

16 (mc)

SATELLITE

S N O W I

Your cloak also essays to hide the truth,
to veil inconstantly reality.
The hard, black houstetops face eternity,
but your slow mantle shades their grim, uncouth
deformity of shape. The mirrored sky
grows warm in recognition of despair,
and Yolandette has snowdrops in her hair -
see the small snow folk, see them floating by!

Here in the last slow throbbing of old peace
new conflict stirring ripens into strength,
waxes and wanes, and fades again at length
into the age-old tumult, into sleep,
sweet sleep preceding what unknown decease,
while skies let down their snowy robes and weep.

C. S. YOUD

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THE SATELLITE

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57, Beaclair Drive,
Liverpool 15 .

1/6d. for six months . . .

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AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MURKINESS

OR LOVECRAFT-INTO-LEACOCK

BY ARTHUR C. CLARKE

With the recent death of Professor Nutty in the Scraggem Mental Hospital I am left the only survivor of the ill-fated expedition he led to the Antarctic barely five years ago. The true history of that expedition has never until now been related, and only the report that another attempt is being made to investigate the unholy mysteries of Mount Morgue has prompted me to write this warning, even at the risk of shattering such sanity as I still possess.

It was in the early summer of 1940 that our expedition, which had been sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Potato Peelers, of Murphy Mansions, in the City of London, arrived at the desolate shores of Linburger Land. We were equipped with planes, radio, motor sleighs, and everything necessary for our work and comfort, and every one of us felt eager to begin our work at once - even Dr. Slump, the Professor of Contagious Neuroses.

All the stores and provisions were transferred from the ship to the land, and we established the base which was to be our home through so many months. As soon as possible, we left for the interior, for we were all (at that time) anxious to investigate the mysterious ruins reported to cover the slopes of Mount Morgue, the highest peak in that little-known range discovered by Lady Muriel Mildew on her daring flight across Antarctica.

I vividly recollect the day we set out towards the mountains. The polar sun was shining low over the icefields when our line of tractor-sleighs started off inland. Soon we had lost sight of the sea, though we were still in radio communication with our base, and before long we were passing over regions which no man had ever before visited, nor, I trust, will ever visit again. The coast had seemed desolate and dreary enough, but the wilderness of snow and ice through which we were passing was a nightmare of jagged, frozen spires and bottomless crevasses. As we pressed onwards a vague malaise crept over every one of us. A feeling of uneasiness, of strange disquiet, began to make itself felt, apparently radiating from the very rocks and crags that lay buried beneath their immemorial covering of ice. It was such a sensation as one might have felt on entering a deserted building where some all-but-forgotten horror had long ago occurred.

On the fourth day we sighted the mountains, still many miles away. When we pitched our camp at the end of the day there were only twenty miles between us and the nearer summits, and more than once in the night we were awakened by sudden tremors in the ground and the distant thunder of mighty explosions from still-active volcanoes.

It took us two days to cover that remaining twenty miles, for the terrain was contorted into a frightful series of chasms and beetling crags, resembling the more contorted regions of the moon rather than any portion of this earth. Presently, however, the ground became less convulsed, and we pushed on with renewed vigour. Before long we found ourselves in a narrow valley running straight towards the mountains, now only four or five miles away. I was hurrying along at the head of the party when suddenly there was a sharp crackling noise together with a violent tremor of the earth, and the ground just ahead of me dropped down out of sight. To my horror, I found myself standing on the edge of a frightful precipice looking down into a

chasm thousands of feet deep, filled with the steam and smoke of a hundred geysers and bubbling lava pools. Surely, I thought, the mad Arab, Abdul Hashish, must have had such a spot in mind when he wrote of the hellish valley of Oopadoop in that frightful book, the forbidden "Pentehconicon".

We did not remain long at the edge of the valley, for at any instant the treacherous ground might subside once more. The next day one of the planes arrived, and landed on the snows nearby. A small party was chosen to make the first flight, and we took off towards the mountains. My companions were Dr. Slump, Professor Palsy, and Major McTwirp, who was piloting the machine.

We soon reached the chasm, and flew along its length for many miles. Here and there in the depths were suggestive formations, partly veiled by steam, that puzzled us greatly, but the treacherous winds made it impossible to descend into the valley. I am certain, however, that once I saw something moving down in those hellish depths - something large and black, that disappeared before I could focus my glasses on it.

Shortly afterwards we landed on a vast field of snow at the foot of Mount Morgue itself. As we shut off the engines an uncanny silence descended upon us. The only sound was the crashing of avalanches, the hissing of gigantic geysers in the valley, and the distant concussions of erupting volcanoes.

We descended from the plane and surveyed the desolate scene. The mountains towered before us, and a mile further up the slopes the ground was strangely bare of snow. It seemed, moreover, that the tumbled shapes had more than a suggestion of order about them, and suddenly we realised that we were looking at the ruins our expedition had come so many thousands of miles to investigate. In half an hour we had reached the nearest of them, and then we saw, what some of us had already surmised, that this architecture was not the work of any race of men.....

We paused for a moment at the all but ruined entrance and the sight of those hideous carvings on the fallen lintel all but drove us back. Low bas-reliefs, they reminded us of some nightmare surrealist creation of Dali or Dobbi - save that they gave the impression that they were not the representations of dreams but of horrible reality.

After a few steps, the feeble Antarctic light had dimmed to absolute darkness, and we switched on our torches hastily. We had gone at least a mile from the entrance when we decided that we had better return. We had taken the precaution of blazing our trail by means of chalk-marks on the walls, so that we had no doubt that (if nothing stopped us) we could find our way back to the surface. However Dr. Slump was adamant.

"I insist," he cackled, "that we progress at least another mile. After all, we have a plentiful supply of torches, and we have not yet discovered anything of exception archaeological importance - though I, personally, am finding your reactions of the greatest interest. Poor McTwirp here has become positively green about the gills in the last ten minutes. Do you mind if I measure your pulse? Oh, well, you needn't be rude about it. I am also amused by the way Palsy and Firkin keep looking over their shoulders and shining their torches into corners. Really, for a group of distinguished scientists you are behaving in a most primitive manner! Your reactions under these unusual but by no means unprecedented conditions will certainly be includ-

ed in the appendix to my forthcoming "Hysteria and its Pathological Manifestations. I wonder what you would do if I were to - "

At this point, Dr. Slump let rip with the most piercing scream it has been my misfortune to hear since the last revival of "King Kong". It echoed from wall to wall, left the chamber through one of the holes in the floor and wandered for minutes through subterranean passages far below. When it finally returned, with a monstrous progeny of echoes, Professor Palsy was lying in a coma on the floor and Major McTwirp had disguised himself as a bas-relief and was propped up in one corner.

"You blithering idiot!" I cried, when the infernal row had screeched out of the chamber for the second time. But Dr. Slump was too busy taking notes to answer me.

At last silence, and a few bits of ceiling, fell. Slowly the other two revived and with difficulty I restrained them from slaughtering the Doctor. Finally, Professor Palsy started the return to the surface, with the rest of us following close behind. We had gone a few hundred yards when, far away, came a sound, faint but very clear. It was a slimy, slithering noise that froze us to the marrow - and it came from ahead. With a low roar, Dr. Slump sagged to the ground like a desiccated jellyfish.

"Wh-what is it?" whispered McTwirp.

"Ss-sshush!" replied Palsy, giving a creditable imitation of the Death of St. Vitus. "It mmmay hear you!"

"Get into a side passage, quickly!" I whispered.

"There isn't one!" quavered the Major.

Dragging Dr. Slump in after us, for it would have revealed our presence had we left him behind, we crept out of the chamber, extinguishing our torches. The crevice McTwirp had scratched hastily, at the cost of two fingernails, in the solid rock, was rather small for the four of us, but it was our only hope.

Nearer and nearer came that awful sound until at last it reached the chamber. We crouched in the darkness hardly daring to breathe. There was a long silence; then, after an eternity of waiting, we heard the sound of a heavy, sluggish body being dragged across the ground and out into the corridor. For a moment we waited until the horror had passed out of hearing; then we fled.

That we fled the wrong way was, under the circumstances, nobody's fault. So great had the shock been that we had completely lost our sense of direction, and before we realised what had happened we suddenly found ourselves confronted by the Thing from which we had been trying to escape.

I cannot describe it: featureless, amorphous, and utterly evil,, it lay across our path, seeming to watch us balefully. For a moment we stood there in paralysed fright, unable to move a muscle. Then, out of nothingness, echoed a mournful voice.

"Hello, where did you come from?"

"Llllllll ----" quavered Palsy.

"Talk sense. There's no such place".

"He means London", I said, taking charge of the conversation, as none of my colleagues seemed capable of dealing with it. "What are you, if it isn't a rude question? You know, you gave us quite a start".

"Gave you a start! I like that! Who was responsible for that

excruciating cacophony that came from this direction five minutes ago? It nearly gave the Elder Ones heart failure and took at least a million years off their lives".

"Er - I think Dr. Slump can explain that", I said, indicating the still semi-comatose psychologist. "He was trying to sing 'Softly Awakes my Heart' but we put a stop to it".

"It sounded more like Mossolow's 'Sabotage in the Steel Foundry'", said the Thing sarcastically, "but whatever it was, we don't like it. You had better come and explain yourselves to their Inscrutable Intelligencs, the Ancient Ones - if they've come round yet", it added, sotto voce. "Step this way."

With a strange, flowing motion it set off through the passageway, covering what seemed miles until the tunnel opened out into an immense hall, and we were face to face with the rulers of this ancient world. I say face to face, but actually we were the only ones with faces. Even more incredible and appalling than the thing we had first encountered were the shapes which met our horrified eyes as we entered that vast chamber. The spawn of alien galaxies, outlawed nightmares from worlds beyond space and time, entities that had filtered down from the stars when the earth was young - all these crowded upon our vision. At the sight my mind reeled. Dazedly, I found myself answering questions put to me by some vast creature who must have been the leader of that congress of titans.

"How did you get in?" I was asked.

"Through the ruins on the mountain slope", I answered.

"Ruins! Where is Slog-Wallop?"

"Here", said a plaintive voice and a mouse-like creature with a walrus moustache drooped into view.

"When did you last inspect the main entrance?" said the Supreme Mind sternly.

"Not more than thirty thousand years ago next Pancake Thursday".

"Well, have it seen to at once. As Inspector of Outhouses and Public Conveniences it is your duty to see that the premises are kept in good repair. Now that the matter has been brought up, I distinctly recollect that during the last Ice Age but two a distinguished extragalactic visitor was severely damaged by the collapse of the ceiling directly he entered our establishment. Really, this sort of thing will not improve our reputation for hospitality, nor is it at all dignified. Don't let it happen again!"

"I can't say I liked the decorations, either", I ventured.

"The same visitor complained about those, now you mention it. I will see that they are replaced by something more appropriate, such as a few stills from 'Snow White'". Here the Mind gave Slog-Wallop such a glare that the poor little creature was bowled clean out of the hall.

It turned to me again.

"These things will happen in the best ordered communities", it said apologetically. "Now perhaps you'll be good enough to tell us how you got here?"

So I described the Expedition, from its departure to our arrival in the caverns, omitting such portions of the story as I considered fit.

"Very interesting", said the Mind when I had finished. "We so seldom get visitors these days. The last one was - let me think - oh yes, that Arab fellow, Abdul Hashish".

"The author of the 'Penttechnicon'?"

"Yes. We were rather annoyed about that - these reporters always overdo things. No one believed a word he wrote, and when we read the review copy he sent we weren't surprised. It was very bad publicity and ruined our tourist trade, such as it was. I hope you will show a better sense of proportion".

"I can assure you that our report will be quite unbiassed and entirely scientific", I said hastily. "But may I ask how it is you seem to know our language so well?"

"Oh, we have many ways of studying the outside world. I myself toured the Middle West of America some years ago in a circus side-show and it is only very recently that I eradicated the accent I acquired on that occasion. Nowadays, too, radio makes it impossible to avoid you. You would be surprised to know the number of swing fans we have here - though I regret to say that the television revues from Paris have an even greater popularity. But the less said about them the better".

"You amaze me", I said truthfully. "What surprises me most, however, is that the modern world hasn't discovered you before, if you have so many outside contacts".

"That was very simply arranged. We started writing stories about ourselves, and later we subsidised authors, particularly in America to do the same. The result was that everyone read all about us in various magazines such as "Weird Tales" (of which, incidentally, I hold 50% of the Preference Shares) and simply didn't believe a word of it. So we were quite safe".

"Incredible! The conception of a super-mind!"

"Thank you", said my interlocutor, a smug expression spreading over where its face would have been had it possessed one. "Now, however, we have no objection to everyone knowing that we really exist. In fact, we were planning an extensive publicity campaign, in which your help would be very useful. But I'll tell you about that later; now perhaps you would like to go and rest in our guest chambers? I've had them cleaned - it's surprising how much dust can accumulate in forty thousand years".

We were escorted to a vast room - little smaller than the one we had just quitted - where we could recline on oddly-shaped but comfortable couches.

"How completely incredible!" gasped Dr. Slump as we settled down to discuss the position.

"Nice chap, wasn't it?" I said, referring to our host.

"I don't trust it! Something tells me mischief's brewing. It is our duty to keep this knowledge from the world!"

"What, do you hold the rest of those 'Weird Tales' shares?" asked Palsy sarcastically.

"Not at all, but such a revelation would mean universal madness and I fear that with the forces at their command these Elder Ones would soon enslave mankind!"

"Do you really think - ", I began, when McTwirp interrupted me.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing to something on the ground. I bent down and picked it up. It was a piece of paper, on which some writing was scrawled. With difficulty, I interpreted the curious characters.

"Get Slog-Wallop to see about the drains", I read. Then, underneath, "Duke Ellington, 3.15, Washington".

Harmless enough - then I turned it over, and saw words which sent shudders of fear down my spine.

'Destroy human race by plague of flying jellyfish released in stratosphere (? Sent through post in unsealed envelopes?)

No good for Unknown - try Gillings'.

"You were right, Slump!" I gasped. "What a hideous plot! I suppose this Gillings must be some poor devil these fiends experimented on. We must escape at once!"

"But how? We don't know the way".

"Leave that to me", I said, going to the door. Outside it was a strange, flabby creature resembling a doormat in the last stages of decomposition.

"Would you mind guiding us to the upper corridors?" I asked politely. "One of my friends has lost a valuable wallet, and if a search party comes along it may be found and sent home to his wife. Incidentally", I added, in an easy, conversational tone, "we should be awfully obliged if someone would make us some cups of tea while we're gone. Two lumps each".

This last masterstroke dispelled any suspicions the being might have had.

"Right-ho", it said. "I hope you like China tea ; it's all we've got; Abdul finished off the rest".

It scuttled away, and shortly returned: "Now follow me".

Of our journey back through those awful caves I prefer to say as little as possible. In any case, it closely resembled the journey downwards. At last, after an eternity, we saw the exit into the outer world far ahead. And none too soon, for our guide was getting suspicious.

"Are you sure you had it with you?" it asked, rather out of breath. "You may have left it behind".

"Not likely", said McTwirp. "I think it was about here".

So we pressed on, our goal now only a few hundred yards away. Suddenly, to our horror, we heard sounds of pursuit far behind. Pretence was useless. "Run for your lives!" I shouted.

Luckily our guide was so taken by surprise that before it could recover itself we had a considerable start. In a matter of seconds, it seemed, we had reached the exit and were out in the clean light of day. Emboldened by the thought of safety, I glanced back.

The guide was far behind, stupefied still by surprise. But racing towards us at an incredible speed was something so hideous that no words of mine can begin to describe it.....As I turned to flee, I heard it cry out with a gasping, high-pitched voice -

"Do you - puff - mind condensed milk?"

I heard no more, for at that moment the shattered bas-reliefs of the entrance collapsed about me in complete and final ruin. When I recovered, we were already in the air, flying towards safety and civilisation, away from the brooding nightmare horrors which had beset us so long and from whose unthinkable clutches we had so narrowly escaped.

THE END
(Thank God)

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THE RETURN OF SAM INSCRUTABLE

BY SAM MOSKOWITZ

Well, I'm back again. This time with a little candid commentary on the results of my article, "The Inscrutable American" angle published recently in "New Worlds", and of new conditions that have arisen in the world and just how they involve fandom.

I'd really like to thank Sirs Burke and Rosnblum for their kind treatment of me. I rather expected to be knocked down, stamped upon and then pushed through a wringer and shipped back to America with a tag "One way only". The way the article was actually received is more than a little tribute to the intelligence and understanding of the new group of British fans that have arisen.

What I wanted to do, and now sincerely hope I have done, was to cement good feeling and relations between American and British fans and, if possible, wipe away some of the myths about the intolerable quality of American fan magazines. I was mighty busy on the Convention at the time I wrote the article, and I knew darn well that if it did not serve its purpose, if it were not as complete and fair as I hoped it would be, I'd never dare show my face in an English fan magazine again. It would be many months before I could arrange even a semblance of a reply and counter-defense against some of the charges that might just possibly have backfired. But honestly, my intentions were of the finest, and my hopes ranged high. I believe the article has accomplished its purpose. The healthy discussion which followed gave opportunity for American and Briton to open relations. I can confidently say, that in the entire history of American fandom, British fans and fan magazines have never received such wide mention or have been so widely represented in American fan magazines. There are a few points which could be elucidated upon, perhaps.

First of all I wish to say that I have not practised what I preached. I have not arranged subscriptions or reciprocal exchanges with all the British fan magazines. I have not contributed liberally to British fan magazines. Not because I wouldn't like to, and like it a lot, but always because either conditions or finances never permitted it. I really am terrifically busy, and am not quite able to entirely keep up with all the American fan activities though I do shove my nose into a lot of them. I will try my very best to remedy this situation in the immediate future. That closes one avenue of attack.

Thanks is due to Ted Carnell for giving the article prominent display. If he had not, all would have been to no avail.

For some reason, I have always had a likening for John F. Burke as a fan. Ever since Abe Oshinsky showed me one of his letters, and ever since I saw the first hektographed issue of the "Satellite" which contained views I continually endorsed. But I could have flung my arms around him and hugged him /ED: You must have a long reach/ when in his reply he actually agreed with me on some points. That was more than I had expected. What I had expected was a line like "some vague element of truth lies hidden in that article" and then line after line of refutation, counter arguments, etc. One point though in Mr. Burke's article: "and a lot more response is necessary before I, at any rate, can say that American fans are the mainstay of the magazine". Now, I really