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Philip Sterling Rowe
Ursinus College

Anne C. Markland
Ursinus College

Roy Moyer
Ursinus College

Arthur King
Ursinus College

Linda Lee
Ursinus College

See next page for additional authors

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PROSE

The Quill ........................................ Editorial 5

The Wise Man ...................................... Philip Sterling Rowe 7

Of Men and Lobsters .............................. Philip Sterling Rowe 8

The Painting ...................................... Anne C. Markland 9

The Ghost of Moon Mountain ..................... Roy Moyer 12

POETRY

Song for the Atomic Age ....................... Art King 10

Opus I ........................................ Linda Lee 11

Stillness ........................................ T. M. McCabe 11

Volume XXVI Number 2
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Be Prepared

It is indeed an unfortunate resident of U.C. who has not been steeped in this fine old Boy Scout tradition. We are thinking particularly of an incident which occurred during the last heavy snowfall. As you know, the storm paralyzed most traffic and forced the rapid tempo of Collegeville life to a near standstill. There was one student, however, who decided to risk the 190-mile return trip from University Park to Ursinus. Refusing to yield to the weather, he fought his way through snowbanks and ice, overcoming all obstacles, until finally he succumbed to the one insurmountable barrier—the Ursinus driveway.

The Distaff Side

Word reaches that a movement is afoot to bar nearly all women from admission to American colleges and universities. A professor in an eastern university feels that such a move relieve overcrowded conditions and make it possible to provide a better educational atmosphere. To this we can only say, NO! NO! NO! What is to become of the cherished traditions surrounding higher education as we know it—the nightly socials in the library, the dances in the gym, the 12:29 dash, and the flat tire story? Will college males have to go for days and days without seeing a single well-turned ankle or a tennis shoe? And what of the ladies themselves? Surely we cannot deny them the tender, fatherly affection of the American college male.

Gentlemen, the time for action is now! Petition your Congressman or favorite preceptor and help stamp out this threat.

Did You Know . . .

*Here Is My Heart*, by Avon, has proved to be the most effective agent for neutralizing the atmosphere of the comparative lab. . . .

The Valentine card with the vulture on the cover and the not-too-narrowminded expression inside it developed into a local best seller. . . .

Upon graduation from Ursinus, one of our favorite chemistry professors autographed a yearbook with “Well, Alice, we struggled through that d*%n physics course.” Times just don’t change.

Science Marches On

Recently, we heard of an experiment in which a large white rat and a college student were each placed in the same maze, at the end of which each was rewarded with a piece of cheese. It will come as no surprise to our readers that the performance of the rat was superior to that of the college student. The investigator’s conclusion, hopeful for the future of humanity, was that a rat can be trained to follow the end of its nose to find a piece of cheese more easily than a college student. We should add, however, that recent experiments of a similar nature indicate conclusively that rats are far less susceptible than college students to liberal education.

In This Issue

By writing *The Wise Man*, Phil Rowe has earned for himself THE LANTERN’s prose award. A short short story, this piece has but a single main character. The story is not without meaning, and we feel that its point is worth considering.

Phil has also written *Of Men and Lobsters*, a somewhat unusual work of science fiction. The poetry award has been taken by Linda Lee, authoress of *Opus I*. One of the shortest poems ever to appear in this magazine, it contains excellent description and contrast in its few lines.

The cartoon on page 14 is the work of Mike Blewett, who has received the honors in this division of the contest. Dave Wright is the contributor of the cartoon on fraternity rush-
ing, and Andy Street is responsible for the one depicting a freshman's problem.

*The Painting*, by Anne Markland, describes the thoughts and emotions brought about by the viewing of a great work of art.

Roy Moyer's *The Ghost of Moon Mountain* concerns a mountainer and his sons, who find themselves involved in some very mysterious circumstances.

Writing in a serious vein for this issue, Tom McCabe is the author of *Stillness*, a poem reflecting the inner thoughts of a soldier.

*Song for the Atomic Age*, Art King's handiwork, expresses his feelings concerning the implications of the atomic era.
The Wise Man

Philip Sterling Rowe

The Wise Man sat in the shade on the edge of town and thought. He thought of the universe, and God, and Man; he contemplated The Beginning and The End, the problems of This World and The Next. He was very old. As long as memory had accurately served them, the villagers remembered seeing him in that same shade, thinking. People for miles around had come to ask him questions or to seek advice. And because his was the wisdom of the ages he had never been known to answer mistakenly.

This day was made for thinking; a gentle breeze toyed with the Wise Man’s silver hair, and the tree’s mossy sheathing felt comfortable beneath it. He rested and waited and thought.

Out of the heat of afternoon a tired stranger, drawn by the impetus of doubt, thirsting insatiably for knowledge, approached him. The stranger was troubled and weary; the imprint of fear was upon his face; he had traveled far to ask his question:

“Old Man, you have lived long and are wise. Grant me the benefit, the wisdom of your lifetime; satisfy the nameless dread within me; put my mind at rest. I look upon our world and I grow fearful. I see the monster Science which we have ourselves created, and I am afraid—not for myself alone, but for the generations following. When will it end—this progress in destruction? And how much further can our science go? What can we do to use it for the betterment of Man, as was intended?”

The Wise Man restlessly stretched out his feet and drew unintelligible figures in the warm dust. He studied the wind’s rustle in the leaves above, and his shadow’s fickle movement on the hot road—and he thought.

“Our is a world of fear, physical and spiritual. In theory there is no limit to our progress, but, practically, we have now reached the end. We have achieved so much—communication, transportation. We have reached the farthest point. Think how we live today; think also of our fathers. Yet are we any happier? Your, yourself, have answered. We have grown more dissatisfied at every new discovery. The product of invention has been insecurity. Our world today—greed, and intolerance, and again fear. Science’s every accomplishment put to militant use—out of war comes our scientific progress, weapons. I don’t wonder that you fear, for these are fearful times. Yes, these are times when souls as well as bodies stand in danger of extinction. For Mankind, it appears, seeks to destroy itself. Oh, with these modern ways of devastation I long so often for the old days, when we had far less and used it to far better purpose.

“Yet, of course, we must advance. I’m not so old or blind that I can’t realize this truth. My only counsel is to advance mentally as well. I believe that we must know ourselves, now especially with this frightening new power. No, I see no further progress in any scientific area; there is no way to go. But do not think that we may now relax. The hardest task of all remains for us, the task of spiritually progressing until we can achieve intelligent control of our own ingenuity. It is the heritage of future generations—this, Man’s most important work. But now it is the one road left to us. Yes, I will put your mind at rest. For Science finally is blocked. As I have said before, there is no way to go. And I thank God that we have reached our limit.”

So spoke the Wise Man, he who had never erred. The stranger went his way in thoughtful silence, leaving the Wise Man to his shade and to his contemplations.

The Wise Man sat there on the edge of town and thought. He contemplated all that had passed in his lifetime. He studied the heat waves rising from the road, and the dust-devils twisting their way into the distance. With his eyes he followed them. At a far point some children were playing, and he watched them. He watched the curious rolling of the rounded stone they had been playing with. He watched it and studied it.

The Wise Man sat in the shade and thought. He thought for a long, long time. Then he arose, and, putting aside all worry of fire-arrows and spears, he walked out into the sunlight—and invented... the wheel.
Joe Gordon paused while crossing the parking lot to gaze up at the sky and reflect for a moment on its eternal production. The night was beautiful. Its thousand eyes winked down at Earth as if in laughter at some celestial joke. And the pale shadows on the newly-risen moon seemed, almost, to join in on the fun, as did the whole galaxy. Joe slowly swung his vision in a great arc far as far as he could from one side to the other, drinking deep of the purity of space. He had often admired its timeless perfection. But tonight, somehow, the firmament reached out to him and held him in a splendored bond. He felt an identity, a oneness, with the stars themselves. The heavens drew closer, and the night wrapped round about him, and the infinite vastness of the universe was a nonentity. Caught up in its mantle, Joe thought, “This night is different. Something great is about to happen.”

It was; it did.

It’s difficult to explain how it happened. Any reasonably san person would go quietly mad, rather than admit the possibility. Joe considered himself reasonably sane, and as such, was vulnerable. Well, how would you feel if you suddenly found yourself in Joe’s position?

Joe and his wife were shopping, a respected American tradition. In the supermarket Joe’s wife went one way; he went another. It’s as simple as that.

“Hey jerk,” a voice shrilled in his ear, “lay off the aerial, will ya?”

Joe whirled around. There was no one within twenty yards, and certainly no one with—

“Hey stupid, how many times I gotta tell ya? Leggo the aerial.”

Joe glanced down, surprised to find himself bending over the lobster tank. For some reason he had absent-mindedly picked up one of the lobsters, and was gingerly holding it by the antenna. Suddenly, at the base of his spine, he felt that prickling sensation of fear. There was no one around—he looked at the animal in his hands. No, that was too incredible—

“Yeah, that’s right. It’s me,” the lobster said.

It dropped with a splash.

“That’s better, Joe. Pick me up right.”

Now Joe Gordon, as has been previously stated, considered himself a reasonably sane man. For this reason, and because of a regrettable addiction to science fiction reading, he refused to utter the expressions customarily used at times like these.

He didn’t say, “Either I’m going crazy or you spoke.” He didn’t even resort to the screaming hysterics. As calmly as he could under the circumstances, Joe managed to shriek, “Who in hell are you?”

“I,” came the immeasurably pleased reply, “am a Martian.”

This was going to be a night to remember!

Regrettably, the next segment of that rather one-sided conversation must be omitted, or if not omitted, then condensed. Certainly a word-for-word record would be in very poor taste. But then, might not the more polite elements of your vocabulary be temporarily forgotten in the excitement of meeting a Martian, and a lobster-shaped one at that? I don’t excuse Joe Gordon. I only appreciate his situation.

After a while, Joe examined more closely the specimen in his hand. It was hardly extraordinary, just a normal looking lobster, if you can call any lobster normal looking, a statement for which I excuse myself to all lobster lovers. For undoubtedly to some a lobster might quite conceivably look attractive. It only happens that my preference in such things runs toward the broiled state and well-cooked variety—a phrase which, if unnecessary, at least adequately describes Joe Gordon’s feelings.

“How is it you can speak our language?” Joe asked.

(Continued on page 14)
I never thought a painting could do that to me; after all, how can anyone portray real emotions or sentiments by using brushes and paint? Experiences are real; they are in a sense solid, and though they disappear and fade into memories for awhile they are tangible. How can something abstract and unreal like a painting so capture feelings that it is able to express itself to the observer? Impossible, or so I thought.

It was in his office—the professor's office—and I only caught a glimpse of it. A long narrow painting—buildings high yet ridiculously stooping as if to imprison the downtrodden inhabitants of the city. The people appeared in small groups scattered about on the sidewalk, heads bowed, hands in pockets. One could see the shaggy hair matted by the beads of sweat and outlining the hairline along the faces. Dark shadows, probably grime and dirt, were visible on the people's hands and faces. The women's dresses, horribly alike, were sloppy and beltless, and they hung loosely, showing the women as shapeless blobs. The children were as yet undeveloped duplicates of the elders, and you knew from observance almost exactly the life each youth would lead—or follow. Not a hopeful future. The children had no sparkle or bubble of carefree youth in their eyes or on their faces or even in their movements. They seemed all resigned to their fate and therefore had already proceeded to lower themselves down into their destined molds. The streets were gloomy and littered with debris and also seemed aware of their ill-fated destiny. They stretched out endlessly, but no longer restlessly as once they had done. That was the way the painting appeared at first in its entirety. But wait—something else—up in the corner of the painting high above the unhappy people was the sky, beaming and brilliant. And a little to one side a tiny portion of the sun was shown. There was hope—it wasn't all futility and despair. The brilliance of the sun and sky were not to be severed; their powers of penetration were indestructible, undefeatable. And they pushed their shimmer of good fortune right down between those gloomy buildings and flooded a portion of the street in a pool of light. And as I looked again more closely at the picture I noticed one person with his gaze directed upwards—glad to receive that flicker of light. And soon some of the others would sense the glow and they too would look up and then migrate slowly to that spot in which they could for a few brief hours bathe luxuriously in radiance. And after the sun went down and darkness folded over the city, their lives would once more sink back to the familiar pattern—a dull, routine existence. I lost myself in that painting. For awhile I actually was one among those people. I felt their common plight. And then the union was broken—I remembered the artist was mortal.
Song for the Atomic Age

Art King

Is there anything new here?
Is there anything under this sun
that hasn't already been done?

The voice, for all sudden fear,
asks; but we make no reply.
We tremble, and do not know why.
A judgment seems to descend.

A beginning is also an end.
These worlds beyond thinkable stars
remind us of plausible schemes
in the world before motorcars.
We cannot shake free of our dreams.
Oh, what is out on the moon?
and may we not rocket there soon?

Children playing on the lawn,
what far journeys are you on?
Scarce a space-adventurer
will find reasons to deter
from quest of alien fields and flowers
his vision to a world like ours.

There is no answer in the sky.
Dare; nor ask the city why
its streets are hateful to your sight.
Upward, then, into the night!

Let a new romanticism
breed its own obscurantism,
hinting of new elements
as drunkards of pink elephants.

What of transcendentalism?
What of existentialism?
In the world of outer space,
as in this of common sense,
is there no place
for (pardon the touch of morbidity)
"higher degrees of excellence"
or "moral responsibility?"

Why are there no voices crying,
"The key! give us the key!"?
In their beds the living slumber;
in their graves the dead are lying.

But momma, look at me!
I'm off, my eyes filled with stars,
on a visit to Venus or Mars.
Opus 1

LINDA LEE

Mist is soft and a veil to hide the city.
A subtle veil,
A delicate disguise.
Crude monoliths, the buildings stand
as prehistoric alters to an unknown god.
Hard grey and harsh—
Stone piled high on years of human work.
Stone—strong, enduring, jutting bravely upward.
But mist is soft and a veil to hide the city.

Stillness

T. M. McCabe

I thought I'd seen the last of stillness
and silence eerie.
As the lull before the storm
and the dead quiet of the battlefield
when the fighting has passed.
Or as the wintry sun
rises majestically o'er the black and devastated earth
in the wee hours of the frostbitten morn.

I thought these were but the feelings
of the tired warrior
home at last.
Safe,
Safe from the hidden land mine, the screaming
mortar,
the silent bullet.
Safe and free from war's privation, desolation
and death.

I thought that time would heal the wounds
that war had opened,
And never more
would I feel the terror of the long
and silent wait.
Nor feel the sickness and sorrow
for close comrades
departed.

I thought I'd seen the last of stillness,
and the cold hand of death
upon my heart,
But now I know that I was wrong
for the stillness, the sickness,
and the sorrow
are once more with me.

And as the wintery sun rises majestically
O'er the calm and peaceful earth
I bow my head
before my Mother's grave,
And pray.
I'm just setting on the porch one morning chucking me some stones at a tree stump and thinking about going fishing, when all of a sudden this here big ol' booming-like noise comes over the hill from the direction of the mountains. Pretty soon Pa and Jed—he's my older brother—they come running on out of the cabin wanting to know what's going on, and when I tell them I sure don't know, Pa says, "Well by heaven, boy! Don't just set there like a toad sunning hisself on a rock. Go find out!" Pa's like that, y'know. Why, if the whole cabin ever caught fire with him inside, I don't guess he'd do nothing but set there stomping and hollering like crazy for somebody to come put it out.

Well, anyway, I don't feel a whole lot like going nowhere just then, but after thinking on it some, I start in to getting right curious about the whole thing myself, especially when I recollect as how the last time I heered a ruckus like that was when Little Jack Mason and Willie Smithers had that big fight over at the Pine Tree general store. Besides, I sure ain't up to having Pa riled up and everybody at each other's throats. they won't be nothing for a bit, Pa finally-ups and asks us what all the ruckus was about.

By the time me and Jed get back, the sun is looking like pretty well past noon, and there's Pa setting on the porch just as cool as you please whittling himself a stick and taking a pull every now and then from the jug at his feet. Well, we go up and flop down in the shade near Pa with Jed cussing a blue streak at the heat, and after we don't say nothing for a bit, Pa finally-ups and asks us what all the racket was about.

"Some outside feller got hisself all tangled up in the brush at the foot of Moon Mountain," says Jed.

"Well now," says Pa, "I reckon that's about the most peculiar thing I ever heerd tell of. A feller'd have to be pretty big to kick up all that there fuss just by falling into some ol' brush patch."

"What Jed means, Pa," I says before Jed can pick up the bait, "is that this here feller was in a car, and the both of them most likely fell off of the mountain road somehow, because the car was all smashed up and this feller had went and got himself threwed right on out of the car and killed."

Then Pa says he don't guess we'd thought to look to this feller's shoes nor nothing, and when Jed allows as how we didn't, Pa says real disgusted-like, "Well, I just don't know what you boys is going to do when I'm dead and gone. Lord knows I try to take care of you, but 'pears like I can't learn you nothing a-tall. Ain't nobody can say it's none of my doing if..."

And he stops talking just like that, and sets his whistling down real slow, and this funny, hard kind of look comes into his eye. Then, finally, he says—staring straight at Jed all the time, mind you, "Well now," he says, "you wouldn't be holding nothing back on your ol' pa, would you?" He leans forward real slow as he says that, and before I know what's happening, he makes a sudden, quick jab at Jed and comes up holding this here gold pocket watch. Well, you should see Jed's face; he looks just like a feller what'd got a knife stuck in his gut and is trying to make out like he don't notice nothing. And all the time Pa's just chuckling in his beard, holding the watch up in the air watching it catch the sunlight. Jed starts in right away, of course, saying how sorry he is about forgetting about the watch and how he was going to give it to Pa all along and everything, but Pa just shuts him up with a good buckhnd wallop that snaps Jed's head back and busts his lip open.

Now, you know Pa ain't one for beating around the bush; there's no telling what he might've done if'n he'd been mad, but as it is, he just looks at me real thoughtful-like and says, "Boy, understand, I ain't asking you nothing, but if'n you figure there's something you oughtta say about this here, you best get it out now while I still feel like listening." Well sir, I'm ready to tell Pa the whole thing right then and there, but I see Jed looking at me out of the corner of his eye, and I figure maybe I'd best keep out of it. Anyways, I know as long as them two is at each other's throats, they won't be bothering me none. So when I don't say nothing after while, Pa gets up and goes back inside, and I go back to bouncing stones off the tree stump again.

Even at supper that night it's pretty plain that Pa's still smoking some from what Jed's tried to pull off on him. Jed himself ain't looking too happy about the whole thing, and neither of them's spoke nary a word to the other all that
noon. None of this is new to me, of course. Both Jed and Pa’s got good size streaks of pigheadedness through them, and I ain’t hardly seen a day go by when them two don’t lock horns over something or other, especially since Ma died. But it looks like this un’s going to build up to a real Saturday night blowout before them two’s finished.

Well, Jed’s done eating before me and Pa, and he gets up and picks his squirrel gun out’n the corner and starts for the door. When Pa asks whereabouts he’s going, Jed says, real short-like, “Hunting squirrel.”

“That so,” says Pa kind of casual, as if he don’t care a-tall. “What you going to use for ca’tridg’s?” I guess he figures Jed is really going out by himself to sulk, and he wants to give him a little something extra to eat out his insides about.

“Never you mind ’bout that,” Jed throws back. “I got some all right.” Now, the way Pa’s feeling just then, that’s kind of sticks at him some, especially ’cause so far as he knows there ain’t been no ca’tridg’s in spitting distance for two, three weeks.

“Boy!” Pa calls out so sharp that it catches Jed right at the door and holds him there tight. “Now you listen to me. Y’know, twicet in one day is enough to make a man take to his fists. If’n you ain’t lying to me, you just best tell me right off where a boy like you is going to get ca’tridg’s in the first place, and in the second place how come he don’t even tell his own pa about it. Why, boy, that just sounds like pure spite to me.” You can tell Pa’s getting riled some, too, ’cause his beard’s working up and down and the corners of his mouth is starting to twitch like he’s trying to smile but can’t quite make it.

So I figure right there that Jed’s went too far; but Jed, he has it figured some other way I guess, ’cause without no trouble a-tall he tells Pa the whole story: how at the crash he found this here set of store teeth what’d been knocked out of the feller’s mouth, and how he kept them ’cause some of them was gold, and he figured anything a-tall that was gold might be kind of a nice thing to have. Then he tells how we met Jeremy Stuart on the way home, and how he traded the teeth to him for some ca’tridg’s.

When Jed comes to that part about the teeth, I tell you, Pa turns right pale, pretty near as pale as he was the night Ma died, and he kept saying as how he heerd her screaming outside, only it wasn’t but the wind. He didn’t sleep nary a wink all that night, but kept watching at the window with his shotgun. Well, when Jed sees how pale Pa’s go, he starts in to looking right pleased with himself.

“Jed,” Pa finally says real quiet and kind of shaky-like, “if’n you know what’s good for you, you’re going to take them ca’tridg’s back to Jeremy Stuart right now and get them things back and take them to where they belong. Lordy, boy, you ought’ve known better than to do something like that!”

Well, sir, Jed’s spite gets the best of him then, and he’s pretty near grinning outright. He knows (Continued on page 16)
The Martian snorted. (A difficult feat for a lobster, but one which, when accomplished, adds infinitely more emphasis to the gesture.) “Speak your language! You Earth people have no language, just a nauseous jumble of ugly, irritating sounds. You’re not only dependent on your primitive vocal chords, you must also use gestures to be understood. It sure beats me how you ever get anything done. You don’t even have a standard system. And those of you who seem to speak the same language are different, too. Why even I find myself using your slang, now and then.”

He went on, “Pure thought is the only true communication. I send mine to you through these aerials, and it seems as if I’m talking.”

“Antennae!” Joe suggested.

“That’s the natural species,” replied the lobster. “But you see, as I said before, I’m a Martian.” He continued, “I use the word aerial as the nearest meaning in your vocabulary. Actually, it’s much more. It controls my every move, and is so sensitive that any prolonged handling or pressure, such as you gave it, could damage it beyond repair.”

“But of course you wouldn’t be interested in my anatomy. Right now you’re wondering why I’m here. Well, I’ll settle your doubts now. It’s an invasion, and I’m a scout. Yep, just like all the stories. I make my report tomorrow, and,” he added playfully, “if I don’t show up, it’s all off.”

The sudden hope set Joe aflame.

“The aerials,” he thought, “his weakness. If only 1—”

Slowly Joe crushed his fingers together. Then his fingers stopped. He hadn’t meant for them to stop, yet they had.

The air was filled with the laughter of one little Martian.

“That’s better, Joe. I like action. I’m surprised you didn’t try sooner. Why, I was told that you’d try to kill us on sight. Earth creatures don’t like things that are different. These other lobsters in the tank, they sense a difference, too. They’d kill me if they could, but they know I could handle them all. Oh, wait Joe, don’t get to doubting your strength. See, I can handle any rational being, mentally. Why I could clamp a block on your brain so you’d never even remember this. But I won’t have to. No one would believe you, and it won’t matter anyway after tomorrow. Now don’t look so desperate. Oh sure, we’ll kill you all off, but would that be so bad? Look at the mess you’ve made of things. Besides, you knew this was coming. You’ve talked about it for years—invasion from Mars.”

He laughed again, and Joe felt the bottom drop out of his stomach.

“Joe Gordon, put that filthy thing down and help me carry these groceries.”

Joe looked up helplessly at his wife, then placed the Martian in his tank, and turned away.

Aren’t you even going to say goodbye, Joe?” the Martian called. “Well, never mind,” he added cheerfully, “I’ll see you tomorrow—D-day you know.”

In a daze Joe stumbled after his wife. Of course the Martian had been right. No one would believe him. And tomorrow—Joe shuddered.

One thing in particular was burning through his mind—the answer to his question, “Why lobsters?”

“Why not?” the Martian replied frankly.

Why not, of course, why not? What had Earth expected—Wellsian monsters, fanfare, flying saucers? What better way to study Earth than from the safety of a supermarket lobster tank? What better way to observe the stupidity of their ridiculously easy prey? And tomorrow—what difference did it make? Man had made a mess of things. But if only they had known; if only they could try again.

Joe bowed his head in resignation.

“So long, Kate,” he started, “I’ve got a long line of bars to hit before morning.”

But Kate wasn’t listening. She was looking backward in fascinated horror.
“Joe,” she cried, “look at the terrible thing you’ve done.”

He looked back. Some children, their natural fear overcome by his example, were curiously picking up the lobsters for closer examination. Children—irrational, cruel, so prone to mimicking adults. One little urchin, a broad grin on her childish sunny face, was busily twisting the antennae off the head of the largest lobster. Joe could almost hear the Martian’s scream of pain. He looked at the child. “I can control any rational being, mentally.” It must have been frustrating, the attempt to control that mind.

Children—what could be more irrational? The saviors of the world—what could be more fitting? The best laid plans of men and lobsters—

* * *

“Let’s go home, Kate. I’ve got a lot of life I want to start living. And Kate, I don’t know how long it’s been since I told you this, but in case you’ve forgotten it like I had, I love you.”

They walked together beneath the same night sky, but it was different. The timeless aura was gone, and it was fitting.

* * *

The next morning the seafood manager, much to his consternation, found a dead lobster in the tank. It had been torn to pieces by the other lobsters while apparently helpless, for it appeared that somehow it had lost its antennae. Lobsters aren’t so far removed from humans in hating anything different.

It is interesting to note the curious fact that, while making out his report, the manager could find no actual loss on the books, even though he knew he had a dead lobster. It seemed almost as if he’d had one too many, in the first place. But the mind plays funny tricks sometimes.

At any rate, it isn’t too far fetched to imagine, somewhere, a Martian Task Force Leader, faced with the unexplained loss of his scout, addressing the army:

“I guess we’ll have to postpone the invasion—at least temporarily.”

* * *

Directive to GHQ No. 1

Commander Qrl,

Greetings:

This text has been relayed verbatim, exactly as it was found in a leading Earth publication. While published as fiction, the simile is too strikingly accurate to be accidental. I have no doubt that it explains, fully, the disappearance of Scout 17. Furthermore, I feel that it is to our advantage to delay matters for a while. It is obvious that we cannot now continue with the present plan. However, this story’s very form proves our main strength—time. A patient race, such as our own, can afford to wait, for Earth will never suspect or believe until it is too late. Meanwhile, I respectfully submit that we follow the story writer’s suggestion and postpone the invasion, at least until we have discovered a better way to plant our scouts, and can observe more closely. It appears that there is a great deal which we do not know about these humans. Let us then employ a term which is strictly Earth-like, and alien to our thought processes. Let us postpone the invasion—temporarily.

Respectfully,

Scout 14

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THE GHOST OF MOON MOUNTAIN

Pa's got some mighty peculiar notions about dead folk and such, and he sees he's got Pa right where he wants him. "Shucks, Pa," he says with that sweetish sound in his voice that Pa used on him sometimes, "you was sure quick enough laying hold to that nice shiny watch you been showing off all day, wasn't you? Now, I just can't see where you get off 'grudging me a little of' . . ."

"That ain't the p'int," Pa cuts in. "They's some difference betwixt a dead man's watch and a dead man's teeth. Why, a feller's teeth is just like part of him, even if'n they is store bought. Don't you be giving me back none of your sass now. I'm your pa, and I understand these things a sight better'n you."

I come near busting out laughing with Pa going on that way about the teeth and all; but I get serious again right quick when, all at once, he jumps up from the table and holers out just like his ol' self, "Now you get the devil out of here, boys, and do like I'm telling you before I knock your own teeth out in that damn silly grin of your'n!"

Well, Jed knows when Pa means business all right I guess, and he just drops his gun and lights out so fast he like to got his legs all tangled up going through the door. And I tell you, I'm keeping one eye on that there door my own self. 'cause I figure maybe Pa's going to light into me next; once he gets going he ain't easy to stop. But all he does is stand there a minute with his beard working like crazy, then he gets down his shotgun, which he's kept loaded ever since Ma died, and sets down and puts his feet up on the table and starts in to waiting for Jed to get back.

Now, it's a good long walk over to Stuarts then to Moon Mountain and back to here again, and by some time after the lamp is lit, there still ain't no sign of Jed. Pa, he's acting just like I ain't even there, and to tell the truth I'm just as glad to leave it at that. I ain't hardly ever seen him like that before. Every little night noise that comes from outside, he gives a jump, like so's you can almost see his ears perk up. Then, after he listens some and figures there ain't nothing unnatural going on, he settles down again. And even though he said what he did to Jed about the watch, every little bit he kind of puts his hand down and fumbles around with that ol'
gold thing, like he's trying to set his mind straight on something. Finally, he takes the watch out altogether and pushes it out on the table in front of him.

It goes on like that for some time with Pa setting there real quiet, giving a little start now and then like a skittish rabbit. Seems like I must've dozed off after while, 'cause the next thing I know Pa's shaking me awake all excited-like and saying something about something being outside in the dark. I try to tell him it's most likely just some ol' porky or maybe fed coming back, but he don't pay me no mind. He just keeps talking real fast and kind of hoarse-like so's I can hardly tell what he's saying, and his face is all pale again, and his eyes is big and shiny in the lamp-light.

"Come on, boy," he keeps saying. "Come on, get up now. They's something I don't like outside in that brush, and you and me is going to find out what it is. Come on now, get a move on."

He drags me up and pushes me at the door with one hand while he holds his shotgun with the other, and all the time he keeps talking on like that. I grab me up the lamp as I go by, and when Pa pushes me on through the door, I stop and hold the light up high so's we can see. About thirty foot away, hanging there all by itself in the air under a tree where it can catch the light real good, is a human skull with the biggest, meanest grin I ever seen.

Well sir, Pa spots it before me, and he lets out a holler that like to bring the whole sky down on us. Then he fires off both barrels of his shotgun in the general direction of the skull and takes off toward the river like he's got religion. Right then I ain't up to doing much figuring; I tear out right on after Pa just as fast. I would've outrun him, too, 'cept his legs is some longer'n mine. After a bit, the both of us get pretty well wore out, so we lay down in the brush sweating and panting and decide to wait right there in the woods till morning. Wasn't neither of us fixing to tangle with no dead folk.

Come sunup, the both of us is feeling some better, and after a while Pa allows as how maybe we should go back and see what's what. I tell him I guess maybe we should too; only thing is, we don't have no more shot left, so it ain't till a couple hours later that we leave the woods.

The first thing we do when we get back is to sneak up real careful-like to the place we seen the

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skull the night before. Well, there's the skull all right, laying right there under the tree and not looking near so scary in the daylight. It's all pitted and cracked up where Pa's shot hit it and still tied 'round with the vine that it hung from the tree by. But there's something else laying under that tree, too; it's Jed, all stretched out and with his eyes big and staring and his mouth wide open like he's trying real hard to tell us something and can't make it come out. His shoulder and neck is all chewed up like he took most of the blast from Pa's gun.

Seems like Pa don't know what to make of it at first, and he don't say nothing, just stares. Then he drops his jaw and sets down hard right where he's standing.

"Now if that don't beat all!" is all he finally says, real quiet, just like that: "Now if that don't beat all!"

"Yes sir," I says just as quiet, "it sure does." Only right then I ain't thinking of exactly what Pa is. I'm looking at the pair of busted, silver-rimmed eyeglasses that Jed's hand is wrapped around and thinking how much they look like them that I seen laying near the dead feller we found yesterday.

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