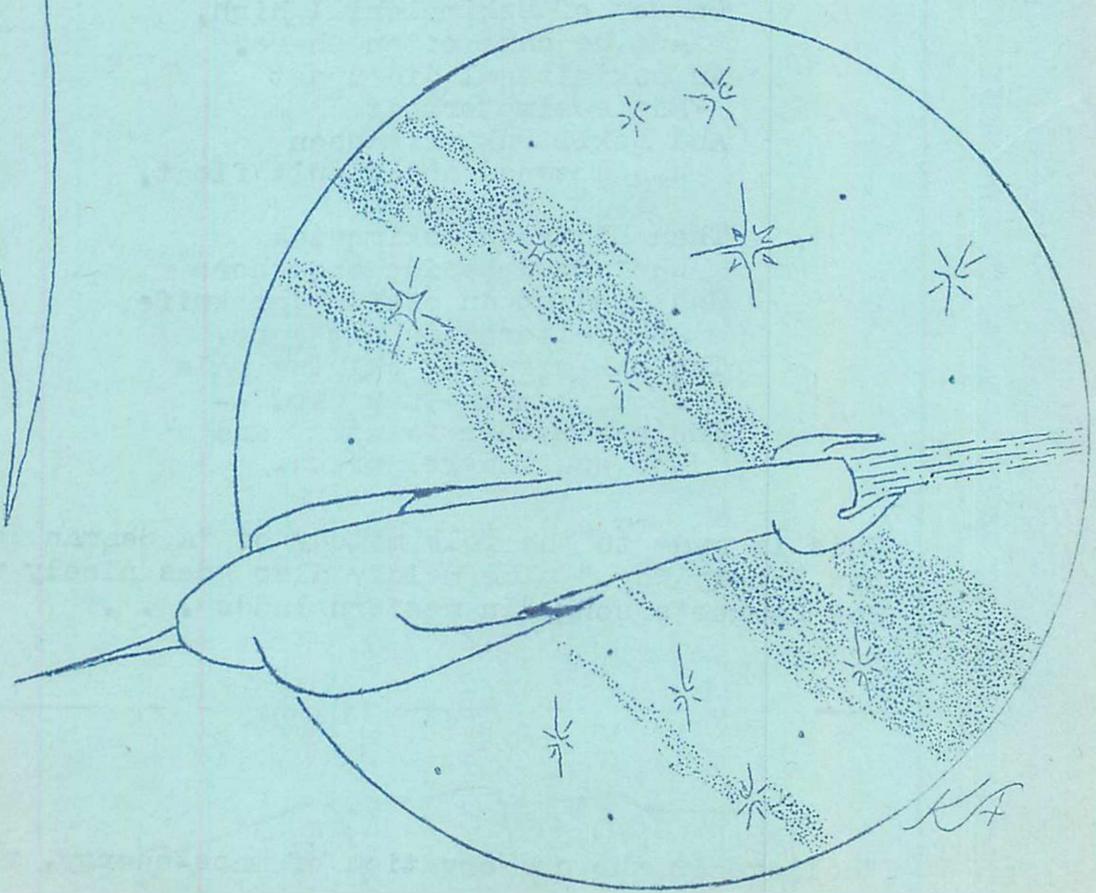


MAILIF



A SEVAGRAM PUBLICATION

ESKIMO SONG

Let me emphasize the fact that I am irresponsi---
I mean, not responsible for the puns in this song.
It is a nearly word-for-word translation from the
Danish, and the same puns occur in the original.

Oh, once there was an Eskimo
Who had a name to fit;
'Twas Eskil Eskimortensen --
You can remember it.
He was an eskimotorman
With long and tangled hair;
He loved an eskimaïden sweet
Of half a hundred year.

Now, Mistress Eskimonia
Lived with her mother dear
On top of Eskimolehill high,
And he came often there.
An eskimistral did upset
His eskimotorboat
And Eskil Eskimortensen
Was drowned and didn't float.

Then Mistress Eskimonia
Who stood beside the shore
Snatched up an eskimurder knife
And weltered in her gore.
The eskimoon was shining pale
Upon them as they died --
The eskimother fainted, and
The eskimongrel cried.

This is sung to the folk melody of "A Seaman Takes
his Lonely Way." The melody also goes nicely with
Sam Gamgee's song "In western lands . . ."

"Believe in the conservation of mass-energy, vote the
straight ticket, and let's draw to an inside
straight."

WHAT MAD MICROCOSM

Or, Tom Swift and His Eccentric Woolgatherer.

"Naturally, we twentieth-century warlocks do not use the old-fashioned terminology," said Dr. von Dreamhush with a graceful wave of his long hand. "Henbane and snakeroot have gone out of style, to be replaced by atropine and reserpine. In order to inspire the confidence of the public, a drug must be sold under some such name as Vionate, Hadacal, or Serutan. Though I do not intend to place my --- ah --- product on the mass market, I have chosen to name it Resurgamine." He stroked the little bat nestled in his hand.

"Just what are the properties of Resurgamine, Dr. von Dreamhush?" asked Alan Renfield. He was a lithe, slightly built man in his late thirties, very quietly but expensively dressed, with wavy brown hair and moderately good locks. His beautifully made shoes failed to disguise his totally inoperable clubfoot.

Dr. von Dreamhush shrugged his broad shoulders and shook his bushy white head. "They are almost infinitely variable, being directed by the psychosomatic Gestalt of the user. In your case, it would eliminate your talipes. No doubt this is what you came to hear."

"But what does Resurgamine actually do?"

"My dear fellow, I would not tell you even if I understood it myself. Allow me to refresh your drink."

He coaxed the bat to hang from his lapel and went to the table on whose carved jade top stood a tray with ice and bottles. He was tall and heavy-boned, with striking aquiline features; his movements were smooth and fluid.

Having supplied Renfield with a fresh drink, he seated himself and took the sleek brown bat in his hand again, delicately scratching it behind the ears.

"There is only one difficulty, Mr. Renfield," he said. "The treatment must be repeated at frequent intervals. It is quite impossible to produce enough for more than one individual."

Renfield frowned. "You mean that the expense is too great to manufacture it on a large scale?" he asked.

"Not at all. The expense is negligible. On the other hand, it is in a sense infinite."

"You see, it is necessary to subject the raw compound to certain radiations. Are you familiar with the phenomenon of R-radiation?"

"It sounds like something dreamed up by Rene Lafayette."

"No, it is a real phenomenon. When an intense white light is focused on a ruby, the stone fluoresces with a red light of very narrow band-width. I use a similar technique, but the stone in question is not a ruby or any other common jewel."

"You think of rubies as common?" exclaimed Renfield.

"Certainly they are common. As common as washing machines. They are merely costly --- and so are new washing-machines. Rubies, of course, do not become obsolete or lose their trade-in value. The gem I use to produce Resurgam is unique; it is not native to this space-time continuum, and even in its own continuum it was the only one of its kind. It is called the Arkenstone."

"Excuse me, Dr. Dreamhush, but where did you get the Arkenstone?"

"Even if I told you, it would do you no good."

"I see. What is your price for the supply of Resurgamine?"

"No, Mr. Renfield. The question is, what is the price for me?" He tickled the bat under the chin. "Eh, my pretty? What will buy Max von Dreamhush?"

Renfield said uneasily, "I can't offer you everything I own," he said. "I'd rather be wealthy and clubfooted than poor and sound. How much do you want?"

"How much --- and of what, Mr. . . . Ricoletti."

"What do you mean by that?" he cried, turning pale.

"Do not think that you are the only one who knows you to be the son of Benny Ricoletti. During Prohibition, that curious barbarity practised under the name of civilization, your father was ---"

"Never mind. So you know. It may surprise you to learn that I did not know until he died. I never knew him. I was brought up as a gentleman; everything was paid in advance from the day I was born --- right down to my class ring at Harvard."

"He bought you that. And you think, now, that everything can be bought for cash down. Do not forget how you tried to buy a wife."

Renfield flushed angrily, but did not speak.

"Excuse me," said Dr. von Dreamhush. "I would not have referred to that incident, except that I had a point to make. There are things whose price is not money."

"What do you want, then?"

"Look around you. What would you expect me to want?"

Renfield looked around the room. Dr. von Dreamhush's flat was located on the top floor of a high glass-and aluminum building, and was probably the highest residence in San Francisco. Peacock-blue velvet curtains were drawn back from a wide window, framing the multicolor glitter of neon and mercury and sodium. The other walls of the room were pure white. On one hung an indisputable Monet. Against the narrow wall section between the door and the peacock curtains stood a twisted branch, polished and glowing brown; behind it hung a gold replica of an Aztec calendar disc. On the other side of the door was a massive custom-made high fidelity record player; above it hung a map with strange names. Gozashtand, Zamba, Sungar --- and what was that odd silver helmet on the mantel, with its spreading batlike wings? He gave up.

"Mejrour Qurardéna," said Dr. von Dreamhush.

"I beg your pardon?"

"The helmet that has you so baffled --- it is of the Mejrour Qurardéna; well known in Gozashtand. It should have been obvious to you from the start that I do not need money, Mr. Renfield. As Shandon has it in Whither Sybaris?, "When you have money, you have a chance to find out what you want." I do not believe that you have anything I want. And now, if you don't mind, I must bid you goodbye. I am expecting someone else."

"I see," muttered Renfield. He stood up.

Several rooms away, a bell chimed, and voices murmured. Renfield hesitated, wishing to know who Dr. von Dreamhush was expecting. What did the man want?

"Miss Sonia Lurlin, sir."

Sonia Lurlin swept into the room. Her silver slippers whispered over the thick gray carpet; her silver gown reflected molten highlights; her silvery hair was like a moonlit cloud. Over her green and green-shaded eyes, her carefully drawn black eyebrows were edged with fine silver lines. Dr. von Dreamhush returned the bat to his lapel and rose to greet her.

"Dreamhush! Is it true that --- Rennie. You here: I know you're after the same thing. Then it is true. Dreamhush, I'll top any offer he makes."

"My dear Sonia," Renfield said, "Dr. von Dreamhush has already told me that money is not a sufficient price."

"Why do you need Resurgamine, Miss Lurlin?"

"Last week I found a white hair. Is it true, what I was told by --- never mind who --- what they told me? That your dope could keep me young?"

"Undoubtedly. But tell me --- I am fascinated. How did you find a white hair?" asked Dr. von Dreamhush, looking at the silver dye.

Sonia Lurlin glowered, then recalled herself and switched tactics.

"Of course you don't want money," she breathed, her voice half an octave lower. "I know. Who could know better than I that money is valueless?" The highlights squirmed across her silver gown and she held out her hands. "I could offer you so much more than mere money."

The brief, triumphant glance she directed toward Renfield vanished as Dr. von Dreamhush put a drink into one of her outstretched hands.

"Do you mean," he said, "that you will break your deadlock of the past fifteen years and divorce your husband at last, Mrs. Renfield?"

"Do you know everything?" cried Renfield.

"Oh, no; but I do know that you are both so stubborn and hate each other so much that neither will divorce the other; though both have sufficient grounds --- if only on the count of desertion."

"Never mind that," said Sonia in satiny tones, though perhaps just the least bit strained. "It's different now."

"Oh, Dr. von Dreamhush --- Max ---"

"Ridiculous," asserted Dr. von Dreamhush. The bat flapped softly away. "Ergonon himself started with more promising material; and Aparadite isn't in business any more."

Sonia snarled and sprang at him, claw-nailed fingers cracked into talons. He stretched out his hand and his palm caught her full in the face. She sprawled on the floor.

When she got up, she saw him ostentatiously wiping make-up off his hand with a handkerchief, and ran for her purse to repair the damage. Dr. von Dreamhush picked up her glass and clucked his tongue softly at the spill. He was about to ring for a servant when the door chimed again.

"Mr. Shandon, sir."

"I'll see him in the library. Would you see if you can do something about this---he indicated the spilled drink---when you've sawed Miss Lurlin and Mr. Renfield out?"

"What do you want, you beast?" screamed Sonia.

"Never mind. You don't have it either. Good-night, Miss Lurlin, Mr. Renfield."

In the library, he greeted a well-built young man in whose dark hair there was a single streak of white.

"How goes it, Shandon?" he said. "Seen Gollas lately?"

"I haven't. I'll tell you, Max --- I'm beginning to think I won't any more. That I had only the one chance, and now it's over."

"A pity. What makes you think so?"

"All my luck is running out. Listen, do you know how long it took me to write Whither Sybaris?, book, lyrics, and sight-gags? Five weeks. And it's been on the road for three years now. Hoarla Hennegorinica took a little longer: three months. It's booked up till next August on Broadway. But Woggle-bug took a year to write and lasted eight days."

"I hadn't even heard of Woggle-bug. What's wrong, Shandon?"

"I don't know. While I was writing Woggle-bug, I had to work for every word. I was putting things together that I thought should be funny. With the others, I'd get a whole idea, and sit there laughing while I jotted it down. I tried Equanil to relax on in case I was too tense. I took Dextro-drine in case I needed energy. I tried every god-damn nostrum you can imagine, Max, and I'm dead between the ears."

"Perhaps I can help you," said Dr. von Dreamhush. He opened the library door cautiously; yes, his other visitors had gone. The bat flew up and he held out one hand for it.

"This way," he said, and led Shandon to his laboratory, where the Arkenstone's golden light was focused on a tightly stoppered test tube. He took another, similar test tube, and poured its contents into a beaker, to which he added a tenth of a litre of tap water.

"Drink this."

Shandon obeyed, and slowly set down the beaker. "Hey," he said softly. "I see now what to do about --- but no, I won't bother trying to salvage Woggle-bug. I'll start fresh."

Supposing Northern California gets fed up entirely with Los Angeles, and everything north of ---oh --- San Jose secedes and forms the state of Franklin, that they've talked of; and at the same time the University of California at Berkeley splits off from UCLA and affiliates with Stanford --- the Big Game is then Stanford-Berkeley against UCLA, and at the same time the Regents at Berkeley decide ---" Shandon burst out laughing. "Got some scratch-paper handy, Max?"

Max von Dreamhush handed him a sheaf of blank paper with a contented smile. Like all men, he had a price; but it was a unique one.

The End

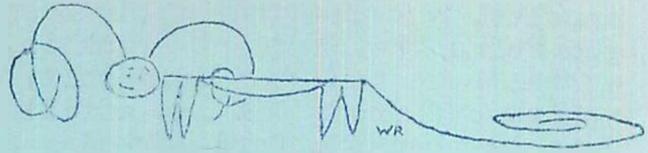
Challenge-to-the-reader: Can you identify the sources of the names, persons, objects, and situations in this story? For example, "Renfield" is the name of a patient of Dr. Van Helsing in Dracula. Others are from very varied sources. How many can you spot? Where did I get the idea, anyway?

I'll publish a complete list next mailing.

Do not tear along dotted line



ALIF



November 1960

It is the end of October. Chrysanthemums are blooming and the pyracanthas are weighted down with scarlet berries. On the way into Berkeley, tawny and russet leaves whirl behind cars. The white birch in the front yard is nearly bare.

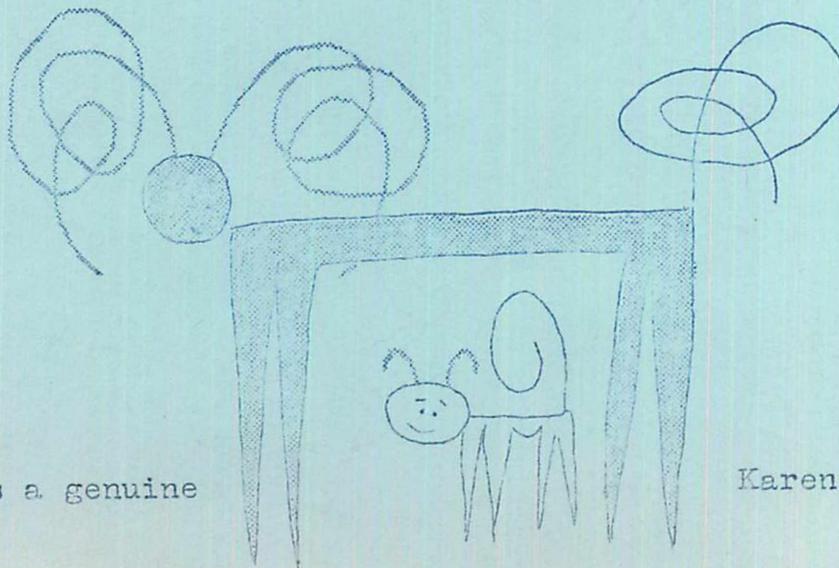
There are pumpkins in the supermarkets.

Yet the feeling of autumn is transitory; I lose it when I shift my eyes from the gold of chrysanthemums to the soft blue of rosemary, the color of hazy late-spring skies, and hear the heavy drone of bees. The pink oleanders have not stopped blooming and the white ones are starting over again, along with the bottlebrush and a bush that I don't really think is called strawberry-bush. (The fruits are like small knobbly cherries, with a mealy taste. I call them amercoid acubometers.) There are various pink or white or yellow annuals, including a lonely snapdragon, as well.

It rained this week. The growing season is about to begin.

I have bought a Hawaiian tree-fern for the patio.

Barnaby Conrad



This is a genuine

Karenized Rotsler