

ticed Etwane. He peered down in shock and suspicion, but he could be sure of nothing. And in any event was powerless to act, unless he chose to slide down one of the guy-lines to confront the unauthorized passenger, which he did not care to do.

The guys sank into the thick blue grass of a meadow. Etwane jumped gratefully out of the ring; the balloon, relieved of his weight, swung back aloft. Etwane ran like a wild creature for the hedge. Heedless of cuts and scratches, he burst through the brambles and into a lane, where he ran pell-mell until he came to a copse of yapnut trees. He plunged into the shadows and stood till he caught his breath.

He could see nothing but foliage. Selecting the tallest tree in sight, he climbed until he could see over the hedge and across the meadow.

The balloon was down, anchored to a stump. The passengers had alighted and stood arguing with the wind-tender, demanding immediate fare rebates and expense money. This the wind-tender refused to pay over, in the certain knowledge that the main office clerks would not casually refund these sums unless he were able to produce detailed vouchers, invoices and receipts.

The passengers began to grow ugly; the wind-tender at last resolved the matter by breaking loose the anchor and scrambling into the gondola. Relieved of the passengers, the balloon rose swiftly and drifted away, leaving the passengers in a disconsolate cluster.

For three weeks Etwane roamed the countryside, a gaunt harsh-featured lad in the rags of his Pure Boy gown. In the heart of the yapnut grove he built a little den of twigs and leaves, in which he maintained a tiny fire, blown up from a coal stolen at a farm-house hearth. He stole other articles: an old jacket of green homespun, a lump of black sausage, a roll of coarse cord and a bundle of hay, with which he planned to make himself a bed. The hay was insufficient; he returned for a second bundle and stole an old earthenware bowl as well, with which the farmer fed his fowl. On this latter occasion, as he jumped from the back window of the barn, he was sighted by the boys of the farm, who gave chase, and harried him through the woods, until at last he went to cover in a dense thicket. He heard them destroying his den and exclaiming in anger at the stolen goods, and as they blundered past: "—Yodel's ahulphs will winkle him out. They can take him back upland for their pains." Cold chills coursed down Etwane's back. When the boys left the wood he climbed the tall tree and watched them return to their farm. "They won't bring in ahulphs," he told himself in a hollow voice. "They'll forget all about me tomorrow. After all, it was just a bit of hay...An old coat..."

On the following day Etwane kept an anxious watch on the farm-house. When he saw the folk going about their normal duties, he became somewhat less fearful.

The next morning when he climbed the tree, to his horror he saw three ahulphs beside the barn. They were a lumpy dwarfish variety, with the look of hairy goblin-dogs: the Murtre Mountain strain. In a panic Etwane leapt from the tree and set off through the woods toward the river Lurne. If luck were with him he would find a boat or a raft; for he could not swim.

Leaving the forest he crossed a field of purple moy; looking back, his worst fears were realized: the ahulphs came behind.

So far they had not sighted him; they ran with their eyes and foot-noses to the ground. With pounding legs and bumping heart Etwane ran from the field, up the high-road which paralleled the riverbank.

Along the road came a high-wheeled carriage, drawn by a prime pacing bullock, the result of nine thousand years breeding. Though capable of a very smart pace, it moved in a leisurely fashion, as if the driver were in no great hurry to reach his destination. Etwane pulled up the old jacket to hide his bare neck and called to the man who drove the carriage: "Please, sir, may I ride with you for a little bit?"

The man, reining the pacer to a halt, gave Etwane a somber appraisal. Etwane, returning the inspection, saw a lean man of indeterminate age, with a pallid skin, a high forehead and austere nose, a shock of soft white hair neatly cropped, wearing a suit of fine gray cloth. The verticals of his torc were purple and gray; the horizontals were white and black, neither of which Etwane could identify. He seemed very old, knowing and urbane, and yet, on the other hand, not very old at all. He spoke in a voice of neutral courtesy: "Jump aboard. How far do you go?"

"I don't know," said Etwane. "As far as possible. To be quite frank, the ahulphs are after me."

"Indeed? What is your crime?"

"Nothing of any consequence. The farmer boys consider me a vagabond, and want to hunt me down."

"I can't very well assist fugitives," said the man, "but you may ride with me for a bit."

"Thank you."

The cart moved down the road, with Etwane keeping a watch behind. The man put a toneless question: "Where is your home?"

Etwane could trust no one with this secret. "I have no home."

"And where is your destination?"

"Garwiy. I want to put a petition to the Faceless Man, to help my mother."

"And how would he do this?"

Etzwane looked over his shoulder; the ahulphs were not yet in sight. "She is under unjust indenture, and now must work in the tannery. The Faceless Man could order her indenture lifted; I'm sure she has paid it off and more, but they keep no reckonings."

"The Faceless Man is not likely to intervene in a matter of canton law."

"I've been told so. But perhaps he'll listen."

The man gave a faint smile. "The Faceless Man is gratified that canton law functions effectively. Can you believe that he'll disrupt old customs and turn everything topsy-turvy, even at Bashon?"

Etzwane looked at him in surprise. "How did you know?"

"Your gown. Your way of speech. Your mention of a tannery."

Etzwane had nothing to say. He looked over his shoulder, wishing the man would drive faster.

Even as he looked, the ahulphs bounded out into the road. Crouching down, Etzwane watched in sweating fascination. Through some peculiar working of their brain, a loss of scent confused them, and no amount of training or exhortation could persuade them to seek their quarry visually. Etzwane looked around at the man, who seemed more distant and austere than ever. The man said, "I won't be able to protect you. You must help yourself."

Etzwane turned back to watch the road. Over the hedge bounded the farmer's boys. The ahulphs made grinning disavowals, loping helpfully in one direction, then another. The boys gave a caw of rage at the helplessness of the ahulphs, then one saw the carriage and pointed. All began to run in hot pursuit.

Etzwane said anxiously, "Can't you drive somewhat faster? Otherwise they will kill me."

The man looked stonily ahead, as if he had not heard. Etzwane gave a despairing glance behind, to find his pursuers gaining rapidly. His life was coming to an end. The ahulphs, with license to kill, would rend him apart at once, then carefully tie the parts into parcels to take home, quarreling over this and that as they did so. Etzwane jumped from the carriage, to tumble head over heels into the road. Scraped and bruised, but feeling nothing, he sprang down the riverbank, bursting through the alders and into the swift yellow Lurne. What now? He had never swam a stroke in his life...He clutched to the twigs, shuddering uncontrollably, torn between dread of the water and a desire to immerse himself away from view. The ahulphs came crashing down the riverbank, trying to push their hairy faces through the thicket. Etzwane eased himself downstream, clinging to the twigs, letting his legs float. The green jacket weighed on him; he slipped it off. Catching a bubble of air it moved downstream, attracting the attention of the

farm-boys, who could see only indistinctly through the brush. They ran shouting along the bank; Etzwane waited. Fifty yards downstream they discovered their mistake and stood arguing; where was their quarry? They ordered one of the ahulphs to swim across the stream and range the opposite bank, to which the ahulph made whining protests. The boys drew back up the bank. Etzwane floated with the current, hoping to pass them unseen and presently pull himself to shore.

Silence on the bank: a sinister absence of sound. Etzwane's legs began to feel numb; cautiously he edged himself into the thicket. The disturbance attracted attention; one of the boys set up a halloo. Etzwane fell back into the water and missing his grip on the twigs was carried off into the stream. Straining to hold up his head, beating down with his arms, thrashing with his legs, Etzwane floundered out into mid-stream. His breath came in harsh gasps, water entered his mouth to choke him; he felt himself going down. The opposite bank was not too far away. He made a desperate final effort; one of his feet touched bottom. He pushed, thrust himself hopping and lurching toward the bank. Kneeling in the shallows, clinging to the alders, he hung his head and gave himself up to hoarse racking coughs. From the far bank the boys jeered at him and the ahulphs began to thrust down through the alders. Etzwane wearily tried to push through the brush, but the bank beyond loomed high and steep above him. He waded with the current. One of the ahulphs jumped into the stream and paddled directly toward Etzwane; the current carried him past. With all his force Etzwane threw a chunk of water-sodden timber. It struck the hairy dog-spider head; the creature keened and moaned and retreated to the opposite bank. Etzwane half-waded, half-hopped with the current, the boys and ahulphs keeping pace along the other bank. Suddenly they all ran forward pell-mell; looking down the stream Etzwane saw a five-arched stone bridge and beyond, the town. His pursuers intended to cross the bridge, and come down the bank at him. Etzwane gauged the stream; he could never swim back across. He made a ferocious attack on the alders, ignoring scratches, jabs, cuts; at length he pulled himself to the bank, a vertical rise of six feet, overgrown with fern and thorn-grass. He scrambled half-way up, to fall moaning back into the alders. Once again he tried, clinging with fingernails, elbows, chin, knees. By the most precarious of margins he crawled up and over, to lie flat on his face at the edge of the riverside lane. He could not rest an instant. Glassy-eyed, he heaved himself first to his hands and knees, then to his feet.

Only fifty yards away the town began. Across the lane, in a wooded park, he saw a half-dozen carts, painted in gay symbols of pale pink, white, purple, pale green, blue.

Etzwane staggered forward, flapping his arms; he ran up to a short sour-faced man of middle-age, who sat on a stool sipping hot broth from a cup.

Etzwane composed himself as best he could, but his voice was tremulous and hoarse. "I am Gastel Etzwane; take me into your troupe. Look; I wear no torc. I am a musician."

The short man drew back in surprise and irritation. "Get along with you; do you think we clasp every passing rascal to our bosoms? We are adepts; this is our standard of excellence; go dance a jig in the market square."

Down the road came the ahulphs and behind the farm-boys.

Etzwane cried, "I am no rascal; my father was Dystar the druithine; I play the khitan." He searched wildly about; he saw a nearby instrument and seized it. His fingers were weak and water-soaked; he tried to play a run of chords and produced only a jangle.

A black-furred hand seized his shoulder and pulled; another took his arm and jerked another direction; the ahulphs fell to disputing which had touched him first.

The musician rose to his feet. He seized a length of firewood and struck furiously at both ahulphs. "Goblins, be off; do you dare touch a musician?"

The peasant youths came forward. "Musician? He is a common thief, a vagabond. We intend to kill him and protect our hard-earned goods."

The musician threw down a handful of coins. "A musician takes what he needs; he never steals. Pick up your money and go."

The farm-boys made surly sounds and glared at Etzwane. Grudgingly they picked the coins out of the dirt and departed, the ahulphs yelping and dancing sideways. Their work was for nought; they would receive neither money nor meat.

The musician once more settled upon his stool. "Dystar's son, you say. What a sorry let-down. Well, it can't be helped. Throw away those rags; have the women give you a jacket and a meal. Then come let me see what is to be done."

CHAPTER 6

Clean, warm, full of bread and soup, Etzwane came cautiously back to Frolitz, who sat at a table under the trees, a flagon of liquor at his elbow. Etzwane sat down on a bench and watched. Frolitz fitted a new reed to the mouthpiece of a wood-horn. Etzwane waited. Frolitz apparently intended to ignore his presence.

Etwane hitched himself forward. "Do you intend to let me stay with the troupe, sir?"

Frolitz turned his head. "We are musicians, boy. We demand a great deal from each other."

"I would do my best," said Etzwane.

"It might not be good enough. String up that instrument yonder."

Etwane took up the khitan and did as he was bid. Frolitz grunted. "Now tell me how Dystar's son runs the fields in rags?"

"I was born at Bashon in Canton Bastern," said Etzwane. "A musician named Feld Maijesto gave me a khitan, which I learned to play as best as I could. I did not care to become a Chilite and I ran away."

"That is a lucid exposition," said Frolitz. "I am acquainted with Feld, who takes a rather casual attitude toward his craft. I make serious demands upon my folk; we are not slackers here...What if I send you away?"

"I will go to Garwi and ask the Faceless Man to give me a musician's torc and to help my mother as well."

Frolitz looked up at the sky. "What illusions the young harbor nowadays! So now the Faceless Man indulges every ragamuffin who comes to Garwi with a grievance!"

"He must heed grievances; how else can he rule? Surely he wants the folk of Shant to be content!"

"Hard to say what the Faceless Man wants...But it's not good policy talking. He might be listening from behind that wagon, and he's said to be thin-skinned. Look yonder on the tree. Only last night, while I slept fifty feet away, that placard was posted! It gives an eery feeling."

Etwane examined the placard. It read:



The ANOME is Shant!

Shant is the ANOME!

Which is to say: The ANOME is everywhere!

Sly sarcasm is folly.

Disrespect is sedition.

With benevolent attention! With fervent zeal!

With puissant determination!

The ANOME works for Shant!



Etwane nodded soberly. "This is exactly correct. Who posted the placard?"

"How should I know?" snapped Frolitz. "Perhaps the Faceless Man himself. If I were he, I'd enjoy going about making guilty folk jump. Still it's not wise to attract his notice with petitions and demands. If they are right and reasonable—so much the worse."

"What do you mean?"

"Use your head, lad! Suppose you and the canton have come into conflict, and you want matters altered. You go into Garwi and present a petition which is right and proper and just. The Faceless Man has three choices. He can accommodate you and put the canton into an uproar,

with unknown consequences. He can deny your just petition and expect sedition every time you get drunk in a tavern and start to talk. Or he can quietly take your head."

Etzwane pondered. "You mean that I shouldn't take my grievance to the Faceless Man?"

"He's the last man to take a grievance to!"

"Then what should I do?"

"Just what you're doing. Become a musician and make a living complaining of your woe. But remember: complain of your own woe! Don't complain of the Faceless Man!...What's that you're playing now?"

Etzwane, having strung the khitan, had touched forth a few chords. He said, "Nothing in particular. I don't know too many tunes: only what I learned from the musicians who came along the road."

"Halt, halt, halt!" cried Frolitz, covering his ears. "What are these strange noises, these original discords?"

Etzwane licked his lips. "Sir, it is a melody of my own contriving."

"But this is impertinence! You consider the standard works beneath your dignity? What of the repertory I have labored to acquire? You tell me now that I have wasted my time, that henceforth I must attend only the outpourings of your natural genius?"

Etzwane at last was able to insert a disclaimer. "No, no, sir, by no means! I have never been able to hear the famous works; I was forced to play tunes I thought up myself."

"Well, so long as it doesn't become an obsession...Not so much thumb there. What of the rattle-box? Do you think it's there for show?"

"No sir. I hurt my elbow somewhat today."

"Well then, why scratch aimlessly at the khitan? Let's hear a tune on the wood-horn."

Etzwane looked dubiously at the instrument, which was tied together with string. "I've never had the sleight of it."

"What?" Frolitz gaped in disbelieving shock. "Well then, learn it! The tringolet, the clarion, the tipple as well. We are musicians in this troupe, not, like Feld and his scamping cronies, a set of theorizing dilettantes. Here, take this wood-horn; go play scales. After a bit I'll come by and listen..."

A year later Master Frolitz brought his troupe to Garwiy, a locality the wandering troupes visited but seldom, for the urbane folk of Garwiy enjoyed novelty, style and topical substance in preference to music. Etzwane, paying no heed to Frolitz's advice, went to the Corporation Plaza and stood in line at the booth where petitions to the Faceless Man might be filed for five florins. A placard reassured those who waited:



All petitions are seen by the ANOME!

The same scrupulous judgment is applied to the problems of all, if their petition costs five or five hundred florins. Be concise and definite, state the exact deficiency or hardship, specify the precise solution you propose. Merely because you are filing a petition does not indicate that your cause is just; conceivably you are wrong and your adversary right. Be instructed, rather than disappointed should the ANOME yield a negative response.

The ANOME administers equity, not bounty!



Etzwane paid his five florins, received a form from the desk. In the most careful language he stated his case, citing the cynicism of the Chilites in respect to the indentures of the women. "In particular, the lady Eathre has more than paid her obligation to the Ecclesiarch Osso Higajou, but he has assigned her to work in the tannery. I pray that you order this injustice terminated, that the lady Eathre may be free to select the future course of her life without reference to the wishes of Ecclesiarch Osso."

Occasionally the five-florin petitions encountered slow responses; Etzwane's, however, received a verdict on the following day. All petitions and their responses were deemed in the public interest and posted openly on a board; with trembling fingers Etzwane pulled down the response coded with his torc colors.

The response read:

The ANOME notes with sympathy a son's concern for the welfare of his mother. The laws of Canton Bastern are definite. They require that before an indenture can be considered paid, the indentured person must display a receipt and balance sheet for all monies paid over by the person and all charges incurred and debited against the same person's account. Sometimes a person consumes food, lodging, clothing, education, entertainment, medicine and the like, in excess of his or her earnings, whereupon the payment of an indenture may be delayed. Such is possibly true in the present case.

The judgment is this: I command the Ecclesiarch Osso Higajou, upon presentation of this document, to render free the person of the lady Eathre, provided that she can show a favorable balance of one thousand five hundred florins,

or if some person pays in cash to Ecclesiarch Osso Higajou one thousand five hundred florins, when it will be assumed that a previous balance between credit and debit exists.

In short, take this document and one thousand five hundred florins to Ecclesiarch Osso; he must deliver to you your mother, the lady Eathre.

With hope and encouragement,

THE ANOME

Etwane became furiously angry. He instantly purchased a second petition and wrote: "Where can I get one thousand five hundred florins? I earn a hundred florins a year. Eathre has paid Osso twice over; will you lend me one thousand five hundred florins?"

As before the response was prompt. It read:

The ANOME regrets that he cannot lend either private or public funds for the settlement of indentures. The previous judgment remains the definitive verdict.

Etwane wandered back to Fontenay's Tavern, where Frolitz made his Garwiy headquarters, and wondered how or where he could lay his hands on one thousand five hundred florins.

Five years later, at Maschein in Canton Maseach, on the south slope of the Hwan, Etwane encountered his father Dystar. The troupe, coming into town late, was at liberty for the evening. Etwane and Fordyce, a youth three or four years older—Etwane was now about eighteen—wandered through town, from one tavern to the next, gathering gossip and listening with critical ears to what music was being played.

At the Double Fish Inn they heard Master Rickard Oxtot's Gray-Blue-Green Interpolators.* During an intermission Etwane fell into a discussion with the khitan-player, who minimized his own abilities. "To hear the khitan played in proper fashion, step across the way to the Old Caraz and hear the druithine."

Fordyce and Etwane presently crossed to the Old Caraz and took goblets of effervescent green punch. The druithine sat in a corner, gazing moodily at the audi-

* The language of Shant allows exquisite discrimination between colors. Against *red, scarlet, carmine, maroon, pink, vermilion, cerise*, Shant could set sixty descriptive degrees, with as many for every other color. In *Gray-Blue-Green Interpolators*, the qualities of 'gray', 'blue' and 'green' were precisely specified, in order to express by symbolical means the exact emotional point of view from which Master Oxtot's troupe performed their variations.

ence: a tall man with black-gray hair, a strong nervous body, the face of a dreamer dissatisfied with his dreams. He touched his khitan, tuned one of the strings, struck a few chords, listened as if displeased. His dark gaze wandered the room, rested on Etwane, passed on. Again he began to play: slowly, laboriously working around the edges of a melody, reaching here, searching there; testing this, trying that, like an absent-minded man raking leaves in a wind. Insensibly the music became easier, more certain; the lank themes, the incommensurate rhythms, fused into an organism with a soul: every note played had been pre-ordained and necessary.

Etwane listened in wonder. The music was remarkable, played with majestic conviction and a total absence of effort. Almost casually, the druithine imparted heart-breaking news; he told of golden oceans and unattainable islands; he reported the sweet futility of life, then, with a wry double beat and an elbow at the scratch-box, supplied solutions to all the apparent mysteries.

His meal, hot pickled land-crab with barley, melon-balls dusted with pollen, had been splendid, but not copious; payment† had long been made. He had taken a flask of Gurgel's Elixir; another stood at his elbow, but he seemed uninterested in further drink...The music dwindled and departed into silence, like a caravan passing over the horizon.

Fordyce leaned over, put a question to one who sat nearby: "What is the druithine's name?"

"That is Dystar."

Fordyce turned marveling to Etwane. "It is your father!"

Etwane, with no words to say, gave a curt nod.

Fordyce rose to his feet. "Let me tell him that his natural son is here, who plays the khitan in his own right."

"No," said Etwane. "Please don't speak to him."

Fordyce sat down slowly. "Why not, then?"

Etwane heaved a deep sigh. "Perhaps he has many natural sons. A good number may play the khitan. He might not care to give polite attention to each of these."

† Druithines, unlike the troupes, never advertised their comings and goings; after an unheralded, almost furtive, arrival at some locality, the druithine would visit one of the taverns and order a repast, sumptuous or frugal, according to his whim or personal flair. Then, he would bring forth his khitan and play, but would not eat until someone in the audience had paid for his meal. The 'uneaten meal', indeed, was a common jocular reference. Druithines in decline reputedly employed a person to make ostentatious payment for the meal as soon as it was set forth. After the meal the druithine's further income depended upon gratuities, gifts from the tavern-keeper, engagements at private parties or in the manor houses of aristocrats. A druithine of talent might become wealthy, as he had few expenses.