe less fighting.

“Blow your mind. Smoke gunpowder.” Dog didn't smoke anything, so the irony was lost on him.

“John loves Mary. Too bad he's married to Anne,” and so on.

Mixed among those terribly confusing statements were signatures and hearts and words considered foul and dirty.

Each scribbled graffiti created consternation, confusion, or total agreement within Dog's thoughts. Furthermore, they didn't really keep his mind busy, as did *Sesame Street*. Dog couldn't hardly think after a few hours of reading the same things over and over, and not quite understanding most of it. He couldn't pace farther, either, nor sit. It seemed that his mind wanted to see something and his body wanted to do something, both with compulsions of their own.

Then he thought of television, and *Sesame Street*, his heart leaping. Still, Dog wasn't about to leave to find a set. Hadn't Michael cautioned him? Hadn't Michael reminded him repeatedly how David Israel got away last time?

No! He clenched his big fist about the cool doorknob and endured, one time reading poorly understood graffiti, another time, just pacing or sitting restlessly.

The long horrible day and then that night finally ended, and Michael and Patrick were back again, to take their turn as Leprechaun guards.

Dog, relieved and joyful at last, ran and jumped down the ten flights, through rubble and around fallen timber and old couches and torn, sodden mattresses. He knew where there was a television set for the picking up and carrying, so to speak, and he was going to bring it back with him, never thinking far enough ahead to realize that their new hide out was a burned-out building which had no electricity and that, unless portable, with batteries, television usually required working electrical outlets.

That's how it was they so easily caught Dog, down in the dark basement hideaway at that old hangout on Broadway and One hundred and Fourteenth. They were waiting for him, and all of Dog's wit and brawn together availed him naught, though struggle against four men he did.

He wouldn't talk, of course. They could threaten or beat him, for that matter, but he'd say nothing. As a matter of interest, but a point which escaped Dog, he wasn't being held by the F, B and I, nor the State Police, nor the New York City Police Department, although some interrogators, such as Lieutenant Buffalo, were from that force.

His captor, John Buffalo, was really Algonquin, not Sioux, as he often told people. His ancestors had fought in the French and Indian wars started after the French occupied an unfinished British post called Fort Duquesne in 1754, said Fort now called Pittsburgh. When Colonel George Washington with Virginia troops clashed with the French at Great Meadows, John Buffalo's great-great-great father was Washington's scout. Washington and John's ancestor together had driven the French from Fort Necessity on July 3, 1754. When General William Braddock's expedition was ambushed by the French and Indians ten miles from Fort Duquesne — now called Braddock, Pennsylvania — July 9, Washington helped their retreat. Buffalo's ancestor had died during the retreat, of smallpox and some other unknown disease that had



started out with similar pox marks on the face.

So whenever John Buffalo bragged about his great-great-great grandfather being killed in old Fort Duquesne, people often scratched their heads, wondering whether he meant Pittsburgh or Braddock.

“Well, it’s sure we can’t break down this ape,” Buffalo had finally concluded.

“What do you suggest?” asked a harsh voice beyond Dog’s vision.

“Wait, ‘till they contact us. Probably by messenger or phone or — who knows — through public news media. They sound crazy enough. We’ll start it, through newspapers and television. Pose a message they’ll understand.”

So that’s what they did, waited, and before long Michael and Patrick were shivering something awful. Patrick Kavanagh having known Dog the least kept saying, “He won’t talk? You’re sure? You’re that sure? You’re that sure, now?”

“Why I’ve known him through thick and thin and sometimes even better since boyhood. Dog won’t say one word, or even two.”

Patrick was dubious and continued his worrisome chatter which John Sebastian overheard. Sebastian pushed his nose and fingers through the nailed-up boards, clutching at both of them. “They’ve got you now, Michael Coffey. I’m the only one who can save you!”

Cocking his head sideways, to think, Michael brazenly asked, “Are you now? What d’ye think you can do? All penned and caged, with only five days before the shots due ye’? When you’re Little Folk again, we’ll have our proof, and no need to fear authorities, sez I.”

“There’s much in what you say, Mr. Coffey,” John Sebastian said in forced conciliation, “Here. Hand me another of those grand cigars. I’d like to smoke on it, and maybe come up with a way to save your Dog.”

“Save Dog?” Michael pushed another of the over-sized, expensive and stolen cigars through the makeshift bars.

Sebastian took his deliberative and sweet time, casually blowing smoke into big, thick circles. “Do you think they’ll just give him a nice, warm room with television and all?”

Michael hadn’t thought about it. In the sanitarium Dog would’ve been exposed to great restraints, lacking civilized features — such as television, good whisky, beer or wine — Dog was likely to become garrulous, ungentle, which would bring about straps and maybe that electric shock told of by Patrick Kavanagh that deliberately destroyed the mind, and sometimes the body, too. Michael just hadn’t thought it through, nor had he begun to think at all seriously on the matter of Dog’s disappearance. There was still the vision of that large glorious pot o’ gold looming just over the horizon of tomorrow, or another day!

“I can see you’re thinking deeply,” Sebastian urged, not unkindly. “Perhaps I have a partial solution.”

“Listen to the man,” urged Patrick, even as David Israel, cheeks pale and shrunken, came to the slats to lean and listen.

Irritated, Michael growled, “Am’t I listening?”

Sebastian waited, permitting the quiet to do the convincing.

“Well, talk, man! How do we save Dog? If indaid he needs any savin’ a’tall?”

Sebastian puffed out another thick ring. “Trade.”

“Trade?”

“Trade one of us for Dog.”

Michael’s lack of understanding spontaneously cleared and he hopped about gleefully. Already he’d sensed the opening he needed to begin a dialogue which was bound to end with that golden pot in his arms and hands, so to speak. When he returned to the slats, he asked more soberly, “How?”

“Wait, just a moment!” cautioned Patrick. “We release one o’ them, and Wham! They’ve got us and Dog.”

“That be true,” Michael nodded. “That be true indaid!”

So Michael, pacing back and forth, scuffling through the rubble, thought hard during the next several



hours, now and then being interrupted by a fearful but well-reasoned interjection from President John Sebastian, and a groan of misery from David Israel. At last Michael faced the caged ones. "There comes a time in the affairs of men when they must take the bull by the tail and face the situation," he said, "We'll do it."

David stopped groaning and began to hold his breath. Sebastian smiled. Michael asked, "Which one'll it be, Patrick?"

Patrick Kavanagh, truth to tell, couldn't decide to shiver or to feel joyful, and while he was making up his mind, and also trying to decide the proper answer to Michael's sudden query, David shouted out with: "Me. Take me. I've been caged most often, and my nerves are shot."

Sebastian was smooth, you had to give him that. He blew cigar smoke into shafts of light from a yellowing afternoon sun. "I think it only right to take David Israel, too. When you go, David, can you control authorities enough to get them to release Dog? Do you have the stomach for it? Will you command and direct the organization?"

David's gloom deepened until it matched that found by most men in the darkest woodlands described in frightening fairy tales. He sagged until his bottom matched the floor again, arms and neck loose and disjointed. He knew Sebastian had to be the one, you see.

And, as far as Michael was concerned, there was only one of the two he was absolutely sure, without any question whatsoever, was a Leprechaun grown tall, and that was Jewish David Israel. It's true he'd gone after one of the big ones, one of those who's smallest words crackled and men listened and obeyed. But David -- David Israel -- David of the pub, the very man whose hidden tokens were the green shamrock and pot o' gold -- Aye. That's true, he nodded, mostly to his own thinking. And what John Sebastian implied was true, indaid. Only an executive of a great corporation can wield the power that will free Dog immediately and also get us our gold. "Tut! Tut! Am't David Israel John Sebastian's wife's nephew?" he said at last. "And you know how close are great executives with their kith and kin."

XXIII

Manhattan Island is riddled below with long, hollow tubes, carrying streaking monsters that rumble and grumble day and night, screeching, clattering, hissing. There are two kinds of beneath-pavement monsters. The first and biggest are trains, baleful of glaring eye, waiting on no man or woman in their haste to migrate along hundreds of miles of tubeways. The second are humans who strive to prey upon other humans, until for safety's sake, as well as political, most every station and most every monster of the first type is inhabited by New York City policemen to protect those inside from monsters of the second type.

Knowing how things were set up cancelled some of Dog's superior knowledge about those hundreds of miles of tunnels. So Patrick and Michael talked into waning morning hours on how best to make the transfer of John Sebastian for Dog. First Patrick would caution: "They've the manpower and the organization. In a blink they can catch us out, then where will we be? Back in insanity hall, that's for sure!"

Michael would quiet down, and pace again, while John Sebastian's and David Israel's ears pushed at the separations in the slats, both breathing heavily but quietly.

Michael whispered in Patrick's ear, and they both laughed, Michael cackling raucously. Patrick's laughter was short and stuttering. They performed a spontaneous little jig, romping about each other with abandon and glee.

Their gleeful plan might have worked, if it hadn't been for the free treatments Patrick Kavanagh had received from the State of New York for having his sanity checked out and fixed up. You see, when Patrick had been taken to the asylum because of his wild claims that he'd found Little People, and that they was all executives and heads of big corporations, thereby deceiving people and controlling the country and the economy for themselves, he was given electric shock therapy.

Let me tell you something about the treatment: They jolt you with enough free electric juice so that your body muscles have no idea what your orders are, and they got so tense you have to be strapped down and



sometimes also held down. Your muscles jump and relax and tighten up again, and since all the while — or at least some of the time -- you're unconscious, you have no way of feeling the pain of the straps against your skin, and so your muscles have no way of knowing when to quit fighting the thick straps. Your arms could break, or the straps, or neither or both.

Your body follows undirected orders from jerking muscles, throbs and jerks and thumps with each electrical jolt. Sometimes your eyes glare wide open, though you remain unseeing. So that you're teeth won't bite off your tongue, a rubber plate is placed inside to protect it.

Physicians say that the nice thing about this free treatment is that it often destroys the personality and blurs the mind, causing forgetfulness of certain experiences and memories, although it may also have the distasteful side-effect of scrambling up memories, so that a memory properly belonging on one string of a time-bead is found all snarled up in a bunch along with other times and moments.

All went well for Patrick Kavanagh when he had his free treatments. His body had jerked and thumped and he'd shivered like with an ague, sometimes causing four huskys to hold him so that he didn't harm himself.

And it appeared that the treatment was eminently successful having caused Patrick to quit talking foolishness about Little People grown tall. That, of course, is how and where Patrick had fooled them. The free treatment also had got at other memories involving a warm, cuddly childhood, and foine days at school, and how well he'd done in spelling, and a host of other things, like his first little friends, and his bouncing black and white dog, Kimbo, and so on. Being undirected electrons that made muscles trigger violently, they had no way of knowing which memories needed severe exacerbation, and so those sly, undirected electrons just foolishly followed the easiest paths, like water running downhill.

The problem with Patrick's free treatment was the electric floor scrubber that happened to be working each time he got them. The floor scrubber squirted warm, soapy water over ceramic tile, and then hummed and throbbed while it scrubbed at the water, sucking the dirty fluids up in its rear.

One of the scrubber's casters squeaked, and the motor bearings whined. So as the thick fiber brushes seemed to roar, and the liquid slurped upward, the bearing whined and the caster squeaked.

All those sounds and vibrations together, along with the hub-bub of conversation that went on among the attendants kindly holding Patrick down so's the straps wouldn't break his bones, the noise of Patrick's wild, uncontrolled bouncing, humping and thumping got recorded somewhere in Patrick's body.

Any acoustical-electronic engineer who had recorded all those sounds could have flashed them on a scope and shown a clear correlation of them with the noises that flood from a normal New York subway train as it jerks about its rounds.

Of course, neither Patrick nor Michael were acoustical-electronic engineers, and, in any case, no one, including the average New Yorker — which they both were — would have noticed the cacophonous blend of vibrations, so embedded in their nature were New York subway sounds.

Their sure-fire plan was that Dog was to be freed below ground, and that he'd take a certain subway train beneath Park Avenue. It was to have no New York City policemen aboard. A signal would be placed on a pillar at just one of the five chosen stations. As the train slowed, Patrick Kavanagh would be standing by their selected one, hidden behind crowds as though trying to get on.

If Dog got free, and into those crowds, and into his natural habitat, so to speak, no number of New York's foinest would catch him again.

Once seeing that Dog was off and running, Patrick was to get back upstairs as fast as possible, and to a parking spot where Michael and John Sebastian would be, inside a stolen van. Sebastian would be released and then later the negotiations for David Israel begun in earnest.

It was a wonderful, reasonable and safe plan. "We've four more days!" Michael reminded with growing relish. "Four more glorious, nerve-tingling days, and David Israel, deprived of shots, will revert to size again."



After they'd blindfolded John Sebastian and David Israel, and moved David to a distant place, also another high floor of an abandoned, burned-out apartment, they put their bold plan into effect. Patrick went down into the dim subway corridors to wait and where he also hung the green shamrock on one of the pillars. Since it was early morning, and the crowds bulged, pushing this way and that, he struggled to stay put.

Oh, it was a safe and clever plan, it was, but Patrick Kavanagh was utterly exhausted by the time Dog's train had come along, and that fatigue, plus the terrible din that reminded his body of his former free treatments -- well, altogether, and together, everything conspired to inform his nerves and muscles faulty information, and his muscles began to believe the falsehoods and they jumped and jerked just as if he were back again in the safe and sound electric shock treatment room.

By the time Dog got off the subway train at his station, Patrick Kavanagh's eyes were open and unseeing, his body stiffening and then going lax, and stiffening again, until he'd slumped against the wall and slid downward, cycling through his forcible treatment memories repeatedly.

So Dog never saw Patrick, nor did Patrick see the four plain clothes men rushing unobtrusively behind Dog, elbowing their way with great skill.

The problem was that New Yorkers, being so very busy and important, also didn't care to notice Patrick, who lay there jerking and relaxing, eyes probing forward but unseeing, hands and legs grasping and twitching.

On a side-street near the subway entrance, seated in their newly acquired van with stolen license plates, Michael Coffey was beginning to worry, and he'd look at his watch and curse. "If something goes wrong, Mr. President John Sebastian," he'd mutter, "there's two can play the game!"

Or, "What's keeping Patrick? Do they dilly-dally with Dog?"

Or, he'd glower, never knowing nor deciding whether to run or stand his ground, and caught halfway between issuing orders to himself to do one or the other.

Meanwhile Sebastian was using the delay and distractions to worry at his ropes, although that didn't free him either. What did it was superior organization, and thousands of Sebastian's employees who poured out of subway stairwells, from tall-standing office buildings, from buses and taxis and private cars and walkways. They peered into or searched every car, every office space and janitor's closet on Park Avenue between 15th and 42nd street.

Had Michael taken up his first suggestion, and gone at once, he'd've been safe. Alas, having dallied overlong, he was caught, and Sebastian was easily found and freed.

XXIV

John Sebastian leaned his bulk back in his wide-bottomed chair, secure again with buttons to push and pleasant-faced, sleek secretaries to go for this and that and to do his other biddings. It was indeed good to be home in these swank offices all decorated with the finest murals, from the most elite artists, who got the largest prices that General Motors' could afford.

Making his prisoner sit before him and wait, as he would have done to any lesser executive, he studied charts and graphs, and turned little notebooks, squinting and grimacing and chuckling and frowning, until it would have appeared to any observer — which his prisoner was — that business was weighty upon the president.

At last he blew out one long stream of smoke, and, tilting his cigar at his prisoner, he said, "We want David Israel, you know?"

Michael, who was bound and watched from behind by two beefy men with iron stares and equally hard dispositions, seemed to peer upward, as though he'd been caught in the taffy jar.

"We got Patrick Kavanagh, but you moved David Israel."

Evidently Sebastian wanted some response, but Michael waited, only shifting his weight a bit to show how uncomfortable he was.



“Well,” says Sebastian. “Won’t you ask of your friend, Dog?”

Michael’s eyes gleamed. “What of ‘im?” Crafty, nearly smiling: “D’ye catch him, too?”

Sebastian sighed. “No. He’s big and apparently knows those tunnels better than a sewer rat. Did he take David to a new hideout?”

Michael relaxed, and even let a big, floppy grin cover his features.

“Mind you, Michael Coffey. We don’t really need Dog. He only does your bidding anyway. He’s big and dumb and he’s strong as a bulldozer, but he’d never hatch any crazy scheme like you’ve roosted over. But we must have David Israel!”

“Well, I suppose it’s the F, B and I you’ll be callin’,” Michael said with some despair in his voice.

Sebastian waited quietly, blowing the tantalizing carcinogenic smoke toward Michael.

Michael shifted again.

At last Sebastian spoke, pushing himself toward Michael. “You and Dog saved my life and that of my spouse’s and our friends. We’re grateful, Michael Coffey.”

“Aye,” said Michael, warily, carefully thinking back on how he and Dog had set the fierce conflagration in the first place.

“We can’t have you all the time running about capturing my wife’s nephew simply because you’ve got the strange idea we’re some Leprechaun society.”

Then everything came to Michael at once, and he broke down, crying out with heavy grief, “Just four days! Just four more days and I’d have had him little and beggin’ for his shots! Four days more, and the pot o’ gold. . . .”

“Stop it man!” shouted Sebastian, waving his pudgy hand to stay a guard who’d begun to bend Michael’s back. “Quit your blubbering. You want a pot o’ gold do you? A whole pot o’ gold? Suppose I give you a pot o’ gold? Will you call off the whole insane thing? Quit going about snatching at every Jew you think an Irish Leprechaun? Will you, Michael Coffey? Will that satisfy you?”

Well, Michael knew it was a trap, for he could hardly believe his ears. In his mind he’d already been placed in the sanitarium again, with Patrick Kavanagh, where they’d surely suffer most odious and outrageous tortures, not to mention the horrible disgrace of associating with psychiatrists and other crazy people. He dried up his tears that had come spontaneously by means of self-pity, and he looked upward most warily. “Ye’d do that?”

Sebastian thumped plump fingers against his smooth, shiny desk, thinking over ways to control this — this daft person — to whom a serious debt was owed. Then, “If I untie you, will you behave?”

That was good news, and so Michael nodded eagerly.

While Michael rubbed at ankles and wrists, Sebastian heaved an awkward sigh, saying “Alright. Now there’s some economic lessons you’ve just got to learn. First off, Michael Coffey, understand that no one uses gold anymore, except in the industrial production processes and in jewelry. Gold is a yellow metal that resists rust, and lies about gleaming brightly, but doesn’t attract any extra money. It costs money to set it inside vaults to save and guard it. Understand? If you have a big pot of gold, you have to find money, or give some of it up every month to pay for guarding it.”

“Gold never loses value,” Michael defended, wonderingly. “Can’t a man hide his gold in the ground, or other secret places.”

Sebastian was patient. “Someone else finds it, stumbles on it, you’ve lost it all. You can forget where it’s hidden. Whenever you want to spend a little, you have to dig it up, maybe leading people to it. And then you’ll have to find someone to buy it, with paper money, or coins of the United States Federal Government, and each time you make the transaction, they’ll take another little bite from your gold, making the pile shrink again.”

Michael understood and so he nodded. “Aye. There are those points. But U, S and A money is called ‘greenies’ by some, and they lose value faster. Why would a sound Irishman want something like that?”



“You can bank it, and draw interest on it. The interest you draw won't be as big as the amount lost through inflation, but overall, through your lifetime, Michael Coffey, you could have a sizeable amount put away — in gratitude, so to speak — and you'd never want again. You and Dog.”

Michael thought on it, biting into the sounds like soft-shelled walnuts. Even if they were greenies, it was sure enough an attractive offer, which he could hardly refuse. But, sighing again, he steeled himself. “No, Mr. President John Sebastian. I just couldn't take greenies. They have no more value than the U, S and A sets upon them from time to time. I'll not be havin' me money's value determined by arbitrary and fickle government whims.”

Sebastian was used to giving orders, not explaining. On the other hand, he had a difficult and delicate circumstance here, in Michael Coffey — owing him his life and wanting desperately the safe return of David Israel — and so he found some excuse to piddle about at his desk until he'd regained self control. Then he laughed congenially, saying: “You'd turn down our government's approved Federal Reserve money?”

Well, Michael Coffey was shrewd, but he was also afraid, though the foine treatment he'd given Sebastian while the tables was turned about should count for something. Still, forgetting one's debts does not pay them, he told himself, and other like sayings. “Aye! It's the gold what Leprechauns brought from Ireland that I be wantin'. All one-hundred and ninety-six thousand and two hundred cubic feet.”

“What!?”

“All one-hundred and ninety-six thousand and two hundred cubic feet.”

“Now listen here,” Sebastian's spluttering began, tinged with anger, but catching it up shortly. Then: “Suppose, just suppose I go along with your crazy story, about Leprechauns and all. That we're all Little People. Suppose I agree that we came over during the Irish potato famine in and about 1845. Suppose we did bring our pots of gold. Then what — pray tell me, Michael Coffey — just what would be done with all that gold? Bury it in the earth, like back in Ireland? Or invest it in big business?”

“Where, then, would we get the capital to begin America's great industries, if not through converting our gold into assets — supposing, mind you? And where do you think we'd get money to create research to come up with growth medicine so early in scientific history — supposing?”

Michael's thoughts, already involved, could not follow the intricate concepts, so he steadied on his goal, steeling himself further, and he blinked noncommittedly.

“If you won't take Uncle Sam's good Federal Reserve dollar bills, then we have but one other asset, and that's ownership in our corporate enterprises. If you'll accept stocks and bonds. . . .”

“Am't those paper pieces?”

“Tut! Tut! Stocks and bonds means part ownership in whole, large industries. I'm going to let you sleep on it, Michael. It's either the Federal Reserve money, or stocks and bonds that represent ownership — or nothing. If you take the money, you can go buy all the gold it'll cover based on current market prices. If you take the stocks and bonds, you can sell them, and get money, and buy the gold at current market prices. But you're stupid if you don't take the stocks and bonds, Michael Coffey. Don't you understand? We're offering you — as a reward for our lives in the fire, so to speak — and a bribe - - to get off your insane kick and the safe return of David Israel — we're offering you pieces of our industries, our businesses. “Think on it, Michael Coffey. Think on it hard.”

Well, they must have done something to his drinks and eats, or his breathing air, in that small but comfortable cell, because Michael did think seriously over the proposition, tossing and muttering throughout the whole night. On the one hand were big yellow, gleaming coins that he'd set his heart on, and on the other were little, green bills that could be printed by the millions on any old government printing press. These seemed to shrink as they came flying off the plates at him.

When he awoke, he rubbed at his eyes, and though he was still Irish, some of his natural stubbornness had gone from him for good. The air was somehow mustier. An unidentifiable odor — greenness mixed with



salt spray and damp mushrooms — twitched his nostrils. Though he flexed his muscles, he felt somehow weaker in a way he couldn't describe.

In the morning, a freshened and more composed John Sebastian again asked, "Will you take the stocks and bonds? Will you become part owner with us, Michael Coffey?"

As though his mouth had become self-willed, it said, "The gold is terribly, terribly temptin', Soir, but I'll be pleased to seriously consider stocks and bonds, Soir, and ownership of mighty Leprechaun industries, too!"

But then, what else could he say?

Sebastian seemed very pleased. "I'll call a meeting and lay everything before those involved. We'll make it a dandy presentation award. A dinner, perhaps. Now shake on it, Michael Coffey, for I know the Irish are honorable and will not break their word. Fetch David Israel to the banquet, and we will honor our agreement to you as well."

Well, Michael tried to find the catch, if any, but failing that, and also realizing that the King of the Leprechauns would surely keep his word too, being basically Irish too, he at last extended his right hand, and the pack was sealed.

XXV

The room housed hundreds. At each gold encircled plate was a four-leaf clover and a small cane whose knobby end also held encircled the lucky and green four-leaved clover.

Michael looked about, bewildered. He was seated at President Sebastian's right hand, their table overlooking all others. Waiters scurried about, placing foine salads and drinks at each plate, and carrying steaming plates from which wafted tantalizing odors. The box at his side had been specially prepared by Michael, himself, and carried to the grand luncheon almost as if it were intended to be an honorium.

He squinted to see through the thousands of twinkling lights that seemed to create a false mist before his eyes. "Glory be!" and "Saint Patrick preserve," he muttered toward Sebastian when his eyes began to make out forms and figures. "There's John O' Dancy of Irishmen's, with George McGarth, the reputed Wallstreet broker, and others, too, from Irishmen's."

It was true, they were at one table, together.

"Sweet Mother McCree! Dr. Samuel Benovsky."

Sebastian, who was busy breaking off a golden pheasant leg, did not explain that the man beside Benovsky was another physician called Dr. Amendus Dullea.

Well, Michael looked about some more, squinting and making his Irish sayings as he made out bellhop or taxi driver or doorman that he'd seen somewheres, until he began to feel that the whole, wide world was one big Leprechaun conspiracy and he the only normal and tall human of the lot. His heart leaped at the sight of Dog and Patrick Kavanagh together at one side, along with Jean Dee, Phoenicus, little Big Joe Crabbe and even Prudence Carnera, all of them, but especially Dog, digging into food piled high, as if they'd given no thought to tomorrow, or today either, for that matter, which they probably hadn't and didn't.

What was that Sebastian had mumbled? All ours? Hormonal failures?

Michael twisted a thick finger in his ear, 'cause he wasn't hearing quite right. Now that he thought on it, there was a certain persistent rumbling in the background that seemed to distort sounds just as his vision was not as clear as it might be.

They finished eating, and Sebastian called for attention, asking that they all raise glasses brought by waiters splendid in white jackets embellished with golden braids and buttons. "A toast," he grandly announced. "Drink it down. All the way. It's non-alcoholic, so those who are teetotalers need not worry."

Well, that last remark worried Michael some, but he gulped it all anyway, as did everyone else.

Something had to be amiss with the drink, for all of a sudden he felt heavier. His eyes bothered more, and the big table wanted to swim away. He fiddled at the package at his side, feeling through the cloth to wires beneath.



Hollow sounds reverberated throughout his skull, bonging and booming.

President Sebastian — who now seemed to've grown atop his head a giant golden crown, and wore a robe golden and dark purple all lined with white ermine fur — pounded with a gavel.

"I call the Great Irish Leprechaun Society to order," Sebastian seemed to bellow, his voice deep and resonant.

The room itself seemed to change, twisting and stretching. Alcoves, richly paneled rooms with sliding doors opening wide, were seen as somehow now furnished with plush chairs and lounges, and brilliantly colored tapestries. There was surrounding them easy-on-the-eyes indirect lighting and carpets were as thick as Erie's own green turf. Chairs and screens and modern decorations aligned some of the walls, which, along with bright tapestries, embellished more effectively than sooty drawings on cold, drafty caverns; and the soft, plush seats beneath them were far nicer than hard-chisled stone, where, Saints forbid! black leathery wings swished back and forth!

There was simply no decent comparison between this big, modern, comfortable habitat and the old Irish caverns described by the grandfather. None-at'all, except maybe the crystalline, tinkly laughter that seemed to bounce about as though from stalagmite to stalactite as each of the boisterous, good men filled and drank and boasted in their cups.

Michael glanced upward, his eyes following the swishing leathery wings. There was a large clock, round and all decorated with those heathen numbers brought back to Irene after Briton's defeat by Rome in A and D of fifty one. The Roman numerals said it was twelve o'clock, midnight.

"Our third emergency meeting of the Great Irish Leprechaun Society will come to order," King Sebastian seemed to say, getting immediate attention.

Was Michael's ears deceiving him? He banged his thick paw against one ear.

"It's the emergency that makes me cut out amenities. Aloysious Gary Isaacs, otherwise known as Darby Clanahan in the old Hibernian days, received a terrible call. David Israel was being forcibly restrained by this very same Michael Coffey that you see before me here at my right hand. David's monthly shots. . . ."

The original decision to leave Ireland had not created such a stir!

Fist wavings and the milling of angered bodies stirred old memories and bad blood from deep within hidden caverns, where little men pounded rocks with bare fists and dumped kegs filled with heady malts and liquors, shamefully wasting same for attention's sake.

Though he raised his hand several times, and beat the gavel solidly, Sebastian could still do no more than wait on their attention.

And what else should he do?

The noise level dropped from that of roaring jets to that of mere diesel engines. George Hays (Ryan) transportation magnate, and Henry Mallette (O'Leary), oil billionaire, shouted loudly at one another, first one fist then another waving about, as though invisible snakes were whipping at each other.

"Liar! Liar! O'Learys are liars!" bellowed George Hay.

"Only a Ryan can be spineless!" Henry would push his thin nose directly onto Hays' little pug one, though not for the scent of it all, that was sure.

"Gentlemen!" President Sebastian raised both hands high. "Are we to save others? Are we to protect ourselves, our loved ones?" It was truly masterful the way the king changed all the threshing wind-mills into a sane audience.

"How much gold is he asking?" someone asked loudly.

"One hundred and ninety-six thousand and two-hundred cubic feet."

Stunned silence, like the echo of an echo in a truly deep, wet cavern swept away the earlier remnants of vocalizations, though most had already gone with the King's regal gesture. All, that is, except maybe an O' Gill against a Ryan, or a Sullivan against an O' Leary.



The laughter started slowly in small snakey titters, then burst outward like star rockets on Hugh O' Donnel Day, making every kind of colored speckle against the black, boggy night.

"Tommy Ristad —once Maloney —here!" The big, burly Norwegian was an engineer of some kind, Sebastian remembered.

"How did this normal arrive at such an outlandish figure? And, why gold? Does he think of us as mending shoes for night's milk? Or hoarding pots of gold at the rainbow's end?"

It was a fair question, and whispers and nods waved with it.

Sebastian explained: "Michael Coffey has no brains for the figuring, but somehow he estimated our population growth. In the year eighteen and forty-seven he figured about one thousand of us survived the great potato famine, based on a pro-rata share of the Irish population. Factoring in on our presumed longevity, and the four-tenths per cent annual rate of population increase, which he claims from 'shrewd calculations' made by a genius friend of his, he says there must be about one hundred and ninety-six, two hundred of us now."

"So he figures one cubic foot of gold per Leprechaun?"

"Aye."

"So — and where did the one cubic foot of gold come from?"

"Talked funny, he did. Like he was more than proud of his figures. Kept explaining how smart he was, and all.

"'Since no Irish Leprechaun', he says, 'would be caught dead without the same amount of gold as every other Leprechaun, then every Leprechaun has a pot of gold, no more nor less,' he says. 'Except maybe for the King, who would have more than anyone could know.'"

It was a foolish thing to repeat at such a severely sober meeting, and no one could believe the lie, even if it was truth. No one a'tall! Although King John Sebastian did notice a low rumble from points about the room.

"'Each pot holding gold has a radius of sixty-two one hundredths of a foot.' Coffey's genius friend says, 'That comes to one cubic foot of gold per Leprechaun,' he says. 'So figuring on one hundred and ninety-six thousand, two hundred Leprechauns spread about the globe, that makes one hundred ninety-six thousand, two hundred cubic feet of gold' he said — and he wanted it all in return for the secrecy and the swearing that he'll not reveal us, he'll return David Israel and promise not to go after him again."

While Michael O' Coffey was puzzling over this strange but marvelous computation —*Did I truly say all that?* he kept asking himself, amazed over its complexities and logic —the ensuing hubub lasted —it seemed — for hours. A committee was formed, and nominations made fairly, and recommendations and voting kept in strict confidence. Not that anyone would cheat. Why would they do a thing like that? Except, perhaps, the O' Learys and Ryans, and they were always watched closely by everyone else.

King John Sebastian headed up the final decision committee, as was his natural right and place, and besides Aloysius Winston, there were the other two, Henry Mallette and George Hays honestly placed, as everyone could testify.

And sure, why wouldn't they be?

That made up the whole of the final decision committee: King Sebastian, Aloysius Winston, George Hays, and Henry Mallette. Unless you also counted Joe Smith, an O' Banion who was set there just in case of ties.

"I saw cast-iron pots somewhere in Alabama, or maybe it was Mississippi," Henry Mallette explained to the thickening and dusty gloom. "Used to render hog lard on chilly January mornings, they were."

The other members stared.

"Suppose we could convert the Society's assets without forcing down world-wide markets, and attracting attention. Where would the gold come from?"

"Why didn't he ask for aluminum or platinum, or uranium?" asked George Hays.



Finally the call for votes came.

Michael Coffey squinted closely at Sebastian, apparently not seeing the original John Sebastian face anymore at all, but a face that somehow appeared even more familiar. It was wizened, even ancient, but with eyes that were big and clever, a nose as red as his own, and the man had a way about him that only true Irishmen could know for when his eyes danced they made the heart throb for the old green sod and a merry fiddle.

Sebastian caught Michael's eye, probably thinking to himself: *Coffey's a dumb Irishman, alright!* Studying Michael's features, he saw red Irish-whisky-blooming cheeks puffed outward from much blowing on cold hands, a Catholic, bowl-shaped haircut, parted in the middle and neatly combed to each side, like little Tommy O' Toole on his way to school.

Sure. He's the Little Men's King, alright, Michael thought in his turn as he chuckled at his cleverness.

Nothing so heartens the Leprechaun King than a duel of wits, for nothing so livens the long days more than the fun of outwitting the dull Irishmen, who think they are so smart, which is hardly the half of brains.

Sure, and such an equivalent feeling can be known only by the Irishman, face to face as they match canniness, each with weapons forged by aeons-long mutual pummelling.

Of all the Little Ones, the King of the Leprechauns would be the cleverest, strongest, wisest. Otherwise why would an O' Quinn have been chosen?

Now John Sebastian stood tall, quieting the hubub with a regal wave of his right arm. "We're all present, Michael, all of those who own the wealth you desire. But we must have the return of David Israel before we further negotiations. It is that or nothing."

Michael squinted almost as though he were attempting to see the differences between his inner vision, and what actually appeared before him, which in a way he was. "That or nothing, indaid! And when was an honest Irishman to trust one of the Little People?"

"Trust? Michael Coffey. What choice do you have? Also, keep in mind that had we a mind to do so, you'd be back in the asylum again. You have my word on it."

It was all true. They had him. Still grandfather Coffey had explained that once their word was given -- especially the King's word -- it would be kept. But watch out for trickery! Be sure the terms are clear! Well, Michael knew he was a match for the Little People. He'd gotten this far hadn't he. Cleverly he said, "And do ye give your word on it? The word of The Great Society of Leprechauns? And promise on the lucky four leaf clover, too?"

"I do," Sebastian said simply. "Tell us where to find David Israel, and you shall be greatly rewarded. I promise."

Well, Michael should have been cleverer, but then, wasn't his mind and senses whirling after that last drink? "What is this cage by me side?" Michael said grandly. Again as though his mouth worked independently from his thinking — which for the Irish is not unusual — he heard it say: "Let me show you something," and his betraying arms whipped off the cloth covering. It was a cage, and David Israel's face pushed sorrowfully from inside against tiny bars. His tiny gnarled hands grasped and opened as though with a reflex disease as they tried vainly to hold onto the thin bars of an ordinary parakeet cage. Tiny veins bulged and crossed David's face and arms and hands to form a fern-like lacework. Though naked he was — and as plucked as a parakeet — his long, black beard hung low, providing what little propriety was there. His eyes were watery and bloodshot.

"Indecent!"

"Criminal!"

Already George Hays and Henry Mallette were shouting and jumping and striking nothing whatsoever, everywhere, so filled with frustration they were. John — King O' Quinn — Sebastian clenched broad jaw muscles. And didn't it take emergencies like this one to bring out his forceful personality and quick intellect? And what of the sight of David Israel, himself? Physically engaged and reduced to miniature



status, it was truly enraging! There is nothing more vile, more sadistic, more unsightly, more thoughtless.

Unless it is the sight of the small half-filled bowl of mush inside the cage, on its floor, all filled with sodden fragments of molding bread! That and the chuckle which filled Michael's mouth and which some would say was a ripple of Irish glee, though more like a hissing snake, it was, standing tall before St. Patrick in spite of all his glory.

"Alright. We've seen the kind of man you are, Michael Coffey. You've got us." King O' Quinn's visible apathy was not entirely play acting. Not all of it. *Have we been through this bit before?* Michael's confused mind asked of himself. Then, aloud, "Well, now. Sure, and I wondered about that meself. What happened to the pots of gold during me great, great grandfather's day?"

"They came with us during the great potato famine, along with the Irish immigration, as you know. "Now we couldn't leave that kind of thing lying idly about in our new, busy land, could we, what with so many greedy gold hunters and all?"

"That sounds reasonable. Sure. What did you do with it?"

"Stocks and bonds."

"Well, I'll just take the equivalent in American Federal Reserve — U, S and A dollars — under me personal account."

Had King O' Quinn been normal human, his eyes would have squinted like the cat who's about to catch the mouse. "You understand, Michael Coffey, we can't suddenly convert holdings into cash without creating panic and depression, besides, you've already agreed to a share in stocks and bonds."

"Oh ho! — So you have that much in loot, d'ye? Enough to upset nations? And all from good Irish gold!"

"We can share with you, make you rich beyond imaginings. What good is a pile of yellow metal or lazy, green dollars taxed into nothingness, or to be drained away by inflation? You, Michael Coffey, need to own a big slice of grand American industry." Speaking rapidly so's to get ideas into Coffey's mind fast and in proper sequence, O' Quinn reflected on the committee's agreed-upon strategy, finding it good, and thinking it still the best way to deal with Irishmen.

"Aye. Aye! That may be best." The clever kidnapper stroked his chin even as his eyes seemed to spot a dangerous bargain, or perhaps a box all filled with twisty tricks. "I'll give me very best thought on it," he heard himself saying., while thinking, *Now where have we had this scene before? I must think before they confuse me.*

"Wait, Michael Coffey. We've got to know how you found us out. We can't have it happen again, can we? We'll trust you, of course. And though it softens the heart to say it, we must know the answer even if we must sacrifice our beloved David Israel."

At that moment David began shaking bars and squeeling in his unnatural high-pitched voice. It was almost as though he believed the king, so good was the acting.

And, of course it was acting. What else would it be?

Michael Coffey's head tossed high, with pride. "Sure, and I'll tell you that now." He tapped his finger to temple, pointing in the right direction to the source of his own brilliance.

King Sebastian permitted himself the slightest relaxation, now that natural Irish pride and ego had burst through.

"One of the Coffeys — Patrick it was, and a foine, great, great grandfather he was, too, and a troubador. Always taking notes, he was. Only they rhymed, so nobody believed the things about which he wrote. Nobody a'tall except me.

"Patrick, he died of the potato famine in eighteen and forty six passing notes on down to Timothy O' Coffey, the great grandfather, himself. Timothy followed the Irish immigration to America, passing the notebook on to Ian, the grandfather, hisself, then to Graham, me very own faither, himself, and none a'tall



like him to be found anywhere on the face of the earth or elsewhere, for that matter.

“Sure and it was a sad day, when me poor old faither died, St. Patrick preserve and otherwise help his soul. He left me his poor leaven’s: A jug of Irish whisky and Patrick O’ Coffey’s notebook, dressed with soft pigskin and lettered fancy and all.

“Out of respect for him, I swallowed the whisky, all the time wiping away me tears and thumbing through the old notebook. It must have been the saints themselves what diverted this lucky Irishman’s attention to the simple poems written in longhand there.”

Michael Coffey paused. Sure, and wouldn’t these listeners want the opportunity to reflect on and to acknowledge his brilliance and humility and his luck in receiving personal attention from the blessed saints, themselves?

“What poems?”

Michael’s eyes widened and he smiled broadly, waving his forefinger to sing *Tiddley, Tiddley or Not*, all the way through.

Sure. And it was against all reason, King O’ Quinn knew. It was madness indeed. Wasn’t it just the right kind of foolish thing that would lead a drunken Irishman to the right conclusions? Wasn’t mis-reasoning of this kind the only way an Irishman could arrive at correct answers?

“That’s a pretty, little ditty, Michael Coffey. And how could it lead to us?”

“We’re no longer Leprechaun high. And do we carry about our pots of gold? None of us have gold. For long it was illegal as a medium of commercial exchange, in America, you know. And look how we’ve integrated ourselves with normals, even to taking on coloration of races, religions and various diverse nationalities. You must be very clever indaid to have figured the rest for yourself.”

It was just the touch. Michael Coffey expanded visibly. Wouldn’t any Irishman puff under such skilled flattery? And so he described the parts known and unknown but guessed at. His ego was outside now, worn on his dirty white collar, slipping in and out of his wrinkled, old-fashioned vestpocket, crawling up his nose and down his ear. King O’ Quinn plunged for the kill. “You still had to be clever to spot one of us. How did you manage that, Michael Coffey?”

“Aye!” Coffey swelled visibly. “There’s a certain cast o’ eye in Leprechauns, whether they be big or small. And it’s known only to carefully observing Irishmen.”

It made a certain kind of Irish sense, though no other kind. Somehow King O’ Quinn’s slowness of wit and open admiration for Michael seemed to transfer of itself. “Think it over, Michael Coffey. Indaid it is a brilliant man, ye’ are, and deserving of ownership in America’s giant industries.”

Well, that’s when Michael put down his glass. The terrible moment had come and passed. Michael was surely cozened into signing the documents placed before him, but he seemed not to care any longer, though he was beaming and smiling.

He signed with a satisfying flourish placing down his pen. “Then I’m corporation executive?” he asked for reassurance.

“Yes.”

“A rich one?”

“You’ll own petroleum, mines, computers, manufacturing facilities and bits and pieces of other industries.”

“Ah!” he sighed. It had taken no effort at all for Michael to sign those grand papers at the places marked with x’s. None a’tall. None, that is, except a sort of straining with eyes and mind, warily peering about for traps. But if you were a clever fellow, like himself, then you could win against the Little Men!

But naiver, naiver let down your guard!

A big metal embosser pressed official marks into his undecipherable signature and the King’s and his very own signature were duly witnessed by two notaries. They gave Michael his copy and handed the other to John Sebastian, all the while everyone at the table looking on silently.



Somehow David Israel's cage had disappeared and Michael was sitting at the table where he'd always been. This might have bothered Michael some, but he had other thoughts for the moment. "Where are me offices and me girls that guard the doorways?" he asked.

"Surely you know that you're part of a large business conglomerate. Didn't you just sign documents explaining all? Here. I'll read the important part." O' Quinn picked up and thumbed through Michael's copy. "Conglomerate International Incorporated hereby appoints Michael Coffey to full membership status on the Board of Directors with all rights and privileges assigned and pertaining thereto.

"You're one of us, now. You share in everything we have, equally and fairly, just like all the Little Men."

"I share equally with all the Leprechauns?"

"Absolutely. That's correct. We've made you full member of The Great Irish Leprechaun Society. See?" O' Quinn pointed. "This next paragraph."

The close-printed type probably could have been read easily by one of the angels, but Michael refused to let on his eyesight was failing. "Sure, and that's just foine." Now his nose, ever faithful to its prime duty, had identified a certain delicate aroma. Was it behind the desk? "No man would deny 'tis a beautiful paragraph," he argued. "But, it's a big desk that I had in mind, with little buttons to push and female door-guarders, too."

"That you'll have, Michael Coffey." O' Quinn beckoned to someone, and all heads swiveled about. "But first we seal the bargain."

Hardly dressed a'tall with scandalous skirts, the pretty young thing pushed along a gleaming chrome cart from which came the tantalizing odor discovered by Michael's trained nostrils. When she bent over, he had all he could do to keep his attention high, up on her sparkling smile.

From a door in the cart she withdrew the most heavenly crystal, all full of a bright amber fluid — praise the Saints — Michael's eyes were so busy switching from the sparkling smile toward the cart and back again!

"To our new full-blooded Leprechaun!" King O' Quinn said, as he raised a brimming tankard. "May his life-line be long!"

"Hear, hear!" everyone sang out, raising their tankards, too.

Mainly to keep his eyes away from the sinful exposure of bare skin, Michael permitted her to fill his glass again, carefully watching as the little bubbles rose upward, swelling larger and larger, then bursting at the surface with a most tantalizing aroma.

Is a full glass to be wasted? Not among the O' Coffeys! He drank that one. And a third and a fourth. Oh what a wicked woman guarded those bottles!

It was more than decent man could bear.

And the female doorway-guarder beside O' Quinn was large. Maybe he'd choose his own door-guarders equally fair and pretty, but not so huge. Her face peered downward on his, curls so thick they'd take both of his hands to hold. If he were a mind to do so, he could reach out and grab one right now and literally swing his body back and forth on just one of those huge curls.

And breasts! Why, it was a shame! Must be some glandular deficiency. He could easily crawl between those big, two lumps, squeeze down inside where it was soft and dark and warm and no one would ever notice a'tall. No one a'tall.

Now why were the tankards so hard to hold? And the chair so big? The table, too? And the big round clock with crazy pagan Roman numerals, as big as Big Ben, itself. All so large, he felt so small, just like a Leprechaun. . . .

"Michael Coffey!" the voice rumbled.

"Aye!" he squeaked.

"You've just signed our contract. Look about. What do you see?"



And he did just that, first seeing two giant thews like twin tree boles, but upside down, thin at the bottom and thicker at the top. That will be the shameful female door-guarder, he thought.

And the rest? The giant chair and table, the ogres peering from a wide circle about him like hungry animals showing sharp teeth?

God forbid! The Saints had left him and the devil was about!

Recognizing his plight at last, he quaked. He was Michael O' Coffey, small, pathetic, an Irish Leprechaun!

"I'll not tell a soul," he shrieked pathetically. "Only bring back me own size and I'll go away," he wailed. His thin voice fluttered about the air like a wounded hummingbird, barely making it across the vast expanse of the room.

"Sure and you're one of us now. Why would you tell?" The grumble moved slowly, even as a giant needle came up from behind.

"No! No!" He was frightened — nay, terrified. But no one minded as the monstrous needle pushed into soft flesh discharging magical hormonal fluids.

When they had him back to size again, he rubbed the sore spot, his face puffed and red, his anger hardly vented, his fear surging and roiling, and his vanity whistling outwardly like escaping air in a pierced balloon. No one likes being beaten by the Leprechaun, least of all an Irishman.

"I had them! Didn't I have them?" he continued to mumble, and, "Where did things go awry?"

"You're one of us, now, Michael Coffey," King O' Quinn repeated. "You share in all rights and privileges, in truth, Michael. And once each month you'll be needing the needle. The shots'll keep you from growing small, you know."

And wasn't that a friendly smile, that last?

XXVI

Well, Michael O' Coffey became rich, though he never forgot his true friends, like Phoenixus, little Big Joe Crabbe, Jean Dee, Patrick Kavanagh, and especially Dog, although now and then he'd stop to wonder at how they'd become Leprechauns grown tall, too.

Between you and I, they were all hormonal failures from our early days — as King O' Quinn had explained it — before the shots were perfected — and a sad tale that we dassn't talk about too much.

Being Irish, Michael would never forget true friends, of course, and being Leprechaun, with all those mines and conglomerates and corporations at his control, so to speak, he'd reward his friends from time to time, giving away good Irish Whisky and Coors Beer or even Haig and Haig Scotch, if they asked, he was that liberal. And now and then he'd pass a keen eye and foine wink at the female guardians at his doorway.

Why I can hear him t' this day singing "Tiddley, tiddley or not! I caught them with their pot!" though in truth he'd not caught them with their pot a' tall, as they'd caught him, so to speak, and then made the best of what was fast becoming a terrible nuisance.

Oh, it was glorious, it was. Neither Michael nor Dog had a care in the world after that, except maybe to see that they both got their monthly shots.

I saw it all and heard it too, or as much as I was supposed to, or paid attention to. Saint Patrick strike me down like the lowest, scurliest snake if it isn't all true, or me name isn't David Israel.

You know, just because we've become tall and American, and own large corporate structures and such doesn't mean we've lost all of our magic. How do you think we contain nuisances like the O' Coffeys and Kavanaghs?

To start with, we harrass them, make them have bad luck.

Remember the dog that upped and urinated on Michael while he was studying the strip-tease photo? Well, that was George McGarth, the reputed stock broker from Wallstreet who did the deed, breaking the dog from its leash and bringing it to bear at Michael's knee. Of course he couldn't predict all the



consequences, or that that little act would redirect Michael's attention onto me. Usually we have enough foresight for preventive measures, and why it didn't work this time wasn't George McGarth's fault at all.

Then the time the policeman collared Michael right outside of Dr. Ashville's office building, and would have caught him, too, had it not been for Dog's unthinking reactions. That was one of Dog's defects. He couldn't remember who he was, nor where his prime loyalty belonged.

But you can't believe that that New York constable appeared outside Ashville's doorway just by coincidence, can you?

And the net to capture Dog and Michael in the act of robbing my room was set there on purpose, because one of us had peered far enough into the future to see the event, though such sightings are truly becoming rarer nowadays.

Dr. Samuel Benovsky had lost a lot of his natural powers. Seems like education and erudition and growing tall has much to do with loss of magic and other abilities. Still, all in all, he was stragically placed in the New York mental institute where he could keep a professional eye on the likes of Kavanagh and Coffey. After all, everyone knows that a psychiatrist's purpose is to control those that bother the rest of us, not to make the deviant well.

Then remember how Michael O' Coffey left Dog in charge of me? Wasn't it just a wee bit strange that Dog would decide to wander off like he did, leaving me free to work my way loose?

Who put the crazy idea into Michael's mind that he should call President John Sebastian on a pay phone already surrounded and crowded with private detectives? One of us, that's for sure, because that's how we work it all, and for that much magic to work there's got to be some residual powers left. I don't know what is the scientific explanation, but its probably something like the strength of the magic is indirectly proportional to the number of human cells encumbering the source of the thought.

Dr. Amendus Dullea, like Dr. Asheville, had to resort to non-magical tricks, psychiatric pain/hypnosis/shock treatment, and you can remember just how poorly those worked. So when Michael's mind was worked on successfully, it wasn't Dr. Dullea, but some of us who stilled his tongue and distorted his senses, and it would have lasted, too, if it hadn't been for the Russian flu along with Coffey's rugged disposition.

Michael Coffey was Irish, and our magic seldom works one hundred percent when Irish luck is about. That's a sort of black magic in itself. That's why Michael was able to capture me so often. Luck! Just plain, dumb, Irish Luck! The same we've had to contend with now since the birth of Hibernia — and we'd thought t've left behind in the Old Country.

But say — wasn't the splintering of their shack in the junkyard pure inspiration? And the strange unexplained disappearance of Phoenicus, little Big Joe Crabbe and Jean Dee? And what of the triggering off of Patrick Kavanagh's electric shock memories during the attempted transfer of kidnapped victims? And the final capture of Michael O' Coffey, and how he was tricked into revealing his true thoughts and intentions before we gave him the final treatment that made him just like us?

The greatest magic, of course, was the drastic changing of stubborn Irish mind. That part wasn't easy to do. It took the assembled Leprechaun society in Michael Coffey's presence to insure that Mr. Coffey would keep his bargain, accepting ordinary stocks and bonds instead of insisting on gold bullion. The Irish are perhaps the most stubborn in the world, as every Leprechaun knows, and sometimes they can be quite clever — but never as clever as the Irish Leprechaun, himself.

Why, I remember in the old days when a snap of a finger would change a tree into a golden staff; a milk cow would sour and bellow; iron filings would change to glossy pure silver; a nagging wife would be stilled instantly, her mouth frozen stiffly until freed again. At the blink of an Irishman's eyes we'd appear and disappear, safe from greedy fingers.

Sigh!

I suppose it's the size that weakens us, being big, you know.

Sigh!



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MICHAEL COFFEY'S JEWISH LEPRECHAUN

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But then there's some advantages to being big and Jewish, instead of little and Leprechaun, though for right now I can't think of a blessed one.