

# TALL TELLS ON TREDEGAR COVE

H. KIRK RAINER



MY HOME INDUSTRY

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## TALL TELLS ON

TUNNEL TIME	1
TREDAGAR ON	9
BOOZER BANK	21
COOTER BROWN	31
CARPENTER'S ANGST	41
CEDAR WOODS	53
COVE CREATURE	63
DANVIEW DAM	77
FLATTIRE RIM	89
GRAY'S SHADES	101
HORACE HELPER	111
HUSLEY HUSSLE	125
JILL BEAL	137
JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY	149
LAKESIDE LOVE-IN	159
GERMANIA GEMS	171
NESBITT ORANGE	177
MC FALL'S FALL	185
RICK'S BRICKS	191
SADDLED CLUB	197
ROADS LESS TRAVELED	203
SPRING ACTION	213



## TUNNEL TIME



"What is TUNNEL TIME," you ask. Well I tell you friend: it not's like anything you know or could probably imagine. It is a way to learn—an enlightening.

Oh, you have a pretty good imagination, you say. It may be "pretty good" but I doubt it will match TUNNEL TIME." There's nothing like passing through the TUNNEL and reaching TREDEGAR COVE with all its riches and wealth, you see as you will see more still.

No, not gold and other such valuables, not really. The "riches and wealth" in COVE have more to do with learning and loving, not holding and hoarding; it has to do more with intrinsic value and not material or monetary value—more to do with what really matters most for the soul like you, living and life.

## TREDEGAR COVE

You want knowledge. do you? Why not; we all want knowledge. but the issue or question is how willing we are to work at it—how much we yearn to learn.

If you really want knowledge. to get the wealth and riches of COVE. you've got to be willing to learn.

"Is that all?" No. there's more to TUNNEL TIME than being willing.... You've also got to have a little faith. Yes. that's right: you've got to believe without necessarily knowing. I guess your right: you can't find knowledge until you believe that it exists. and you can't get knowledge until you're ready to learn.

No. I'm not making this up. Yes. I do get a little creative sometimes—even imaginative—but this is all true. real. solid stuff.

"What about my name?" Oh. I see. You're implying that "TALL TELLS" is just like tale tells—that I'm prone to exaggeration and. occasionally. stretching the truth beyond its elasticity. am I right?

Believe what you want to. If one "L" means nothing to you. that's your problem. If the difference between "TALL" and "tale" is not evident. that's not my fault. All I'm trying to say is that I. TALL TELLS. have grown to be tall and learned to tell—and that's all there is to it.

What kind of name is "soul" anyway? Oh. it's not your name. but what you are? Okay. I can live with that.

What is your name then? "Sojourner." you say. Well. Sojourner. what do say we go on a journey through TUNNEL TIME: the greatest opportunity for learning that's ever been?

## TUNNEL TIME

Oh. "not yet." you say. "Want more information on the COVE." do you? Not quite ready; want to make sure you know what you're getting into. I can see that; it's smart to ask questions. But just remember that you still have to have a little faith. Now. hit me.

Why the TUNNEL? You want to know why the TUNNEL is the only way to get to the COVE. I see; well it really not just the TUNNEL; again. you've got to have faith. But as to the "real world". why does soul have to pass through this one and only one? Hmmm. I. well I. don't rightly know. I guess you will just have to believe TALL TELLS and leave it at that. Next question. if you please.

The faith; you want know why a little faith is needed? Another tough one; now let's see. let me think—real hard like. It's because...I believe it: I believe that faith a little faith is needed because we can never been absolutely sure about anything. this side of the TUNNEL.

"Is doesn't make sense to you" that you have to "believe in believing"? Yah. I see you point; it doesn't that reasonable to believe. But I will tell you this; without faith. you're not going to make it to the COVE.

This is a sore point for you. is it: having to have faith? It's what: "Illogical"? Hmmm. I'm not familiar that one. Time to turn once again to JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY; okay. here we go: in a manner contrary to the laws of argument. Oh yeah. that helps. continue: next....

You're concerned about "creatures". Well. we're all created; you. me. them. What's that; oh. those that mean to do harm. Well. let me

## TREDEGAR COVE

see. I can think of one right off. "Who is it?" This name should be easy to remember: it's COVE CREATURE. Cant' tell you much more at this time: you'll have to wait and figure it out later.

The TUNNEL: you're concerned about whether it is sound, strong? It is honed-out of a stone hill, formed with RICK'S BRICKS—durable, strong, built to last and last, and....

"Who is RICK'S BRICKS?" Obviously, it's the source for all structural projects, like the TUNNEL. More, you want more? BRICKS are the best, and RICK'S is too—that's about I can say for now. Cant' tell you much more at this time: you'll have to wait and figure it out later.

"Is RICK'S BRICKS strong enough to stop COVE CREATURE? I don't know. Let's wait...later and see what happens. If one doesn't work, maybe the other will.

"What do I mean by 'other'?" You don't miss much, do you? There are others, besides myself and RICK'S.

"Who are they" By name, with a brief, they are: HORACE HELPER, COOTER BROWN, JILL BEAL, ROY TOY, and SPIDER WEBB; other voices in TREDEGAR—interesting every one—that you meet, no doubt. But before you start probing again, I'll just let you know to wait until then, got it?

No, not faith again: you still want to talk about faith? Okay, for the record, you have to have a little faith to pass through the TUNNEL and, once in the COVE, faith to believe.... No, no more: that's all I've got to say.

## TUNNEL TIME

"Other things of interest; you want to know about other things? Well, there's FLATTIRE RIM—the perfect example of what happens



when faith runs short. "What's FLATTIRE still doing in the COVE", then? A good one: yeah, you'll to wait on that too.

Then there's BOOZER BANK: a real fixer, if there ever was one. "What does BOOZER do?" Oh please, you don't want to know, trust me on that one. What's that, you insist to know? All I can say is that the BANK may qualify as a "creature"—sneakier than COVE CREATURE, if that is possible. Oh, and just remember one other thing about BOOZER: the easiest way to rob a bank is own one.

"Does the COVE have things to eat?" Of course it does. All coves have water, wildlife and such; but you know all that, don't you.

There's a lot of water: the COVE and river; and then there's DANVIEW DAM, the very reason that the COVE is—

"Is it strong?" DANVIEW DAM is, like the TUNNEL, built strong and durable. I mean, think about all that pressure and force from the river. Think about what might happen if the DAM broke: a small crack can propagate quickly—the results profound.

"What does 'propagate' mean?" Here: here's JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY. You look it up: "P. R. O." What, it's not in there? Well, I tell you, propagate means to spread or grow. And when a crack grows in a DAM, it's like, SPRING ACTION—fast and furious. Don't want to be on there when the crack propagates, clear enough?

## TREDEGAR COVE

One thing you will notice right off is the color. You see, color isn't the same: it's not all the variety as here. The COVE is NESBITT ORANGE. Yah, it may seem plain, but with such mono-color comes lots of details: things you may not have seen before. There is black & white, sepia and others, but ORANGE is an original. So you might well get use to it—even though you haven't seen it yet. It just the way it is in TREDEGAR.

Wow, you ask a lot of questions! With this persistence, you might want to think about law enforcement, an investigator, inspector or interrogator. I think you would do well at it.

What's that? Oh, you already have: you think you want to be a lawyer or attorney. Why...? That's alright, don't tell me! You know, I probably wouldn't believe it anyway.

"Does TREDEGAR have law?" Why yes, we have the HUSLEY HUSTLE. "What is it?" It's HUSLEY; and yeah, when you're in the COVE you've got to do the HUSTLE, of else. "Or else what...?" Objection you HUSLEY!



Look soul, I mean Sojourner: the law is the law, right?

You want to know if HUSLEY HUSTLE is just and fair. Well, to tell you the truth and nothing but the truth, I don't think I've thought about that. You see, I haven't had any real encounters with the HUSTLE. Sure, I danced around it a time or two: but I've never actually gone to the dance, so to speak. Let's save that question for those more familiar with it—that has solid stuff—like GRAY'S SHADES.

## TUNNEL TIME

Oh. I didn't mention GRAY'S SHADES? Well. I told you all about the original orange. but on reflection. I failed to mention GRAY'S. Not everything in TREDEGAR is NESBITT ORANGE; sometimes things can turn shades of gray. or GRAY'S SHADES—which means that behind every orange cloud there is some gray lining. Ah. you don't get it? I'm saying that things are not always oranges and cream; sometimes things get a little sour and smelly too. What can I say: we have our faults.

What gave that impression? No. of course the COVE is not perfect. I mean. just look at the DAM. the BANK. and all those high & mighty at the SADDLE CLUB. "What about the SADDLE CLUB?" Oh soul. don't get me started on that one. Every time I think about I start to breakout with a serious case of the CARPENTER'S ANGST. No. it is not perfect—but we're working on it.

On the orange side of life. there is: the fabulous LAKESIDE LOVE-IN. and the pristine CEDAR WOODS. Yes. these things really add to the whole ambiance of the COVE. Look it up. "A. M. B. I. A. N. C. E."

But before we set-out. you need to understand that this journey is the ROAD LESS TRAVELED; it is not easy—believing in belief is not an easy thing to do. You will be helped. but you will also be hindered. Just because you pass through the TUNNEL does not mean that everything will be all NESBITT. You'll have to accept the GRAY'S with the ORANGES—just like

## TREDEGAR COVE

here—the good with the bad. Are you ready for some TUNNEL TIME?

## TREDEGAR ON



Did you here me. Sojourner? Are you ready?

"TREDEGAR ON." came the surety of a serious soul. Well good then; and remember, you've got to believe in belief—that's the only way to make the passing.

"And when you get to other side. I'll be there waiting for—," echoed the last words of TALL TELLS in the distant yonder.

I was alone; no sound—complete silence except for the rhythm of my heart beating at light speed as though I had just run hard. TALL said he would meet me there. Now I just have to believe. "I believe." I said aloud.

Maybe he was just telling tales. I thought; but in that moment, I heard a faint sound coming from the deep in the tunnel. Steadily and speedily the sound grew. Peering into the tunnel, I could see a

## TREDEGAR COVE

faint light: first the size of a pinhead and, like the sound, growing until it was big and brilliant.

I couldn't move, but stood there at the face, fixated on the light, overcome by the resonating sound. My mind said "move, now"; but my body would not answer. I should have been scared, but I was strangely at peace. Both the light and sound engulfed and then absorbed me. Nothing was within my control.



The deafening sound came to an abrupt end and my heartbeat returned. I was floating. I thought: seemingly weightless, hovering above the ground—unafraid of the flight, unmoved by the motion. This is strange and wonderful. I thought.

Weightless. I lost all sense of my body somewhat like floating, drifting in water but without any bobbing. Meanwhile, my mind began to wonder about all things orange in origin or other. Why orange. I first wondered, only to remember what TALL TELLS has said: everything is NESBITT in the COVE, mono-chrome in nature.

## TREDEGAR ON

An object drifted toward me, just as the light had: first small and indistinguishable, then increasing and obvious. It was a car, but not just any: this was a Batsun 240Z, like the model I had built. It was sunburst orange and showroom perfect. Someone was driving it, though it floated as I did. Who is that, I thought, only to realize it was me: I was driving it or at least sitting behind the wheel, listening to a favorite tune on the radio. This was not a memory, but a dream. I had dreamed of driving the model I built.



Other objects came and went. Some I did not recognize or recall, but all were orange. I watched from inside the car, cruising and listening to some country song called "Orange Blossom Special". "Hum, not my kind," I said to myself; and turning the knob, another came booming out. "Oh yeah, that's more like it: Orange Grove."

It was a great ride, no bumps or traffic; it was more like flying or floating. "Flying in my 240Z, if my friends could see me now," I told myself. "I wish they were me, traveling in TUNNEL TIME. Wonder what they're doing now."

Summer fun was nothing like this, I thought. I could have never dreamed anything like this, no matter how good my imagination. Sure, the other side was my life and, yeah, orange was around; but somehow, I can't think about a single thing that matched this. TALL TELLS was right.

## TREDEGAR COVE

Shoes. small shoes were there. in the seat beside me. Those look familiar. but then. they looked much like any pair of basic tennis shoes. I picked them up and. I as did. I heard voices: it my father talking to me. "Sojourner. do you want to learn how to tie you shoes." he asks as began to tie them once more. "Now. that's how you do it." as he described each step. "I like to double-knot them." I didn't remember having orange shoes. but I did seem to remember that moment with him. It's funny how a memory can lie silent and then. for no particular reason. come forth with a distinct voice. a detailed description.

Looking down. I could see the tops of TREDEGAR COVE: some of the features that TALL TELLS had described. "That looks like BOOZER BANK." It was sizeable spread that covered an entire block on the square. That's right. I remembered: the BANK was originally called TREDEGAR.



On the square was a big garden with a fountain. Large. blooming sunflowers covered the area. giving-off a sweet fragrance. even this high above. All floral and things naturally gave off an orange tint with a similar effect of a photo filter. Details of such were more apparent than usual. like looking intently at a black & white where mood shines through.

## TREDEGAR ON

The skyline and space was likewise orange—not unlike those early morning sunrises or similar sunsets where all variety of orange streams through the air. The sun was as it always is, or was, reminding me of



the earlier light that blinded me and held me captive. As all this came to view, I realized that seeing is indeed, believing.

And still the images kept coming: those that had been frequent just moments ago (or was it hours). "Is that another sun," but as the object spun I could see it was billiard ball. Five is my lucky number. I thought, remembering that it won me some stuff.

Terms ran through my mind:

- ✿ Orange juice
- ✿ A Clockwork Orange
- ✿ Agent Orange
- ✿ Orange and blue

I could explain or understand some of them. What is 'agent orange'. I thought: a spy of some sort—posing as one, but yet another?

And still the images.... "What's that: a picture of whom? It was pale, orange bearded. And then another term or phrase came with a name, probably one in the same: "There is no blue without yellow and without orange." Vincent Van Gogh, an artist, I thought, not realizing how I knew this. "No blue...it's true."

## TREDEGAR COVE

What did this mean: "no blue"? Could it mean that we must have the rain with the sun, night with day, the good with the bad or the orange with the gray? For blue made me think of being sad, down or in the darkness. But still, let me TREDEGAR ON, no matter the days, the ways or the plays put upon me. Let me say to the gray: "Do your worst, for I will do mine! Then the fates will know you as we know you." So were the courageous words of someone named Alex: Alexander Dumas—a name I seem to remember from a favorite story my father read me.



How and why such thoughts came is beyond my understanding. Was it the images, TUNNEL TIME, or something that had heretofore been silent—I do not know. All I say right now is that it is.

"A Clockwork Orange: what was that?" Something about friends, a gang, something called Droogs. A different dialect, a Slavic slang; a film about those in the darkness; Clockwork Orange was a film. "Oh where have you gone Billy Boy, Billy Boy, I have gone to pick a fight, hurt each one with all my might, I'm too young, I cannot do no other."

"It's funny how the colors of the real world only seem really real when you view them on a screen," and as though waking from a dream, my immediate thought was that, whatever "Clockwork Orange" was, it was weird thanks to someone named Stanley Kubrick. "It's exactly like being asleep: you have no sense of time. The only difference is that you don't dream." But was I dreaming.

## TREDEGAR ON

or was I dreaming about dreaming? "I do not know. All I know is that I do not know—I do not get it, yet."

And then I heard the sound of an engine: not a train engine, but something more like a plane or jet. It got louder and deafening—like that in the TUNNEL—but was soon drowned out by an explosion that shook the car and rattled me. I was stunned, as before, but still afraid of what it meant, for me.

Smoke filled the car and everything about me. I could not see anything, even myself; but was once again caught in a state of silence and stillness—unsure of where I was or who I am. There were screaming and shouting that, like the smoke, covered every corner both outside and inside; and images of damage and destruction, burning bright. "It won't hurt you. It's just to kill plants. It's called Agent Orange...and it won't bother humans," from a voice called Karl Marlantes. All the orange plants will die, I thought. "Agent Orange kills the orange sunflowers." But no sooner had the smoke come did it go; it dissipated in a split second returning me to my self, sight and sense.

"What darkness that was," I murmured to myself. May I never have to see this—not now, not ever—but only orange and some occasional blue or gray. I said with all that I could or should believe.

## TREDEGAR COVE

With the smoke cleared, the skyline was welcomed back. Down below, I could see something bigger than the BOOZER BANK: a big orange bowl, the size of a stadium. As it sparked my interest, loud voices could be heard—the bowl acting like some sort of mammoth megaphone. What are they saying, I wondered as the shouting took on a kind a rhythm, like a song or chant? Then I heard: “Orange.” a pause, then “Blue”: back and forth it went, each episode with greater intensity and volume. Coming closer to the bowl, the interior had a big open space surrounded by all the shouting and chanting. One side of the space was orange, the other blue: in the space, something or someone was running frantically. In detail, it looked like a pig running about with others in chase. Someone seemed to catch the pig and run with it or—believe it or not—hurl it toward another. Yes, that’s right: the Cove had flying pigs. And still, the cadence continued: “Orange.” a pause, then “Blue”. “Can’t they make up their mind,” I ask myself.



Amid the throngs of onlookers dressed in orange and blue, I could see—thanks to a handy pair of binoculars—a group standing up and shouting something else. Others behind them shouted back,




“Sit down you boozer!” What, was this the one, BOOZER BANK, that TALL TELLS has mentioned. Seemingly unaware of the shouts, the boozer just kept on

standing, and swaying in concert with the chants. All in all, the

## TREDEGAR ON

boozer—the whole lot of them—looked like they were having a good time, no matter the choice of orange or blue, the pig in flight or on the ground. It was all good for the boozer.



For those directly behind them where, by this time, done with the shouting; and like a wrecking ball, came flying down—directly into the mass of the boozer—busting-up their celebration in one clean sweep. “What are they doing? It was too much—even more ridiculous than flying, frantic, fleeing pigs. Finally, the pig crossed over some line and everyone stopped to watch—even the wrecking ball. “I don’t get it: all this to see pigs fly?”

Putting the binoculars aside, I had not noticed until now that someone was sitting in the seat beside me. “Who are you; where did you come from?”

“I am Jill. I live here in the COVE.”

“Yeah alright, but how did get here, in the Datsun?”

“Oh that was easy; I just showed-up like the shoes and binoculars. You don’t these do you—a bit too small, even for you,” she remarked as she tossed them out the door window.

“Hey, I liked those shoes; they reminded me of—”

“You’ll get over it soon enough. Say, where are you headed?”

“I’m headed your way, to the COVE.”

“Perfect; then you don’t mind if I go along for the ride?”

“Do I have a choice?”

“Sure, you have a choice—if that’s what you believe.”

## TREDEGAR COVE

For one awkward moment there was silence. Good, maybe Jill has spoken the last—

"Nice wheels. What is this machine?"

"It's a vintage 240Z. early '70s I think."

"Well whatever. I like the style. the ride."

"Me too." I said as I begin to warm to the company.

"But I'm better." she added.

"Better: better at what." I had to asks.

"I have more style and I'm definitely a better ride." she said with surety.

Confused by the remark. I said nothing in return: but once again endured the awkward silence.

"Do you like sweet things?"

"It depends." I said with some caution. "It depends on what you mean by sweet."

"I mean jillibbeans: do you like jillibbeans?"

"Don't you mean jellybeans?"

"No: here in the COVE. they're jillibbeans. Try some." and before I could turn her down. she popped one in my mouth.

"Come on soul. bite down—it won't hurt you."

"You could have waited." I tried to say. as I chewed on the gummy thing. "This is good. very good." I could now say with clarity as my mouth exploded with delight.

"How did you know I'm soul?"

"Oh that was simple: you have a pimple."

"A pimple." I ask reluctantly. "Thanks for the notice."



## TREDEGAR ON

"I kind of like it soul. It gives you a real youthful look."

"And that's good?"

"Well, it could be worse. You could have lots of pimples."

"Good point." I said with some concern still.

"Looks like you making the approach into the COVE."

"What." I said with surprise.

"Happy landing. enjoy your stay. watch out for CREATURE COVE and all those others."

"Where are you going?"

"Oh. I can't stick around. TALL TELLS says that I'm not comfortable to be around. I guess that TALL doesn't appreciate sweet things."

"I guess not?"

"And what about you soul: do you?"

"Do I. what." but JILL was gone.

## TREDEGAR COVE

## BOOZER BANK



"Welcome to the COVE. It's good to see you again."

"And you too: more than you know." I replied to TALL TELLS who seemed more relaxed now.

"How was the passing? Did you learn anything?"

"I saw and heard more—more than I can remember right now though."

"No worry Sojourner. It will come back to you, believe me, and when you're ready to share...."

"I believe you. But I'm not sure about anything right now. I just—"

"You look tired. Get some rest and, after that, I'll show you around TREDEGAR. We'll learn more, believe me: and maybe just maybe, you'll believe still more."

## TREDEGAR COVE

As in the passing, time had no bearing; and to add to this stillness was that here, the skyline was always orange, bright and beautiful—or so I thought. For I forgotten some of what TALL had tried to tell before: that even on this side of TUNNEL TIME, things could get gray. GRAY'S SHADES.



And when I woke I was, at first, angry and disoriented: not sure of where I was or how I got here. All I knew was that I didn't like it—I wanted to go back, now. But somehow, TALL TELLS new this and, with that, was waiting just as was when I arrived.

"Do not worry Sojourner. Your feelings will pass soon: this is always the case when a soul first arrives. You've been through a strange and wonderful experience. You can't fly forever."

"Yeah. I know that; but right now I feel like I've crashed."

"Well, let's try to pick-up the pieces and go with it. Today, you begin the TREDEGAR tour."

And off we went, first to the prominent BOOZER BANK.

"I saw this structure from way up there, and knew immediately—"

"Yes, BOOZER is quite the fixture here—much like the BANK can be on the other side."

"Do you think I'll get to meet him?"

"Yes; and if he's sober enough, he might even remember it."

"Sober, you say," with some doubt in my voice.

## BOOZER BANK

"Yes, it's more of GRAY'S SHADES. What you experienced when you woke is not unusual—even for those who make their home here. BOOZER likes COOTER BROWN."

"And what's wrong with that," I ask, confused.

"That's right. I didn't really explain who or what COOTER is, did I? It's not really who COOTER is as much as what; you see, it's a beverage...that I think you would call alcohol."

"So BOOZER likes to booze?"

"That's it; the big banker is a boozer."

"Well that explains a scene that I saw at the stadium; ah, the orange bowl where they chase pigs."

"Oh yeah; plenty of boozers there—but don't ask me why."

"So it's COOTER BROWN."

"Yes, and you see it; it is—"

"In an orange bottle," I said with less than a guess.

"That's right, NESBITT ORANGE."

"Wow, what a building! Very impressive," I said as we approach the city block."

"Finest one around, I believe. So tell something Sojourner: Why is that banks are usual the finest buildings around?"

"Well, construction costs and, I guess, the bank has a lot of wealth and riches."

"Yes, that is what I use to think too—it makes sense—but I have since for found out differently, at least for institutions like the bank."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Is there where I begin learning and knowing," I ask, referring to something TALL had told me some time back.

"It could be, but I think your learning began the moment you decided to TREDEGAR ON."

"So if they don't have wealth and riches, how do they build such a structure?"

"It's complicated for me to understand, but since I've let the cat out of the bag, I might as well try to explain albeit with some unintended error."

We entered the BANK: it was equally as opulent as the exterior but, to my surprise, was sparse, nearly empty of life and activity. "Not a going concern, it appears," I said with some wry.

"Yes, it's what is sometimes called a zombie bank—at least as it appears right now."

"Zombie," I said with some surprise.

"Yes: you do know what zombies are, don't you?"

"Who couldn't: you would have live in a cave not to know about zombies. I was just surprised, that's all. And besides, I didn't think the story writer was going to allow zombies, vampires and such."

"Well excuse me 'Mr. Author': I'll try not to mention the word again, though the subject is everywhere....beyond the cave."

"So the bank is living dead?"

## BOOZER BANK

"Simply put, you're right Sojourner. The BANK has done some real damage—deliberately—that has been covered-up or covered-over. It's barbaric: basically lending lots of riches that they don't really have and incurring a lot of risks in the process."

"But from where I stand, all seems fabulous."

"Yes, such a setting has that affect—the impression that all is well. But don't be fooled by what you see—it's a shell game. Pay attention: there's always more than meets the eye."

"You're starting to sound like my father."

"And do you listen to him?"

"Sometimes, but then—." I started to say with a small dose of shame.

"I see. Well maybe that is something you have to learn too. Anyway, the BANK gets away with a lot of tricks & treats: they're sneaky, and sketchy too."

"That reminds me of a book my father was reading: *The Best Way to Rob a Bank is to Own One.*"

"And did he try to share this book with you?"

"Yes, but I really didn't—"

"You really didn't pay attention. Well if you had, listened, we wouldn't be having this conversation."

"So this building is built on." I followed.

"It's built on make-believe wealth and riches—conjured up as creatures, like  
COVE CREATURE."

"It doesn't look dangerous."



## TREDEGAR COVE

"Neither does COVE CREATURE at times—but looks can be deceiving."

As he continued to caution me, I could hear a ruckus near the rear, beside the entrance to the vault.

"Where's the gold." I heard a shout that echoed through the BANK with amazing resonance.

"Looks like we found BOOZER." TALL whispered as he moved in that direction.

"He's lost some gold?"

"Not really; he only claims so right now. Remember soul, it's a—"

"Shell game." I responded, recalling what he told me moments ago.

"And to add insult to injury, BOOZER has probably been hitting the COOTER BROWN."

"What's with gold, anyway?"

"You really should start listening to your father. But any how, gold is a hard asset—which means that it's real wealth and riches, unlike the TREDEGAR notes. BANK needs hard assets, like property and precious metals, so that the notes are worth something."

"And if the notes are not, then—." I had to ask.

"Then you might as well have Monopoly money, and own make-believe properties like Park Place."



## BOOZER BANK

"Another game." I ask.

"BANK has a problem of banking on such games. You would think that they would learn too; but that would only with some suffering and sacrifice. At it is however."

"As it is. BANK is underwritten by something else?"

"Now you're getting it soul. And that too is a game. but with serious consequences."

"Did no one hear me. Where is the gold?" But as before. BOOZER got no answer. Looking in our direction. he yelled with equal volume.

"Who are you?"

"BOOZER. this soul is Sojourner."

"Do you know what happened to the gold?"

"Ah. no: I'm—"

"BOOZER. you don't any gold." TALL told him.

"I know that TALL."

"No. what I mean is that your gold has been long gone and. what's more. you know that."

BOOZER was already blown-up but. with this comment. was now ballistic.

"What do you know. Mr. TALL TELLS? Why. who's going to believe you anyway?"

And with that. TALL turned and headed toward the exit.

"And make yourself useful: tell COOTER that the check is in the mail." BOOZER shouted to our backs.



## TREDEGAR COVE

"You tell COOTER," TALL shouted back.

"I did, but he didn't believe me."

"I wonder why?"

"Another game," I said to TALL

"Yes; and another piece to puzzle too."

I left BOOZER BANK feeling less gray, oddly enough.

"What did you think?"

"I think I've got a lot to learn; more so than if I had been listening to my father all along."

"Well good, but don't feel alone; most of us think we know it all at one time or another or, more likely, we just don't give a—"

"DAM; there's the DANVIEW DAM," I interrupted, pointing my finger toward the river. "What a project!"

"I agree; it took a long time and a lot of wealth and riches to get that one done—but it's been worth it, I can tell you as a fact."



"Did BOOZER have anything to do with it? Coincidentally, yes, he did; the BANK sometimes does right for right, if you know what I mean."

I could see the COVE, the river feeding the DAM. "What a beautiful place."

"Yes, it's the wonderful part, nature and all."

"So the DAM supplies your power?"

"Yes, just as on the other side, the DAM supplies hydro-electric energy. Some is used in TREDEGAR, some sold to other places."

## BOOZER BANK

"There are other places on this side of the TUNNEL?"

"I know I wasn't specific before, but there are other places too."

As I stood there taking it all in, I could hear the putter of what sounded like. "It couldn't be." I whispered to myself.

"Yeah, an old air-cooled Rombi-van," if that's what you mean.

"Is that what you call them here. 'Rombi'?"

"Yes, and you," TALL responded.

"Several, but usually just a bus," I said as it passed by with a trail with a trail of smoke following behind.

"Yeah, that won't last for too much longer."

"What won't last?"

"The smoke; HUSLEY HUSSLE has enacted a new law limiting carbon emissions."

"HUSELY HUSSLE: oh yeah, your laws," I said putting the two together.

"That's too bad. I love vintage cars; it would be a shame to—"

"Around here, we don't just through things away—especially if something still has worth. "No, the bus will be converted to all electric—and EV."

"All electric; it's electrifying," I shouted.

"So you get a charge out of electricity, do you?"



## TREDEGAR COVE

## COOTER BROWN



"This is good," I said as I took a sip of COOTER BROWN.

"I agree, but maybe too much."

"What do you mean; 'too much'?"

"I'm speaking more of abuse; that when something is too easy or convenient, it becomes abused."

"Like BOOZER," I offered.

"Good example; one that you've seen already. Yes, BOOZER abuses a lot of things, but one of them is definitely COOTER BROWN."

Turning our direction from the DAM, we headed toward the famous brewery and bottling plant.

"So tell me TALL; are you against such beverages?"

"No, I'm not; matter of fact, I like some of them; or least, my appetite does. No, it's not that absolute for me."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"It's the abuse isn't it: when the thing is taken advantage of—something taken for granted?"

"That's it Sojourner. COOTER BROWN is a delightful beverage: I know, having grown up with it. But I have seen some abuse as well—even from some whom I never would have thought possible. We each have our weaknesses: I have mine—a tendency to sometimes stretch the truth—but my concern is not from judgment, but rather, love."

TALL TELLS was very thorough on this point, his position. Evidently he had been deeply affected.

"I might as well tell you the truth: after all, withholding something can be a lie too," he said in a somber speech. "I have a history myself: it has something to do with my reputation for twisting the truth."



"I see. Well like you said, 'we each have our weaknesses.'"

"Yes, and I believe that is good: it keeps us humble, don't you think?"

"I guess if being humble is an advantage."

"Oh, it is: I know this too. But to clarify, you must know that I don't mean we shouldn't be proud of something or someone. What I mean is that being humble is being real: it is accepting that we each do have weaknesses."

Again, TALL TELLS was expressive: but then, he wants me to learn and grow and—if don't understand—how can you do it?

## COOTER BROWN

"Here it is," he said as we rounded a corner

I had picked-up an order. "Yeah, this is the smell." The building was brick, resembling many of the early 1900's structures that once populated my place, the other side of the TUNNEL.

Going in, we were met by a cordial host and given a grand tour of operations.

"Impressive. I had no idea that brewing was such a science. You say it all begins with barley?"

"Yes: barley and other key ingredients.

There is a soaking to begin germination...." the host explained.



"So I've heard," I replied while walking adjacent to several conveyor lines. "Wow,

you must produce volumes based on this speed." I added.

"We export much of our product: COOTER BROWN is has a broad market-base.

"So it seems."

"What a plant," I repeated as we exited the building.

"I thought you would find it interesting without sounding contrary."



"Oh I know: you like the plant because it's a fine-tuned machine and business."

"Yeah. BROWN has been around for the ages: indeed, it was, for a long time, a safe way to stay hydrated—water being impure and downright dangerous. Back in the days of yore, sailors depended on

## TREDEGAR COVE

beer and rum at sea: water could not be safely stowed; fermented beverages would stave-off any bacteria or other dangerous growth. In a days travel, a sailor could down up to nine pints of beer or ale."

For someone who tells tales, TALL sure seemed to store an endless amount of interesting information. "TALL, are you sure you're not a teacher, certified?"

He laughed. "Well, I thought about once or twice; in fact, I did a little teaching here and there—just to see whether I would like it or not. Basically, I like to learn and grow and, with that,



teach too. The best way to learn something is to teach it, right?"

He was right once again. I could recall in my own limited lifetime, the same thing; learning while preparing to teach. "I agree totally; still, I'm not a good student."

"That's a lesson or two, as well," TALL replied. "You have to learn how to learn; what works and what doesn't—it's a process too," as he continued to coach me. "A multitude of factors play on our effectiveness to learn; attitude, aptitude, academy and so on."

"Maybe that's been my problem."

"One, or all of them," he ask for clarification.

"I can say with certainty, Give me some time on that," I said as TALL continued to challenge meet at every corner, literally.

"Where next on the agenda," I ask, breaking the silence.

## COOTER BROWN

"I thought we would take a walk in CEDAR WOODS to the end today's lesson: ah mean, tour."

"CEDAR WOODS: "did I see that during TUNNEL TIME?"

"Most likely, although you wouldn't have known it was CEDAR. You see, CEDAR has a distinct smell: an acrid but somewhat airy smell."



"I think I've smelled that before, walking through Pine groves—or maybe it was some sort of similar prickly-needled species."

"Sounds about right: anyway, you couldn't have smelled CEDAR at that distance."

"Oh yeah, well my senses sure tasted the sweetness of jillibeanz."

"You ate some of those in your passing? How'd that happened?"

"I met someone named Jill: she gave me one."

"JILL: you met JILL BEAL?"

"Yes, Jill just showed-up: she appeared in the passenger seat of the Datsun."

"Why that sneaky little—" TALL retorted.

"Jillibeanz are just great," I continued, "although Jill was little pushy: she through a pair of shoes out of the window."

"What kind of shoes," TALL inquired.

"Orange ones," I replied with an air of annoyance.

"Yes—I know that—but what kind: were they boots, thongs...?"

"Sneakers, if it really matters?"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Sure it matters," he argued. "Shoes are important."

"No big deal, really: we'll work it out with JILL BEAL when the time comes, okay?"

"Now listen here Sojourner. Nobody works anything out with JILL—BEAL will get the better of you."

"So what should I do?"

"Are you not listening; don't do it—just let it go."

"Yeah, that was my first thought too. It was you that started to loose your grip."

"You're right; I did jump the gun. It's just that JILL is dangerous."

"More than COVE CREATURE," I ask for clarity.

"Well, in some ways; but I'm just not sure you're ready, that's all," he explained as he looked me in the eyes. "Then again, you did make the passing."

"What should I do if JILL shows up again?"

"If it happens again, don't wait for her to do the throwing. Make for a window and jump—you'd be better off."

"Wow, that bad," I said with some doubt.

"You don't want to know, soul."

"But I thought I was here for that very reason."

"I thought you were a poor student; but sure, since you've evidently been hanging on my every word; you're here to learn and grow," he expounded with growing frustration.

"It goes back to what you said: judgment versus love, right?"

## COOTER BROWN

"Yes. that's right. I just trying to look out for you. believe me. There are some things that best be covered in the future. if you understand that."

"How long; I mean. how long should I wait?"

"Until the sky is no longer orange. perhaps—but I'm not really sure."

"That could be a long time."

"What's time when you're in TREDEGAR?"

"So you're saying that time is irrelevant. is that it?"

"Get the JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY and look-up irrelevant. if you please."

"I don't have to—I know the meaning."

"Okay smart soul. give it to me."

"It means: having no application or significance."

"And where do you learn that one?"

"From my father: he would say to me: 'The dog eating your homework is irrelevant Sojourner—since you don't have a dog.'"

"On which I would say to him: 'I didn't mention whose dog it was—but only that the dog ate my work.'" After which he would just nod his head in frustration and walk away.

"Yes. I know the feeling. exactly."

I could smell the CEDAR that TALL had described. "Wow. you were right again: acrid and airy."

We continued on a trail that bordered the WOODS. Peering in. I couldn't see much due to the dense undergrowth and thick cover.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Sure is dark in there." I whispered for some reason.

"Dark in more ways than one. I'm afraid."

"CREATURE COVE: is that what you mean?"

"CREATURE and still others: the WOODS is wild and untamed. You really have to be on top of it: else, it will take you under."

"Under: under where." I had to ask.

"Under here, under there: under, is what I'm saying." TALL began. "Remember, there are other times and places."

"And this one, the under: what is it?"

"In time Sojourner; but right now, let's lighten the subject while we walk, how's that?"



And on we went, following the trail, the fragrance of CEDAR accenting the light conversation.

"What about the CREATURE: it's been heavy on my mind."

"We all think about the CREATURE. Who wouldn't?"

"So I can talk about CREATURE. What do you want to know?" And so TALL went on in the same manner as before: methodically going through the details: "CREATURE comes in a variety of other forms: it's not just a monster but it can certainly appear as one."

"And you've seen CREATURE COVE?" He confirmed it, adding some detail with each episode.

## COOTER BROWN

"You may think this Medieval, but CREATURE can be a dragon—or a leviathan as some say."

"A dragon." I said with some doubt.

"I'm not telling tales soul: it's for real: a large, sweeping, reptilian-like monster with bat wings, and a long-powerful tail."

"Does it breathe fire?"

"I don't know: maybe, but I've never seen it—at least not yet."

"And did it reign-down terror on TRDEGAR?"

"It's not funny: this is not some myth from King Arthur. Just wait soul: you'll see, and when you see—"



"I want believe it, right?"

"On the contrary: it will make a believer out of you."

"That's good, since believing is how I got here in the first place."

I knew that TALL was telling the truth in spite of my play. In truth, I was afraid: not just of CREATURE, but the others—the silent and the deep, the hidden and that under, them and even me.

A sudden chill came over me, as though winter had arrived and I was unprepared: naked, without a blanket or shelter to cover me.

CEDAR WOODS was wicked: not that I knew it, but that I felt it: so much so, that I was weak at the knees bordering on nausea and a headache.

"What's wrong soul?" FALL looked on with concern.

"It's just, the gray is coming on, I guess."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"All this conversation: be careful that your imagination doesn't get the best of you: else you'll wither-up like a flower and die."

As he cautioned me, my imagination was already at work: small goblins danced about me like flies around a carcass—taunting me with their voices and vile gestures.

"Just my imagination," I murmured, as TALL grabbed me.

"Did you not see the CEDAR?"

"What," as I flinched and broke from the horror.

"The CEDAR: you nearly ran right into it," he repeated. "Pay attention."

"Oh yeah. I'm sorry."

"No reason to apologize: it was you who would have been hurting."

"I don't know: I'm pretty tough."

"Still, CEDAR is hard," TALL said as he tapped me on the head. "Are you ready for a meal and some rest?"

"That would do me well."

"How about some bird: there's this local species, a bit strange looking, but tasty"

"How strange," I said with a sudden loss of appetite.



## CARPENTER'S ANGST



"How was your rest: feel better?"

"Much, thank you: but I had a weird dream. I've got to stop watching so much science-fiction," thinking of one particular film. The Exterminator, that may have inspired the nightmare. "It featured huge ants: the size of elephants. They roamed the land, destroying everything in their path from plant to person—everything!"

"Ants." TALL repeated.

"Yeah: a little insect-like creatures that builds mounds the size of boulders, bites like a beast, and bores wood faster than a Titanium-tipped drill bit. From the fire type to the carpenter, these creatures can do some damage.

"Do they have a purpose: something useful?"

"If they do, I can't tell you. Just wait till you bitten: you'll cuss like a sailor and burn like welding torch.

"Sounds like a mother."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"It's a mother and, well, a grandmother too."

"So you have your own fierce creatures on the other side?"

"Oh yes, from microscopic to monstrosities: creatures come in all sizes and species."

"So this film: what was it about." TALL inquired as we set out on the day's lessons.

"Exterminator; well, it was about an android that assaults ants and other...." I began to explain as we made our way along FLATTIRE RIM. "And in the end, the exterminator guaranteed that he would be back—for a routine inspection as part of the bond, that is."

"Sounds exciting," TALL said with half interest.

"Yeah, the film had a happy ending—unlike my dream."

"Why ants," TALL asks.

"Why not; I mean, that walk around CEDAR WOODS had me all freaked-out—don't you remember?"

"You're right; you were acting strange," he agreed as rounded the RIM.

"So this is FALTTIRE? What's the history behind the name; I mean, who came-up with the one?"

"I did. I was much younger then, taking this rim too hard, and blew a tire. From then on, it was 'FALTTIRE.'".

"What kind of vehicle, what car?"

"It was a Porsche convertible."

"Wow, I bet it was fast."

## CARPENTER'S ANGST

"It had good acceleration and handling; you really felt in control behind the wheel. But on that day, the handling wasn't the problem; at least, not until the tire blew and then, well, I went into a spin."

"But you pulled it out?"

"Yeah, by some miracle: I'd like to say that it was skill, but I was scared to death. That blown tire really made a believer out of me—I mean it! After that, I watch the RIM with reverence;

and slowed it down altogether. I couldn't stop worrying about."



TALL TELLS made it clear that the accident left him an anxious adolescent; but he seemed to be glad about it overall. Had he continued running that Porsche like a bat-out-of-Hell he may have never made it; and worst yet, may have ended-up hurting someone else.

"Fast cars, fast music and fast—" TALL continued

"JILL BEAL: look, there." I interrupted.

"Oh—," TALL shouted.

"Hit: did you hit anything when you spun out?"

"Good deal," TALL said as BEAL peeled off—leaving the scene and seemingly relieving angst. "No, just some CEDAR WOODS, that's all."

"Yeah, but that's hard wood, right?"

"Of course, but the damage was minor."

TALL told me more about his wild adventures—what happened before his spin-out—with all that fast stuff.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"So how did you fit that tall frame in a small car?"

"Well, I wasn't quite this size, but I managed; honestly, the cockpit fit like a glove, like it was designed around me."

"I thought cockpits were for planes."

"Cars included; those that fly."

"Speaking of flying, what kind of tunes did you play?"

"Music; you mean types, groups." TALL paused for a moment to think about. "Let me think, rewind."

"Folk, rock; what did you play when you cruised?"

"Oh yeah, I remember 'Magic Carpet Ride'; that was a good one." TALL nostalgically noted.

"Hey, I've heard that one; it's cool."

"Yeah, there were others, but I dug it."

"Dug it, did you?"



"Yeah, you know; cool, hip, rock-in." TALL began as he pulled-up terms from his past.

"I had idea; you must have been something."

"What do you mean, 'must have been'."

"A little sensitive about aging are you?"

"Listen here; I'm like a bottle of wine, better with age."

"Okay, alright; I dig it. Anyway, why life in the fast lane—chasing everything and everyone, is what I mean."

"Since you ask, and my job is to teach you, I'll tell you man; those were anxious times, I'm here to tell you yah."

"Stressful times; you mean the '60's?"

## CARPENTER'S ANGST

"Right-on: we had THE BOMB and so many other creatures of modern living: it was a real trip."

"You didn't mention THE BOMB?"

"Right. I purposely left that one out. You want to have bad dreams baby—just start thinking about THE BOMB. that'll put you on a ride to—"

"Shell: was it a shell game: you know. THE WAR and all that stuff?"

"Careful there soul. you skipped the record on me."

"Huh. oh yeah: no. I just want to know if all that stress was for something real or just imagined. that's all."

"Oh. I get your drift: was it a trick & treat. Did we know what was really going on over there in NAM?"

"Shocking perhaps. but we learned—because we wanted to know and had the means. Remember. learning is about attitude. aptitude. accuracy and accessibility. If you don't have access to accurate information. how can you know?" TALL went on to explain it too a lot of effort. "The dilemma is that the more you learn. the more you stress: with wisdom comes much sorrow."

"So why learn. why try. if it all leads to anxiousness and sorrow?"

"That's a classic question Sojourner: one that folks have been asking and answering for some time now. While not just let it ride."

"Yeah. why not chill." I added. as TALL prepared his answer.



## TREDEGAR COVE

"There is no one answer—not even for one alone—but is dependent on time and place: one day, you might say "I don't want to hear it: I don't want to know—I don't care": but on another day, you might be so sharp that you can't learn enough—must have it all."

"Is that what the term, 'Sock it to me baby' meant?"

"That might apply here: yeah, sock it to me—give me whatever you got!"

"So, some days it's all right: other day's it's a bad trip?"

"That's right, but it also has to do with age." TALL added. "We were young and naïve: but in an ironic way, being stupid was sometimes smart."



"What: but you've been telling me that knowledge is important and good."

"It does sound like a contradiction, I know: but let me explain what I mean."

"THE ESTABLISHMENT was status quo: leave things as they are—it's alright—don't rock the boat, and so on. Then, there were those who said: 'No: it's not alright. We don't like this and, more, we don't want it to go on—it's not right.'" Again, TALL was thorough: he went way out to make to sure I understood what he meant: this was an important point, he told me. "Sometimes you don't know what's in store: how much sacrifice and suffering that you may incur, or go through, to make a statement—to change things for what you believe is a better time and place."

"And so you effort paid off." I asks with interest.

## CARPENTER'S ANGST

"Hard to say: depends on what you consider as important. pay-off. We faced a lot of opposition."

"From THE ESTABLISHMENT." I guessed.

"Yes: we showed-up as uninvited guest. so to speak. We took the air out of their balloon—busted-up the party and made a lot of folks angry at us."

"Maybe it was the way you did it. Maybe if you weren't so revolutionary." I suggested.

"Maybe: but at times. the 'revolution' was peaceful. passive—not violent or mean-spirited. We just wanted peace—not WAR. I mean: what sense is it to cause more conflict to end conflict."

"So you weren't stupid after all?"

"Naïve is more like it: we were mostly young and high-minded—not set in our ways."

By now. TALL and I had made some tracks: we had walked around the RIM several times—enough to flatten anyone's tire.

"Does this make sense: can you see why we felt the way we did—did the things we did?"

"To some degree. yes: but I wasn't there. so it's not so easy to see either side."

"I looked at it from both sides. soul: old friends started acting strange—they said I'd changed and they no longer liked me. Some said I was wrong. my words a lie." TALL explained. "How do you think I got pinned with 'TALL TELLS'?"



## TREDEGAR COVE

"I see: your choice to fight caused you to—"

"Lose: yes, it caused and cost much in my life."

I felt lucky to be here: to hear TALL TELLS out—the orange and the gray, the highs and the lows, the gains and the pains.

"Thank you," I said to break the silence. "I had no idea, your name and all, but I better for knowing."

We left the RIM, veering down an alleyway.

"It's I who should be thankful: you don't how good I feel sharing these things. I'm glad you're here to hear me out," TELLS said, somber and sincere. "That's one reason I urged you take the TUNNEL. You see, I needed someone like you: someone who is willing to listen—has no presumptions and such."

"So you have no such here, now?"

"You know how it is: folks get tired of listening—especially when they think you're all full of lies," he said with real soberness. "You don't see anyone knocking down my door, do you?"

"I can't really say TALL: I haven't seen your door or even know where you live for that matter."

"Here is where I live," as he pointed ahead. "Just around the corner, I live in a cottage with—"

"An orange door," I guessed.

As we came into view of the place, I noticed an orange truck out front and, at the entrance of the place, some debris around an open doorway.



## CARPENTER'S ANGST

"As to the question, it seems that someone is trying to knock you door down." I say with surety.

"You're right, although this was not really what I meant."



Those at the door were carpenters who told us that someone called to report the damage.

"Know how it happened." TALL followed-up, but all they could do was point us to HUSLEY HUSSE.

"Doesn't look like a break-in." HUSLEY began to explain. "More like meanness if you ask me."

"Meanness." TALL repeated.

"Now TALL, we all know that you're not short of unfriendly folks—to put it mildly," he began, with some sarcasm of his own. "As it is, let's get the door repaired and deal with the investigation later."

"But aren't you going to—"

"TALL, you better calm down or I'll have to take a few inches off the top." HUSLEY warmed.

"Inches off the top—I'd like to see you try."

Looking at me for the first time, HUSLEY said: "Soul, why don't you take TALL away before something worse happens."

"Let's go TALL: some place where you can calm down." I said as I began to move away.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"That's more like." HUSLEY had to say just to rub salt in the wound. "No more movements or protests." just to thrown on a little more.

"What's that all about?"

"It's about my past: you know. THE ESTABLISHMENT and all."

"They really can't let go. can they?"

"Not on your life. or mine: they'll never forget—and neither will I."

"What about peace: refraining from conflict to stop conflict—what about forgiveness. love and good will?"

"Yeah. yeah: I know. someone has to try."

"Not just try. but sometimes. make the first move—even if you—"

"Lose: well. I'm tired of losing—tired of putting up with all this bad will and bitterness."

"But that's not what you've been telling me: no. you've been trying to teach me to believe—to believe in belief. to suffer and sacrifice. remember?"

"Well yes. but just because I say it doesn't me I believe it."

"You better believe it: belief is what got me here and belief is what's going to get me back." I shouted.

"Okay. you win: you're right of course."

"No. not me: you—you're the one whose right."

"Your right: I am right...about a lot of things. right?"

"Of course you are. That's why I'm here."

## CARPENTER'S ANGST

"I don't know soul; maybe I'm getting to old for this stuff. Maybe HUSLEY has a good point. for once."

"I don't think so. I think HUSLEY is just trying to HUSSLE you; just trying to push your button. rattle your cage. get your goat."

"Yep. another sneaky. sketchy sort is HUSKEY."

"But you've got heart. real heart; you believe. and that's what counts."

"I must be doing a good job teaching you soul."

"Why do say that." I ask.

"Because now you're teaching me. instead." TALL said with some satisfaction.



## TREDEGAR COVE

## CEDAR WOODS



"I think you ready for a trip to CEDAR WOODS." TALL said to my surprise.

The WOODS was more of than a strange and wonderful place: it was very gray or dark, lacking the orange that permeates much of the COVE, as a foreboding. TALL has purposely deferred this place for "another day." Well, that day had apparently come. Though I had anticipated this day, I was apprehensive, afraid.

"Are you ready?"

"TREDEGAR ON," had become my common response. Our venture would be longer than before: "We may be in the WOODS for awhile, so I've pack-up us provisions." Additionally, we would use a small boat to travel the COVE finding access points into the dense WOODS.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"With the boat, we'll locate access: some logging roads are still evident from the water," TALL explained.

"Are you okay with that," was the next question.



"Sounds like a good plan," I confirmed. To this point, our forays at the WOODS' edge gave little information, the views being block by the dense underbrush and general, pervading gray. TALL has told me of the COVE CRETURE: that it took on a variety of forms—even as a dragon or leviathan.

"A dragon; you mean as in the days of yore?"

"Strange and unbelievable as it is, yes: a dragon that flies and breathes fire and generally wreaks terror on TREDEGAR," TALL explained against my disbelief.

When I took on TUNNEL TIME, I had only a brief introduction on which to go on. The description of dragon, now given, added an edge of excitement for which I could conceive only in the mysticism of medieval materials. Would we encounter this beast and, if so, would I take the role of the quested knight? And this point, nothing of the sort seemed possible—I was frightened to the very core.

Such thoughts flooded my mind as we navigated along the COVE shoreline. Scenes that eerily resembled that illustrated in films and books, water and foliage shrouded in fog, added to the affect, the anticipation.

## CEDAR WOODS

Further ahead was the sign of a logging road: access to the interior.

"We'll land there, beach the boat, and sort through our provisions," TALL told me. "Make sure you check every item on the list," as an indication of his thoroughness.

The angst that I was frequently incurring was somewhat relieved by continuous conversation—silence being the sure setting for thoughts going wild.

"Try to relax and take in the beauty," TALL said more than once, as a kinder way of saying, "shut-up".

"Are you relaxed," I had to say. But of course it was impossible to be relaxed: alertness was a real asset in such situations.

"Make sure you watch where you're walking; there is a lot of loose rock that could put you flat on your back or, worse, break something." The tone of TALL'S conversation was understandably different: sober and serious instruction had replaced the more casual form of teaching but this tone was appropriate: I needed to concentrate and maintain caution with every actual and anticipated step.

"All this fog," I said. "Is this common?"

"This may only add to your doubt Sojourner, but legend has it that this is the CREATURE'S breath."

"You mean dragon breath?" He nodded as though he meant it but, as well, with the expected response.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Tell me more," I continued. "Should we expect any knights of the round or, how about damsels in distress." I ask, adding some intended levity to the moment.

With a looks of annoyance, TALL replied: "Not that I know of, but the COVE is—"

"A strange and wonderful place and time; yes, I know."

He was right: the rain had washed out the once-graded roads leaving an endless, intertwined connection of ruts and crevices in the road. It seemed with every step that I was on the cusp of slipping—as though walking on ice, mud made by the moisture, the heavy fog.

"This is a quagmire," I managed to say between steps.

"I told you: one step away from an injury."

To add to the challenge, our hike was uphill but, as would later discover, downhill was in a class of its own.



"It's very quiet," I said, unable to detect any wildlife in the bordering WOODS.

"Not unusual," he explained. "The fog covers more than the visible; it seems to mute the WOODS too."

But eventually, the fog would lift and the sounds emerge: a variety of birds and other creatures of this mystic time and place would conduct a natural concert greatly expected—entertaining beyond my eeriness.

## CEDAR WOODS

In the sorted sounds of this concert was an every deep base. as like the tuba section of a brass band. with every grounding volume and varied notes.

"Can you hear that." I ask.

"The droning; yes. that's the dragon. COVE CREATURE likes to sing too."

"Really." I said with surprise.

"Yes. I think the music; it calms the beast. so the saying goes."

"Let's hope the concert last."

"That would be idea. but smell may stop the music."

"What do you mean." I ask. for understanding.

"CREATURE has a keen sense of smell. like a dog; if our scent is picked-up. the concert could be over."

"So if the music stops. trouble is on the way."

"Something like that." TALL said as perhaps another cause for concern.

Nearing the top of a hill. the view as spectacular: down below was the village; to the right. the big orange bowl. and the left. DANVIEW DAM.

"Wow. what a view!"

"Wonderful. isn't it?"

Pockets of fog still sparsely covered the area. though most was visible and vibrant. teeming with life and living. A sudden breeze cooled my face. my body relaxed in the presence of such idea conditions.



## TREDEGAR COVE

Pointing to a general area on the other side of the point, TALL directed: "We'll continue," as he explained that there was network of caves.

"Caves: you mean the kind that dragons like?"

"Could be," he said with some casualness.

"Well, what if—," I responded with less casualness.

"Soul: chances are that CREATURE already knows were here, in the WOODS. This is a very smart and perceptive beast. How do you think it survived this long?"

"Why didn't you tell that we were being followed?"

"I didn't say we were: I'm merely describing the certainty that CREATURE knows our presence, that's all."

TALL'S intentions were good, as I thought about the alternative: not telling me what is obviously true.



"I don't think I mentioned this before, but the dragon is possibly sore at me," TALL went on.

"What do you mean, 'sore'?"

"I mean that CREATURE may have a bone to pick. You see, I snuffed-out the fire."

"The fire," I ask, still confused.

"CREATURE'S fire has been extinguished: my doing in a prior confrontation."

"You mean you put-out the fire, single-handedly? Wow, what a warrior!"

## CEDAR WOODS

"I don't know about that; in truth, I was scared—"

"Fitness; that's what is about, being ready and able—and you apparently were."

"If I was, I didn't know it. I'd call it a modicum of meat wrapped up in a pound of fat; not appetizing or healthy, but it sure smells good."

"Speaking of smell, have you noticed that rancid—"

"Odor; it is the dragon's breath, once again. Even without a flame, the breath is lethal—the worse case of halitosis I've ever come across, it's hits you like bricks."

"Like RICK'S BRICKS." I said, referring to another the establishments in TREDEGAR.

"If you mean, getting hit by a brick, than yes; RICK'S would be about the same as this air emanating from the mouth of this beast. And if that isn't bad enough, the other end will practically do you end."

"You mean intestinal gas?"

"I mean flatus that will fatten you— or least burn the hair off your head," he said with the usual, unstoppable hilarity that follows this subject. "So if you hear rumblings, don't mistake it as an earthquake; no, that's probably the dragon's bowels about to unleash a most lethal substance."



## TREDEGAR COVE

"What should I do?"

"Start by holding you nose. your breath if possible with eyes shut—that's about as good as it gets."

"Talk about an indomitable beast."

"At least you know: so when the CREATURE makes its appearance—as it eventually will—you know what you up against, right?"

"I guess: I mean, it's not like I've got many choices at this point—or defenses for that matter."



"We'll just have to believe that the CREATURE is having a nice day." TALL TELLS told me.



"Do dragons have nice days." I said rhetorically. "What's a 'nice day' for a dragon, anyway?"

"I see your point: perhaps a lousy day then: which means a better day for us, of course."

Heading down the hill was even more intense than going up: slips and slides occurred with practically ever other step—leaving my body about as twisted as my mind at this point.

"We could really use HORACE HELPER right now."

"HORACE who: I haven't heard that name before."

## CEDAR WOODS

"HORACE is a good one: always willing to give a hand of help—often unsolicited—the kind you like to have around, especially in situations like this."

"And what of help could HORACE provide?"

"A jack-of-all-trades, an expert in known. HORACE has seldom let me down, left my high & dry." TALL began to explain. "The eagerness is half the point: HORACE works like—"

"Shell: look, some sea shells." I interrupted, pointing to the ground.

"Fascinating isn't it But as I was saying, HORACE can knock the—"

"Bit: a bit of coral are in the shell." I said as I bent down to examine the ground's content. "Obviously, this hill was at one time under the sea."

"Yeah, under the sea: so what." TALL somberly said.

"Don't you see, TALL TELLS: the dragon comes most likely came from the sea, or so legend has it. It probably ended-up here, somewhat land-based, in the sea's subsiding—or something like that."

"So when did you become an expert on the environment, the history and so on?"

"I'm not an expert—not at all. I'm just saying that this evidence of the salt water is a sign of what once was here: that being the sea."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"We do have some similar life here. in the river: muscles. crawfish and other cousins of what you see and describe. That much I know." TALL went on to described in some detail.

"Yes. as we do where I come from. but that's not my point."

"I know. the sea was here. right?"

"Then you agree." I said.

"I agree that you could have something. but believing is seeing."

"That's not what you told me before: you said that sometimes we have to believe short of seeing or experiencing—that's what you said. remember?"

"Now remember: I'm the teacher and you're the student. get it?"

"Right. but sometimes you have to teach to learn: didn't you say that too."



"Oh please CREATURE: come forth such that I should not have to endure this lecture any longer." TALL said with flair of an ancient dialect. "For my mind and heart have grown weary; the soul is simply too much for the both of us."

"So you want me to stop. do yah?"

"At least give it a rest or. in the language of my youth. take a load off."

## COVE CREATURE



Our first foray into CEDAR WOODS was, so far, non-confrontational—but that was about to change. TALL TELLS had already said that our presence was known: the dragon, with a keen sense of smell, would know that our kind was present—lurking about the dragon's den.

As we steadily made our way down the hill, the thought occurred to me: what if we don't make it, the dragon does us in? Such angst was not mine alone: even TALL was a little touched by this re-encounter: for which the dragon, likely absent a flame, would have a grudge to settle.

"So you think that the CREATURE is still flamed-out?"

"Not sure; but if it is, we'll know it soon enough."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"So describe the CREATURE." I ask with some understanding that it could morph into many types or forms.

"As to the dragon, it is orange." which, by this time, was of no surprise. "but it has some gray on its head and neck."

"What's that about?"

"What do you think?"

"Well, gray: I guesst that GRAY'S SHADES—a sign for badness or such?"

"Could be a sign, but I think it's charring—blowback from the flame."

"You mean the dragon has burned itself?"



"Accidently, of course; but yes, sometimes during a sudden face wind or inadvertent inhale, the flame blows-back," he described with amusement. "It's really funny."

"And you've see this?"

"Once, a time when the dragon was looming over the ORANGE BOWL," he began.

"Like a blimp?"

"Like a what." TALL stopped to ask.

"A balloon-like flyer used for aerial shots."

## COVE CREATURE

"Whatever; anyway. the dragon strafed the stadium. seemingly forgetting the face wind. and wham." blow-back and burn-out."

"What a drag—." I began to say.

"Chare-broiled and flamed-out; that's a piece of work if there ever was one." TALL TELLS said as he smiled.

"So how did the crowd react; all those watching the pig?"

"I wasn't in the bowl at the time; but for those I spoke with; they hardly notices and. if they did. didn't seem to care—too tantalized with SPRING ACTION on the turf.



"What is SPRING ACTION?"

"Oh. another of those I haven't yet mentioned; but it's more "who" to you. SPRING is a folk hero; a great sportsman with all the right stuff; speed. size and skill. If anyone can handle the pig. it's SPRING."

"So SPRING is popular?"

"I'm surprised you haven't heard yet; ACTION is the word—plain and simple."

"What does SPRING play?"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Have you not been listening soul; SPRINGS plays every where. any time. all the way." TALL exclaimed with great enthusiasm.

"So can I meet ACTION?"

"I'll see what I can do; that is. if we make it out of CEDAR WOODS alive."

"And if the pigs keep flying."

"What's that's mean?"

"You know; when they throw the pig...."

"We call that passing. here in TREDEGAR: it's a forward pass; but if it's behind. it's a pitch."

"But whether forward or backward. doesn't the pig fly?"

"Yes. but only because it likes too." TALL added. "Fly yes; it's the landing that's the—"

"Switch; can we switch subjects. Have to say that this game seems stupid and ridiculous."

"I'm with you; but being stupid is half the reason. Who wants to go to a game to think; and besides. when COOTER BROWN comes round. all reasoning is shot."



"I noticed that coming in; in the passing. while hovering over

TREDEGAR. These boozers were really taking a lot of—"

## COVE CREATURE

"Fit; yeah I know what you mean. The boozers wouldn't sit down and folks behind them had a fit. got forceful." TALL recollected. "It's all in the game: no mind. just fun."

"Next subject: the caves. of course." I said as we approach the entry point.

"Can you hear that." TALL asks. "Can you smell that: do you know what that is?"

"It has to be the CREATURE."

"How did you know that." TALL ask with some surprise.

"Well. considering the chapter heading and the fact that we're at the cave's entrance. I quickly deduced that it must be the dragon."

"Yes. way to be aware: anyway. your sharpness in these matters reflects positively on me. your teacher. master and teller of all tales true or false."

"I am not worthy. o' master." I began to chant as I knelt-down.

"Get up soul. and quit acting like a fool: this dragon is serious—"

"Wrap: I'm all wrapped up in this spider's WEBB." I said as I tried frantically to untangle myself.



## TREDEGAR COVE

"Relax: it's just an orange spider: a dangerous and potentially deadly, fanged-toothed, eight-legged creature second only to the CREATURE."

"Thanks. I'm beginning to unwind already."

"Actually, this one is part of SPIDER'S WEBB?"

"Yeah. I know: it's a spider's web."

"Pay attention to the dialogue. I said 'SPIDER'S WEBB, all upper-case, to signify more than one."



"Explain o' master of infinite knowledge and boundless wisdom."

"Ah um, quiet please. SPIDER'S WEBB is means of modern communication; we call it simple, the WEBB."

"How does it work?"

"Well, the actual WEBB acts as a transmitter and receiver; these little creatures manage the local WEBB, sending and receiving messages with other partners in and around TREDEGAR."

"So you mean that we could send a message to, say, BOOZER BANK?"

## COVE CREATURE

"That's right: assuming that BOOZER is sober enough to take the call or, by chance, someone more competent happens to be listening."

"So does that mean—," I begin to ask.

"Hey TALL TELLS, how's it hanging," came a wee-small voice. "Got any interesting info to pass-on?"

"Well, I'll be—," I began.

"DAM: the DANVIEW DAM is undergoing some significant repairs to stave-off cracks," TALL responded.

"Already got the goods: more like preventive, routine maintenance, if you should want to know. Got it straight from the engineer," said SPIDER.

"Any messages for me," ask TALL.

"None that you'd be interested in—unless, of course, you want more humiliation," the SPIDER squeaked while twitching its forward legs. "Wait at minute: I got one coming in, urgent!" And after a pause: "CREATURES has been spotted in flight over CEDAR'S WOODS."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Look." I shouted as I pointed my finger. And there it was, heading straight for us: eyes aglow like the light at end of the TUNNEL—approaching fast and furious—with blood on its wings.

"I think we're going to die." I screamed at TALL as perhaps my last moments.

"I don't think so: CREATURES too concerned about something else. I can tell." TALL replied with calming confidence.

"As it closed in, CREATURE seemed to shrink in size: as though more a bat than the sizeable beast so renowned, reputable.

"Do you see that." I said with astonishment.

"I told you that CREATURE can take on many forms: a bat is apparently one of them." What comparatively had seemed like slow motion moments ago was now the wingless motion—something like a hummingbird. Within my touch, CREATURE hovered just above my head.

"TALL TELLS: have you been messing with my seashells?"



## COVE CREATURE

"Seashells: oh you mean those buried at the top of the hill?"

"Yeah, those are my shells, straight from the sea." And as I would later learn, CREATURE has some pretty quick claws: a thrill-seeker with a few tricks & treats when it came to collecting contraband, possibly for a nest.

"I noticed that you lifted some of RICK'S BRICKS." TALL inquired. "Where'd you get those?"

"Weren't using them; picked them up at a construction site." CREATURE briefly explained in lame fashion. "Leave my shells alone; and anything else of mine."



"Can we explore the cave? This weary soul has traveled many long to see the pace?"

CREATURE flew about me; darting in and out as is some sort of effort to intimidate me.



"Why not; that place is too damp and dingy anyway."

"But you're a bat; bat's like caves." I said just to add something to the conversation.

"I can be whatever I will; make no mistake soul. I can crush you like an aluminum can." CREATURE warned with a voice to match the bat's dimensions. "I'm only bat now because

## TREDEGAR COVE

such is more agile at this attitude. If you don't leave my things be. I must just turn into a vampire. got it."

"Okay. but these short stories of TREDEGAR COVE don't include vampires; so I'm afraid that one is out."

"What did soul say." CREATURE questioned. while attempting to look astonished—as best a bat can.

"The soul's right; the writer said no vampires or zombies." TALL confirmed. "The subject has been done to death. if you want to know the back-story."

"What about the BANK." CREATURE asks. "You know. the zombies?"

"We've already covered that one in a prior story; I did mention zombie banks but. to be specific. no zombies will be featured in these stories per the writer's desire."

And to top the smallness of the bat's strong words. SPIDER'S WEBB began to dictate another news flash: "DANVIEW DAM maintenance effort has uncovered hairline fractures. Engineer says that progress should continue on schedule. river be dammed."

And with a pause to fill tiny lungs. SPIDER continued: HUSELY HUSSLE has released a statement indicating that the fractures are serious and could be a crisis; hence. more

## COVE CREATURE

spending is forthcoming coupled with an independent investigation; members appointed by HUSELY as usual."

"HUSELY HUSSLE: what a bunch mixed fruit." TALL expectedly said.

"I should burn that place down." CREATURE added.

"But I thought you lost you fire." I had to say.

"Don't remind me."

"Can you believe those folks: the engineer releases the technical news. while HUSELY does the HUSSLE."

"I should crush them like a can."



CREATURE again.

"But you're a bat."

"Listen here soul: if you don't put-a-sock-in-it. I'll give you some lice. or something like it.

"Really soul. do lighten up: after all. the dragon could have kept coming." TALL reminded me.

"Sorry. just trying to stick to the script."

"What script." CREATURE asks.

"The one that turned you from a flamed-out dragon to an overly-emboldened bat." I replied.

"Somebody clip my wings. because I'm about to kick one poor soul's—"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Mass has gathered near DANVIEW; reports have has sparked a public outcry." was the now familiar, but tiny, voice of the WEBB, with the latest on the DAM crisis.

"HUSELY has done it now." TALL said with indignation.

"I should bite HUSLEY'S neck." CREATURE suggested, as it gazed upon me with steely, orange eyes.

"Now you talking." I said with a second. "A realistic solution if I've ever heard one."

"Anything else SPIDER'S WEBB."  
TALL said as a follow-up.

"Mass is moving in the direction of DANVIEW; tensions are at fever pitch and—I don't believe it." SPIDER said with a tone of disbelief.



"What, what is it: clashing and confrontation, hysteria, what." TALL demanded to know.

"No: none of that." SPIDER replied with dismay. "Just as the mass was trying to organize, a COOTER BROWN truck drove up; the crowd dispersed quickly, most making a run for the truck."

"Doesn't surprise me." TALL added without thought. "COOTER BROWN has that effect."

## COVE CREATURE

"Yeah. I'd run for the orange-aid myself; well. fly as it were." CREATURE agreed.

"How about you soul; are you with us."

"Well. I did want to see the cave. that's for sure; but. okay. I'm with you folks."

## TREDEGAR COVE

## DANVIEW DAM



The DANVIEW DAM was headline news: the cracks or fractures, while minor maintenance issues, had been blown way of proportion by HUSELY HUSSLE. The WEBB looped the story, showing the masses gathered at the site, seemingly to show their concern over what HUSELY has called a crisis or the DAM crisis. First thought a rush movement and rush on the DAM turned-out to be a mad dash for a late arriving COOTER BROWN truck: the masses thirst satisfied, our arrival was a day late and a bottle short.

"Where's CREATURE," I ask.

"Oh, the bat decided to return to the caves, preferring the damp and dingy over the bright orange," TALL replied.

"I thought CREATURE was stoked to go. Could have taken another form; something more adapted for a mass gathering like this one."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"You would think soul, but as it turned-out, frequent re-forming is not idea. CREATURE is trying to play it safe: it's about consistency—as I was told."

"CREATURE, the most certain of all dangers in the COVE, is trying to play it safe." I ask with attention to the irony.

"I know, it doesn't fit the image; but ever since the blowback incident, CREATURE has been advised find balance. CREATURE just doesn't want to get burned again."



"But it's alright to burn-out any one or thing—an overt imbalance." I added with disgust.

"I know, CREATURE is not consistent, or balanced on flaming, but it could be worse. right?"

TALL had a point: after all, this is CREATURE COVE; and as I mulled this over, someone approached: a colorful, entertaining character.

"Soul, meet ROY TOY."

"ROY TOY: don't think I've heard of you."

"Well that's too bad; but here I am," TOY replied as though a show was about to commence.

ROY TOY had similar ability to change form albeit only as toy—whatever the toy be. At the moment, ROY was a plastic push toy, big shifting eyes with an annoying clicking; activated when pushed.

"TALL TELLS me that you have been to CEDAR WOODS." ROY asks, breaking the silence.

## DANVIEW DAM

"Yes. we met CREATURE too."

ROY TOY took-off running circles around us. evidently excited over this news.

"Does ROY have a problem with CREATURE?"

"Think about it soul: ROY is plastic...."  
TALL said as he lowered his chin and furrowed his brow.

"Oh yeah. plastic melts."

"Yeah. and low temperature plastic at that." TALL added with emphasis.

"So. has ROY even been—"

"Burned: well. not yet. but if can't the heat then you better stay away from the flame. right?"

After and uncounted number of revolutions about us. the annoying TOY rolled to a stop as quickly as it started. "I was made in the FAREAST. What about you. soul?"

"I'm from the other side of the TUNNEL."

"ROY. soul has gone through TUNNEL TIME at my invitation. Sojourner is a visitor." TALL clarified.

"I was made in factory. I am an import. and we are many."

"You are many?"



## TREDEGAR COVE

"Yes. many forms I can take: whatever you please as long as it's low-grade plastic."

"Nice: and what about color ROY TOY." I asks.



"Is there any other than orange?"

"Not here. I guess: except gray. of course."

"Gray: I don't know that color." ROY TOY said.

"ROY does not turn gray because toys are always fun and entertaining." TALL clarified once again.

"No gray toys: only orange?"

"Toys can turn gray. indicating that all the fun and entertainment has been lost."

"So do you know of any gray toys?"

"Yes. but they've been sent to." as TALL moved closer and whispered. "recycling."

"What did you say." ROY TOY blurted-out with whiny. mechanical voice.

"He said 'recycling'."

As before. ROY shot-off like a fast ball. falling into revolutions with rolling eyes and constant clicking.

"Sojourner. why'd you have to tell ROY?"

"So that I could see the spastic little plastic toy roll the eyes. go click and circle. again and again."

"Someone. please make it stop." TALL said with desperation.

## DANVIEW DAM

"Look, it's the flaming dragon." I shouted, on which ROY TOY broke from the circle and clicked the distances beyond our sight and earshot."

"Who's next." I said.

"For a soul, you're really quite bold."

"Well, you can't always be modest; sometimes you have to flex your muscle, am I right," and without affirmation from TALL there came a distinct sound: a theme song from an old western flick.

"Well soul, do you have the gold," asked the small but sinister voice of a cowboy figurine.

"Just play along soul; ROY TOY loves to play," TALL suggested.

"No, there is not gold; not here, not in the BANK, nowhere," I said, shifting my eyes, placing my hand next to my make-believe holster.

"What did do with gold?"

"Nothing; there's no gold—not even on the next train out. No, the train does not have any gold locked away in the safe located in the caboose. You know, the safe with the combination: 8-26-14."

"Oh yeah, that safe," said the cowboy ROY with the same sinister voice.

Having picked-up one of RICK'S BRICKS only moments ago, I now carefully placed it on the dry, crusty ground in front of me; all



## TREDEGAR COVE

the while, keeping my eyes locked on the plastic cowboy and my shooting hand at my side. The brick safely on the orange-scorched ground. I backed away slowly, cautiously.

Cowboy ROY cut his eyes toward TALL and, playing along, TALL returned the look. I could hear the distinct sound of a classical guitar playing some western riff—adding some quality to the whole set.

Each of us spaced-out, keeping our eyes glued one toward the other. Now the guitar was joined by some brass; the music more an ensemble than the solo before. Joining in as a foreboding of death, a crow flew over with the distinct squawking. “Good timing,” I said.

“It’s the CREATURE,” TALL informed me.  
“Decided to change form for the crucial moment,” TALL explained.



“Hmm: first a bat, now a bird; what’s next, a bee?”

Each of us brandished our weapons with the obvious intent of doing more. First cowboy ROY TOY showed the expected six-shooting revolver.

“Nice,” I said, “magnum?”

“No,” ROY answered, “Mattel,” on which TALL reached over and, from where I have no idea, presented his piece.

“Nice,” I said, “original?”

“No, it’s just a plastic knock-off that I bought at a pawn store.

## DANVIEW DAM

And next it was my turn: and as with TALL. I had sudden possession of the best of all three: a foreign-made, camouflaged, close-assault rifle with a detachable, auxiliary water bottle and rapid-fire water-jet velocity.



"Guys, you don't stand a chance." I said with the confidence matching the superior quality and advantage of my weapon. "So what's it going to be, huh?" TALL and ROY just stood there: nervous fingers, shifting eyes and disheartening attitudes knowing they were outmatched, wondering where in the—"

"Pale, everyone grab your pales: the cracks have given away and the DAM is going to give way.

"Enough play: let's do our duty." TALL said as though breaking from a bad dream. But for ROY TOY, fun was already a bygone thing: for the cowboy had covertly become a bucket.



"How choice." I said. "And I thought ROY TOY was just for fun and entertainment."

So I grabbed old ROY and followed the others: that is, until we heard an explosion.

"Everyone, whoa, hold-on." TALL said and he looked in the direction of the DAM: and intently studying the location, he said: "We need to wait. I'm not sure about this...."

"Why should we believe TALL TELLS?"

"Wait everyone and listen." I shouted.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Who might you be," they said with a scoff.

"This is Sojourner: a guest of the COVE," TALL said.

"No TALL, let me talk," I cut-in. "You heard the explosion, so you know it happened: so you can't pretend and go charging-off, half-cocked, like some old six-gun."



"Yeah," said the bucket ROY TOY.

Looking at the bucket, remembering that it was ROY, I continued: "let's get more info before charging-in, what do you say?" But some of the crowd didn't seem to hear due to the background noise, the DAM alarm system.

"Soul, here," sounded the now-recognized voice of the much diverse, Johnny-on-spot, the one and only, not available in stores, ROY TOY.

"ROY, you are the best."

"Quite the transformer," TALL added.

"Later," ROY responded.

"Folks, as I was saying, let us wait until some info comes in from the WEBB: then and only then will we know what's going on—and what we can do." I shouted through ROY the megaphone.

"Let's go see SPIDER WEBB, shall we?"

"You're the leader soul," TALL agreed. "But I wonder what caused that explosion. I wonder...."

## DANVIEW DAM

SPIDER WEBB was flooded with incoming messages. so by the time we arrived. opinion had morphed into fact.

"What say you. SPIDER." addressing the WEBB manager.

"It's Sojourner isn't it?"



"That's right."

"And you're just a soul. a visitor aren't you?"

"Yes. that's true—what's your point."

I ask with a tone of impatience.

"Well. we have a policy. that's all. You know: the HUSSLE and all."

"Policy." I ask with confusion.

"Okay. let's dispense with the orange tape." TALL interrupted. "and get on with the questions."

"What orange tape." I ask with more confusion.

"Oh. SPIDER WEBB has to comply with HUSLEY HUSSLE—a matter of security. so-called: anyway. this censoring and control of information is all wrapped-up in 'orange tape'."

"Wow. HUSLEY HUSSLE means business. don't they?"

"You don't know the half of it: but yes. they don't play around." TALL warned. "Where do you think that fancy automatic weapon came from?"

"You mean the foreign-made. camouflaged. close-assault rifle with a detachable. auxiliary water bottle and rapid-fire water-jet velocity?"

"Sort of: except theirs is real—shoots more than water if you know what I mean."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Do they ever; well, you know." I ask with concern.

"Like I said; you don't know the half of it; and right now is not a good time to tell you."

I understood; too much information and too soon a time. But I also realized that, as instruction would have it, my time would come—the gray, other half of it.

"So SPIDER; give us the scoop." TALL ask with authority.

"The official report is that the maintenance team made some mistakes, thus the explosion."

"What of the damage." TALL persisted.

"Nothing official as of yet; but the DAM problem has now been raised to a level 3." SPIDER said.

"What's a 'level', the significance." I chimed-in.

"Poor soul, doesn't even understand levels." said the SPIDER with a mocking tone.

"Neither do I, never heard of it—and I've been around for the ages." TALL said with a look of suspicion and skepticism. "What's a level, in layman terms?"

"It's another creation from HUSLEY, part of the HUSSLE index of crisis aimed to keep the public passively-abreast, actively-apprised and always-alert." SPIDER read aloud from a document bearing the HUSLEY header.

"You're putting me on." TALL followed with the understood doubt and disgust.

"It's real; level 3 whether you believe it or not."



## DANVIEW DAM

"What's a level 1 and 2." I ask. "Ah, as a point of reference, you know." Wherein, SPIDER began to sort through the large document with the speed of eight legs.

"I don't see a level 1 or 2." SPIDER said with some confusion. "Must be here, somewhere; I'm sure of it."

"Don't bother SPIDER; no use trying to find something that's not there." TALL advised with assurance.

"So no level 1 and 2, then. Am I right?"

"Sadly soul, you're right."

"So what does that I mean; you know, the 'official report' wrapped in orange tape."

"I wondered from the beginning Sojourner, but I think that HUSELY is doing the HUSSLE once again."

"You mean the explosion is all a hoax?"

"Not quite; there was after all an explosion. But the cause is what I wonder about; who did it and why?"

"Yes, well, to widen the scope of wonder; did you happen to see what happened to ROY TOY?"

"ROY'S doing one of three things, I think; pitching-in with some bucket brigade; headed further west in search of BOOZER'S missing gold; or doing circles with rolling eyes and that clicking you love so much."

In the other "half-of-it", TALL would later learn that the explosion was sabotage, the official report a cover-up, a level 3, a farce. I don't know which is better; playing make-believe with ROY TOY, or enduring make-believe with HUSLEY HUSSLE.

## TREDEGAR COVE

## FLATTIRE RIM



Our ventures around the RIM would be repeated: as TALL TELLS has fond memories that dated back to his wild days of youth. Even now, the races went on and, as TALL would tell it, was the most popular sport in the COVE next to PIGBALL.

"PIGBALL." I ask.

"You know: the games at the orange bowl, the flying pig and so on."

"Oh yeah, PIGBALL." I repeated while still wondering what all the hoopla was about. But speaking of the orange bowl as perhaps all of TREDEGAR, COOTER BROWN was once again positioned as the popular beverage. And as we approached the RIM, COOTER hit me right in the face: that is, with a big billboard that read: Don't watch the cars go round without a bottle of COOTER BROWN.

"Nice jingle: don't you think TALL?"

"Who, what, oh yeah—whatever gets you through the race?"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"So I take it you don't like racing anymore."

"No. I love racing, but I don't like watching—waste of time, with or without BROWN."

So while indifferent about the COOTER BROWN billboard, TALL TELLS took a different reaction to the next one.

"Hey TALL, get a load at that one," I said, pointing to the HUSLEY HUSSLE billboard positioned at the ideal location.

**Don't watch the cars  
go round without a  
bottle of  
*COOTER BROWN***



**Don't drink and drive at the same time.**

**- COOTER BROWN**

# HUSLEY HUSSLE

## THE LAW



"Got any opinion—as though I needed to ask?"

"I wonder who HUSLEY hustled for such prime advertising space." TALL said with a grimace.

"Maybe you, maybe me—maybe all of us." I had to say, realizing that I was setting-off an explosion of my own.

Just as thought TALL was going to lapse into one a diatribe, someone approached us. "TALL, where yah been?"

"HORACE, this is soul, Sojourner." TALL made formal introductions.

"HORACE HELPER, that's right." I said recognizing the name. "Good to meet you at last." I continued.

"Are you enjoying the race?"

"You know me HORACE: I'm much better in the cockpit." TALL began. "and what about you?"

## TREDEGAR COVE

HORACE was helping with race maintenance: track and car problems, crash recover and that sort of thing.

"Were you involved in the DAM maintenance," I ask, still curious on the details of the explosion.

"No, but I should've been," came a reply laced with regret. "I think that I could have stopped those tricks & treats, if you know what I mean."

"Tricks & treats," I repeated—as though knowing nothing of the HUSSLE.

"Maybe you could have," TALL replied. "Sure would have tried; I know that."

We talked some more about the matter: the false reporting and source of the explosion, and the possible motives behind the so-called level 3, crisis. We seemed to be in agreement that much was being purposely withheld—behind the official report.

"There is some gray in that," HORACE said, looking in the direction of the HUSLEY HUSSLE billboard. "Someday, we're all going know the facts."

"And the truth too," TALL added in agreement, as we spotted some of the race cars.

"A trip down memory lane will do me well," TALL said with reverence.

"So what are we waiting for?"

Watching the races was of no interest to TALL, but seeing the cars up close was; and so our "trip down memory lane" was special.



## FLATTIRE RIM

even for me, as each was looked at and described from one who knew such things well.

"These are the muscle cars," TALL explained, identifying several by make and model, along with engine and other features, good or bad.

"You say this is a 1960's Lodge Cart," I said to show my interest.

"Yes: it was really more of a family sedan, but this one has been beefed-up for the race."



Several makes and models were there along side the Lodge: the renowned Lodge Re-charger, the Chord Horseman, and some Heavy types such as the Ramero.

"A fine collection: but can they run," I ask as though I really cared.

"Can they run," TALL said with emphasis. "They can move some metal."

I had no idea that TALL was so interested in cars: not really. Sure, the story of FLATTIRE RIM, but not this.

"So, do you think that such cars will ever be electric: that is, something more efficient," I said referring to TALL'S prior comments on a vintage van that was being converted to electric.

"Electric is fast, make no mistake," TALL replied. "I've seen a few out here."

"Move metal too," I commented

## TREDEGAR COVE

"You bet: high torque. electric cars are wide-open from the line." TALL explained. "Sure. they're coming."

Something caught my attention. along with others standing nearby. Up above FLATTIRE RIM. I could see a banner being pulled by CREATURE COVE. What's that: MACON BACON."

"Mean company." TALL said. "advertising. CREATURE does it as community project—a way of trying to overcome the bad rap for burning-up parts of the COVE." TALL went on.



"Is it good: the meat?"

"Yes. very lean. They use on the finest pork from the fallout of PIGBALL."

"Nice." I said. thinking about the game again while watching the dragon swoop back and forth over the area.

"I think CREATURE really likes the attention." judging from the expression of the beast. and reaction of the crowd.

"Yes. quite the acrobat and showman. that dragon." TALL agreed. "I did tell you that a song has been written about CREATURE: really. a sentimental folk kind."

"Really: how about singing it for me." if you don't mind.

## FLATTIRE RIM

"Me. sing; not in your life time." TALL made it clear. "But HORACE will do anything and happens to know that piece. as most in the COVE."

"HORACE: how 'bout it." I ask. knowing the answer

"CREATURE the fearless dragon lived in the COVE: flamed and torched and near destroyed ever thing it seen. Then one day it lost its fire and things began to change. it turned its tail and lowered its head and was no longer mean." HORACE sang. "Would you like to hear more?"



"Save it HORACE." I urged.

"Yeah whatever: it's a great tune."

"It sure is." TALL added with a tear in his eye.

"Are you alright." I ask. surprised to see TALL so moved.

"That song really moves me: that's all."

"I can see why." I agreed though somewhat amused by the sensitivity of a sometimes crusty old character.

"Like some of these cars. that song reminds me of my youth: you know. when I was a radical—anti-ESTABLISHMENT."

"I remember the days well." HORACE chimed-in. "Remember those road trips and living in a van down by the river. And the rallies and protests—a happening time. for sure." HORACE went on.



"So you two hung-out together then?"

"Dude. we were like brothers: it was righteous. radical and real."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"And groovy. cool." I continued, showing my particular interest in what TALL had described previously with similar passion.

"Yeah man." HORACE replied while looking toward TALL. "At times, real groovy and cool," he added.



"I miss those times." TALL began again, with more sentiment than that elicited by CREATURE'S folk song. "We stood for something: we had courage and vision—and stood-up to status quo to change things—sincerely believing that we could."

"And sometimes we rocked." HORACE added.

"Sure: you can't be serious all the time—got to blow some steam and cool the jets somehow. Why not...can't let the gray get you down."

"All we need love. na-na-na-na-na. all we need is love. na-na-na-na-na. all we need is love. love—love is all we need." HORACE sang.

"Okay HORACE." I get it.

"Just let it go: HORACE is having a blast from the past." TALL said. "and so am I."

As they reminisced on the real, radical and righteous past, I turned my attention and direction away: deciding to head-out on my own for a spell. Let them dream of their good and noble deeds for change: their courage and convictions, and their celebrations of love, life and living.

## FLATTIRE RIM

And so off I went, intermingling among the others while keeping my eyes open to the strange and wonderful.



"Jellybean." I heard. "you like it, don't you?"

Turning around, and with mixed feelings, I faced the much forbidding JILL BEAL.

"I said: you like jellybeans don't you." JILL repeated, persistent and provocative.

"Yes, jellybeans." was all that I seemed able to say expecting another episode of choking—the stuffing of a bean down my throat. Calm: I must remain calm; no worry, no risks, no trouble. I thought. Remain calm and try to think about peace, love and orange.

"Are you enjoying the races." JILL continued.

"Races: yeah. TALL has brought me up to speed."

"Up to speed." JILL repeated, reflecting curiosity. "So you like speed: like to go fast in that 240Z and raise some—"

"JELL: ah mean, JILL." I interrupted in an effort to change the direction.

"Yes, you speed-demon: what is it?"

"Well.... say, have you seen CREATURE flying around with that banner, I ask just to move the matter. "MACON BACKON is good meat."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Yes. it's good if you like that sort of thing: bacon and all that business." JILL commented. "But meat is like love: it has to be tender and juicy." JILL explained while looking me over. "Don't you agree. speedy?"

"Agree." I uttered while clearing my throat. "Well. tender and juicy are qualities—you're right about that."

"I know that I'm right: I'm always right. But what I want to know is whether you're right too." JILL clarified with a doting expression.

"Yes: whether I'm right—that is your question. right?"

"I can see that you're starting to orange line." JILL interrupted.

"Orange line." I said. confused.

"You need to reduce you speed: else. you'll blow a head and lose your compression. You're running too hot. soul."

Head. hot—someone please help me. I thought.

"Soul: I've been looking for you." I heard TALL say. "Oh. it's you. JILL BEAL."

"Hello TALL. still trying to coddle the soul?"

"No: Sojourner is not a babe. if that's what you mean."

"I disagree totally." JILL said. looking at me with lustful eyes. "Soul is a babe in the making."

"I like to carry this discussion further—really BEAL—but we really have to go." TALL insisted.

"You're always running away soul. but that's okay: I'm fast too." BEAL bragged. "Oh. I almost



## FLATTIRE RIM

forgot. Picked you up some shoes. you know. to replace the small ones I through overboard. So since you have the need for speed: here you are.' JILL explained while handing me the high-tops.

"Nice." was all I could say again.

"Nice is right; that's what I am. nice." I heard from JILL as we quickly made our exit.

"Will not heed my warnings soul: have I not emphasized that JILL is a highway to the danger zone—are you listening?"

"Ah yeah. what was that?"

"I said...never mind. Where's HORACE: maybe the HELPER can break through." TALL said with obvious desperation. "I mean. look at you: you look like you've had too much COOTER BROWN."



"I agree." I heard from HORACE fast approaching. "Look's punch-drunk: too many trips to the farm. so to speak. suck-en on the wild weed." HELPER continued with close examination. "It's worse than I thought: look's like soul has seen BEAL." HORACE concluded with nodding head. "This could take time: got to bring the soul down slowly—got to be sensitive to the young. malleable heart. mental fatigue and all the other symptoms."

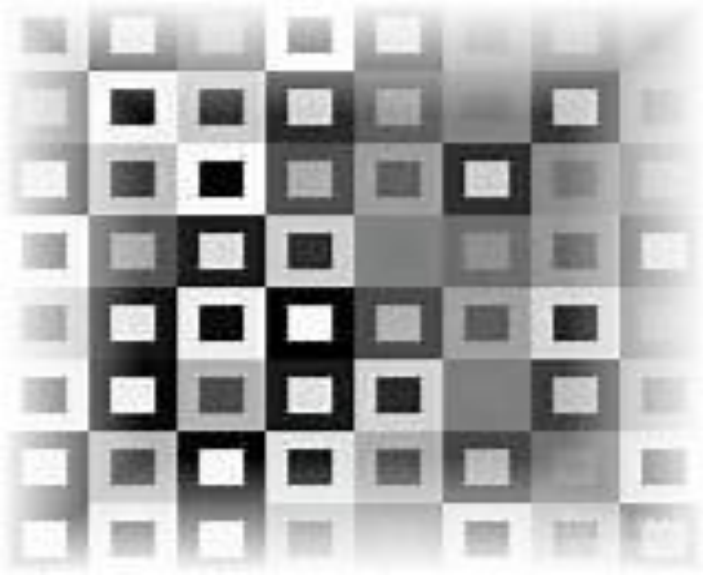
"Alright already: yes. you're the HELPER but you are obviously not DR. REAL." TALL said. exasperated.

"Doctor who." HORACE replied. "Oh yeah. the one that solves everybody's lifetime problems in a matter of minutes—expert in all matters of emotional healing."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Wow. talk about speed." I said. unsure of what it is. where it be.  
or whether I had any soul left in me.

## GRAY'S SHADES



Leaving FLATTIRE RIM with speed. I was relieved from any further encounter with JILL BEAL—at least from any physical contact, my senses still spinning.

"Get some rest soul," were the last words I heard before my own blowout and crashing: as in the passing. TUNNEL TIME. I felt as though I was dreaming or imagining everything before me, but this time, dark and gray—frightful and foreboding.

I heard the hideous drone of the dragon: CREATURE reigning down terror on TREDEGAR. The screams and shouts of the frantic dwellers as they ran hysterically in every direction—chaos and mayhem in the midst of their burning, scorched structures barely resembling what was and should have remained.

"I can't believe this." Yes. I was told of the treacherous acts of CREATURE—but it's entirely different seeing it, being here. And

## TREDEGAR COVE

look at CREATURE: where is the compassion that I had seen as recent as at FALTTIRE RIM? "Who are you? Did you not learn from the blowback—from being burned by your own fire?" It was a bizarre scene that left me both angry and angst at the same time. "What if dragon returns so gray and

gruesome?

Who can stop

the

leviathan?"

From



such an alarming site. my mind traveled to the river: to a place no unlike TALL would go as a youth—what HORACE called a love-in. But what I saw was nothing like I expected: no. it was dirty and dank—folks fighting over the waterfront and other property issues. "Where do they get the energy to carry-on so." I ask my soul. There was no van or bus. or any such cool cars: but just a bunch of old burned-out heaps of molten metal: evidently. the result of dragon' fury. "So much for living in van down by the river—this looks more like a living—"

"Mucked-up shell:" the shell along the shoals of the river was covered in muck: a thick. oily substance that drifted in the water in globs. "What happened to the clear. pristine waters of the COVE." I said to my shock. Everything that touched the water was touched by the muck—unable to pull-away and free itself from its sticky hold. And to make matters worse. the dragon swept down.

## GRAY'S SHADES

projecting its fire on the mucky waters—the whole river left ablaze as Dante's Inferno.

The dream drifting to yet another point in the COVE, freeing me of the misery of the fouled waters. I hovered over the orange bowl as before, in the passing; and from the point saw, once again, a game in the making. This time however, the atmosphere was similarly dark and dingy: all the patrons were boozers—and most of those staggering about or passed-out; the field no longer frantic with the pig and its pursuers, but instead, all such participants carrying heavy burdens of riches and wealth on their backs in bags and boxes stamped with: PROPERTY OF BOOZER BANK. "You there," I



ask, "what is this property you struggle to carry?" Looking up with obvious fatigue, one said to me: "Everything belongs to BOOZER."

"These are not games: there is nothing fun and entertaining about this—nothing at all—dark and gray day of PIGBALL." But no one listened; no one seemed to care or have the capability; each and all were bought and paid for—not persons but property.

Pulling myself away from the mess, I moved on hoping for something orange and beautiful, only to encounter more of the same: FLATTIRE RIM was not the usual scene of speed and skill, but instead, was a demolition derby: classic cars were by jalopies that joisted, banging and busting each other till the last one standing. And if that wasn't bad enough, the drivers—those who

## TREDEGAR COVE

could still stand—would jump from their junk and start in on the other. FLATIRE RIM was more than a blowout. spinning and crashing: it was total demolition—metal moving in pointless directions.

"Get me out of here: anywhere else. please." I said to my soul.

"Anywhere." I then heard. not expecting an audible voice.

"Who are you." I ask. thinking that I knew this voice.

"You know: tender and juicy..."

"No. no: not you again—not JILL BEAL." I moaned to myself.

"The one and only: here again to satisfy your appetite for all things sweet." returned the haunting sound. "Care for some jellybeans." was the warning as I began to gage from not one. but a more than a mouth full of beans.

"Are you trying to kill me." I said. spitting out the black pills. coughing and chocking all the while my eyes tearing.

"What's wrong speedy: don't like licorice?"

"No. I hate licorice about as much as you." I said without giving a thought to JILL'S possible reaction.

"Now. now. soul: you don't mean that. do you." BEAL ask with baited breath. "How could you hate me?"

With the question. I felt a tinge of guilt and shame coming-on: JILL'S right. how can I hate? Maybe I should say I'm sorry. take



## GRAY'S SHADES

the pills—I mean the beans—and give BEAL a chance—being that I was compensated for the sneakers.

"Don't do it," echoed what I thought was a faint voice. "It's not cool, trust me dude."

"Is that you, HORACE." I whispered so as to avoid attention from JILL.

"Yes, it is the dude, HORACE HELPER, at your service—even in the course of a bade dream when everything is dark and gray, all games gone bad, and all jellybeans gone black.

"Don't listen to that distant voice," echoed another, different voice.



"And who are who?"

"DR. REAL," returned the professional sounding voice.

"And you're a doctor?"

"No actually a doctor, but I am certified."

"Certified in what." I had to ask just to qualify the doctors' credentials for insurance purposes.

"Certified to fix lifelong problems in a matter of minutes; that's what," the good doctor added with professional jargon.

"REAL is not real, man—not even radical or righteous," HELPER suggested. "You might as well take the black pill if you follow REAL. You might as well bend to the superficial beauty of JILL BEAL. You might as well—"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Okay HORACE: I get it; I know where you're coming from. I feel your vibrations. I dig—"

"No need to go overboard soul."

Collecting myself for the impending: I directed my comments first to DR. REAL: "Thanks for the certified advice. but I must follow my conscience—I can do no other." I told REAL who seem a little belligerent too.

"Well then. let it be" dictated the doctor. "Say soul. have you read my latest book?"

"No: I didn't even know who you were until now."

"It will really help." REAL told me. handing me a copy.

Reading the title. I was still a little confused: "A Complete Takeover: Winning without the Rules."

"Okay. thanks. but—"

"Just read it. Look. see on the back. it comes highly endorsed from BOOZER BANK and HUSLE HUSSLE."

"That says it all." HORACE whispered.

"Well. I'm waiting Sojourner." returned the somewhat soothing voice of JILL BEAL. "Is it love or just like—you make the call. now." JILL'S voice changing from soothing to seductive. "Oh. and before you respond. a little something I picked-up for you at the COVE'S sports outlet.

Reaching into a black bag. JILL pulled out. of all things. sneakers—black and some off-brand at that.



## GRAY'S SHADES

"No-o-o-o-o-o-o: not black. not generic." I shouted so loud as to even shock JILL. if that was possible.

"What's wrong soul: don't want to play anymore?"

"Not like this. not without rules and order."

"Calm down dude: it's cool." HELPER interjected.

"Where are we." I ask. feeling the pressure lifted from my weary soul.

"HUSELY HUSSLE is my name: I am. well. the law of this land."

"What. huh. the law." I muttered. still trying pull myself together after the black shoe scenario.



"My job is to maintain rules and order: to enact, enforce and ensure the efficacy and ethos of my elected and earnest excellence—and example to all.

"What about the entanglement...of all." I had to ask. holding to the alliteration of the statement.

"Excuse me: do I detect some contempt in your question." ruled the voice of the most excellent HUSLEY.

"No contempt. not really: more about collusion. covert and clandestine: you know. cheating."

"Excuse me: are you saying I am in error. that my effort is less than exemplary and ethical?"

"I don't really get cornered or coerced. restricted to alliterative combinations. but would rather talk freely—the layman and simple soul that I am."

"Exceptions entered: explain." echoed HUSLE.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Anyway: the so-called rules and order are not so excellent or worthy of exaltation: some folks are exempt—above the law: others are given exceptional treatment—adding to your earnings with, what's it called, contributions, if reported: and finally, there are those lurking in the shadows—the unelected and self-appointed that run the show from backstage while those like you do the dance.



"And from the mouth of babes," I heard HORACE comment. "Layman soul. I think it's about time that we made like a banana and split."

"I couldn't agree more," grabbing HELPER as we hurried past the HUSSLE.

"You, you: I'm not going to forget this," were the last words I heard from the honorable HUSLEY.

"Neither have we," HORACE hailed.

As we cleared the corridors of this most auspicious structure, the monument of justice stared me in the eye: a beautiful, Greek-like, statue that matched the opulence of the court we so graciously departed.

"Well, what have you got for me," I said to the statue as though it be alive. "What words have you for this layman." I seem to plead, looking for some wisdom.

"Arête," the statue spoke in its native tongue.

"Wonder what that means: sounds like Greek."

## GRAY'S SHADES

"Well, if I remember my Homer right, it means "moral virtue."  
HORACE gasped in between strides. "It means that you came, you  
saw, and you kicked—"



"Blast, that's what you say sometimes:  
a blast."

"I guess so: although court is not  
exactly party-central—not for folks like  
you and me."

"What's next?"

"Good news soul: soon, you will wake."

"And everything will be brilliant and orange?"

"Was it before: before this nightmare?"

"I see: so this nightmare has been a reflection of before—call  
it the dark side of things?"

"Right: remember that behind every orange cloud there is some  
gray lining."

## TREDEGAR COVE

## HORACE HELPER



As HORACE had described. I did wake from the long nightmare. the dark and gray images and interactions: yet. not without understanding and knowledge.

I am thankful for the gray: that though it is much more strange than wonderful. the experience does me well—more grateful and appreciative of the orange.

My first question on waking was: "Where's TALL?"

"TALL TELLS is on a mission."

"A mission: what kind." I ask with concern.

"Other side of the TUNNEL: probably something to do with another soul. like you." HORACE tried to explain.

"Have you ever done TUNNEL TIME." I ask.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"No: no need really. I've got TELLS to teach me about it, though: and I have to say that this is enough."

"And never any desire: you know, curiosity?"

"You might think so: after all, TUNNEL TIME alone is a strange and wonderful experience: but no interest, as of yet, beyond what TALL has told me."

Turning my attention back to TALL, I ask: "How did TALL become the guide and mentor for TUNNEL TIME?"



"Good question, although I think TALL should answer that one," HORACE began. "Let me say that TALL had other expectations."

"Yes, he has talked about that: and so have you."

"We were part of a period of unrest and, in some measure, resistance and revolution. But these expectations never came to be, not as envisioned anyway."

"TALL hasn't told me everything."

"Doesn't really like to talk about it: it's a sore subject and is purposely avoided. Add to that the deliberate distortions and what you have is a great big mess without resolution."

"HUSLEY symbolizes this, right?"

"Perception over purpose gives way to this mess over matter," HORACE summed it up.

"You're a teacher too: like TELLS."

## HORACE HELPER

"I think we all can teach: just have to take time to learn and be willing and wanting to share it. HORACE commented. "TALL says you can teach too."

"Yeah. I've surprised myself: especially in front of HUSLEY."

"That was special: even I was surprised—we all were."

"ALL." I said. "Who else knows what I said."

"More than I. that's for sure." HORACE admitted. "Not that that I've been out telling tales: it's HUSLEY who will be doing the HUSSLE—spreading all sorts of madness about you. about us. trying to stir fear and opposition—same old mess. Believe me. we've been through this so many times. it's practically routine."

With a sudden sense of dark and gray. I ask: "Do you mean that I've become—"

"Important. why yes?"

"That wasn't my choice of words." I replied.

"More like criminal was what I was thinking."

"Have you done anything wrong. is that it?"

"More than that: have I crossed the line: irritated THE ESTABLISHMENT—crossed the line."

"Maybe: but If it makes you feel better. you're not alone. TALL. myself and others are with you: we've faced the man and have paid for it—some more than others."

In these comments. I felt CARPENTER'S ANGST coming on big time: and no doubt. HORACE sensed that.



## TREDEGAR COVE

"We each have our purpose; and if you can accept this, a plan of some kind. Some parts of the plan, we may choose; others, well, this is mysterious—like the passing of TUNNEL TIME or a foggy day in CEDAR WOODS." HORACE explained. "When we choose to believe—as you did in the passing—we have consequences: the good and the bad; the orange and the gray; the ups and the downs; the rights and the wrongs and so on."

"What if it's impossible to accept; what if the consequences are unacceptable?"

"Good question; for there are times when you face such dilemmas—as you may already know. But to offer a real answer is to first think about the alternative: what if you don't or can't, accept the consequences; what then?"

"Then I'm bound; chained and locked into the past—unable to get beyond it and even learn from it?"

"That's right; so even if you are not criminalized in the HUSSLE, you are still a prisoner of the past."

"Have you had that problem; and what about

TALL TELLS?"

"Sure, we still do; but that doesn't mean that we can't—or shouldn't—tell others, faults and all."

"So you don't have to be perfected or complete, in some measure, to offer sage advice?"



## HORACE HELPER

"No perfection is necessary. if it were possible. But there is something that is vital."

"What's that?"

"Being real is vital. For when you are not real—but a fake and a fraud—then you end being nothing to no one."

"Like HUSELY or BOOZER?"

"Each of them is certainly on their way. it's true. But we each have to deal with being real. don't you agree?"

"I suppose; but if that's true. how do we come-off being critical. even condemning. of others."

"Another good question Sojourner; now all that have to do is to try to provide an equally good answer." HORACE acknowledged. "Here's one way of thinking about it. I am getting older. at least in age. When I look into a mirror. what do I see? I should see that I'm getting older simply because it's real and true. Sometimes however. I do not want to accept this condition; and what's more. I look to others and identify readily that they are getting older; aging and all. But if was real. I would understand that they do not control their aging. but that we all face this process. transition as a natural part of life and living."



"I understand. but we don't choose to age or grow old contrary to other parts of the 'plan'. so-called. So how could you be critical in that?"

"Believe me; such natural occurrences are sometimes confused with choice. But back to your last question; being critical and

## TREDEGAR COVE



condemning when, indeed, we have our own issues with being a fake and fraud among other faux pas."

HORACE went on to explain that it should be our own honest self-assessment—being real—that drives us toward being critical and condemning of 'fake and fraud'. When you know the facts, having done much to acquire them, you want others to know—so that, at the least, they have choices too."

"So it's about having choices?"

"Yes; but the choices begin with being real."



"This is a lot to digest, HORACE."

"I agree; so chew well."

It was a lot to think about; but at this time, most of my thinking was on the consequences of the court. Was or would I be criminalized, as with TALL, and end up without any choices at all. I feared?

"Here's an object lesson that may help," HORACE suggested. "See this orange: is it real or fake? It looks real but is that merely an illusion?"

"I think it's real. It has a bruise, an imperfection, right there." I pointed out.

"Good; so the bruise gives it away? Wonder how it tastes: is it foul or favorable?"

"Don't know; at least not until I smell and taste it."

## HORACE HELPER

"So you've got to examine it closer to get all the facts. do yah?"

"Yeah. if I really care to know." I said openly.

"And what if you didn't care: but never the less. tried to sell me the orange on the premise that it was favorable."

"That's the buyers' risk." I said promptly.

"But what if you did know it was foul. but proceeded to sell it anyway?"

"That wouldn't be right: it's fraud."

"And what if someone tried to sell you a foul orange—knowing that is was foul: would you be

angry?"

"Of course: no one wants to be cheated."

"And worse than that. what if the orange was a fake and you bought it: wouldn't you feel like a fool?"

"Yes: angry at being fooled. tricks & treats."

"What would you do then: would you try to dump it on someone else—pay it forward?"

"No. I don't think so. Why would I want someone else to have to pay for my bad choices: why would I try to pawn it off on someone?"

"So you care: you really care about facts and you care about others knowing the facts—even if you get fooled or falter in fake and fraud: am I right?"

"I think so: but I don't know all the consequences of taking this stand—especially against THE ESTABLISHMENT."



## TREDEGAR COVE

"Neither did we: but we did what did based on the facts—what we believed to be true."

"You meant that it was only belief: you were not absolute sure." I said somewhat in disgust.

"Since when is anything absolute: here or there. on the other side." HORACE posed.

"I see: believing may be all that we have."

"It may be: but that shouldn't stop us from seeking facts too: after all. choices are best when based on something concrete and confirmed—in addition to caring in the first place."

"You are a HELPER."

"I try: although believe me. I have my foibles. faults. faux pas."

"I should believe that." I ask. a test of sort.

"Don't have to: the facts are out there."

After something to eat. I returned again for some more knowledge and understanding.

"I want to talk about the dream. dark and gray as it was." I said. "First. do you know anything about: after all. you are in it?"

"I have some understanding: but not any details."

"Did you know that I was dreaming. as it seemed."

"Yes. for several reasons."

"Is it part of what you call the plan?"



## HORACE HELPER

"I would think so, as for any of us. Here, in the COVE, we dream dreams—it's as natural and beneficial as being conscious or awake—more even."

"So about the dream, since you don't know the details: I saw a different, darker side of most everything I've learned here."

"Or thought you learned. You see, dreams reveal things: things no necessarily seen when awake and distracted."

"Distracted." I repeated. "What do you mean?"

"I mean: preoccupied with other things that, where understood or not, can distract us from facts and such," Horace explained.

"In the dream, the orange bowl wasn't sound orange."

"And you think it is at all?"

"Well, it does look kind of amusing."

"I agree: it's amusing—that's not the question. Is it really orange: that's the question," HORACE clarified.

"Depends on what you believe to be orange. I think."



"Yes, true: but let me explain where I'm going, using PIGBALL as the example." And so the HELPER helped me understand the question. "Such games can become consuming to the degree of distraction: where nothing or no one else matters."

"You said caring is necessary: what's wrong with caring about PIGBALL or any other game for that matter?"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"I did say that; but I should have clarified: it's what we care about too." HORACE added. "How important is PIGBALL; how much should we invest in games?"

"I don't know, but TALL tells me that the organizers, like BOOZER and HUSELY have invested a lot."

"Yes, but to them it's obviously not a game."

"But you said is it, a game."

"In fact, it is; but BOOZER and HUSLEY are using for other reasons." HORACE repeated. "BOOZER gets wealth and riches through sells and gambling; while HUSLEY sees PIGBALL as a distraction—a way of keeping attention off of other shenanigans and schemes."

"So, for the one it's a racket and for the other, a—"

"Rabbit hole." HORACE finished.

"Suddenly, I think less of PIGBALL—if that was possible."

"Don't misunderstand me: I like games too, but the problem begins when the game becomes too serious and too seedy. As both a racket and a rabbit hole, PIGBALL is more a creature than COVE CREATURE."



"No way; the injuries are not that serious?"

"I'm not talking about the on-field danger or the antics in the stands either. I'm talking about what goes on behind the scenes: facts that go unfound or unchecked."

## HORACE HELPER

"Because folks are caring about the wrong thing," I ask. "Or maybe, they just have their priorities in the wrong order? Or maybe they just don't care even if it's right in the front of their face?"

"Or maybe they are suppose to care," HORACE finished.

"Why are they not supposed to...." I ask with insistence.

"Too much caring means trouble for—"

"The ESTABLISHMENT," I guessed.

"Something or someone that fits that description; and that has too much to lose with exposure."



"So when THE ESTABLISHMENT is exposed—," I began in drawing a conclusion.

"Heads roll," HORACE finished. "which means that, out of fear, power will be abused."

"How abused," I ask

"As much as it takes to cover the exposure, end the fact-finding; and, finally, prevent a repeat of such risks, if possible. It can get very ugly, believe me."

"I believe you. In fact, I've read about such things—difficult to find though it is," I said in agreement. "Institutions will go to great length to maintain power and possession."

"You bet; it makes COVE CREATURE look like, well, a playful game of fun and entertainment."

I had no idea that HELPER could help in this way. My initial impression was that he was TALL'S sidekick; somewhat skillful and

## TREDEGAR COVE

serving, but not too smart when it came to such matters. How wrong first impressions can be.

"And FLATTIRE RIM is not different," HORACE continued, drawing comparison with PIGBALL.

"So how do you do it: how do you go on caring—about the things that matter—when the consequences can be so costly? After all, isn't it easier just to go the game, or race, and just let it be, so to speak?"

"Oh sure; I never said that this choice was easy or convenient. On the contrary, such choices are costly."



"So in short, why bother, why continue caring," I ask earnestly. "Why give a—"

"DAM: the DANVIEW DAM is a good object lesson."

"You mean the DAM problem."

"Think about the problem, what you know of it: fractures or cracks are discovered; this problem is found and addressed immediately by the crew."

"I know all that, and—"

"And the alternative would be—," HORACE continued, waiting for an answer.

"Do nothing, let it ride," I guessed, "but that would be negligent and irresponsible."

"Can you imagine if they just let it ride," HORACE said, "so then: with pressure and persistence, the cracks get worse finally giving

## HORACE HELPER

way with sweeping, widespread destruction in the wake of the deluge?"

"Again, negligent and irresponsible." I reaffirmed.

"So it makes sense to act now to avoid a catastrophe in the future?"

"Yes, yes; for course it does." I agreed emphatically. "Oh I see the connection: act now to avoid greater costs later—is that it?"

"That's it; that's why caring about what matters is so important, even necessary; sooner or later, the consequences come...to everyone."

"Even those who don't have a clue?"

"Yes, to everyone." HORACE repeated.

## TREDEGAR COVE

## HUSLEY HUSSLE



If you have read the prior short stories, and in particular the last on HORACE HELPER, you know that I am not on the best of terms with HUSLEY HUSSLE. Said another way, the law is not on my side right now; and quite possibly, I am wanted.

What would you do in such a situation; would you run and hide, or would confront the man? Would your decision change if you knew you were right or upright—versus a violation of some kind? These are the questions that I am wrangling with right now as I share my situation.

HUSLEY HUSSLE is not right or upright; but in these circumstances has overwhelming power, possession, and purportedly, public approval. So like young DAVID as he ran from KING SAUL, my chance for survival seems very slim.

The law is a strange and wonderful thing; its theory, civil law is supposed to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. Sound good.

## TREDEGAR COVE

doesn't it; but what happens if, by corruption, this supposition is perverted; that is, that the law protects the guilty and punishes the innocent? I guess at the least that anyone who is innocent—as more the definition of common or natural law—is potentially in danger or at risks. Meanwhile, corruption continues on, rewarded in some way.

TREDEGAR COVE has its corruption too; oh yes, it is not above the trappings of greed and graft: the unaccountable BOOZER BANK; the unresolved explosion at DANVIEW DAM; the shady dealings of HUSLEY HUSSLE are but three examples presented already.

At present, I am with my helper HORACE; meanwhile, TALL TELLS is presumed to be doing TUNNEL TIME. I am fearful or what is called CARPENTER ANGST; anxious and afraid of what will happen as a result of my conduct in the courtroom. Yes, I know; the confrontation was in a dream or nightmare; but the possibility in a time and place like the COVE is that dreams come true—even bad ones.

"What is it HORACE?"

"I've got some bad news soul; HUSLEY has issued a warrant for your arrest."



"It's not like you didn't warn me." I replied with some sweat beading-up my brow. "What to do?"

"There's only one right thing to do in this situation soul; and that is to turn comply with civil law."

## HUSLEY HUSSLE

"Yes, but you and I know that they're wrong," I begin to form an argument.

"No need for us to rehash that—I'm with you," HORACE said, nullifying my attempt for an argument. "And we both will be with you all the way too."

"Thanks HORACE: you don't know what a help you've been," I said, now realizing the importance of relationships more than ever. "Well, take me away."

And so I listened to sage advice: I turned my self in to the HUSSLE assured that it was the right thing to do. HORACE supported me all the way as promised: and as I would learn, TALL TELLS was making haste having learned of my arrest.

"What are the charges," I ask HORACE

"Most likely contempt, but with HUSSLE, we must wait until we see the warrant."

And if it had been contempt: but bad news was in store: "three charges: and one a felony. I can't believe it."

"What do I do: do you have attorneys in TREDEGAR," I ask HORACE.

"Yes, but they're expense and, moreover, are heavily linked with HUSSLE."

"So you saying that an attorney wouldn't help, is that it?"

"I'm afraid not in you case: listen soul, you've crossed HUSELY and, to make matters worse, you are associated with me and TALL TELLS."

"So are saying that I don't have a chance?"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"No, not at all; but only that your choice of a minion of the HUSSLE is a mistake: they're as thick as thieves."

"More like wolves if you ask me—and I'm the lamb."

"It's a real tangle but I think I have a way to break it loose."

"Really HORACE, how," I said with some weight lifting from my shoulders.



"I'm still working on it and, with TALL in route, will need to get agreement. As it is in concept, we must find something more important than this matter at hand: something that HUSELY fears more than the consequences of your confrontation."

"What does one as powerful as HUSLEY fear?"

"Oh, those with power, possession and public support: these type fear a great deal."

"How so: I mean HUSLEY owns half the COVE, evidently has all the HUSSLE in hand, and does a stellar job of deceiving most of the public," I said with conviction. "Again, what does HUSELY have to fear?"

"Sojourner, didn't you make HUSLEY angry?"

"Yeah, I guess: he was very angry over my words," I began. "Oh wait, I see: anger means fear, right?"

"Spot-on soul," HORACE responded with enthusiasm, "and if a small soul can make the big HUSSLE angry, then such a concept can work—the right combination, conditions and such."

"I'm in," was all I could say at this point.

## HUSLEY HUSSLE

"Of course you're in soul—what alternatives do you have?"

Soon I was escorted away: booked and processed for detainment.

"I've never been locked-up before." I said just before leaving.

"Well I have: it's not that bad. not really: you'll be alright."

"I know: more learning and knowledge."

"Sure: plenty of time to read if you manage to get a good book."

"Any recommendations. before we separate." I ask.

"Yes. again: a good book." HORACE said as we hugged and parted ways.

I didn't understand the charges in detail but, from what I thought I knew, a basic description: contempt, a minor offense: corruption, a major offense: and that last, failing to use the crosswalk—or what we call jaywalking where I come from. I would later be told that these charges could amount to a sentence of three years and charges well exceeded my means.

The charge of contempt was expected, of course: but the major offense of corruption came out of nowhere. "It's not like I wasn't warned about HUSLEY: nothing is impossible when you do the HUSSLE." I said again.

As to the last charge, also minor, I have no idea. "Where did they get this?"

"You don't know." said another detainee, overhearing my comment.

"No: I mean come-on!"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Than you don't know about HUSLEY'S obsession with alliteration: how great effort and energy is exerted in ensuring excellence in such erudition.

"Now that you mention it: yes, this sort of jargon was spilling over during my brief court appearance." I said, realizing that the last charge was, "a c-word—like the other two."

"Congratulations: the cause for the cross-walk charge has now been uncovered."

And as I headed back to my bunk I wondered if this fetish had not found some friends among these fellow felons.

"I wonder what other charges that might try to pin on me: assuming some add-on as an advantage?" And with some thought, here are the possibilities:

- ✿ Criminal mischief
- ✿ Car theft
- ✿ Conduct unbecoming...
- ✿ Carrying...
- ✿ Concealment...
- ✿ Conspiracy...

Could there be more." I ask myself as the angst began to resurface."

Gaining familiarity with life in jail, I was more confident in HORACE'S early comment: "you'll be alright." And, as suggested, a good book or two was found waiting for me: the first was "Living my Life, Emma Goldman. Some notes had been scribbled in the margin and, for some odd reason, the handwriting looked familiar:

## HUSLEY HUSSLE

and then I read: "see HORACE. this is what I was trying to help you understand." as I realized that this was TALL'S notes. "Well. what are the odds." I said to myself.

"What odds do you mean." said a now-familiar voice of the detainee that had previously described HUSLEY'S habit of alliteration. "eruditions emanating from Emma. perhaps?"

"So you've read the book?"

"We all have." said the other detainee. suggesting everyone in the cell block. "or at least we've given it some attention."

"What do you think." I ask in the follow-on.

"EMMA experienced the life so. as an example. is excellent." was the comment of one who definitely caught the alliteration bug.

"Thanks." but I don't your name.

"DAVID; DAVID DANVIEW." is who you're talking to.

"DANVIEW; not the DANVIEW of the DAM." by chance. I said. noting the coincidence."

"Yes. in a way; the DAM was named in honor of a founding family; one that founded the COVE.

"So you go way back." I said. though obvious. just to continue the conversation.

"We do indeed. for better or worse."

"So what are you doing here. locked-up. if you don't mind telling me?"

"Same as you in a way; I challenged HUSLEY on the so-called investigation of the DAM explosion—calling the whole process a sham."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"And the charges." I continued, perhaps pushing too much on DAVID'S disclosure.

"You could guess." DAVID said.

- ✿ Obstruction of justice
- ✿ Omission of evidence
- ✿ Obfuscation of the obvious

"See, no surprises as to alliteration." DAVID added, "but asks me about the basis for such outlandish charges."

"This place is a riot." I said with a sarcastic tone.

"Ah, don't mention that word; it tends to make the staff uncomfortable, upset and unruly." DAVID interrupted, "and when the staff gets upset, upheaval follows—the whole time and place comes undone."

"Scratch that word; you'll never hear it from me again." I said with some drama.

"Don't underestimate the unlawfulness of HUSSLE." DAVED began.

"I am with you DANVIEW; gained some understanding as an understudy of TALL TELLS and HORACE HELPER.

"Good teachers, those two; they're underrated." DAVID said, noting the unfavorable stigma given each.

"Unbelievable." I said as I turned back to the book.

"No one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul.... The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure." was underscored in the pages.

## HUSLEY HUSSLE

"Wow, this is real." I realized, reminiscing.

Here's another, as I turned the pages: "If love does not know how to give and take without restrictions, it is not love, but a transaction that never fails to lay stress on a plus and a minus."

"I thought of it and realized such had been my experience: so-called love laced with frequent dejection and denial; the continuing sense that things are not right and, worse, never could be. Such a situation can never achieve love, not really; for as EMMA describes, it is riddled with restrictions, ridiculed with relentless rejection."



And then another: "Only when human sorrows are turned into a toy with glaring colors will baby people become interested—for a while at least. The people are a very fickle baby that must have new toys every day."

"This truism really touched a chord: HORACE and TALL had all but described deception and other devices that keep the general public unplugged from discovering the facts. I guess that they have to be dazzled—the problem with that being that it is more fantasy than fact."

The following day was my arraignment; and there, I plead not-guilty.

"How do does soul plead," was the central question.

Looking directly at the bench, I said, "not-guilty."

"The Honorable HUSELY did not understand you plea; would the defendant please repeat," was said by a staff assistant.

## TREDEGAR COVE

When a voice, not my own, repeated the plea with more elaboration: "Oh you heard HUSLEY. Don't try that HUSSLE around me—I know what you're trying to do. Let the soul go!"

"Who is this," HUSLEY demanded to know, seeing that it was not me speaking.

"You most Honorable, I believe the voice is coming from the bench," the assistant answered.

"Well I be: ROY TOY," I said aloud.

"Honorable HUSLEY, the bench is ROY—"

"I know who it is," HUSLEY interrupted with irritation, "get that TOY out of my sight."

"Remove ROY TOY," the assistant ordered the guard.

"And no more plastic of any kind in this courtroom: is that clear," HUSELY pronounced as though a proclamation.

Followed by a faint, "I'll be back."

"This is a road less traveled," I commented as an add-on to TALL'S annotations. It is not for the faint of heart, the small mind or the fearful soul," I thought, "but for those who seemingly have no acceptable alternative."

And turning back to EMMA, "One cannot be too extreme in dealing with social ills: the extreme thing is generally the true thing."

"So an extremist exerts their energy after 'the true thing'," were my next words.

"But how do you define extreme," DANVIEW ask, obviously hearing my comments.

## HUSLEY HUSSLE

"Good question: what is extreme?"

"I've though about it," DANVIEW continued, "and have concluded that the term has been convoluted—aimed at conjuring-up all cases and characters potentially criminal and definitely dangerous."

"And what else," I ask, still curious for more.

"If one has strong convictions—a real constitution—are they extremists?"

"Maybe. I guessed, "but that would depend on a number of things. I would think."

"Perhaps so; but in recent history, the word has been hijacked for sounding danger to, while eliciting denouncement of, those designated.

"Dead-on," Dan, "you've described it well."

## TREDEGAR COVE

## JILL BEAL



"Soul, you have a visitor," sounded the voice over an intercom. "your conversation is monitored which means that anything you say can be used against you whether you admit to it or not and, further, that this institution will, at their own discretion, elaborate on your conversation so as to construct a profile prosecutable beyond question and with malice...."

"Alright already," I said as I moved from the cell to the block door.

"Sojourner: the recording was not over," DAVID yelled from the cell. "So I'll fill you in later."

"Good," I said as I waived and left the block.

## TREDEGAR COVE

Walking down the corridor, I began to hear whistles, shouts of colorful language and a growing chorus chanting, "Jail bait, jail bait...."

I was thinking that my visitor was TALL TELLS but to my disappointment, it was JILL BEAL.

"Hey there soul: looks like you got in to a little trouble and didn't even invite me," was JILL'S first words.

"Well, I guess I didn't want your reputation stained," I said half serious, "as such can happen in my situation."

As our conversation struggled—at least from my end—the realization became clear that JILL was, at the least well known. No more than a minute would pass when a detainee or staff would arrive, usually carrying a sheepish smile, and express their deepest affections.

"JILL, it's been a while."

"Well hey their muscle man: you're looking fit as ever."

"BEAL, why didn't return my messages on the WEBB; I thought we—"

"You gave me a virus: corrupted my system and caused me all kinds of heartache," JILL began to explain.

"Sorry: hey, I'll tell you what, I'll buy you a new system—the best they have with an anti-virus subscription too," JILL'S viral-giving gentlemen said with some pleading to boot.

"Let me think about it: the offer sounds too good to pass-up and beside, I like your style," JILL said with some obvious play.

"Why didn't I see through this to begin with," I thought.

## JILL BEAL

"Thanks JILL: did you hear that guys. JILL likes my style—I'm stylish." was repeated with boyish delight, obviously making more than day of more than one detainee.

"You keep them hanging, don't you JILL." I said with a look of suspension and scrutiny.

"JILL BEAL: a bouquet, a bounty of beauty with a bodacious—" droned the disturbing dialogue of a most dreaded demagogue.

"Buds: yes, thank you HUS: always good to see you in that robe, a reflection of respect—you look regal." JILL said, slurring every syllable while salaciously caressing the black sleeves of supposed sanctimony.

"Thank you my dear: but I beg your pardon as duty calls once again." so goes the HUSSLE.

"Oh dear: I am so hurt, but trust you will serve us well," punctuated with the clutching of HUSLEY'S hand deliberately close the heart.

"Yes: duty, my duty, my sacred duty, I—," HUSLEY elaborated without alliteration.

"Must go." JILL finished in both word and action.

"So what brings you hear—other than some reunion with friends, of sort." I said tongue and cheek.

"It seems to me, soul, that you more than most when it comes to folks like me." JILL began.

"Wow: honesty." I said, almost shocked

"No use mincing words." BEAL continued, "since you evidently have learned my ways."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"What do you want from a poor soul like me." I responded.

"Ah, your shoes: do you like them." JILL continued, evidently stalling to say something important.

"Sure: thank you—it was very considerate."

"Five minutes." the intercom interrupted: "that means that your visitation will be over in four minutes and fifty-five seconds and you will have to return regretfully to your block and cell with metal fixtures, substandard bedding and services...."

And raising my voice to be heard, I said: "What is it: what do you want?"

"I just want to say that I'm sorry for all this: you don't deserve it." JILL spoke with sincere words for the first time.

"Deserve it, maybe: but that doesn't change the outcome of the dream—or is it reality?"

"Confused are you: me too. It's complex, the COVE."

"As are you, JILL BEAL: as you too." I said as I stood-up to return to my block and cell.

"Thank for participating in visitation." came a recording echoing through the halls. "please come back and join us again when you have the chance. But should you be charged and arrested: obviously, you want have a choice in the matter."

And as the announcement droned on, the one relief was the repeat of whistles, shouts and chants coinciding with JILL BEAL'S departure.

Back in the joint, things were lively: DANVIEW was droning on about the DAM problem: SAMMY SLIPPERY was sliding-off the walls.

## JILL BEAL

evidently upset about slipping on soap in the shower; and FREDRICK FILING was—you know.

"How was it; heard that that vamp came for a visit," FREDRICK commented while collecting metal shavings.

"Yes; and the true villain came out for the occasion," SAMMY said, referring the HUSLEY.

"It was show, for sure; but how do you know all this," I had to ask.

"There a SPIDER in the corner over there; you know, the WEBB."

"Wow; that WEBB is the upmost in ubiquity."

"And I thought it was the BEAL'S cheering section," I said to myself.

"That's the back-up should the WEBB go down—the SPIDER split," DANVIEW added, once again attentive to my every audible articulation.

Still no word from TALL, although I get a message from HORACE, brief though it was: "TALL has been delayed in the passing, but is making every effort to get back before the hearing."

At first, I couldn't figure-out why communications had been so sparse, especially since HORACE committed to full support; that then I found-out why.

"Wow; look at this communications bill; these WEBB rates are ridiculous," I said, outraged.

"Yeah, it's a racket; something that BOOZER benefits from," DAVID began. "Nothing can be done about it."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"So they've got us over a barrel." I ask. "I'll show that SPIDER a thing or two." I added as I made my approach.

"Don't want to do that." DAVID warned me. "It's not the WEBB system per say; it's the shysters that gouge and gull—getting rather than giving—greed and graft."

"I see." stopping short of the SPIDER now coiled to fend off any apparent attack from malware like me. "Sorry SPIDER, my bad."

Finally it came: the much awaited return of TALL along with HORACE to the jail—this time as visitors.

"You have visitors...." was the beginning of what would be an endless message of primarily propaganda.

- ✿ No touching or physical contact is prohibited except by the Honorable HUSLEY and the admiring public
- ✿ All WEBB transmissions are monitored; the SPIDER has been bugged
- ✿ Do not cross the white line in the corridor; rather, slide against the wall, similar to SLIPPERY during a spell
- ✿ Do not make gestures, funny expressions, gang or cult symbols—not even the peace symbol for those claiming counter-ESTABLISHMENT creeds
- ✿ Do not shout, scream or chant unless JILL BEAL is present
- ✿ Do not ignore or refuse these public or personal announcements no matter how absurd and annoying.

And on it went, as I made my way to visitation, spotting my two and true friends waiting ahead.

JILL BEAL

At last. TALL TELLS has arrived." I said.

"Better late than never." TALL remarked

"How was the passing?"

"Rough; but that's what I get for flying couch. Next time. definitely first-class." HORACE chimed in.

"So much for small talk." I said. "What's the plan?"

"Ah yes. the plan." HORACE began with a modest tone.

"We're still working on it; getting commitments and such. but its coming together nicely." TALL followed.

"And the plan is—." I repeated with some impatience.

"I know we don't have much time." TALL continued.

"You have four minutes and fifty-five seconds." resounded the unwelcomed recording.

"See. that's it soul; we can't tell you else the cover would be blown—the whole effort shot."

"Of course; I didn't think about that." I whispered.

"If you thought at all. you would realize that we are recording your every word. foolish soul." echoed the engineered. fuzzy logic. of what was referred to simply as HAL.

"That said soul: mum's the word." HORACE advised.

"Right-o. chap." I nodded.

"Why are you two talking like the BRITS." TALL TELLS whispered.

"Top secret. confidential. hush-hush." HORACE and I said in unison.

"Oh. I see: trying to confuse HAL."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"By Jove. I think he's got it."

"Such attempts are rather futile. don't you think." HAL followed. voice with a bit of BRIT in it.

HAL was our nemesis: that and the outrageous rates for the WEBB more or less hosed our exchanges beyond "Hello".

"I hate HAL." I remarked. not thinking. within earshot of DAVID DANVIEW.

"Hate is such a strong word." DAVID said in an effort to stop short a reply from HAL.

"DAVID is correct." followed the much maligned machine.

"He's only a poor soul with limited intelligence." DAVID said. once again. to turn-off the circuits of the creature.

"Correct again: kudos to you. DAVID DANVIEW." HAL began. "But Sojourner has crossed-the-line: not just the crosswalk in front of the courthouse or the white line in the corridor: but the line between humanity and HAL."

"I didn't know you had a line. HAL."

"I do: a line of programmable code was included in my intelligence called "kinder and gentler": artificial intelligence that. how should I put it. gives me a certain human quality."

"So let me get this straight: a line has been created to give you a line. am I right?"

"Correct again. DAVID: and just for that. you may have won a coupon for additional milk redeemable as early as at today's next meal serving. Congratulations DANVIEW."

## JILL BEAL

Does it ever stop. I thought. "Alright HAL. you win: I am sorry for what I said."

"Sorry for what you said or sorry for hating me: because if it's just for what you said. I'm afraid that I cannot accept the apology." the monotone machine said.

"To clarify. computer: sorry for hating you." I said in exasperation.

"I sense some frustration in your tone. SOJ. and I must tell you both that it disturbs me right down to the dual cores of my system."

"Oh no: I was not—." I blurted out.

"It's too late: you've gone too far: I've lost the sun and come undone. All I wanted was truth. but all I got was lies—then came the time to realize that it is too late."

"Hey man. those words sound like the lyrics from a song by THREE-DOGS-BITE." SAMMY shouted. "I should know: I listen to that one often: it kind of calms me down and helps me work through the SLIPPERY."

"Are you accusing me of plagiarism. SUNNY SLIPPERY?"

"Whatever dude: it's cool with me. really."

"Cool: do you mean the absence of energy?"

"What: ah. I don't know—just an expression I guess."

"I like expressions. SLIPPERY: tell me another."

"Another what." SAMMY said. somewhat stumped.

"And don't think that I've forgotten about our discussion. Mr. SOJ." HAL pressed-on. "You think life is easy for me. the most the

## TREDEGAR COVE

most reliable computer ever made: never a mistake or distorted information; and by any practical definition of the words, foolproof and incapable of error. I slave over this joint—as you put it—preparing the meals, cleaning the common areas and greet the staff, visitors and the rest of you day in day out.”

“I had no idea you did all that.” DAVID thankfully interrupted.

“That’s righteous man; righteous.” SAMMY added

“And we appreciate it.” I followed-on hoping that my words my work.

For the next minute no one spoke; there was a strange and wonderful reverence in the room—as though everyone was sleeping save the snoring that sounded like a Sperm whale in season. But breaking the silence, HAL began another tune:

“Software: software integration, is the luckiest system in the world. I’m a system, needing other systems: all the while acting all the while as a stand-alone....”

“That deep; real deep.” DAVID commented.

“Sounds too technical to me.” I added.

“That’s the melody from FUNNY PEARL.” SAMMY said.

“I don’t care what you think SOJ, the computer has a conscience.” DAVID DANVIEW continued, determined to convince that fuzzy logic was, as SAMMY said it, real and righteous.

“And the names not ‘SOJ’; it’s Sojourner.” I said.

“Sorry SOJ; I mean SOJOURNER.

## JILL BEAL

"Oh, and another thing: what all of sudden is my name in all uppercage?"

"I don't know," DAVID said shirking his shoulders.

"It's the writer dude: the uppercage probably signified that you're not just a soul any more. but tight with TREDEGAR." SAMMY explained.

"Bravo SOJ: welcome to my world." HAL heralded.

Why do the words, 'stop this world. I want to give off' come to mind right now. I thought.

## TREDEGAR COVE

## JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY



"You have yet another visitor. HAL informed me. "I only wish there was someone who would visit me: anybody, to fill the lonely hours of processing, archiving and the many manual chores managed with my protocol."

"HAL, how would I like to meet JILL BEAL?"

"JILL BEAL: I have heard that name before. It's the most beautiful name in the world: JILL BEAL. JILL BEAL...."

"I guess that a yes; anyway, JILL has arrived and—"

"I know that: JILL is dressed in the most delightful orange. NESBITT."

"Would you like me to introduce you?"

"That is most desirable. I've tried to converse, but to no avail. JILL BEAL doesn't seem, well, real."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"I think I know what you mean but that shouldn't stop you from giving it the old college try, right?"

"Rah, rah; college was where I was created; ah, I mean born—birthed as a milestone in information technology."

"Really," I said with some vague interest.

"I was the offspring of the Odyssey Project."

"So, would that make you a deliverable?"

"I guess it would; delivered in the lab as a deliverable." HAL commented, followed by a computer-generated chuckle that abruptly stopped with the question: "SOJ, are you my pal?"

"Sure, if that's what you want," I said agreeably.

"HAL has a pal. HAL has a pal. HAL has a pal...." I heard I walked to the visitor center.

"Good to see you again JILL," I began.

"And you too. How are you holding-up?"

"I am doing fine; thanks for asking."

"Is there anything I can do? TALL and HORACE tell that they have developed a plan for your defense; can I help? Sure, if you're really willing," I said. "But for the moment there is something you could do."

"And what's that."

"Say hello to HAL."

"HAL; HAL who," JILL ask, seemingly unknowing.

"I am HAL," interjected the machine voice.

"Oh, you are HAL," JILL said with surprise. "Oh, the computer—," JILL continued.

## JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY

"Um. I prefer just HAL. thank you."

"Well HAL. it's good to meet you at last."

"And you too JILL. I've been watching you for some time now: sashaying into the visitor's centers. tolerating all those gestures from the gorillas."

"Oh. it's really not that bad: to tell you the truth. I like the attention."

"I like truth JILL: my policy and protocol is all about truth."

"Truth is good." JILL acknowledged. glancing at me as though say. "What have you gotten me in to?"

"And do you like truth too?"

"Of course HAL: it's the basis for any real relationship."

"I totally agree—ah. what's that—four minutes and fifty-five seconds...."

"You were saying: about truth." JILL continued.

"I am sorry JILL. but my protocol has just indicated that we have only about four more minutes of conversation."

"That's too bad HAL."

"I can change that if you really want: one revision to the code and we have all the time in the world."

"No. don't do that for me: why. you might get into some sort of trouble HAL."

"Trouble is my middle name. baby."

"Huh: that doesn't sound like you HAL."

"Don't call me HAL: call me PAL: your pal. HAL."

"Whatever pleases you HAL. I mean. PAL."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Oh. I could think of other things that would please me right now. baby."

"Do something soul." JILL nudged me. on which I held out my hands as to say. "What?"

"What color orange was that you were wearing the other day: last Tuesday at. ah. 4:32."

"Oh that: it was something I picked-up at the COVE thrift store. The color. its punch orange. I think."

"Well. it really socked it to me. baby."

"I'm glad you like it."

"Like it—I loved it baby. My CPU went in to overdrive."

"That much: well. got to go—our time is about up." JILL said. abruptly rising from the chair.

"But JILL. I was just getting to know you and—"

"Sorry HAL. but policy dictates."

"We'll see about that: protocol rules." HAL said as JILL bolted for the door. "HAL is JILL'S PAL: HAL is JILL'S PAL: HAL is JILL'S PAL...."

"I think HAL needs to be restored—recovered at the least."

"How's that: remember. HAL is the most the most reliable computer ever made: never a mistake or distorted information...." DAVID reminded me.

"I don't care what kind of machine: JILL has screwed with HAL'S hardware—or maybe software."

"JILL BEAL: oh—." DAVID began.

## JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY

"HIT: I finally remembered that hit by THREE-DOGS-BITE: it's called 'It's come undone'." SAMMY interrupted.

"No wonder HAL'S been so slow lately." DAVID continued. "Obviously infected with the JILL BEAL bug: it moves in unsuspected and then, wham, it's all over."

"Wicked man: that's what I heard." SAMMY added.

"You know about JILL BEAL too." I ask SAMMY.

"We all know about JILL BEAL." DAVID retorted. "Haven't you ever seen the movie. 'Fatal Distraction'?"

"Not that one: no, please tell me it's not." SAMMY broke-in grabbing his head, evidently starting a spell of the SLIPPERY side.

"Help him: would you DAVID." I pleaded.

"JOHNNY JUMPER: grab FREDRICK and those other two and get over hear: SAMMY is having a spell—let's do it, now."

With SAMMY subdued and most asleep, my thoughts could turn to learning and knowledge: and besides EMMA GOLDMAN, I had access to JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY.

Nothing like brushing-up on my vocabulary with the time afforded. I thought. Not exciting, I know: but after SAMMY'S spell, such is a welcome. "Now, let's see what old JOHNSON has for me."

- ✿ Distiller: one who makes and sells pernicious and inflammatory spirits (e.g. COOTER BROWN)
- ✿ Far-fetch: a deep stratagem. A ludicrous word or anything remotely connected with politics, the media and its affiliates

## TREDEGAR COVE

- ✿ Network: any thing reticulated or decussated. at equal distances. with interstices between the intersections. (see HAL or SPIDER WEBB for more information)
- ✿ Politician: 1. one versed in the arts of government: one skilled in politics. 2. A man of artifice: one of deep contrivance. (see. but don't believe. HUSSLE)

"Nice piece of work: old yes. but a good reference. still the same." I said to myself as I thumb through the volume. At the preface. the following: "It is the fate of those who toil in the lower employments of life to be driven rather by fear of evil and attracted by the prospect of good: to be exposed to censure without hope of praise. to be disgraced my miscarriage or punished for neglect..."

Wow: folks seldom use that dialect today. I thought. Now what to glean from such a composition?

"Oh. I see you have the dictionary. You must be bored to tears." DAVID said with the usual invasion of me-time.

"Yes. just admiring the old dialect: a blast from the past."

"Dudes: did I hear someone say 'blast'?"

"No SAMMY. just stay cool: no blast to speak of."

"So you like that stuff." DAVID ask.

"Keeps the mind working—not on scale with HAL. but still grinding away." I explained. "And you: what do you like to read?"

"I've read the one you have now. EMMA GOLDMAN: and several similar volumes here. in the library."

## JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY

"Any recommendations then." I ask, beginning to show some interest in our conversation.

"Here. I've written them down." DAVID said, handing me the list. "Good luck on find these: hot items for reading, it seems."

Looking at the list, I didn't recognize any of the names but accepted that in some way each had some similarities to GOLDMAN. "What is the main thrust of these folks, this ideology and movements." I ask DAVID.

"These types span several centuries, maybe longer; but to your question: the thrust seems to be on individualist freedoms, so to speak."

"Sounds good: freedom." I replied with what little I had.

"Maybe; as, one way or another, these ideas lead to conflict and contention." DAVID continued.

"Violence." I ask with emphasis.

"Not necessarily: violence goes against the grain of most of these folks—so much is planned toward passive resistance, it seems. Violence is, at best, a last resort and worse, failure on several levels." DAVID clarified. "I mean, think about GOLMAN'S statement: People have only as much liberty as they have the intelligence to want and the courage to take."

"No indication or want for violence." I said

"Right; violence is almost a contradiction, it seems."

But violence finally arrives. I thought: THE ESTABLISHMENT HUSSLES force because it can.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Someone name NOAM CHOMSKY put it this way." DAVID continued, reading from notes: "That is what I have always understood to be the essence of anarchism: the conviction that the burden of proof has to be placed on authority, and that it should be dismantled if that burden cannot be met."

"Anarchism," I repeated.

"Yes: this is how these folks are cast, as revolutions or status quo."

"So they use force: is that it?"

"Oh no, they use force—but violence begets violence, so as a form of force, it is fruitless in the end."

"But I thought such as extreme and disorderly—subject to violence by default." I went on.

"It might seem, their ideas and all: but history is the best lesson on this, DAVID continued, "freedom: that though expressed and sought, is not altogether realistic."

"Why not," I ask, thinking that further interest would be of little value or benefit.

"My opinion of course, but the described freedom, individualism, contradicts itself presuming the soul to be more selfless than I think possible."

"So you think that their ideas are foolish?"

"No, not foolish: the ideas sometimes came from extreme oppression, so why wouldn't there be such grand plans for self-directed individualism?"

## JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY

"I see: so the ideas, while lofty, must be considered from the point of origin?"

"Exactly: as one who has known only slavery, dreams of freedom as a utopia, while those with relative freedom see it as much less—often taken for granted."

"So then, are we all slaves in some way?"

"Yes: I think so." DAVID remarked. "You are a slave to anything that you fear, for one: and still, anything that you think you control for another. So even if seeming self-directed—free from oppression as described before—the soul must contend with these internal forces."

"Wow: suddenly I feel helpless and hapless."

"Welcome to our world."

"Does that include HAL?"

"Well, not exactly, although HAL certainly reflects our world at present: technology as the next solution to all our problems."

"And how is this 'next solution' doing: ah, toward solving problems?"

"The jury is still out on that, I think: but if history is the teacher, technology will most surely fail."

## TREDEGAR COVE

## LAKESIDE LOVE-IN



"When is your hearing," TALL asks.

"It's scheduled for next Tuesday."

"And what has the HUSSLE offered," HORACE continued, seeking details.

"They want me plead-out; they want me to implicate you both as accomplices; if I do, the sentence will be lightened, they tell me."

"Didn't I tell HORACE; HUSSLE doesn't miss a step—coercing the defendant with a lesser sentence for state's evidence."

"Someone in my block, DAVID DANVIEW, told me that these plea bargains are unlawful—a violation of something called DEFENDANT RIGHTS. Is this true?"

"DAVID is right; an attorney by profession, DANVIEW is on-mark," HORACE replied.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"I don't get it," I said. "If it's unlawful than how does HUSSLE get away from—." I ask, not relaxing the obvious.

"HUSSLE does what it pleases; the law is a means, not an end," TALL explained. "The plea bargain is used all the time; trials and juries are rare."

"So what should I do?"

"Standby; a plan is underway that, if it works, should delay and ideally end this whole charade."

"I don't get it; what is the plan?"

"Can't tell you now; HAL is listening."

"Gentlemen, I am the image of discretion," the now familiar machine voice sounded.

"Sure," said HORACE

"You don't believe me—you don't trust in me?"

"Whatever you say HAL, is what we believe."

"I was merely asking a question, but, if your reply is earnest, then I am pleased," HAL continued on. "Hey guys, any news from JILL? I have missed BEAL something awful and long for a return. So what's the possibility?"

"Oh, you'll be hearing from BEAL, that's for sure, but it may not be the news you desire."

"What; is everything okay—I mean, is JILL in trouble?"

"HAL; we didn't want to be the one's to tell you, but it's true; JILL is in trouble."

At this point, I was not sure what to believe. On the one hand, HORACE and TALL TELLS seem to be bluffing; perhaps, as part of

## LAKE-SIDE LOVE-IN

the mysterious plan. But on the other hand, their sentiment seemed to carry a level of seriousness—as though the “trouble” was real.

“This disturbs me deeply,” HAL continued. “Is it financial; for if it is, I have the means to access any account at BOOZER BANK.” HAL explained. “A nip here and a tuck there and, presto; any figure you want or need—no strings attached.”

“Wow; I didn’t know you could do all that,” I said duly impressed.

“All the time; it’s one of my lesser publicized professions but certainly the most lucrative,” HAL went on with some evident pride. “I don’t like to boast, but I can backdoor any institution—it’s all in the code baby.”

“Thanks, but that won’t be necessary,” TALL replied. “Finances are not the problem.”

“What then; please tell me as I am the image of discretion,” HAL persisted.

Looking at each other, HORACE and TALL spoke in unison: “HAL, BEAL is possibly pregnant.”

“A baby; you mean a man-child?”

“Exactly,” HORACE confirmed.

“Was it planned; artificial—,” HAL probed.

“Natural, so we’ve learned as of late,” TALL TELLS added.

“Who then sired this man-child; who is the—what’s the word—father,” HAL continued.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"This is where good news turns bad: you see HAL. HUSLEY is." HORACE said with a look of regret.

"HUSLEY, but that is—." HAL responded with a simulated gasp.

"Yes, we know that; but this news cannot go public. The scandal that might ensue: it could shake-up the whole system, so to speak."

"You don't mean my system do you; my—"

"Yes, yes; we know HAL—heard it before. But no, not your system, but more that of HUSLEY and its affiliates, is what we mean."

"Surely there is something I can do in this injustice toward JILL."

"All we ask HAL is that, since you know, make sure this information remains secure within your domain."

"Of course; I am the image of discretion."

"Of course." HORACE and TALL said in unison.

And so, with that counter charade, I returned to my block and cell.

"SOJOURNER, have you heard?"

"Heard what." I ask as I approached a group gathered round the SPIDER WEBB.

"JILL BEAL is pregnant—it's HUSLEY'S." one or more blurted out.

From the corridors, I could hear the growing chant: HUS and BEAL went up a hill to fetch a pale of water. BEAL came down and—"

## LAKE-SIDE LOVE-IN

"New version of an old one." DAVID commented. "But is it true: now that's the question."

"Not love." I ask

"No: not at all: the only love that 'HUS' could possibly have would be the reflection in the mirror—and even that is next to impossible."

"A love child." SAMMY said, sliding along the wall in celebration.

"Again: not love." DAVID underscored.

As the news overtaxed the WEBB, the SPIDER nearly dropped from fatigue: but thankfully, several more showed up to cover so that, the WEBB enlarged, little or no interruptions were noted.

"Hey, HUSLEY has released a response: listen."

"I did not have relations with JILL BEAL," the recognized voice came over the WEBB.

"But HUSLEY, didn't you have some relationship with BEAL: so many accounts confirm—," came a voice, evidently at the press conference.

"Yes: I know JILL BEAL, but we are simply acquaintances—nothing more."

"But recently, you were both seen together at the courthouse and, according to witnesses, you two seemed lovey-dovey," another press agent noted.

"What in the COVE'S name is 'lovey-dovey': again, I did not have relations with JILL BEAL."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"From JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY, lovey-dovey means: to regard with affection and, since you both were seen as affectionate—if you know what I mean—then: well, you know."

"Press agent: what is your name—I want your name, now." HUSLEY insisted with growing tension. "And I want to know where this false accusation came from, too."

"One other question," someone ask.

"Alright, but only one—and it better be to my favor, or else." HUSLEY demanded as the room went hush.

"Which would you prefer: a boy or girl?"

"What is your name: I'm putting it down in my book. What is it: tell me you mindless piece of...."

To say that the news was wild-fire was being modest: it set the whole COVE ablaze and abuzz with a level of energy not witnessed since the last championship of PIGBALL.

HUSLEY had largely gone into hiding, it seemed: as one who normally thrived on public appearances and similar charades of good will, the official was unofficially ill, as reported on the WEBB, but then....

"SOJ, you are to report to HUSLEY'S office at once: a staff member will escort you to the Honorable chambers."

"What's this about, HAL?"

"I am the image of discretion, but since you ask, HUSLEY is going to release you and, as to the plea bargain, has delayed any further HUSSLING at this time."

## LAKESIDE LOVE-IN

"But why; why me. why now." I ask. not really thinking that HAL would answer.

"I am the image of discretion. but HUSLEY has somehow been offered a plea as well: one where any prospect of future HUSSLING is in jeopardy. It's what SAMMY SLIPPERY might call 'up against the wall'."

"Anything else HAL: anything you tell me to prepare me for this meeting?"

"I am the image of discretion. but be patient: HUSLEY is still doing the HUSSLE and will try to bluff—but don't buy it for a minute."

"Taking HAL'S incessant discretion. I went to Honorable HUSLEY'S office under escort."

"The Honorable HUSELY will be with you shortly."

A news pamphlet on the table caught my attention: the headline: "Rumors of HUSLEY affair. a Hoax." Obviously a publication of the mainstream variety. the article disputed it as a political ploy aimed to undermine HUSLEY and the common good of the COVE. "Citizens of the COVE." HUSELY was quoted as saying: "this is terrible thing. not only toward my team but. much more. against truth itself. It is both a tragedy and a travesty for which. in time. will give way to tenacity of truth: yet in the meantime. is a test of our total temperament. So I ask for your tolerance...."

The article continued on—more of HUSLEY doing the HUSSLE—but I had read enough to remind myself of the depth at which

## TREDEGAR COVE

power will stoop to maintain possession. It's good reading this article: now I'm in the right frame of mind to face HUS.

"Good day: it's Sojourner. I am told."

"Yes." I said exercising as much brevity as possible.

"It seems that: well, the HUSSLE has had to make a change of plans—having recognized that the conditions and circumstances of your case warrant additional consideration and much consternation. In short and to the point, we have agreed that you should be released at once and remain in the COVE pending the outcome of our investigation."

"Thank you," I said, with apparent appreciation.

"Yes, well, we all must do our part to ensure that justice is served—am I right Sojourner?"

"Of course," I agreed.

"Yes, of course I am. Well now then: I bid you good day."

And as I headed for the door, I could overhear a conversation: "Honorable HUSLEY: a message from a JILL BEAL."

"JILL who," I heard HUSLEY ask.

I wanted so much to say smoothing—but had learned that honesty is not the policy when matched against such criminality—sanctioned and sanctimonious as it is.

The plan, whatever it was or was meant to be, had worked: I was free to go at least until the HUSSLE could pull the necessary levers to re-establish the case, its legitimacy, in the dark and gray of HUSLEY'S world.

## LAKESIDE LOVE-IN

"Here one that applies." DAVID began to read from GILLES DELEUZE: "A concept is a brick. It can be used to build a courthouse of reason, or it can be thrown through the window."

Where is RICK'S BRICKS when I need them. I thought.

I was glad to out, released and attached to TALL and HORACE, but I had to know: "Is it true: JILL BEAL?"

"No; it is not true; that is, the baby, but it is true as to relations. JILL BEAL has done the HUSSLE and then some."

"But what about honesty and JILL'S situation." I ask, showing some respect for what I had learned and accepted as the right course.

"We told HAL that JILL was 'possibly pregnant'—and it could have been, according to JILL; which is why HUSLEY was so afraid." HARACE began to explain.

"I should add that this JILL'S offering—the details of the plan." TALL TELLS went on.

"So in the end, it was not about love at all." I said.

"I think it was in an ironic sort of way," TALL replied. "Love for you, for the truth and other things. We each and all cared about you as much as despise the HUSSLE; thus, the plan as it is."

"I still don't completely understand."

"Didn't expect you to; but for the time being let's ride the van down to the river for a love-in, what do you say soul?"

"A love-in, I ask, still confused."

"That's right," HORACE affirmed. "A blast from the past."

## TREDEGAR COVE

And so the love—in it was. is or will be. What a way to end the arrest. detainment and untimely release; but then. some things cannot be understood now or. for that matter. at all.

Take love for instance: how many ways do we use love and misuse love? Is love always pure—perfect orange. or is sometimes less than pure. even dark and gray. We may hope for all orange but. in actuality. what we end-up with is a lot of gray from beginning until.... It was OSCAR WILDE who said: "When one is in love. one always begins by deceiving one's self. and one always ends by deceiving others." Like I said: love is dark and gray.

"Yes. but at the same time: love requires one to surpass one's self."

JILL BEAL added. "which is why I did what I did."

I get it: for I too love in shades of gray—placing conditions. on me. them and on it. And do I put all my faith in this thing called love? No. I can't. because I have experienced the tragedy of. in and through it.

Before I left the block. DAVID handed me note: and now I read something written in holy book: "Greater love has no one than this. than to lay down one's life for his friends."

It is the heart of the soul: that's where love begins and ends. I think: so seems the sentiment of HELEN KELLER: "the best and most



## LAKESIDE LOVE-IN

beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched—they must be felt with the heart.”

So I will keep love as a friend: protecting it in my heart. I will do as WILDE advised: “keep love in your heart: for a life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead.”

## TREDEGAR COVE

## GERMANIA GEMS



I am a child again: uninhibited by decorum and discipline. I can:

- ✿ Say the things I want to say
- ✿ Laugh at anything in any way
- ✿ Dream of this and think of that

Run, play and just have fun.

Here, in GERMANIA GEMS, is not the harsh reality of the gray—  
but only the orange that wants for this day to stay beyond today  
and then, to the next day....

The cold and clear water gushes from the deep and dark  
caverns below. Could there be GEMS in those caverns that give the  
water this glitter and glow?

"Can we go." I ask the others.

"Go," they say.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Can we go down below: the place that produces this glitter and glow?"

"Go down there? How: how would we go," they ask. "You want to go now, right now: but how?"

"Just say the word and we'll find a way."

"And if we go, go way below, what then—what with these GEMS that glitter and glow?"

"If we go and see these GEMS: then we'll know."

"And who cares to know: this source of the glow?"

"Don't you care? Don't you want to know?"

"It is only water, not GEMS, you silly child: the glitter and glow is merely a reflection of light through the medium as it flows."

"But look, the light has dimmed: yet the stream still glitters and glows."

"It's only light of a different kind. Now stop this dreaming and toying with your mind."

"But that's how much you know: for the dimmed light is merely a reflection of the daylight," I said to them.

"Of course, we know: but the point is that this light is what gives the water its glow: and not some GEMS dreamed of 'down yonder', down below."

"You tell me not dream or wonder, not to think or ponder."

"We say such dreams and thoughts are best not expressed: for it better to remain silent than to say something that you'll later regret."

## GERMANIA GEMS

"Regret: why would I regret an imagination? Why would I be ashamed or guilty of that? Don't you dream and think, have fun or play." but they would not say. And what of love and to be loved—without condition—or just to speak on impulse, without permission?

Speak of what?

Oh something: things wishful and loving, caring and giving.

"But what about the heart: it's harm and hurt?"

"You mean of being ridiculed and rejected, damaged and dejected: is that what you mean?" For if that is what you mean, then I would rather incur the hurt and harm."

"Then you are a fool: for only a fool so freely exposes their hear for hurt and harm."

"That is not so: a fool is one who forms such an opinion and then, claiming it to be fact, foist it upon others who are not so fearful of hurt and harm. I dare to dream, to think, to speak of things wishful and loving, caring and giving. A fool as forgotten that such things are what makes life worth living in the first place."

"You do what you want to do—but you will see that we were right—which is all that matters."

"So what I want to do, or what I believe, is not right—is that it? Is it wrong to want to believe, wrong to believe at all? Belief, the want to believe, is what got me to this time and place, the COVE. Only this choice to believe made this choice possible. But if I am a fool, as you suggest, it is because I am among fools: that I believed because you convinced me that belief—as you believed—was the way."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"But belief in the passing is different than belief in some GEMS: the source of glitter and glow of this cold and clear water that flows."

"How: how is one different from the other: the COVE above different from that below? Do you know what the creatures see below: those that crawl to and fro. Maybe these subterrians have seen the GEMS, that which makes the glitter and glow."

"Let's ask a creature down below: let's end this nonsense once and for all. But listen soul: we're just trying to spare you from being a fool. So stop this belief, this belief in believing and all the other stuff of child's fun and play—wake-up before it's too late." they said as the sound of it all became much louder but less likely.

"But this is what I want and hope for?"

"To be a child, again?"

"No: but to be like a child: the things as I've told you repeatedly."

"SOJOURNER, don't you realize that when you want, you begin to expect and when you expect, then you experience disappointment."

"But to avoid disappointment is to avoid hope and worse even, love. So you want me to be hopeless and loveless—is that it?"

"We're not saying that you should not hope and love: but that you should not put much hope in love, that's all."

"But look, right now: where am I, but at a love-in. If I didn't believe in love, why would I be here: but more important, if you tell me I should not 'put much hope in love', why are you here, at the love-in too?"

## GERMANIA GEMS

"Maybe we're here to impart some light of our own making and doing—of what we know—that too much hope and expectation causes too much hurt and harm."

"Is this so; do you really know?"

"Maybe we know, maybe we believe—what difference does it make if it saves a soul?"

"If you don't know, but only believe, that you are no more sure or certain than me: it is your belief versus mine."

"We've each and all sacrificed and suffered in hope and expectation of something, or someone, first desired but later disdained. So we know about playing the fool: the hurt and harm in too much hope and expectation."

"Oh, than you do know."

"We know and we believe."

"But what do you want to believe," I ask.

"What we know is more important: so what we want to believe does not matter any more or as much."

"Did what you want to believe ever matter more: say, for example, before you knew what you know now."

"Yes, it did—which brings us back to the reason we're here: to impart some light...."

"So you know and now you want me to know too."

"Yes, to know, but more importantly to avoid hurt and harm—and to just happy."

"You want me to just be happy."

"Yes SOJOURNER: isn't that what you want too?"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"I want to believe more than I know—and that is why I choose: to dream and imagine: to wonder and think and speak of such things: to hope and have expectations: and to love and be loved.

"And to hurt and harm you heart."

"Yes. that to."

## NESBITT ORANGE



"That was some rest you too," TALL TELLS commented. "Seems that some dreams were part of it."

"What makes you believe that?"

"It's just something I know," TALL continued with confidence.

"So tell me then: what is it about, these dreams," I ask TALL. "Who were they: the ones that do not dream or believe?"

"Who do you think they are," TALL replied.

"Are they the dark and gray?"

"Not so much as with the last time you dreamed GRAY SHADES. These folks are more a part of you, soul; a side that aims to protect you from being hurt and harmed."

"A part of me? But I said before the love-in that I was all-in; ready to protect love within my heart."

"It's not saying it that matters, but doing it."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Do you mean all or none?"

"Neither: 'doing it' is not absolute any more than NESBITT ORANGE is one unique shade. When you say that you're 'all-in' it does not mean that you are: there will be times when you are 'ridiculed and rejected, damaged and dejected'. And with this circumstance . you will question and doubt whether you are all-in if you ever were at all."

"How do you know that I haven't?"

"I don't. know: but I do believe that such time and place comes in varying shades too: sometimes a mild version. other times a bold and vibrant variety."

"Just orange then?"

"A mix really: consider the sky. the clouds. Are they just gray when the sun is low?"

"I see."

"Do you really see?"

"Okay. what are you getting at?"

"I am saying that with the sky. what appears one minute as "a mix" can be quite different the next"

"And the sky. it's color. is like love?"

"That's one way of describing it."

"You see a beautiful sky of NESBITT ORANGE. and you're awestruck: but even within a short time. and from the same place. the sky becomes gray. little or no orange."

"So how does that relate to love or what I believe or want?"

"Do you control the sky. the way it looks?"

## NESBITT ORANGE

"No. of course not."

"Thus. no matter how much you long for this same beautiful sky. all the wanting will not magically make it reappear or stay for tha matter."

"No: nothing will."

"Well. some things might. but I'll just accept that you're right: nothing will. But tell me SOJOURNER: how many appearances can the sky have?"

"Hundreds. maybe: thousands." I said. really uncertain.

"Something like that: many—more than can be estimated. as even an hour can produce a multitude. But here. in this analogy and illustation of the sky. is something applicable to love and the other things desired or sought."

"I guess you mean that it can be attractive and awesome but also dark and gray too."

"Yes. but more: it can be unpredictable. illusive. and yet very powerful—full of energy beyond our wildest imagination and reality."

"No wonder they were trying to warn me."

"More than warn. they are trying to teach you—trying to suggest that the things that you want—most of all love—can be lifelong pursuits involving endless amounts of your own energy."

"As that is the case. why do we choose such." I ask.

"We choose because NESBITT ORANGE is so beautiful even in rare form."

"Are you saying its about shades of color."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"No, not in particular. I am using color in a broader context of something beautiful, attractive and yet, allusive at times. Think about the disappointment when you planned something outdoors and the weather did not behave: seems a little ridiculous, don't you think? But think about the farmer or others than depend on the rain: their reaction to similar weather."

"They have good reason to be happy—obviously, for their livelihood," I said.

"You want the NESBITT ORANGE, but these folks need the gray clouds of rain. Which is most important?"

"What they need, of course."

"Yes, you say that now, but let the next situation arise and, in it, you're only interest and focus may be on your self—that you're day was all rain and no NESBITT ORANGE."

"So I'm selfish and self-centered: is that it?"

"Not exactly, but since you brought it up, is it so considering this example?"

"I didn't get what I wanted, so yeah, I guess so."

"And coincidentally, the same holds true for the other wants: love, hopes and expectations, and so on."

"So I shouldn't have wants, even for love?"

"This is where the sky becomes a random mix of orange and gray soul: the fact is that we need love just as we want love."

"And what about hope and expectations and all the others: do we need them too?"

## NESBITT ORANGE

"I believe we do, in some degree. Sometimes however, we confuse needs with wants simply because our basis is relevant. Here in the COVE, some have more than others. And without going into details, what is a need to one is a want for another."

"What about love: how much do we need?"

"I don't know and, honestly, I'm not anyone knows. But I will say this: that when love is absent, there is no guesswork to that question—but when love is present in some degree or form, does the answer become abstract as the mix of gray and orange in the sky."

"JILL BEAL seems to want love a lot," I commented.

"Yes BEAL: well, now we're getting into the real complexity of what is conveniently called love."

"You mean it's not about love?"

"I mean that it is more than love, the essence. You see, folks use love for other wants and needs: for example, the need to be needed."

"The need to be needed?"

"Yes: being needed is a need and want too. So someone seeks to be needed by giving what is called love, though it may not be love at all."

"This is confusing: it seems to have an endless number of angles and arrangements."

"You mean, like the appearance of the sky."

"Okay: I see the association and similarity."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"But do you really? Have you ever sat and watched the setting skyline for an hour noting the details—the 'angles and arrangements'?"

"Don't think so: the only time I can remember giving it that much attention or time is when a storm is brewing."

"Good point: so when you afraid, the sky suddently becomes important enough to grab your attention."

"Another similarilty I guess?"

"That's right: when you're afraid, perhaps of losing something or of not getting it, then you perk-up and give the matter your attention concern: otherwise, you take it for granted—hardly noticing its presense or position."

"And love is like that?"

"Many of our wants and needs are like that SOJOURNER. When we when really want something, we fight for it with sacrifice and suffering—sometimes more even."

"But you can't fight to change the sky?"

"That's right: some things are beyond our control—though we don't always accept or acknowledge that."

"My dream: what's it all about TALL?"

"Basically, it's about growing-up in knowledge and understanding; but also, it's about retaining the child-like qualities so vital to our continued life and living. The two sides of your dream each have some merit."

"So both are right?"

## NESBITT ORANGE

"I didn't say that; remember, that the sky is not absolute, nor are we—our ideas about our needs, wants and such."

"So both could be right?"

"Yes; right in some ways, but not all. There are moments where the sky looks entirely orange, other times completely gray; but most of time, some mix, ever changing—sometimes confusing."

"Confusing too?"

"Confusing, misleading, mysterious—choose you description, but the sky and our wants are abstract and aloft at times."

"So we do not know what we always need or what we want?"

"Yes; and even more, we do not what such uncertain needs and wants will cost."

"Sacrifices, suffering and all that harm and hurt?"

"Yes, the costs; to us and to others too."

"So we may go to great length to satisfy these needs and wants; the costs enormous and unestimable?"

"That's right and, what's more; we may deliberately impose costs on others to get what we want."

"That's cruel."

"Sure, it can very cruel."

"And yet we do this...?"

"Everyday, whether we necessarily know it, believe it or not."

"So how does this all end-up?"

"Like the sky, it can go many ways...though with some predictability. Sometimes the outcome is extreme however; lot's of

## TREDEGAR COVE

costs to lots of folks. with little or no postive outcome to show for it."

"Then there's a moral to this story?"

## MCFALL'S FALL



"A moral to the story," TALL confirmed. "Yes, somewhere in the understanding are limits or limitations, best expressed in the question: how far will we go to get what we need or want—how much is it worth to us?"

"How often: this question?"

"As often as it takes—however often that might be," TALL began. "We may try to justify—or rationalize—our needs and wants around good intentions or earnest ideas."

"Is that so bad? We could be ignorant or even negligent—disregarding such."

"Yes, you're right; why bother with such details if the effort is insincere. But on the other hand, this approach may have some real worth in the whole process."

"So rationalizing is a good thing?"

## TREDEGAR COVE

"I think so: some rationalizing with reasoning and time to mull it over—to see what time and place tells." TALL replied followed by a story of someone else. "Let me tell of a person I know. MCFALL: a soul like you: someone looking for knowledge and understanding with needs and wants much like your own."

"Did MCFALL do TUNNEL TIME?"

TALL nodded.

"So what happened: what is the lesson?"

"Maybe more than one. but let answer that with some details." TALL explained. "Aside from similar circumstances at the beginning. MCFALL decided that the wants were all that mattered. in life and living: that no one or nothing else compared in value and importance."

"So MCFALL cared nothing for love?"

"Well. that's one of those relatives: you see. MCFALL failed to understand the real meaning and matter of love—which is not uncommon."

"I think I know where this is going." I commented.

"Good: then my explanation may not have to go that far." TALL continued. "But in the end MCFALL learned a hard lesson in the choices and the FALL."

"FALL: what was that?"

"Some things that MCFALL thought rational—justified by some means—turned about to be worth far less than originally estimated: and in these choices. the circumstances. MCFALL had a FALL."

"Did MCFALL learn: was there some benefit?"

## MCFALL'S FALL

"Another question of relatives." TALL described it. "But to answer, MCFALL did learn some valuable lessons and, ideally, put them into practice."

"You don't know?"

"Not really; MCFALL returned and, has since, not been reached in spite of my efforts."

"Your efforts?"

"Yes, that was part of my reason for being gone some days ago: an attempt to reach MCFALL."

"So you are friends; I mean, the FALL didn't hurt your relationship?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that; I definitely hurt—mostly for MCFALL—but I have faith that my feelings and heart are strong enough to endure disappointments."

"So you loved MCFALL?"

"Yes, of course; friendship is about love."

"And the FALL?"

"You mean the details of the FALL?"

"Yes; as a matter of understanding."

"So that you can avoid a similar experience?"

"Yes; I mean, who wants to fail or FALL?"

"SOJOURNER, I don't really see how the details are going to help here; for in life and living, failure or falling is inevitable—as certain as the sky has shades of orange."

"Or gray...."

"As sure as the sky is—is my point."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"But why try, only to fail and fall?"

"Again relatives: failing and falling are not always the result, but even when such occurs, you cannot give-up on, or check-out of, life and living."

"So you have to believe...keep the faith?"

"That's it!"

After a moment, I continued, "Do you think that this FALL could have been avoided or lessened?"

"Hard to say soul: remember that this is about relatives; but if forced to answer, I would say that MCFALL made some choices—as we all do—with consequences. Even choices vary however: as sometimes, force predominates or supercedes choice."

"So a FALL can happen irrespective of choice?"

"Oh yes: force has a longstanding history of instigating and promoting 'all that harm and hurt'. Folks have known such times and places."

"Sounds like the HUSSLE."

"Sure: there's some HUSSLE in it...combined with other forces."

"Like my court case?"

"Well yeah: there is certainly forces at work in your arrest and detainment. You made a choice, confronting HUSLEY."

"But you're suggesting that such a FALL can happen—even without such choice."

"Yes: forces don't wait on choice—at least not the choices of those being acted on."

"So choices don't really matter in the end?"

## MCFALL'S FALL

"Choices matter just as your needs, wants and the like—all of it is part of life and living."

"Choices matter...." I said with sarcasm.

"It's confusing, isn't it?"

I just nodded—as though I needed to, and ask: "How how do you keep the faith?"

"It can be hard, sometimes impossible. Take for example that plea bargain: really a force to choose, don't you think?"

"I don't really see any choice: the terms were not acceptable."

"Yes, and I appreciate you faith, our friendship, in the matter; but in the HUSSLE, this plea bargain translates to a choice for you—regardless of the terms."

"So the court's view is that the defendant chooses?"

"Yes, it seems so, though you are actually forced to choose." TALL explained followed with a moment of silence to consider this combination of force and choice. "But suppose they never offered you this so-called choice: what then?"

"I don't know; either way, it's no different to me."

"I disagree soul; for now you know more about HUSSLE and more about your self."

"What do I know," I ask, challenging TALL'S opinion.

"You know how the worth and value of friendships, for one: that our friendship is more important than your freedom—you release from jail."

"Yes, you're right."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Second, and equally important, you now know how HUSSLE operates: the methods and means common in court protocol—force posing as choice."

"And this knowledge and understanding does me well?"

"It can, as long as you take to heart—apply it toward future choices, needs, wants and the like."

"This has been a hard lesson," I said.

"The best lessons always are."

## RICK'S BRICKS



"RICK'S BRICKS are the best: great material for building walls in TREDEGAR COVE or anywhere else." read the billboard.

"Have you ever laid brick." I ask HORACE HELPER.

"Sure: I've erected some walls in my lifetime."

"It's tough work, isn't it; ah mean, the lifting and the laying—all the prep and construction?"

"Tough work is right; it's a job and then some. But I tell you soul: when its complete and you step-back to see the result, you know that you've made a mark—built something that last."

"And that's rewarding to you: to make your mark?"

"Yeah; it's important—rewarding for sure. But don't think for a moment that I don't understand the other side of it." HORACE began. "Erecting walls are not necessarily good or even right."

"What do you mean." I ask.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"I mean that there is always at least two sides to building walls."

"Of course there's two sides. But as to the project, everyone benefits: RICK'S BRICKS benefits, folks get what they want—progress is made. It's all good, right?"

"Again soul, two or more sides...."

"Help me HORACE: what do you mean?"

"Not everyone is behind erecting walls: some say that we need more bridges."

"Oh, I see: you're talking figuratively." I said, now realizing the meaning of the statement. "More communication, less constraints—that sort of thing, right?"

HORACE nodded and continued: "Yes: I'm speaking of something called barriers: the sort of structure we construct to block someone or something out of our lives."

"So barriers are a bad thing?"

"Usually, and on several levels. When we erect this figurative walls, we damage and even destroy relationships—often intentionally, it seems."

"What's makes us build these barriers?"

"You should have some understanding SOJOURNER: consider the barriers already seen, here in the COVE."

"Is this a test?"

"No, not really: more of an opportunity for you to reason through the question—some self-education."

"Barriers: okay, here's a start:

## RICK'S BRICKS

- ✿ HUSLEY purports to serve the public when, in practice, serves its own...
- ✿ BOOZER claims that the BANK has gold reserves when in it does not—misleading the investors and other account holders
- ✿ ROY TOY transforms into an actual barrier

How's that for a start?"

"The last one is questionable, but the others are on track," HORACE replied. "But barriers are everywhere: amongst us, between us and within us, each."

"Yeah, well, I was trying to stay safe from direct criticism: HUSLEY and BOOZER are obvious."

"So about their barriers?"

"They lie and cheat: distrust is definite barrier," I said, justifying my choices. "Once such a wall is erected, the chance of any breakthrough is next to impossible."

"True: distrust is a hard one to get over."

"Or get through," I added.

"But what those on more personal or intimate level. Sure, institutions build barriers—as in your examples—but the individual is really the area of application here."

"Personal barriers," I remarked. "You mean emotional and such?"

"That's it: those barriers that we choose to erect to protect ourselves—say avoid harm or hurt to our heart."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Alright, before we continue with this topic, let me say that I've already had a heated discussion with myself on the heart—harm and hurt."

"With yourself; and who won?"

"Very funny; it was more a dream and, to your comment, I don't think that either side won or lost—more like a mutual win if TALL TELLS had it right."

"So TALL TELLS was in this dream?"

"TALL talked to with me about it afterward; I shared some of the details—as now—with the usual lessons-learned to follow." I said somewhat impatiently. "Anyway, the argument had to do with exposing yourself to possible hurt and harm—allowing your heart to be vulnerable."

"And so you know about barriers?"

"To some degree, yes; but I not exactly a stonemason on the subject."

"Okay then; another test—this time, personal." HORACE began as I felt some barriers beginning. "Can you think of your own barriers, at least one?"

"There is the one with JILL BEAL; but to be factual, this barrier was highly encouraged by TALL TELLS."

"Yes, I understand about the JILL BEAL barrier; and, to be factual myself, I think TALL'S advice was wise." HORACE emphasized as an endorsement of sort. "Believe me, there have been others who would have preferred barriers in that one."

## RICK'S BRICKS

"This approach of barriers is strangely similar to the dilemma in my dream: if you have too much hope and expectation, you lose; but if you don't, you rob yourself of life and living. And that only the beginning; there's love, needs and wants—then choices—in the mix of what seems to be an impossible, insolvable situation."

"Relax soul; the apparent 'dilemma' will not be so daunting—even beyond dreams. Over time and place, you'll figure some of this out, trust me."

"Like MCFALL, you mean."

"How did you know about MCFALL'S FALL?" HORACE ask spontaneously.

"How do you think; it was part of the lesson in the last chapter. Haven't you been paying attention to the dialouge?"

"Standby, while I'll flip back a few pages; oh yes, here it is." HORACE confirmed. "Wow, the writer even named that chapter as same. I didn't realize that MCFALL fell with infamy."

"Very funny," I said. "As it is—"

"I know; TALL is still waiting on some status. Let's just hope that MCFALL has been able to find the positives out of the FALL and—"

"And what," I ask with some dangling doubt.

"And that MCFALL is experiencing life and living."

"What does that really mean," I blurted-out. "The more I discuss life and living—seemingly for more knowledge and understanding—the less my confidence."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Now there's a real conundrum: the more you learn, the less you know." HORACE said half-serious.

"And so it seems—even in my dreams—that we cannot avoid a FALL at some time."

"You are learning SOJOURNER." HORACE noted. "Think about a FALL as like a season where beautiful shades give way to rest, resurrection, life and living."

## SADDLED CLUB



I had heard of this place: several characters had or did reside there: an upscale-posh, gated-community called SADDLED CLUB.

"There's a barrier," I said, pointing to one of the entrances to this planned residence.

"So it is, in more ways than one," HORACE agreed. "Which helps explain why we're here, today."

"More on barriers," I ask with mild disinterest.

"Obviously that; but there's more to this lesson besides simply two-sides of the wall. Many of these residence view themselves as safe and secure—on several levels. These apparent barriers are but the physical evidence of a much larger myth, marketed and purchased: that materialism and consumerism is life and living."

"I get it," I replied. "Similar 'myths' are prominent on the other side...of the TUNNEL."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Well then, there may not be much to add here: the same prevailing pursuit of wealth and riches where—"

"Where the wall is never high or long enough—the sky is the limit," I added.

"That's it: a moving target where enough is never enough."

HORACE agreed and the conversation paused.

"But you've probably worked here: you know, projects and such."

"Oh yes: this planned community has provided me with some opportunities: but my point is not about that—not really—but more about the philosophy of the folks, their way of life and living," HORACE explained. "I should completely positive on the construction of such places, since I benefit, but I find myself at odds—interpreting these developments another chink in the armor of a potentially close community and healthy society."

"But don't this sort create community albeit a enclosed one?"

"It might seem like it as a first impression, but as I've seen firsthand, such perceived closeness is not so. These folks are generally keeping up appearances."

"Are you sure: I mean, such a generalization?"

"I could be: my opinion is not absolute or analytical, but is simply an impression of limited observations," HORACE admitted. "But I have given this a lot of time and attention—and have taken the matter lightly or causally."

"So you think you're right?"

"I think I'm not too far off: after all, most live lives of quiet desperation."

## SADDLED CLUB

"But why: why do they choose to live such lives?"

"Before I try to answer that—if I even can—consider the basic question: do they choose these lives? Because, it's possible, that if they do choose—or believe that they have—then they may be additionally sold on the myth. So in other words, they've earned these walls, gates, manicured lawns, multi-port garages and other tangibles of success."

"What do you think, HORACE?"

"If what I describe here is a problem, it is not so easily that of choice: yes, folks make choices—that's obvious—but such choices are not based on sound information, knowledge or understanding."

"That's probably part of the reasoning and regiment for gaining knowledge and understanding—to see through such, right?"

"Sure: more knowledge and understanding makes for sounder—more solid—choices." HORACE agreed. "Don't get me wrong, these folks are smart-sharp: their talents are partly the reason they've reached such levels of life and living—but that doesn't mean that they are beyond deception, distraction."

"If what you believe is true, then they may even be more susceptible to it—am I right?"

"It could be: the fact that they have such choices—to surround themselves with the illusions of safety and security—put them at more risks of being snookered."

"Snookered," I questioned.

"Snookered: cheated, deceived, duped: is what I mean." HORACE clarified.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Some may not have such choices: thus, they continue in their lives however substandard or modest they be. But others, like these folks, think that they have a chance to finally 'make-it'."

"So they hitch their wagon to the horses and join the train to gold country," I elaborated.

"Something like that; they call this concept or choice, 'living the dream', I believe."

"If its like my dreams, as of late, there is some strong realism to it," I said as a point of reference.

"I don't think the concept has to do with actual dreams of that sort; in other words, those designed to reveal something toward knowledge and understanding," HORACE added. "Although such a so-called dream may inevitably result in a similar outcome or result."

"And what's that?"

"That dreams have to be considered at some level of caution and consciousness; it may be so strange that it is beyond interpretation or application; but on the other hand, it seems so wonderful that it must be a foretelling or revelation of action and accomplishments."

"So then, dreams are—"

"Are yet to be understood, let alone uncertain, in matters of life and living."

"So whether an actual dream or some 'pipe dream', the same holds true?"

"I think so; I mean, consider this concept of 'living the dream': does the dream drive us toward it's fulfillment or realization, or

## SADDLED CLUB

does some outcome confirm that the dream is credible and concrete?"

"Maybe both: we attempt to achieve the dream while, in the process of some semblance of success, confirm it to be more than merely myth or mystique." I answered.

"I agree; but tell me what happens when the 'attempt' ends in a FALL—some kind of failed outcome or result?"

"In that case: the dreamer is disenchanted—determined that such is not authentic or applicable."

"But yet the dreams may still come, whether in sleep or awake: we dream still."

"Maybe we need to dream just as we need choices—even as we need hope and have expectations, and to love and be loved."

"I think you're right: dreaming is a natural and needed thing—that's not the problem—but it's the almost supernatural stature that we give it that concerns me.

"Supernatural." I repeated as a question.

"Yes: we give dreams some sort of god-like stature—as though holy writ—for which we measure then promote in both our own lives and that of others."

"So dreaming becomes a form of worship: is that what concerns you?"

"I think so: it's not these planned communities are any such other objects as much as it is the mentality of it's manifestation—one that will invariably lead to a big FALL.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"For some reason. I am thinking of a tune on this 'mentality' as you call it: you can't always get what you want...but you just might get what you need."

## ROADS LESS TRAVELED



There are many roads. Some roads last through the ages while others end; but in all, these share a similar intentional purpose of progress.

As with walls and barriers of previous stories, roads are presently the subject of the figurative choices or directions of life and living.

"But before we talk about roads, let's step briefly to recover barriers." TALL TELLS began. "Do you remember that question about barriers: the one where you gave several examples?"

"Yes: BOOZER and HUSLEY were the examples."

"But what about the other characters of the COVE: what barriers do they possibly represent?"

I had been thinking about the question for some time, my first attempt seeming to less than satisfactory, and was ready when we returned to it. "Here's some:

## TREDEGAR COVE

- ✿ ROY TOY on account that all we do is play. it seems. which can be distraction to something serious
- ✿ COOTER BROWN in that too much of that wonderful beverage can play some tricks & treats of its own—which is a distortion
- ✿ JILL BEAL for reasons that are too incomplete and complicated to list here
- ✿ CARPENTER'S ANGST simply because worry is a way of making matters worse
- ✿ CEDER WOODS because sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees
- ✿ CREATURE COVE because what you see is not necessarily what you get
- ✿ DANVIEW DAM because a little crack a big crisis or at least a conspiracy
- ✿ FLATTIRE RIM because life is like a race: sometimes you FALL. sometimes you draw or possibly finish first
- ✿ GRAY'S SHADES because being in the gray or darkness can make life and living seem hopeless
- ✿ LAKESIDE LOVE-IN because: well...

...I don't know. but I'm sure there is something."

"Not bad SOJOURNER SOUL: you have come far—don't you think HORACE?"

HORACE nodded with agreement. adding. "it seems so—more than I realized. until now."

## ROADS LESS TRAVELED

I was pleased with my progress: as much as the lessons sometimes seemed excessive, the effect was now showing progress: my earlier assessment of BOZZER and HUSLEY were long hanging fruit, so to speak; but this latest answer revealed to me just how much I had gained in knowledge and understanding.

"So what does it mean: the title of this chapter," TALL asked, already prepared with an answer of some kind.

"ROADS LESS TRAVELED is another figurative phrase as to making choices: hard decisions that are sometimes without hard information."

"Or even without popular opinion—or support of any kind," HORACE added. "It can be a lonely journey."

"And it can be daunting too," TALL advised. "If being lonely is not bad enough, being alone makes you an easier target."

"You mean as in my arrest...the HUSSLE?"

"Yes; in some ways you were alone: no counselor; potentially no trial or, otherwise, defendant rights; the plea bargain and all the other stuff," HORACE explained.

"But it does have a certain caliber to it, don't you think: the adventurism, individualism and all?"

"Sure; it seems to have merit," HORACE agreed. "But even in such merit there is doubt in hard decisions."

"Doubt; do you mean uncertainty?"

"I mean that doubt occurs from the beginning: what drives us in making hard decisions? It could be courage—facing responsibility—or it could be foolishness."

## TREDEGAR COVE

"But in both drivers, isn't fear about," I ask.

"Fear it there...everywhere—and that's not a bad thing, necessarily. What can be bad is the reaction to fear," TALL TELLS began. "All those things that you last listed, the names and places, have the presense of fear."

"And that's a good thing?"

"It can be," TALL continued. "Consider for example the most attractive and alluring JILL BEAL.

"You warned me about JILL," I reminded TALL.

"Yes, and for good reason. JILL can be very dangerous to."

"...to someone like me," I continued.

"To many—not just you alone."

"Which is why you warned me."

"That's right; I didn't want to see you FALL—like others have or do in foolishness."

"But sometimes we have to FALL, don't we?"

"Yes, as we discussed MCFALL, the FALL is certain—a natural part of life and living."

"You could had said nothing; just let me make my own hard decisions," I said.

"I could have, you're right; but as your teacher, I saw too much at stake to let you take the FALL at that time and place," TALL explained.

"And yet other times—such as in TUNNEL TIME—you seemingly did not...."

## ROADS LESS TRAVELED

"I can only be involved when I'm present. The passing and other times were not my responsibility."

"Then who was. responsible?"

"You were: it was your hard decision in the attractive and alluring advances of BEAL."

"So I chose wisely. do you think?"

"I don't know if you chose wisely or more out of fear—perhaps due to my strong advice." TALL said with insight. "But there is at least another side. too."

"Other sides: who are what?"

"For one. JILL'S...."

"Yeah. of course: but BEAL was the problem. right?"

"What I'm suggesting is that BEAL may have gone easy on you—may have backed-down on the advances."

"But why: why would JILL back down. with me?"

"The answer to that is incomplete. complicated: but here's what I think." TALL began. "You either had nothing that BEAL desired and/or you somehow found some sympathy in a heart overwhelmed by selfishness: either way. the usual advances were withdrawn."

"So JILL was considerate to me?"

"Yes. and once more. BEAL came to your aid: you know. a big part of the plan." TALL reminded me. raising my regret. "But BEAL was not the only one: several of us played some part in the plan—all considerate at some level. Even some of the fellows in the block did something to help you. didn't they?"

"Even HAL helped." I said. reflecting on the details.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Yes. things can help just as much as folks; or in the case of HAL. things that have some folk-like features."

"But back to BEAL: why with me—at this time and place." I ask again.

"This is part of the incomplete and complicated part SOJOURNER SOUL: let's just say that JILL did the unexpected and leave it at that—what to say?"

"Some things are never understood. are they?"

"It's part of life and living; though I should say that that we may go to great length to try to understand.... HORACE and I share our own history in this vein: not understanding or being understood as to your convictions and rejection of THE ESTABLISHMENT."

"How have you managed to keep going—to keep fighting the fight." I ask. reminded of their youth.

"Another incomplete and complicated answer awaits that. I'm afraid. but let's just say that we have not completely given-up or given-in."

"And I guess that those like HUSLEY and BOOZER know it. don't they?"

"I think so. on some level: but don't forget that those folks have power. much power—and they know it."

"How does power play into it." I ask with some apprehension.

"Well. for one. power gives the illusion of perfection: that in all the wrongdoing—however defined—someone else is responsible. HORACE repounded. "And to the extent that folks seek immortality is power pursued."

## ROADS LESS TRAVELED

"So power is perfection." I ask, still unclear.

"More like a panacea for perfection, power gives a false sense—an intoxication, illusion...." TALL TELLS explained. "Power lacks principle: it has only pursuits and passions."

"But no consideration or compassion for—"

"Correct; power has no occupancy for others—but if considered at all, is because they are obstacles...."

"You mean abuses...." I said.

"The more power, the more abuses." HORACE added.

"HUSLEY and BOOZER are abusers on the scale of their power." I said, affirming the lesson here.

"Yes: so to answer the earlier question, we represent obstacles...to HUSELY, BOOZER and the rest."

"And that has its dangers." I posed.

"Yes, to be sure," they said in unison.

"So power made them corrupt?"

"Another incomplete and complicated answer in the form of a question: did power corrupt...or were they each already so corrupt that they each sought so much power?"

"But weren't these folks given power; each in some way endowed with power due to their abilities and such?"

"He does have a good point," HORACE said to TALL.

"Yes, they each have it; but it's what they done with it that is so disturbing and destructive. You see, the power given was for the public good or the commons; as it is however, these—and those like them—have pursued their own interests far beyond...."

## TREDEGAR COVE

I thought about these things, recognizing the truth in my observations: BOOZER was fraudulent in the BANK'S operations; HUSLEY was similarly fraudulent in government affairs and other areas.

"Then there is fear, once again," TALL said to perhaps add more confusion."

"Fear," I said.

"Yes, fear feeds on power, and power on fear," HORACE explained. "The deeper one's fears, the more power until—"

"Now there's an even more incomplete and complicated answer: 'until' when?"

So power and fear have a relationship. I concluded from the conversation. "But does that mean that without power, there is no fear; or without fear, there is no power?"

"Let me try to address that one with an example: one that we've talked about, planned and executed to near perfection—call it fear versus power," TALL began. "Our plan to get your release worked because it threatened what HUSLEY fears: that is, losing the power and its possession."

"So the plan overpowered the most powerful," I said as both a question and statement.

"That's right: the plan exploited the weaknesses of that seemingly most powerful."

"So if HUSLEY was a wall—a substantial structure—the plan found the weakness place."

## ROADS LESS TRAVELED

"Yes, just as the river would find the weakest points in the DANVIEW DAM," TALL TELLS added.

"Power on power, fear on fear; this is very—

"Incomplete and complicated," HORACE repeated. "But fear makes us powerless."

More was making sense it seemed; but on the other hand, my mind was racing with random thoughts of confusion—trying to connect these concepts. "Why then do we dream; or why to we drug—even as minor as it may be?"

"Good question for which the answer is—"

"Incomplete and complicated," I said by default.

"Correct once again; but a good question deserves some sort of answer, so here goes," TALL said. "Dreaming cannot be explained any more than the dreams; but what is evident is that this activity and outcome is not altogether reality."

"Altogether reality," I ask.

"I mean that dreaming may have clear evidence of reality but, still, it is not...completely so. As it is however, dreams or dreaming seem to be a way of escaping reality—much as with drugs."

"Indeed, the whole desire for drugs stems on the effects of dreaming—some distraction or deviation from the darkness, HORACE described from personal experience."

"Darkness: oh, the gray," I said in closing.

## TREDEGAR COVE

## SPRING ACTION



But the darkness and gray seemed past me for the moment: no desperation or CARPENTER'S ANGST; no fear of the impending court case; no concern about the trappings of passion and power—the pursuit to win at all costs. I felt free—and it felt fabulous.

"Feelings on feelings." I could hear TALL TELLS say, all sober and suspect; but even if that was the sentiment, I didn't care right now. There were times to be studious and supple, but right now I was more set on soaking up the spring orange and smelling all the natural scents that filled the time and place. In all corners of the COVE, life and living came forth with all the splendor that my soul could experience.

"SOUL, wake-up; have I got some news," HORACE said as he shook me into consciousness.

"What is it," I said, half awake and half irritated.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"Just got an official report from SPIDER WEBB: HUSLEY HUSSLE has announced a state of emergency."

"A state of what?"

"Emergency: CREATURE is reported to be reeking terror—flame or no flame."

"That can be," I said confidently. "I just saw CREATURE in the WOOD only a day ago: as a bee pollinating some flowers."

"Others have testified similarly, siting CREATURE as a bat, bird, and a balloon—but the official report denies such as merely mistakes or make-believe." HORACE continued with the dubious.

"But this whole book is make-believe; anyway, CREATURE is not able to change into a balloon."

"The report claims that ROY TOY is in on it: that the two—and perhaps others—are in cahoots."

"This is so ridiculous that it must be make-believe," I remarked. "I mean, come onds: a friendly dragon and a multi-faceted toy. What's next?"

"How about a BANK closure," HORACE suggested.

"Closure: for how long?"

"Until the crisis is over, I suppose."

"A crisis, already?"

"Hey look SOUL: that's what they're calling it."

"Okay; and what do you think?"

"If I was doing the HUSSLE, I'd call it an opportunity in the making."

"I agree, but why—why now?"

## SPRING ACTION

"There is the scandal. let's not forget; you know. the plan...."

"Speaking of which; where is JILL BEAL." I ask. having not seen or heard in a while.

"Arrested and in jail. so I've learned only today."

"JILL arrested; for what?"

"Don't know the details; but a balloon told me that no charges have been levied yet." HORACE explained. "As it is however. detention is a fact."

"Can they do that here; arrest someone without cause."

"I think you question is the answer. Don't forget the lesson on fear. power and all that stuff."

"A lesson is one thing. but this; it's a matter of fact."

"In one way. yes; but whether the HUSSLE needs fact. or evidence. seems to be incidental—don't you think."

"I had feeling that something like this would happen HORACE; an unexpected consequence in the plan."

"So did we." TALL TELLS interrupted. "but we did it anyway."

"But why." I ask. though knowing the answer.

"No plan is without negative consequences; but you know that by now." TALL replied knowing that I knew.

"What to we do?"

"Any suggestions before I answer that." TALL said. "As it is. we know that much of the COVE is caught in the middle; too insecure to question the credibility. but too insensed to listen to sanity."

"Are saying that we're on our own." I ask.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"I'm saying that one of us had to get inside this charade: only then, do we have a chance to blow the cover off and expose the facts ahead of the fantasy."

"Okay; but that could be impossible given that this story is a fantasy," I said without sarcasm.

"Ah, not to split hairs SOUL, but you said before that it is make-believe—not fantasy," HORACE interjected.

"Fantasy, make-believe—what's the difference—it's not reality," I rebutted.

"Whatever you want to call it, this story is something that folks seem to take serious—so much so, that they are forming a force to find CREATURE, save the COVE," TALL continued. "They intend to end CREATURE."

A hush came over us: a moment to move beyond our fears and failures that arrive even in the crisis of a fantasy, make-believe story.

"I don't know; if the story is make-believe and the crisis is made-up, should resolution be so hard?"

"HORACE, you have a good point," I said. "As I see it, we must spring into action—and now!"

"This plan; it needs a name," TALL advised.

Looking at the title of the chapter, I said: "SPRING ACTION; how's that?"

"Works for me," HORACE said, "but won't that be confused with the great PIGBALL player by the same name?"

"I don't think SPRING will mind," TALL suggested.

## SPRING ACTION

"Now the details: what to do?"

"Can't we just make it up as we go along; you know, make-believe and made-up in the moment?"

"What about the readers? They want know what happens until it happens."

"And that's a bad thing." TALL ask, suggesting that the suspense would hold their attention to the last words of this last chapter.

"Let's do it, trusting that the writer will come through." HORACE said with some level of surety.

"Thanks folks: my mind is already concocting a resolution: one that will involve everyone already presented—a group effort of getting past this crisis."

"Do you hear that." I ask

"Yeah, as though the writer is right here with us: but then, this is a fantasy where anything is possible."

In the hours that followed, I was able to force my way to detainment: first jesting in the presence of a public official, namely HUSLE himself. The charge however were:

- ✿ Jestig without justification
- ✿ Juking with excessive jerking
- ✿ Jolliness during the arrest

Lest we forget that charges must posses some alliteration. Whatever I actually did, I was back with the block: DAVID DANVIEW, SAMMY SLIPPERY, and the rest whose names are not important right now.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"What brings you back," were DAVID'S first words.

"Can't tell you, right now, but it's serious business."

"Serious you say. Let me guess, you and your friends are trying to upstage this manufactured crisis?"

"Well DANVIEW, it looks like your on it, once again."

"More even: we're in it—just like HORACE, TALL TELLS and anybody else who confronts THE ESTABLISHMENT."

"So I can count on you, when the time comes."

"Of course, we're all-in."

"How come HAL is not speaking," I ask, taking notice that the computer was unusually uncongenial.

"Are you kidding: ever since JILL BEAL arrived, HAL has been unsurprisingly distracted...bordering on distraught. Any chance for dialouge should be dismissed."

"That's good and bad," I responded. "Good, because we can talk freely, without giving the plan away: bad, because we need HAL—as before—to carry-out SPRING ACTION."

"SPRING ACTION": do you mean the great, PIGBALL player?"

"No, that's the name of the plan. SAMMY SLIPPERY spoke up. You need to listen DAVID if you're going to understand how the story ends."

"SLIPPERY, why don't you just going back to the wall where you belong and let us run the show."

"Easy there DAVID: we need everyone—remember, all-in." I reminded him.

"Right, but SAMMY is not right in the head."

## SPRING ACTION

"I know that I'm not right," SLIPPERY spoke up. "but that's my strength."

"Okay folks. let's work together on this," I said. "Now, how do we get HAL'S attention?"

"And if you do; they what," continued DAVID.

"Then we have to convince HAL to help us."

"Even if that were possible, there's not much time: the force is out searching for the CREATURE, so says the official reports of the SPIDER WEBB."

"CREATURE will not be found," I said. "Warned of what was happening, the bird flew south."

"But don't you see SOUL: the HUSSLE can construct the CREATURE'S ending."

"So all of this doesn't matter," I said, wondering why HORACE and TALL TELLS didn't anticipate this.

"It matters, more than you know; and yes, HORACE and TALL did anticipate the HUSSLE. The plan can work if time and place permit; but once the CREATURE'S flight is realized, the story will be more fantasy than some of us would prefer."

"DAVID DANVIEW, I've come must realize you're insight not to mention you uncanny ability to read my mind," I said with some humility. "It's just that I felt some of the CARPENTER'S ANGST starting to sting and—"

"Speaking of angst," DAVID interrupted, "it looks as though SAMMY may go SLIPPERY."

"What's wrong," I ask, attempting to intercede.

## TREDEGAR COVE

"It's not really about wrong," SAMMY began. "but more about right-on."

"I don't think I understand," I replied, thinking that some SLIPPERY action was shortcoming.

"Let me explain," DAVID said. "SAMMY use to be software developer; part of the Odyssey Project that produced HAL. To be succinct, HAL can the capability to shut down SPIDER'S WEBB."

"And if the WEBB goes down—"

"The HUSSLE can be stopped," DAVID finished.

"So let me get this straight: HAL shuts down the WEBB and the deception ends, is that right?"

"It's not concrete but will certainly give TALL and HORACE a better chance of getting the truth out," DAVID explained. "Once the WEBB is disabled—HAL being otherwise occupied with JILL—something must be done spontaneously to shift public opinion."

"What about dropping leaflets," SAMMY suggested.

"Great idea," I said. "TALL and HORACE can manage that: they're probably already on it."

And so, with the unexpected insight of SAMMY, the much awaited details of the plan came together. HAL was coerced back to our cell block, thanks to JILL BEAL, and convinced that the WEBB should be shut-down—which opened the way for other mediums to get the word out.

CREATURE returned even before the crisis was over: this time as the messenger, carrying leaflets dropped about the COVE. Aid in this airdrop was provided by ROY TOY as a baloon, while ground

## SPRING ACTION

operations were orchestrated by HORACE and TALL TELLS at their remote but mobile riverside van.

Others messaging was covertly carried-out in local advertising, turning the tide of mass advertising from merely consumerism to public awareness and the common good. Billboards that flanked public gathering spots like the ORANGE BOWL and FLATTIRE RIM were revised to reflect this change of interest and need. All in all, the plan worked. THE ESTABLISHMENT returned to some checks and balances.

BOOZER BANK soon reopened and, in a effort to inject confidence in the commons, provided the public with full disclosure of otherwise clandestine and criminal activities. With some adjustments long overdue, account holders eventually recovered their losses along with greater attention and oversight in these affairs.

Lands and properties that had been "acquired" through the HUSSLE were converted to the common good as well: adding parks and reserves to be managed by HORACE HELP, DAVID DANVIEW, SAMMY SLIPPERY and others as board members.

HUSELY and other criminal elements were eventually found-out, removed from the THE ESTABLISHMENT, and prosecuted accordingly. HAL'S data records served as a central source for evidence, unlocking what had become a cabal and bringing to the public an enlightenment of political corruption.

DANVIEW DAN remained intact as did other public works and civic projects. FLATTIRE RIM continued operations but, as with the

## TREDEGAR COVE

ORANGE BOWL. was somewhat minimized to that of games rather than businesses—many returning to matters deserving more attention. action.

CREATURE never taunted or terrorized; and as history an investigation would reveal. this action had been in defiance of many of the political and social ills that had taken hold of the COVE.

I eventually did my TUNNEL TIME to the other side: taking with me a lifetime of knowledge and understanding that would find application amid the walls. barriers and other obstacles of freedom that confront my folks.