

**A
WINTER
IN
BAVARIA**

or,

The Shadow Under Regensburg

**being
the letters of
Professor Stephens
to
Mr McIntyre**

**Winter
1997-1998**

Editions McIntyre
Redfern & Montparnasse
1998

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PREFACE

The University of Melbourne has produced some great strategic thinkers, who have contributed outstandingly to our growing magnificence.

Professor A. Stephens was not among them. Indeed, the time of his employment can best be described as a series of rolling disasters. His attempts at strategies to undo the less than strategic effects of his failure to fulfil his minute part in my Great Strategic Plan were - if I may speak so warmly of a colleague - lamentable. His only saving grace, his close study of that master-strategist H.P. Lovecraft, inevitably led him into regions where he was quite out of his depth. But, instead of doing the strategic thing and quietly drowning, he kept coming up for air again and again, until more finely tuned strategic intervention became inevitable.

The letters he wrote from Regensburg to some long-suffering acquaintance are, from the point of view of the next phase of my Great Strategic Plan, of no interest whatsoever. As far as the Plan was concerned, he was not supposed to be in Regensburg at all but rather in Brunei, recruiting members of the Sultan's extended family as full fee-paying students (price-category: AAA). As one who has devoted his career to implementing the thought of Lovecraft in Australian Universities, and whose efforts are, at long last, close to fruition, I can only shake my head as I read them. Parts of the text almost give the impression Stephens was trying to be funny. Ha! But I am reassured that he was, despite all else, a Professor of the University of Melbourne, and thus must have known better.

Nevertheless, the reader will search in vain on every page for strategic insights of the kind I am known to value. In fact, I don't know why I am writing a preface to these letters at all. I can only conclude it must be part of some wider strategy, the aims of which I am still keeping a secret from everyone, including myself. But let me urge the reader to go back to the one pure source: H.P. Lovecraft, and to waste no time at all reading Stephens.

Alan D. Gilbert
Vice-Chancellor
University of Melbourne
24 April 1998

A WINTER IN BAVARIA

or,

THE SHADOW UNDER REGENSBURG

'And while there are those,' the Mad Arab had written, 'who have dared to seek glimpses beyond the Veil, and to accept HIM as guide, they would have been more prudent had they avoided commerce with HIM; for it is written in the Book of Thoth how terrific is the price of a single glimpse. Nor may those who pass ever return, for in the vastnesses transcending our world are shapes of darkness that seize and bind. The Affair that shambleth about in the night, the evil that defieth the Elder Sign, the Herd that stand watch at the secret portal each tomb is known to have and that thrive on that which groweth out of the tenants thereof:- all these Blacknesses are less than HE WHO guardeth the Gateway: HE WHO will guide the rash one beyond all the worlds into the Abyss of unnamable devourers.'

H.P. Lovecraft,

Through the Gates of the Silver Key

LETTERS FROM PROFESSOR STEPHENS

10 December 1997

You mention the *Black Book of Glenoe* in your last. Flippingidly through the pages of the fax edition of the *Regensburger Volksfeind* I note that they are excavating the ruins of the synagogue that was burned down in an excess of Christian zeal in the early 16th Century and that they have discovered portions of a manuscript, in a lead casket, entitled *Liber Niger Glencoris*. Can such things be? I suspect that *Glencoris* is simply a disguise to put the ignorant off, “Glencoris” being the Latin for the local hamlet of Glenskorf. But who would bother putting the parish records in a lead-lined casket, eh? And hide them in a synagogue?

The whole point is that what they have found *aren't* the parish records of Glenskorf nohow, but SOMETHING ELSE¹.

Soon I shall be in Regensburg and know ...

18 December 1997

We have arrived in Regensburg.

Haven't been able to busy myself with the excavations of the old synagogue on the Neupfarrplatz - but will hopefully have the real dirt (heh-heh!) to relay in my next.

Htohtos-Goy!

21 December 1997

The Regensburg ghetto and synagogue were razed to the ground in 1519, and they are still busy trizzing up the excavation site, as they were when we were here 2 years ago. The numerical significance of 1519 will not escape you, nor will the fact that the *Liber Niger* antedates it. I feel I am coming close to secrets no mortal was meant to know. Should I be found lifeless or - still worse! - reduced to the unhappy state of Al Hazred on the site of Regensburg's newest underground parking station, I pray thee to see my wife and bairn are not diddled out of my superannuation.

The mortality rate among the Turkish labourers on the site is said to be much higher than the German average for building sites in winter, and the workman who found the lead casket was himself discovered exsanguinated and draped over a gargoye near the

¹ Namely, the finding of a copy of the *Necronomicon*, attributed to Abdul Alhazred (the “Mad Arab”, as Lovecraft calls him). It deals inter alia with how (†) YOG-SOTHOTH (†) and other interdimensional beings equally menacing may be admitted to our continuum. Professor Stephens believes that the *Necronomicon* is in fact one of those books which keeps writing itself over and over throughout the ages at the expense of its human authors, including the present one. It may also do so at the expense of its readers, so watch out!

top of the left steeple of the Regensburg cathedral.

These weird happenings have not dampened the mood of Christmas shoppers in this ancient town, originally built by the Romans as a fortified *bordello* with the name *Castra Regina*, whence “Regensburg” in the vernacular. They are predicting 3° C and drizzle for Xristmas. It warms me to think of those hard-bitten Romans celebrating the feast of *Sol Invictus* in the only heated bath-house for several hundred miles around.

But more grim and sombre matters draw me ever on, and I trust I remain, for a little time yet, your faithful correspondent, with such wits as a lifetime of scholarship have left me still intact.

8 January 1998

Your data stand in all too clear a connection with those increasing fatalities that in any other country would have stopped work on the underground car-park, pending investigations. But no: the only outward sign that the populace is at all concerned by the stirrings below is the number of local politicians and dignitaries finking out of the grand opening ceremony at the end of the month. (I have arranged a visit to Nürnberg myself just in case.)

Playing it cool, as is my nature, I have confined my overt activities to slipping out one night to spray a two meter high graffito, saying simply: 1519, on the wall of the Lutheran church built a couple of decades after the destruction of the synagogue, and then lurking inconspicuously beneath it every morning from 11 till noon. After three weeks my patience was rewarded by my being accosted by a young lady combining in her appearance the least attractive features of Les Murray and Marty Feldman who asked if I were interested in some numbers she had in her little black book - I ask you! Has subtlety deserted the earth forever? »You’ll have to lift your game!« I told her sharply in my fluent *Oberfränkisch*, a dialect that adds pungency to every rebuke. She cannot entirely have understood me, as she responded with a smile of toothless evil and the words, »The Master says no freebies till the Opening!« and ran off hooting with eldritch mirth.

I enclose two postcards. On the one showing the Cathedral, I trust you remark the gargoyles that in this pic are visible about 4/5 of the way up the steeples on the left hand side. There are lots more on other parts of the structure which some Power is using with increasing frequency as a peg for drained cadavers.

The other is marked “Regensburg”. Here you have a close-up of one of said gargoyles together with some picturesque views of a town which has had to wait a long while for some real excitement. 1519 had its moments, but I fear something major is imminent.

10 January 1998

Yours of 7 January got here so fast, given the vagaries of two postal systems that can

between them take up to three weeks to transmit an air-mail letter, that I have no doubt that THEY have intervened to facilitate our correspondence. Now why would THEY be doing that? What advantage could there be to THEM in our exchanging information? The morning I find a brand-new fax machine that doesn't need mains current or batteries outside the front door, then I shall *know* our earnest attempts to elucidate these horrific mysteries do make of us but catspaws in THEIR kitty-litter.

Your account of New Year in Sydney brought »una furtiva lagrima« (Donizetti) to my nostalgic eye. Things were pretty tame here. The Danube, Regensburg's answer to the Yarra only more so, ran with blood for an hour or so after midnight, and the eyes of all the gargoyles on the cathedral (trust you got your pics) flashed with purple balefire for about as long, but otherwise deadly dull.

Of course, there was the sad end of Herr Alois Stimpfl, one of Regensburg's most respected tobacconists and tosspots, who tumbled into the excavations for the new parking station on the way home from seeing in the New in the boozier and was found next morning not merely exsanguinated but with his head attached where one would expect to find his penis and scrotum and with the latter articles growing out of the top of his neck.

This caught the eye of the media in a way the 67 Turkish labourers deceased on the site had failed to do. »*One would imagine*« wrote the **Regensburger Volksfeind** »*some especially cruel LUSUS NATURAE or teratogenic prodigy, had not Herr Stimpfl been seen for some hours the previous night consuming beer and schnaps with his head in its conventional place, and had not Frau Stimpfl assured us amid tears that his organs of generation had been equally conventionally located during all their twenty-nine years of marriage, for Professor Dr Strunck, our leading forensic pathologist, claims Herr Stimpfl's cadaver, on an initial examination, looks for all the world as though its unfortunate former tenant had been born with this bizarre disposition of his essentials.*« And still the construction of the new parking station goes ahead. My personal hogmanay was as dry as a dead nun's crevice, so at least poor Herr Stimpfl got to down a few before Al Hazred's Bane or one of HIS mates got to work.

After the events on the Neupfarrplatz recounted in my last missive, I decided a firmer line was fully justified, so I snuck out again under cover of darkness and heavily disguised (as a ballet-dancer in drag) and wrote a fresh graffito next to "1519", (this time in *Oberpfälzisch* for added oomph) to the effect: "If you think we're in some el cheapo Stephen-King-clone, think again!" I trust this will put the OTHER SIDE on its mettle.

16 January 1998

Yours of January 12 also got here with quite unnatural speed, convincing me that THEY are doing all that may be done to expedite matters, though to what grisly end my mind shudders to surmise.

The news from here is all bad. Professor Dr Strunck's full autopsy on the unhappy Herr Stimpfl revealed him to have been not merely re-arranged, but - *horribile dictu!* -

subjected to a full internal rewiring job so intricate that, had he not been exsanguinated, the learned Strunck sees no reason why he should not have gone about most, if not all, his usual business, thus bestowing an awful poignancy to the locution “dick-head”, which, as it does not exist in standard German or any of the dialects spoken hereabouts, lends added weight to the impending suspicion that the perpetrator indeed came from regions OUTSIDE and had, moreover, recently done a community access course in »Human Anatomy for Pleasure and Profit«.

My researches into the events of 1519 have revealed that they were precipitated by the corpse of a popular local robber baron called Justus von der Jauchegrube² being found outside the back gate of the ghetto with his plumbing redone in identical wise to that of the deceased Stimpfl. Suspicion fell immediately on the local rabbi, Eliesar ben Jonson, who stood in rumour of being both a podiatrist and a necromancer in his spare time and whose daughter, Jisbellah, had been publicly seduced, rogered and fertilized by Jauchegrube. Now this by itself was not sufficient to obliterate both the ghetto and synagogue from the face of the earth, especially as the latter was a most substantial structure, as contemporary drawings by Albrecht Altdorfer attest, but it certainly was one of the warmer-uppers.

Back in the narrative present, the OTHER SIDE never ceases to amaze by its appalling lack of subtlety. Bidden by a message posted to me with my bank-statement to a rendezvous on the scaffolding used for cleaning the priceless medieval stained-glass windows high above the portal of the cathedral, I scrambled up to this most insecure tryst and, of course, found no one there. Nor did anyone appear in the next hour but a pigeon who appeared to be lost and looking for the exit. Inevitably, I fell to studying the windows and, after a while, saw what I was clearly meant to see: in the middle of a panel depicting the martyrdom of St Etfried, who is shown having his guts pulled out by a windlass at the command of a local pagan chieftain for having refused to sing the Lord’s Prayer backwards as an entertainment - German TV is not much more entertaining today, let me tell you! - at the latter’s wedding, I suddenly perceived in the scarlet and mauve glass panes of what I had taken to be some of the holy friar’s entrails - yes! you’ve guessed it: *the three-lobed burning eye!* I suppose it was intended I should fall off the scaffolding at this point, but I had taken a stout rope along against such an eventuality and, with its help, was able to haul myself back onto my perch.

Sighting through the Dreaded Optic down onto the Neupfarrplatz, what should I discover but that I was lined up dead-on with the entrance to the new parking station! How corny can you get?

P.S. On the TV news tonight: there has been an outbreak of *Schweinepest* in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

20 January 1998

I received in the mail an expensively printed invitation from the *Gesellschaft für die*

² “von liquid manure pit”

Erhaltung der Finsternis und Stille, or “Society for the Preservation of Darkness and Silence”, to join them for a “quiet hour” in the crypt of St Ramwolbus in the Basilica of St Emmeram at midnight next Monday. Something tells me it just might be a trap! And the crypt is unlikely to be heated. I mean: even if it’s not a trap, unheated crypts at midnight in the middle of the German winter are not really my scene. I don’t think I should go, do you?

Schweinepest has now reached Niedersachsen, and Belgium has closed its borders to all German pigs. »They tried much the same in 1914, and precious little good it did them then«, Aulbranne would doubtless interject, were that stout old warhorse but among the living. *Ubi sunt qui ante nos?*

26 January 1998

I write this with trembling hand, having sent my wife and bairn to a safe refuge in Basel, Switzerland, and having myself fled Regensburg in peril of my life, as the OTHER SIDE is simply not playing fair! You will recall how in my last epistle from that place of damnation I reported receiving an invitation from a mysterious Society to meet with them in a crypt at midnight. A trap! I thought. But then I thought again: who would set so obvious a trap with any thought of catching one of Brunswick West’s leading intellectuals? Perhaps they are quite genuine, in which case membership of a Society dedicated to the Preservation of Darkness and Silence is a damned sight more sensible than belonging to all the half-witted things I belong to anyway, like the Trades Union and the Academy, which are dedicated to the unnecessary consumption of electricity and to endless jabber. Why do I not - I thought - suss out the crypt of St Ramwolbus by daylight and well in advance of the time specified?

O vain under-estimation of THEIR wiles that was nearly to render me as incoherent and, come to that, incontinent as the unhappy Al Hazred!

At eleven this morning I repaired to the ancient pile that is the Basilica of St Emmeram, wherein lies the even more venerable crypt of St Ramwolbus who was martyred in a spectacularly disgusting way in 763 by the then Dux Bavariorum for venturing to suggest that having 15 wives was at variance with the teachings of Holy Scripture. Ramwolbus’ faith was vindicated when all 15 spouses gave birth to two-headed monkeys, but that is another story.

I made my way unobtrusively down into the crypt where Ramwolbus lies buried and found it to be as Romanesque as all hell and fitted out as a place of worship. Nothing suspicious yet! I thought, as I took my place in a pew and began to say a few prophylactic *Ave Marias* to cover the sins I would likely commit over the next few days, whilst scrutinising the vault for signs of THEIR handiwork.

Some time passed in this way before I became aware that there was something peculiar about the sanctuary lamp. Not merely was it alight and behind red glass, but to my perception it was becoming bigger, brighter and ... somehow more articulated. Yes! You have guessed aright! It was none other than the THREE-LOBED BURNING EYE! This horror-struck realisation came almost too late, for I felt it in the same instant

compelling me to begin reciting that vile incantation in that filthiest of filthy languages, the mere grammar of which is enough - two or three paradigms suffice! - to make the most hardened grammarian vomit! I refer, of course, to the DESCENDING NODE³ which must be uttered by a human voice if YOU KNOW WHO is to make one of HIS unspeakable SELF-MANIFESTATIONS.

Horror gripped me by the gurgler as I whipped into a spirited chant of *Salvum me fac, Domine*. But to no avail! The eye burned relentlessly into my brain, and I could feel my synapses stretching to encompass those putrid syllables!

It was then that I remembered Al Hazred's last frantic scrawl at the foot of his manuscript, which is rendered as: "It is fatal if THEY force you to use their t....." The simple-minded editor, Lovecraft, had glossed "t....." as "toothbrush", and so it reads in the standard edition, where its inanity lets it blend perfectly with the context. Now I saw that "t....." was Al Hazred's despairing attempt to write "tongue", and that the EYE was on the point of using me as a mere tool of my own destruction in the same way as IT had used the wretched Abdul.

What was I to do? Latin psalms were obviously too close to that vile idiom to be of avail as an antidote. In a flash I saw what was needed, and began singing: "The Owl and

³ Orthodoxy has for centuries averred that the Ascending Node is -

Y'AI 'NG'NGAH / YOG-SOTHOTH/ H'EE - L'GEB / F'AI THRODOG / UAAAH

and that the Descending Node is -

OGTHROD AI'F / GEB'L - EE'H / YOG-SOTHOTH / 'NGAH'NG AI'Y / ZHRO,

the second being "the first written syllabically backwards" except for 'Yog-Sothoth' and the contrasting final words. But were it so simple, Old Ones would be more common than motor cars on the streets as a widening circle learns the *tao*. As Professor Stephens notes, the orthodox prescription, to defend against this, is by design both misleading and incomplete. It is likely, for instance, that what orthodoxy calls the Ascending Node is in fact the Descending Node and vice versa, and that the full version of the True Descending Node also contains some or all of -

1. *Iä! Iä! N'gaa, n'n'ghai-ghai! Iä! Iä! N'ghai, n-yah, n_yah, shoggogg, phthaghn! Iä! Iä! Y-hah y-nyah y_nyah! N'ghaa, n'n'ghai, waf'l pthaghn - Yog-Sothoth! Yog-Sothoth! ...*
2. *N'gai, n'gha'ghaa, bugg-shoggogg, y'hah: Yog-Sothoth, Yog-Sothoth ...*
3. *Ygnaiih ... ygnaiih ... thflthkh'ngaha ... Yog-Sothoth ... Y'bthnk ... h'ehye - n'grkdl'lh ...*
4. *Eh_y-ya-ya-yahaah - e'yayayaaaa ... ngh'aaaaa ... ngh'aaa ... h'yuh ... h'yuh ...*

Professor Stephens has added the following powerful insight:

[The orthodox version] unintentionally mangles Abdul's text by including the stage direction 'THRODOG as part of the incantation itself. As I showed in my gutsy little article in *Necronomiconolalia*, vol. 17, what Al Hazred intends at this point is that one picks up the Australian terrier, miniature Dachshund, Pekinese (or whatever canine of appropriate size one has obediently waiting) and hurls it into the centre of the circular congeries of grotesque and obscenely misshapen symbols of horrendous portent which one has carefully daubed on or chiseled into one's wall: *yelp - splat!*"

Scholarly debate continues whether OGTHROD is for incanting, or is the counterpart stage direction requiring the dog to be removed from the wall.

The best pronunciation guide is still R. Dover's *Oldish for Civil Servants* (London, 1900).

the Pussycat went to sea/ In a beautiful pea-green boat” at the top of my voice. At once the EYE, which had expanded to about the bigness of a prize-winning pumpkin at the Royal Easter Show began to contract, spitting out purple flashes of fury the while. Still singing *fortissimo*, I charged past the altar and, diving under a bolt of sizzling mauve, gained the door.

Unfortunately for them, a party of American tourists was being shown over the dreary wonders of St Emmeram, which go back to Merovingian times when European sculptors couldn't chisel their way out of a wet paper-bag, so to speak, in the moment when I came barrelling out of the cellarage, bellowing for dear life:

Oh lovely pussy, oh pussy, my love,
What a wonderful pussy you are!

Inevitably, I knocked two or three over. The rest tried to climb columns, or ducked down behind other bits of masonry. I think I may have given them a quite false impression of the state of present-day Christianity in Germany as I scattered them like ninepins, and did not even stop to say: “I'm so terribly sorry!”, seeing as how I was convinced I had to get to the bit where they dance by the light of the moon, before I could draw a safe breath.

I sang the whole song through again before I stopped running. I mean: what would you, or Murgatroyd, or even Mudlark do if you were chased out of an early Romanesque crypt by a ... by a what? By an EYE? At this point I decided that the OTHER SIDE were no longer playing cricket!

Had THEY ever been playing cricket, or was THEIR game some obscene Middle-Eastern version of baseball? Most like, we shall never know.

At any rate, I thought it was best to leave Regensburg until things settled down again. Clearly, a particular constellation of etheric forces was needed if the DESCENDING NODE was to have its full terrible effect. This was originally to coincide with the opening of the new underground parking station. But it said in the *Regensburger Volksfeind* this morning that the opening has been deferred *sine die*, since they can't scrape together enough dignitaries to grace even the smallest podium. It is said that even Felix, Cardinal Katzenbeisser, CEO of the Office for Dogma and Overpopulation in the Vatican, where he devotes his life to hurling anathemas at the condom industry, declined the honour of cutting the ribbon, and it can't be said he gets all that many invitations to decline - since burning heretics ceased to be a popular ecclesiastical entertainment.

With the opening off, THEY thought THEY must capture, by hook or by crook, that one set of human neurons in which the DESCENDING NODE was firmly implanted and which happened to be within easy reach of both the etheric vortex and the parking station. Hence all the nonsense with the crypt of St Ramwolbus - but, by Xrist's wounds, they nearly got me! As any reader of my poetic works will know, pussies have played no small role in my life, and I offer up a heartfelt prayer of thanks that, in my moment of need, I was inspired to sing that hymn to the Great Moist Cosmic Yoni that

saved my bacon (heh-heh!) and not maybe! (As my late friend A.W. Dwilies was wont to remark.)

29 January 1998

Back we are in this perilous burgh, where more than 2,000 years of foul-mouthed history lie in wait to spit the next dirty joke at the hapless visitor.

I had a pleasantly frothy couple of days in Nürnberg where, disguised as a *Meistersinger*, I did some busking on the fringes of the red-light district where my blurry renditions of *Song of the Vulgar Boatman*, *The Road to Mandalay*, *Because God Made You Mine* and *Old Man River* brought in enough to keep a fairly constant stream of amber fluid going down during interval.

How pleasant to have a few days' leave from the unsewered trenches of this pestilential war for the Soul of the Universe, or Our Lady of Fatima, or Mother England or whoever the hell it is we are fighting for. On Monday, I thought we were fighting for the Great Moist Cosmic Yoni, but after a couple of days in the stews at Nürnberg, I am not really that certain any more. Maybe we, like President Bill Clinton, are fighting for Truth, Justice and the Perfect Blow-Job. Who knows: if one managed to hit Saddam Hussein in the right place with a well-aimed choko, he might well go pop! It must be much simpler being on the OTHER SIDE and just going in to bat for pure, mindless evil.

Not that I'm tempted to switch allegiance, mind! You will recall in my last letter the group of American tourists visiting St Emmeram's Basilica when I fled, singing, out of the vault of St Ramwolbus. Well, four of them quite misunderstood my action and its cause and decided that - to judge from my apparent euphoria - Regensburg's counterpart to Monica Lewinsky must be down there doing it for free! Unzipping, they hurtled down the stairs as fast as I had hurtled up them, and there followed a horrible ululation and a vivid tangerine flash from the nether regions. When the local starforce finally ventured down there some hours later, they found, of course, that all four had been »tergiverstimpflated« or *umgestimpft*, as they now say in *Oberpfälzisch*, in no uncertain manner, and then impaled on a row of iron crucifixes that Felix, Cardinal Katzenbeisser, used to practise on when a mere lad. Since the tour they were on was organised by the First Baptist Church of Omaha, their rearrangement has made the international press and has deferred even further the opening of the new parking station. I mean: who is going to risk both their essential plumbing *and* their Mercedes, just to avoid a parking ticket?

So the war goes on. Judging that the etheric constellation that had well nigh compelled me to recite the DESCENDING NODE had shot its bolt for the nonce, I returned hither and took up my researches. It seems that old Justus von der Jauchegrube was not the first victim of whatever it is lurks under what is now the Neupfarrplatz. Back in Roman times, I discover, there was a centurion of the local garrison called Lordorius, one of those Closet Christians common in the Imperial Army in the years before Constantine did his big switcheroo who sought to undermine the morale of the troops by holding

clandestine prayer meetings and sleepovers. Anyway, WHATEVER LURKS had been getting on the tits of the civil population of Castra Regina, or Ratisbon as the Celtish underclass still insisted on calling it, by exacting an annual tribute of three virgins, a demand quite beyond the powers of this thriving port on the Danube, then a major trade route with lots of boatsmen with bulging purses, to meet.

When it was clear that in 319, Castra Regina was only going to be able to produce *one* attestable victim for the annual tribute, and she a *demi-vièrge* at best, then surely WHATEVER LURKS, called something like **Jogurtsofus** by the Danube Celts in their malodorous dialect, was going to throw one granddaddy of a fit and cause more devastation than the floods of 295.

Seeing the chance for a lot of cheap propaganda, Lordorius got into full armour, mounted his steed, ordered the local authorities to chain the weeping Colleenella to the horse-trough in the midst of the Forum Vermorum and retire. This they duly did to the local taverna in such numbers that no eye-witness remained to see what actually happened in the Forum. The reconstruction a year or two after the event by a local artist, which I enclose, is maybe not all that accurate in detail and has a distinctly propagandist tinge to it, but it -- apart from Colleenella's not very reliable memoirs -- is the only evidence we have. According to Colleenella, **Jogurtsofus** was in a very bad mood indeed, as he bit through her chain, sat down on the edge of the horse-trough, dropped his breeks and underbreeks and said » Kiss it! « in a voice like nothing she had ever heard, or indeed wished to hear again.

She was about to do as she was told, when Lordorius thundered up on his charger, waving his lance and bellowing »*Christus regnat!*«. What followed is a bit confused, but it seems that Lordorius' horse let him down, none too gently, into the jaws of **Jogurtsofus**. »In a pig's ear, He does!« said the monster, then »I really should peel it first!«, then nothing but a lot of terrible crunching noises. Colleenella had the presence of mind to jump on the horse and ride it out of the Forum Vermorum at a smart clip, thus surviving to make a fortune out of her memoirs and notoriety. No one wasted many tears on Lordorius, except some of the privates who had enjoyed his Christian sleepovers, but about a decade later the Emperor Constantine decreed that henceforth all genocide, pillage, rape, extortion and computer fraud committed by the Roman Army should be done in the name of Jesus, and it became at once clear that the State Church lacked the kind of saints who would appeal to the simple fighting-man, as he massacred whole tribes and razed cities to the Greater Glory. In the recruiting drive that led up to the Council of Nicea, some sharp-witted cleric happened on the sad tale of Lordorius as he took his ease in Colleenella's Comfy Castellum Veneris, saw its potential, and bribed a local hack to produce the iconic representation I enclose, and so St Lordorius became one of the first posthumous pillars of the new-style Church Militant.

Despite its central location, the Forum Vermorum never became interesting as real estate to the local gentry, which is doubtless how it ended up as the ghetto in the centuries leading up to 1519. Clearly **Jogurtsofus** went right off annual appearances, or maybe it was just the effect of a chronic infundibulum on the etheric constellations, but clearly he was back in 1914, as the moving account by Flighbarton proves beyond

doubt, and, for whatever reason, WHAT LURKS has decided to go for broke in 1998.

I would ask to borrow your Almanach of Etheric Constellations with Appendix of Nodes, but your question about the **THREE-LOBED BURNING EYE** in your letter of 24 January betrays that fatal Scots predilection for cheap but abridged editions which are fucking useless in a crisis because they lack half the essential information and for which I have, alas! had cause to reprimand you before. It is really better to pay a little more and get the whole text! I mean: who wants to be staring up the nostrils of WHAT LURKS as it becomes painfully clear that the present hypertrophic prodongular quadrella which is allowing IT to manifest this instant just wasn't included in the Condensed Book version?

I realise that - if Stephen King were in charge - I should now recruit some yumptious piece of local talent and go blundering down into the excavation to discover the fatal weakness in WHAT LURKS's repertoire, but I think I'll put that off until I have been to dinner in Munich on Tuesday of the week after next, at a very expensive French nosherie. Time enough for witless heroics then.

Observe the enclosed postcard. The Centurion Lordorius performs the act of heroic folly in 319 that got him canonized, as portrayed by an artist of the period.

3 February 1998

Life has been quiet and scholarly after the horrific adventures related in my last two dispatches. Ascertaining from the Kepler Version of the *Almanach* that no menacing etheric constellations would pass over Regensburg for at least a week, I went back to my researches into ancient tomes full of the accumulated hilarity and malice of the Ages.

And so I came into possession of the exemplary legend of St Emmeram, as set down in *Arbeonis episcopi Frisingensis Vitae sanctorum Haimhrammi et Corbininiani*, expectorated in thickly accented Latin in the year 765 or shortly thereafter by the same Arbeo, Bishop of Fritzkirch, predecessor in that office by the highly significant number of 1212 years to Felix, Cardinal Katzenbeisser, who has since gone on to excommunicate more stubborn adherents of contraception than you have had hot dinners.

An aversion to contraceptive practices figured largely in the life of Emmeram, Bishop of Regensburg back in 519, whose martyrdom may well be linked to another manifestation of WHAT LURKS, as we shall see. Emmeram, Arbeo relates, came from beyond the Rhine, begotten on the wrong side of the blanket by Ubo, King of the Franks, after a brief tussle with Hermenegilda, Countess of Poitiers, while the Count was off on that boar-hunt that was to see him brought home impaled on his own spear. Ubo was second to no man in his devotion to nepotism, and provided for his copious brood whenever he could identify one of them beyond reasonable doubt. Since Emmeram was a whizz at Latin, the King bought him the bishopric of Poitiers at the tender age of 25. Emmeram was of able parts and hurled himself into his duties with

zeal, neglecting neither the bodies nor the souls of those entrusted to his care.

He soon developed a particular enthusiasm for the Sacrament of Confession, and it must be remembered that in those days a bishop was not confined to one of those musty little boxes against the wall but could confess and absolve *ubique dum Spiritus commoveat*, which is to say: in a haystack if the fancy so took him. It did, often, and with an especial care to keep pure the souls of those daughters of the wealthy citizenry who took regular baths, as Emmeran was one of the most fastidious clerics of the whole Dark Ages and would often expel parishioners from mass without benefit of the Eucharist if they came pongy to the altar-rail. He was never known to turn away a sweet-smelling young penitent from his door, even after midnight, as he well knew that the burden of sin can become particularly oppressive in the small hours, especially after a long bath in fragrant oils and spices.

Soon there was not a maiden left in Poitiers with access to soap and hot water who did not participate in the handsome young bishop's cure of souls, and it was not long before the city rang with protestations of parthenogenesis, as, one after another, they were found to be in the family way. Eventually, a delegation of irate fathers waited on the King, who was in no position to be censorious and bought them off. A few years or so down the track, this practice began to make even the royal treasury look anaemic, as members of the impoverished nobility of all France took to sending their daughters to Poitiers for a year to pick up a royal dowry.

In a confrontation betwixt royal father and wayward son, Ubo - so Arbeo records - said that sowing a few wild oats was one thing; mass agriculture another; here was an offer no sensible son would refuse: Ubo would buy *back* the bishopric of Poitiers for a handsome sum - three times what he paid in the first place: what could be fairer than that? In exchange, Emmeram would take the money and go - far away, like maybe Pannonia, and stay there. Bishop Emmeram, it must be said, was hampered in his duties by the throngs of unwed mums who crowded the streets whenever he took the Host for a solemn procession, holding up sucklings and shrill-voiced toddlers who had been taught to crow: "Daddy, daddy!" The pace of constant confessing was also wearing him down. "I know!" he said brightly, "I shall go and convert the Huns!" "That's my boy!" roared Ubo and signed the bill of purchase there and then, not forgetting to pay for a guard of honour of twenty-five knights to see Emmeram off the paternal sod.

Emmeram thus became a Bishop Itinerant, and was not happy. One must recall it was the Dark Ages, when Roman baths had been allowed to fall derelict all over Germany, and there had not been that many to start with. The locals had gone back to their pre-colonial traditions of washing not at all, ever. Our wandering bishop had hired on ten of his guard of honour to accompany him, and there was no dearth of heathen tribes to convert. This he did with monotonous regularity, but all the maidens seemed to feel that one quick dip in the baptismal font, which often smelt of pickles or worse, would do them for life. The young prelate was pretty dismal until the day Divine Providence brought him to the gates of Castra Regina, which the uncouth and foul-smelling locals had corrupted to Regensburg, where Teoto, King of the Bavarians, had preserved the Roman fortifications intact, as they were very useful in keeping enemies and Mormons

out. “What about the plumbing?” was Emmeram’s first question.

“What about the what?” growled Teoto. “I thought you were flogging remission of sons and eternal salvation!” he continued, his Christianity being of a distinctly primitive brand. “I,” said Emmeram, “am a fully paid-up bishop of royal Frankish stock, and if you can but get the public baths back into working-order, I will build me a basilica here and preach therein such sermons as will make your hairy neighbouring monarchs and chieftains go green under their grime for sheer envy, and afterwards you and yours can all have named seats waiting in Paradise.” “Provided you pay for the renovations to the whatever-they-are,” said Teoto, “you are on!” Thus began the first Golden Age of the Church in Bavaria. The Roman baths, adjacent to the Forum Vermorum, were somehow got back into nick; Emmeram built his basilica and his Sunday exhibitions of mellifluous Latin, incomprehensible as it was, became *the* place to be seen in all Lower Bavaria.

Still, Emmeram was not happy. Whilst the public baths were fully operational, and kept so at the bishop’s personal expense, not a Bavarian would venture inside, let alone wash off a lifetime’s sullage in the steaming caldarium. Many claimed their reluctance was due to the presence of a demon called Yosofos who lived under the Forum Vermorum. Emmeram set out to exorcise him with lots of incense and a whole morning’s chanting, but the Bavarians were unconvinced. Our shepherd of souls then tried to pressure Teoto into setting an example, but the King said gruffly: “Salvation is one thing; my dignity another; my hide a third - piss off!” and there was an end to it.

So, while the faith bloomed in Regensburg and environs, Emmeram knew that if he shut his eyes and no one said anything or baaed, he could not distinguish between his confessional and a goat-byre: his cult of a clean soul in a clean body was locally as dead as a smoked Danube sturgeon. Oh, he had a couple of female body-slaves, whom he personally scrubbed in the font twice a week, for his basic needs, but he missed the fragrant days of the See of Poitiers when penitent damsels competed to produce the week’s most alluring blend of bath salts on their peachy skin. So years passed, and all seemed as well for God’s Church in Regensburg as the general lack of personal hygiene allowed.

It seems scarcely like the workings of Divine Providence that had Teoto send his daughter Ota to finishing-school in an Italian convent, for there the Old Ways survived in the form of regular dips in the hot-tub - or maybe it was, as she certainly had a hand in the making of Bavaria’s first saint. Anyway, she came back totally spoiled for her duties as a Bavarian princess, with all sorts of airs and graces and a total aversion to smelly suitors. Ota’s virginity and hand in marriage were among Teoto’s chiefest political assets, useful to dangle in negotiations with the Huns of Pannonia and destined for strategic deployment in the forging of a beaut alliance with someone or other and garnering lots of cash thereby one day. Meanwhile, Ota was immured in a tower overlooking the Forum Vermorum and the Baths, where her constant complaints on every family occasion had finally got her a large wooden vat and a team of serfs trained to heat water and pour it without flinching.

Whether cleanliness was her undoing, as Arbeo roundly states, no one shall ever know,

as what follows is hard to disentangle from the *pia fraus* and sheer inanity in Arbeo's account which was, after all, written for the edification of folk who, two and a half centuries down the track, still had not had a bath in their lives and believed devils were attracted to hot water in any quantity larger than a full soup-kettle. Anyway, as well as having acquired a lust for vigorous ablutions, Ota had learned to sing in the Italian fashion and was given to yodelling off the top of her tower on warm spring nights such perennial favourites as *Vir totam vigilans noctem*, *Sicut cervus desiderat* and *Cor irrequietum*, which brought a sharp reprimand from Teoto - "Douse that, or you'll wake bloody Yosofos!" - and Ota to the attention of Emmeram.

All those years of mephitic absolutions - is it any wonder that Emmeram was tempted? At last, a nubile female penitent who did not smell like a polecat as she detailed her transgressions! So Emmeram began to put a hard-sell on Teoto to the effect that the purity of Ota's soul was as much an investment as her maidenhead - "Tell it to the Huns! All they care about is her nice, round bum!" - and that frequent confession would ensure it was always in tip-top form against the day when the sudden conclusion of a treaty might bring on an instant royal wedding - "If she's got perpetual salivation, who gives a stuff about the rest?" - "Your Majesty, it's what the buyer thinks - it's a buyer's market out there." "All right, give her a weekly congression and dissolution! And stop her from singing at night while you're about it!" Emmeram went about his duties with such quiet diligence and regularity that no one stopped to ask, as the months flowed by, what sins a girl shut up in a tower with nothing but a bathtub for company could possibly have to confess so often.

So Arbeo records it, without being quite able to suppress a hint here and there that soap and water might not have been all that was sloshing about the environs of the Forum Vermorum. Once exorcised, Yosofos had no official existence in a holy legend, but the Latin text is studded with oblique references to weird meteorological phenomena some of which, such as *tempora dislocata*, have spawned endless scholarly conjecture, ho-hum!

One fine summer's day, Emmeram appeared before the King and said: "Summons from Rome - have to do a refresher course in dogma. Be away about a year - young Vitalis is in charge." "What sort of bishop needs to go back to school?" sneered Teoto. "It's the heresies!" Emmeram replied. "So many new ones every week, the Pope's secretaries and copyists just can't keep up. You don't want the See of Regensburg falling behind the pack, do you?" "Can Vitalis sell seats in Paradise too?" asked Teoto, who creamed off 28% of every one sold. "With cushions!" Emmeram replied, and with that took his leave. Scarce three days after his departure, the local Wise Woman appeared before the King and, in alliterative babblings, pronounced Ota to be up the duff.

The King's rage was inordinate, as the Wise Woman had told everyone else first, so there was no point in having her strangled and thrown in the Danube in a bag at night. "All right, who was it?" roared Teoto. Ota declined to answer. "Was it that Emmeram? I'll give the bugger a ram where it hurts him most! Was it him?" "Oh God! I don't *think* it was Emmeram, but you never can tell with Vatican Roulette - it certainly wasn't Duke Sigisbald! He smells like a barrel full of weasels and never got past the

gate once!" said his daughter with a defiant sniff. "I'll have that bishop's balls!" roared Teoto.

Enter at this point one Lantperht, Prince of Bavaria, called by his sister the Little Stinker. "He smells like a badger's sett whose occupants all died a month ago," as Ota was want to taunt him at the royal dinner table after her return from Italy. "Worth ten pounds of gold to you, be they, Dad?" asked Lantperht. "Seven," replied the King. "Yours for eight!" said Lantperht and raced off, calling for his yobbish friends to join him in some sport.

They caught up with Emmeram on the banks of the Isar, and now we get to the bit I'd rather leave untranslated. "Nice day, brother-in-law!" guffawed Lantperht. "Tie the bugger to that ladder if he won't hold still! Useful for helping him up things like the towers and my sister!" So Emmeram, who knew a folding hand when he saw one, did as the occasion demanded, made no resistance to being tied to a ladder and admonished his offsidiers to keep the faith, before beginning to chant the psalter for as long as he still had a tongue - indeed, beyond that mutilation, Arbeo claims. But so much that now follows buggers verisimilitude most coarsely! Starting with his fingertips, Emmeram was dismembered, right down to the parts worth eight pounds of gold, which were wrenched off with a primitive pair of pliers. No martyrdom worth its salt was over quickly in the Dark Ages, and I shall pass over Emmeram's unlikely survival as a mere talking trunk for at least another twenty-four hours, likewise the many tedious miracles that attended his death, canonisation and the transportation of his remains to their splendid tomb in Regensburg, where they lie today - we think!

Of greater interest, though no less tragic, was the fate of Ota and her bairn. It was unhappily clear what the rules laid down for a Bavarian princess in her situation: flogging, beheading and permanent immersion in the Danube. Teoto was setting about this disagreeable chore, and had his daughter standing starkers by the river bank while he got drunk enough to deliver the fatherly reproof the occasion demanded, when an embassy galloped up from Godzilla, King of the Pannonian Huns, to present a message of utmost import: "Pregnant or not, Ota still has the nicest bum within two days' ride of the Danube. We will purchase her for exactly half our last offer. Let her be first delivered of her foal, which is ill-omened and we want nought of it, and then let her be rendered unto us, in earnest of which we enclose 10% in gold as deposit. Lack of enthusiasm for this generous offer will be construed as an invitation to begin Total War. Let the lash not touch those haunches, which are henceforth the property of Our Dreadfulness."

Total War was nothing if not expensive, as Adolf and friends found out 1300 years or so later, and Teoto had at least the wits not to set a precedent. Besides, half the quite exorbitant price he had put on Ota's now non-existent maidenhead was better than a spear's butt up the Khyber, and a girl's bum, no matter how nice, was worth less than a fifth of Godzilla's gold to anyone he knew on this side of the Danube. So, grinning like a village idiot up a sow (Arbeo's simile, not mine - Dark Ages, remember!), he hastily had Ota draped, and the Royal Lash beheaded and thrown in the Danube in his daughter's place as a demonstration of good faith. "His Dreadfulness has a deal! I shall send Ota into safe isolation in yon impregnable fortress atop the Drachensberg until

she be recovered from the birth and I have all the gold. At that point I shall give His Dreadfulness safe conduct to come and collect her, so let us now be Total Friends instead!”

Since we are in a piece of Christian agitprop, there is no telling what really happened thereafter. It would be good to be able to relate that St Emmeram appeared, beaming and reassembled, in a spirit of forgiveness, and gave Ota’s bairn a gold baptismal mug, but Arbeo claims that something else entirely occurred.

Ota spent the next five months in the fortress, closely guarded, and scarcely had a messenger reached Teoto to tell him his daughter had gone into labour when a hellish detonation shook Regensburg. As the dazed Teoto staggered outside, it was to see a vast cloud of dust where the Drachensberg should be. “Go and find your sister, and leave her bum to God!” he told Lantperht in a shaken voice. The dolt rode forth with his usual band of yobs, and they were about half way to the Drachensberg when they were all overtaken by a wall of muddy water - the Isar had changed its course - and drowned. In this and in the fact that not merely the fortress but the entire top half of the Drachensberg were simply not there any more - and so it is today, for that matter - Arbeo sees no more than a continuation of the stream of dreary miracles needed for Emmeram’s canonisation *al prestissimo*. Of course, Lantperht and his fellow murderers had to get theirs - but to suggest God blew apart a whole mountain just to chastise Ota for leading Emmeram into a temptation which he totally and devoutly resisted - well, as I said before: it was written for simple-minded Bavarians by a not very sophisticated Bavarian in the Dark Ages. *Pride and Prejudice*, it ain’t.

But suppose Emmeram weren’t the father of Ota’s child? Arbeo’s pious ramblings conclude with the anecdote that Teoto, just before being felled by a loathsome plague that took ten years to finish him off, did have the Wise Woman strangled, bagged and thrown into the Danube at night for putting it about that it was really Yosofos, the demon under the Forum, who had got Ota pregnant and that the demon-child’s birth was the real cause of the explosion. This, at any rate, was the version Godzilla must have accepted on the advice of his shamans, since, instead of declaring Total War on grounds of culpable negligence, he and his Huns left Pannonia and went back to Central Asia, never to trouble these parts again.

Makes you think, doesn’t it? There seems little doubt that Ota and Emmeram did enjoy their mutual taste for long, hot baths to the full, and I don’t think what happened to either of them was fair, since I used to have a whizz-bang jumbo-sized spa in Adelaide, and I certainly got a lot of fun out of that, but what if Emmeram were just - so to speak - the wash-cloth over the parts, like: the cover-up? I mean: if you were having it off with a demon day and night, what better alibi than having it off with the local bishop, a perfect patsy, once a week? And one can well imagine that if Yosofos were, well, that Yosofos Jr. might be made of antimatter or something, and prove a touch volatile in our dimension. It’s hardball we are playing.

Play up, play up, and play the game! Always the game.

3 February 1998 - BY FAX

Please send under plain wrapper a dozen stuffed bull-wombats as farewell gifts for my Colleagues here. If you haven't a dozen bull-wombats, Tasmanian devils will do, but no fleas please. *Vale*,

Katzenbeisser

8 February 1998 - BY FAX

Most learned and revered Colleague,

Whoever idea it was to stuff that rock-wallaby with rocks, rather than the more conventional kapok, should be aware that Professor Kreutzer dropped it on his foot while trying to mount it and will be on crutches for a long time. I must also point out that it was *not* a happy inspiration to stuff the goannas with seconds from the factory that makes silicone breast-implants, as some are sagging and leaking - none of which is likely to stimulate the frigging export trade, by which the Redfern Institute of Taxidermy will ultimately thrive or implode.

I will have some dire things to report after Tuesday next, as I have a rendezvous in München with Professor Amber Fluid. If I tell you that the THREE-LOBED BURNING EYE is not much more pleasant to look upon than Shub-Niggurath, haunts parking-stations and has a prehensile grip, then maybe you will start taking it all seriously.

Katzenbeisser

8 February 1998

Mayhap thou hast received a fax or two purporting to be from Felix, Cardinal Katzenbeisser, CEO of the Office for Dogma and Overpopulation in the Vatican, *oppure?* I am now at liberty to reveal to you that those faxes were not from Cardinal Katzenbeisser at all, but from me! It may be that I am no more when thou receivest this, and I repeat my requests to look after the legal interests of my wife and bairn – if THEY should this time be successful in nailing me and if indeed YOU KNOW WHO succeeds in breaking through - Ah well, if that happens, this communication is otiose since neither you nor the rest of humanity will be around to read it, even if there is a postie left to deliver it, which is a bit unlikely.

Slowly but surely, my brilliant deductive mind had coalesced around the fact that whenever anything horrific, appalling, foul or reprehensible happened, then it was in close proximity to Holy Church. Think for a moment - if thy brain be not already fused junket! - of the four luckless tourists from Omaha who were *umgestimpft* in the Papal Basilica of St Emmeram. Moreover, the TV news informed me that Felix, Cardinal Katzenbeisser, was presently not in Rome at all, but – strange to tell! – on a visit to this ill-omened burg. All trails seemed to lead to the Bishop's Palace, and so, disguising

myself as a Dominican monk, I succeeded in infiltrating this stronghold of superstition undetected, as there are very numerous weirdos in cassocks floating around looking for a quiet corner to masturbate in and otherwise doing nothing in particular.

In order to get access to the episcopal fax machine, I claimed to be the prior in charge of the Cardinal's collection of stuffed animals and heretics, which accompanies him everywhere, and hence sent off imaginary orders to all my friends for taxidermised potoroos, Big Reds and Seventh Day Adventists (or the like) which must have been confusing for some, since they were all signed "Katzenbeisser". Still, you'd be surprised at the number of orders that were promptly filled! I suppose that's what friends are for. Your eight bull-wombats and four Tasmanian devils were much appreciated - if only you had not stinted on the flea-powder! Now the whole palace is scratching!

After several days of this, I managed to shadow Katzenbeisser himself all the way to the Bishop's nuclear bomb-shelter. Getting inside is going to be the tricky part, since I reckon that is where they are keeping the copy of the NECRONOMICON they extracted from the ruins of the synagogue. The fools! They doubtless have not a clue as to the precautions one must take when having truck with the Genuine Article - if such it be - for surely the crazed Rabbi Eliezer ben Jonson did not seal it up in lead for nothing.

Anyway, I shall be back there tomorrow and see if I can't memorise the combination. Katzenbeisser is looking a bit curdled, so maybe it is all coming to a head. Maybe you hear from me again, or maybe, well, ...

9 February 1998 - BY FAX

Thanks for the livestock, albeit the untreated cetaceans were impounded by the *Gesundheitsamt*. I have passed the bill on to the Bishop's Treasury - God knows he can afford it! I attach a fax number you can try, but note that I'm known here as Monsignore (rather than Professor) as it's the Episcopal Palace and all. Write in Swahili or Tamil or something, as these charlies, whilst as demented as "Legion-for-we-are-many", are a cunning lot of buggers withal, believe me!

Tomorrow we make our gallant but foolhardy attempt to crack the Bishop's bomb-shelter! Three guesses as to whether a secret tunnel connects the bomb-shelter to the new parking station! I hate to carp, but your last crate of stuffed bandicoots all had the mange, and we have to return the echidnas as well, as they shed quills everywhere each time someone kicks one! *Ora pro me in hoc tempore periculi extremi animae meae,*

Katzenbeisser

10 February 1998 - WRITTEN ABOARD THE TRAIN

By Jesus! I just made it by the tip of my foreskin, as the late Fred Dwilies was wont to

say in similar situations! Safe on the train - or at least I *hope* I'm safe on the train. In local parlance, the whole of Bavaria is "black as a negro's fundament", meaning the Catholic Church has a very strong presence: politically, financially, you name it! And I am on the run again, leaving the Bishop's Palace a smoking ruin behind me.

Have I saved the world as we know it? If you are reading this, old boyhood friend, the odds are I have, although if haply you have turned into something like a giant praying mantis and have to read through the wrong end of a telescope, then the odds are the other way. But if you find your physical self more or less the way you were at Christmas, then rejoice and be exceeding glad and hie thee down to yon lotto agency and buy a ticket in memory of a heroic Fortian.

You recall that I had infiltrated the Episcopal Knocking-Shop in the guise of the prior in charge of Felix, Cardinal Katzenbeisser's travelling collection of stuffed quadrupeds and unbelievers. This gave me access to the all-important fax machine, since a codicil to Stephens' Law states: if some person of evil intent commits dark secrets that imperil the world to paper, then some other idiot will forget to remove said sheet of paper from the fax machine after sending the dark design to fell accomplices - and so it was! In order to be sure of not missing that instant of fatal absent-mindedness, I had to lurk by the bloody apparatus by the hour, and, so as to always have a reason for being there, I had to fire off an endless series of orders for stuffed pangolins, numbats, Methodists, anacondas and the like and complain about the quality of every shipment received, even if it had been in mint condition. I sent most of these communications to Alan Gilbert's office, as such confusion habitually reigns there that a complaint about moulting polar bears would simply be referred to the Swedish Section. My friends also copped their share, for the simple reason that I knew their fax numbers. (If you haven't become a giant praying mantis, then accept my apology: your bandicoots were free of mange, albeit your Tasmanian Devils were as flea-ridden as Sir Isaac Newton's underwear!) You see, I could not afford to have a lot of faxes coming back from Katzenbeisser's mob saying: *what* fucking Siberian tigers are missing their tails? (or words to that effect).

Patience paid off, and sure enough Old Felix himself sidled up to the machine, slapped a sheet of paper on the glass and looked around darkly. In a trice I had skinned my knees, skidding to a halt before him, kissed his ring (yeah, yeah, the one out front on his HAND), and began babbling: "*Pater doctissime, quaero lucernam pedibus meis in casu dubitando: si vir nondum seminaverit cum penis inter labia posteriora iter faciens ad vaginam.*" I dangled before the prurient old bugger a real brain teaser, relating to some precocious ejaculator who, while aiming for the pussy in all good conscience, happens to be coming from behind while his wife is emptying the washing machine and ... (you can guess the rest). The question of guilt in the instance of someone who involuntarily chases the bunny into the wrong burrow, while attempting piously to contribute to the world's overpopulation, is plain irresistible for such as Katzenbeisser, who has devoted a whole lifetime to such questions, and soon we were deep into the finer points of sodomy by happenstance. Cunningly, I sidled up the corridor, away from the machine, as we examined the question of whether any guilt accrued to the wife, and whether it would have been altogether more sinful if the lot had spattered on the laundry floor?

“You have the right kind of intellect,” said Katzenbeisser, “and I see you now as being wasted on the Silent Menagerie! Now try this one: if a nun is having it off with an Alsatian, but looking intently at a monstrosity the while ...” I couldn’t hardly shake him off and get back to the fax machine! And there it was! The whole monstrous plot!

The flaming dingbats had installed the contents of Eliezer ben Jonson’s lead casket in the Bishop’s nuclear bomb-shelter (clever), but then thought they could exploit it to their own self-aggrandisement (puling idiocy!) and so doom had taken its wonted course.

Oh, they had exorcised it, and almost strangled on the clouds of incense the while, and they had installed some rabbit in the corner to chant plainsong whenever anyone went near it, but the poor buggers really didn’t have the faintest clue! What they had was, indeed, the Genuine Article, and, as anyone who had done the Summer School at the College of Unknown Kadath would know: if you deal with such, you first take precautions against mind-whispers. Because of prodongular porosity, there is no *genuine* NECRONOMICON (not the Condensed Book versions!) but emits mind-whispers. These are the real danger. What you need against them is a cantrip, but above all one that has *perpetuum mobile*. At the College of Unknown Kadath they invite you to make up your own, as it then becomes part of your brain, with no resistance or rejection, and you can activate it in an hour of need, just like you scratch yourself when you itch.

I had devised a round, which, sung in my mind, goes on forever like a carousel:

Yar, yar, yar!
The Bear went into a bar,
And ordered a pint of beer,
And ordered a pint of beer.
“We don’t serve bears here,”
Said the barman with a sneer!
The Bear biffed him about,
And growled as he stalked out:
“Your beer is far too dear!
Your beer is far too dear!”

This is crude, but effective. It douses mind-whispers like a bucket of God’s own water. But Old Felix the Katz and friends had not the faintest clue as to self-defense!

Is it any wonder, then, that the Cardinal’s perusals of the Genuine Article had led him and his witless co-conspirators to the conclusion that if they summoned YOU DON’T REALLY WANT TO KNOW WHO then HE would immediately cause every condom on earth to go pop! (just like that), wipe out the entire contraceptive industry and, need it be said? make Felix Pope! Once the mind-whispers get a grip on you, you can believe anything, and these prawns were used to strait-facèdly accepting twaddle like Papal Infallibility every day.

Anyway, His Eminence was so impressed by my finer distinctions quâ the sinfulness of

wet dreams that he promoted me to the Security Branch on the spot and stationed me outside the Bishop's bomb-shelter to keep away profane eyes (ha!) whenever he went inside - a folly to be compared only with setting a fox to guard a henhouse, or a rapist to guard a cathouse, or, if it comes to that, a cat to guard a rathouse.

My palm-print was registered for the snooty hi-tech door-opener, in case I had to let His Eminence out in a hurry, and so it was not long before I was treated to the full horror and idiocy of what was in train.

I gave them ten minutes to become fully absorbed, then slipped in and skulked in the shadows. Of course, they had the NECRONOMICON out of its casket and the CEO of the Office for Dogma and Overpopulation was skipping about with it open in his arms, trying to execute the intricate steps of the Incantation Boogie (totally superfluous, and Al Hazred's one good joke) whilst scratching his fleabites (your fault!) and (oh, nameless dread!) chanting the DESCENDING NODE.

A philological digression is necessary at this point. Even Lovecraft, dim as he was, had the sense to omit bits of the full text as he knew it, so that no casual reader could, without meaning to, destroy the world as we endure it. Al Hazred, of course, had - ere his wits were scrambled forever - also had a care or two for the future of the species and abstracted significant bits of the NODE from the version he gives with all solemnity, and concealed them in the recipe section at the back of the book. Many have done the Summer School at the College of Unknown Kadath, but if they didn't do the Cooking Option, they both found out a lot of arcane nonsense and nothing of any use at all for summoning YOU'D WISH YOU HADN'T. Abdul's girlfriend Suleika helped him with the recipes, as is well known, and Suleika taught the Cooking Option at Kadath. When she retired, she passed it on to her niece Leila, with whom I had an intimate connection and whose pussy tasted something like cardamom steeped in Benedictine. What it was to be young with Leila sitting on your face! But I digress from my digression.

What Abdul and Suleika did was bury the missing bits of the operative NODES among the recipes, such that the ninth ingredient for Goat's Head Curry is not an exotic spice at all, but something you have to graft on to an apparently meaningless direction in the recipe for Choko Soufflé several pages earlier, and, when you get the lot together in the right sequence, you have to transpose it into foul language, using the anagrammatic key tattooed into Leila's armpit (as into Suleika's before her). Elsewise, no NODE, no action, no nuttin!

So why didn't I just leave Katzenbeisser to his jollities and take the train to Munich in perfect tranquillity? Well, we have to remember that Al Hazred, despite all his precautions, ended up a heap of chuckles in a pool of pee, which surely means he underestimated the utter vileness of the intergalactic horror we confront.

Fact is: the NODES have semiotic entelechy linked to etheric constellations, which gives them a fiendish capacity to *COMPLETE THEMSELVES* if chanted in certain circumstances. It's a bit like if you say, "Like as the waves make" and the Cosmos replies: "towards the pibled shore/ So do our moments hasten towards their end." But it

only happens if Jupiter is sitting in Venus' lap and his toe is tickling Cassiopeia's fanny. You *comprende*?

Abdul found all this out too late, and I wasn't about to be inflicting the knowledge on Leila - no way! Oh God! those juices!

Now, by reciting what they *had* of the descending NODE, the crazy Cardinal and friends were - all unknowing - opening an entelechial vortex, the which, given a catalyst, could cause a RUBICON, which, if crossed, would enable the NODE to complete itself: no more world!

The slight difficulty arose that the only suitable catalyst on earth, namely A. Stephens' brain, was crouching in the shadows behind them. Thanks to Leila, I am the only mortal whose mind has the whole DESCENDING NODE stored in full in the right order. Once you have got it together, it never leaves your neurons, so you can imagine the irony of me crouching behind a statue of St Sylvester, reciting my cantrip about the poor bear who wanted a drink, whilst stealthily the whole flaming NODE was composing itself in my grey-matter!

After a few tries, Katzenbeisser became impatient: "Am I a brass monkey, or a tinkling cymbal," he asked, "that I should dance around chanting this gibberish and nothing happens at all?" At this point, the bomb shelter was lit by a mauve flash as a THREE LOBED BURNING EYE appeared in the ceiling to give him a bit of encouragement.

I had never before faced the dual challenge of the EYE and the NECRONOMICON at once, and I confess I froze, but then a vision of Leila flashed before my inner sight! Smiling, she said: "The Ball!" A flood of liberating energy pulsed through me and I, even as I felt the missing bits of the NODE slipping into place in my brain, began to roar at the top of my voice the first stanza that came to mind:

The village postman, he was there;
the poor man had the pox;
he couldn't stuff tha' lassies
so he stuffed the letter box!⁴

Total confusion among the Forces of Darkness! Katzenbeisser stopped dancing (and chanting), which helped a piddling amount, as the main problem was with the NODE in my own mind! It kept NODING!

No wonder I had been paid an outrageous sum of money to come and sit in Regensburg

⁴ In distant times when sexuality was routinely suppressed, it just as routinely bubbled up in other forms, such as the Nude Painting, the French Romance, the Shower Tea and the Rugby Song, all of which fell into desuetude after Liberation. They had their own strict conventions. Rugby Songs, for example, were sung by males 16 to 25 while drinking alcohol in groups in the absence of females. (That rugby union teams promote these conditions accounts for the name.) One such Rugby Song, to a cheerful and vigorous tune, was called *The Ball of Kerrymore* (Kerrimuir, Kirriemuir &c), perhaps after Kirriemuir north of Dundee. It begins, 'Oh, who'll come with me / to the Ball of Kerrymore? / Four and twenty prostitutes / a_lying on the floor' and successive verses, of which this and the later ones are authentic examples, each describe a sexual excess of revellers at the imaginary ball. Between each verse is a chorus: 'Singing, who'll do me this time? / Who'll do me now? / The one who did me last time / must have used a plough.' (As is common in oral tradition, versions differ in detail though not in thrust.)

singing *All the pretty little horses* to Young Peter! The whole point was to get Katzenbeisser (who wanted to do it), the NECRONOMICON (as gate) and me (as the only one who knew it) all together in the one place at the one time, so the flaming NODE could recite *itself*! Talk about narcissism!

Was I outgunned? The EYE groped; I sang:

Over in the corner the village idiot sat ...

IT GROPED

and I sang -

Amusin' himself by abusin' himself,
and a-catchin' it in his hat!

Dimly, through the infinite frigidity of interdimensional refrigeration, I seemed to hear an awful voice intone: "Another one blown! Can't YOU find better quality sphincters?"

Fearing the great whammo was about to wham, I crawled under the feet of St Sylvester and covered my ears. Nothing happened. Peering out, I saw Katzenbeisser and buddies frozen in time, but emitting an ominous luminescence, and my decision was made. This brave song has a finite number of stanzas, and I would not claim to know them all, so the conviction came to me that I should continue this effective incantation while getting the hell out!

So I fled, bawling:

Four and twenty virgins
came down from Inverness ...

Again, through the chill of intergalactic space I seemed to hear the words: "Are you sure it's blown? Just try here," and in that instant the whole of the DESCENDING NODE flashed, as if in neon, before my inner eye ...

"... she had the crowd in fits:
a jumping off the mantelpiece
and landing on her tits!

Singing: balls to your partner ..."

I shrieked, as I pelted out the front gate of the Episcopal Bagnio and right into the arms of the police: "if you don't get fucked this Saturday night" - "aber es ist Dienstag!" - "you'll never get fucked at all" "We are familiar with this word used by black members of U.S. airforce!" said the police. I sang:

"The old schoolmaster he was there,
he fucked by rule of thumb ..."

“Ah, apologies Father, we have not registered before your cassock - it is therefore educational?”

“And when the ball was over
everyone confessed,
that, tho’ they liked the musick,
the fucking was the best.”

“Father, we are required by law to request you to cease this ‘fucking’ in a public place!”
“You idiots!” I howled, “it is the only thing keeping us all alive!”

So we had a kind of Mexican stand-off outside the Palace, with me making up verses extempore and trying to edge further down the street, while they called for reinforcements on their mobile phones. At length, as I had been through every possible vocation in Kirriemuir and every possible receptacle for a standing prick, the whole Place began to glow in a fluorescent purple shade, and this distracted the Law enough for me to get to the railway station.

Chance had it that an Inter-City was leaving as I pelted down the platform (my wife and bairn having been sent to safety before) and I leaped aboard with all my credit-cards intact. So here we are, pant, gasp, 29 pages down the track, and thank Xrist the train sells beer. Whether THEY decided on an implosion, which might just have removed the Bishop’s palace from our world, or an explosion, which might have led to hadronic contagion and yourself turning into a praying mantis, I shall know when I see it on telly. If there still *is* telly.

At the moment, trains and beer both seem relatively stable, and I hope devoutly I saved the world for all the swindlers, perverts, public servants and fascists that inhabit it. But - it was close! And one has to ask: Why?

If THEY had paused for one moment to think ... I mean: THEY froze Katzenbeisser and pards in time. Why did THEY not take advantage of the interval to make me a reasonable offer: a temperate island with 17 nubile lassies of different races? A\$60M, or something?

It can’t mean very much to THEM if THEY have to pay for *something* occasionally, and I think it’s plain daft if THEY keep expecting mindless evil just to triumph, like shoes wear out or balloons deflate.

Anyway, the train keeps going, the beer keeps flowing and I wish to Xrist I didn’t know the DESCENDING NODE in all its vomitous integrity, since I doubt THEY will ever leave me alone, for as long as our Universe has chinks. And from where I sit at the moment, it is as chinky as all hell.

It’s nice to be rid of Katzenbeisser, though maybe the other casualties will be more lamented, and you, poor sod, still face your Valentine’s Day crisis. We reach Munich in a moment, so ta-ta for the time being.

14 February 1998 - BY FAX

Your fax of 12 February arrived subsequent to the destruction of the Episcopal Palace, whither it was directed. (My strategic deployment of the BoK seems to have reversed the NODE back on itself, so *kaboom!*) Your missive was delivered by a nun on a bicycle who asked me to draw your attention to the fact that at the end of Para (vi) *utor* appears to be taking the accusative, rather than the ablative, tch! tch! I think this mode of delivery means that Katzenbeisser's mob now knows my whereabouts, and they are holding off for the moment in the hope that my correspondence (which they are doing everything to facilitate) will give them some clue as to the whereabouts of Katzenbeisser himself! Now, that *would* be telling! Maybe he is marrying an English policeman to your niece Antonia in Albury, heh-heh! A likely story! (More likely would be in the dust-bag of the Cosmic Hoover, whatever *that* is.) The kind sister even offered to wait for my reply and translate it into Swahili (she served for several years in various missionary positions in Africa) but I assured her you could just about manage English.

I am a bit worried that Holy Church will whistle up a few battalions of Opus Dei SAS, as I am stretching the budget employing the Kuomintang Irregulars as it is. I think I may be needing backup soon! Stand by - and (for God's sake) keep your talcum dry!

16 February 1998

If my Munich letter has reached you by now, you will appreciate I have a few worries about my family's and my own security, and reading of the tragic end of Sir Rowell Dover does not make me any more optimistic of reaching the airport on Sunday next.

When the usual nun arrived on her bicycle this morning, the Kuomintang heavies let her through. I was a little disconcerted when she peeled off her rubber face to reveal herself as Ambrosio, Cardinal Cesputia, Papal Nuncio, who looked a little like the original Nosferatu (without *quite* the same length of finger-nail). He whipped out a list of those who went missing with Felix, Cardinal Katzenbeisser, when the Episcopal Palace imploded, and said His Holiness had empowered him to offer a substantial sum of any currency I cared to designate for provably accurate information as to where all and sundry might be found, said money to be paid only on their recovery, preferably alive, but dead would do.

"Your Eminency," I replied, "nothing would please me more than to assure my family's future by lightening the Papal Purse by the sum you name, which is truly handsome, but I have to tell you that the simplest and most practical solution for the Holy Father is to canonize the lot of them in private forthwith and without the usual pseudo-legalities, lengthy dramatics and blaze of publicity, as this conceivably might stand them in good stead *wherever they are*. For, assuredly, I have not a clue. Your experts will have examined the ruins of the Palace by now, and seen that the epicentre of the catastrophe was the Bishop's bomb-shelter. Can you suppose that Cardinal Katzenbeisser had merely nipped down there to pass the time by saying the odd *Ave Maria*, and that what occurred was precipitated by himself or someone else flushing

the toilet?

Does not the evidence argue that more than defective plumbing totally emptied a four-storey building of its occupants, furniture, floors, ceilings and all interior walls? To say nothing of the adjacent and almost completed parking station? And will not your experts have pronounced themselves clueless as to where all this matter, animate and inanimate, may have gone? Come, Your Eminency - are not miracles part and parcel of your trade? Do your offices not attest a few score a year? Declare this, then, a miracle. Proclaim that the Lord called Cardinal Katzenbeisser and staff to Himself to help cope with the pressure of work Upstairs: an unexpected but well-deserved promotion. You cannot pretend anyone will actually miss OldFelix the Katz, or that His Holiness will have the slightest trouble replacing him with another CEO of the Office for Dogma and Overpopulation whose views are identically lacking in compassion, reactionary and rigid! Cut your losses, save your cash and let me and mine depart in peace.”

Alas, I fear Cespuglia thought I was merely trying to up the ante, as he ground his fangs, clenched his talons and looked extremely sour. He left, saying he would have to talk to the Vatican’s bankers. I fear worse is to come. I trust you have the backup ready.

18 February 1998 - BY FAX

This is a **mayday - mayday - mayday** call for backup! Cespuglia has bought off the Kuomintang, which leaves me without a strategic figleaf to cover the family jewels. Send in at least a dozen, no - make that 14, and get them here p.d.q. No, not figleaves. Highly trained, hard-bitten, ruthless operatives with no warm feelings towards the Catholic Church! Jewish agnostics or Ulster Protestants for preference. Recycled members of the Japanese Red Army also welcome. I have tried to persuade Cespuglia that there is no point increasing his offer - I am in no position to persuade the OTHER SIDE to put the interior of the Bishop’s palace back just the way it was. I have referred him to the *Gesellschaft für die Erhaltung der Finsternis und Stille* (not in the phone book!); I have sat for a couple of totally boring hours with him in the Crypt of St Ramwolbus waiting for the sanctuary lamp to give the slightest hint of turning into a **THREE-LOBED BURNING EYE** (not a Debreciner!); I have talked it through with him and his stooges in a lie-detector constructed mainly of holy relics said to bleed in the presence of untruth (not a spurt!). So we now have a stalemate which looks ominously like the prelude to violence.

If it be that I am destined never to gaze upon the Yarra’s sparkling flood again; if my apportioned lot is never to be stuck in another Melbourne traffic jam; if fate is hell-bent on depriving me of the joy of listening to Alan Gilbert berate the Academic Board about nothing in particular; if, in short, the number of my days has reached zero, then accept once more my heartfelt thanks for all those stuffed animals you sent and, by all that is Holy, keep well away from half-built underground parking-stations and crypts ...

20 February 1998

**GESELLSCHAFT FÜR DIE ERHALTUNG
DER FINSTERNIS UND STILLE**

Regensburg

Dear Professor McIntyre,

We are having been following with carefully controlled interest the many fascinations of your corresponds with our good friend Professor Stephens who, is, alas, having announced his intention of returning to the bright lights and noise of Melbourne at a time when he will be sore missed at our meetings of the full benefits of which he unfortunately is as not yet in a state of reception.

It has not been unobserved by our observers that he has said one or two things that are quite naughty and we are enclosing a brochure from the Papal Basilica of St Emmeram to correct any misunderstandings he may have pullulated in his sometimes quite unbalanced and one-sided accounts of goings-on in our crypt and even in the Palace of our late Bishop Manfred. We do not hold you responsible for the recent influx of Australian indigenes with criminal records into Bavaria. All were captured and processed, and it is clear you were but attempting to help a misguided compatriot down on his luck, as you Aussies say idiomatically.

As we are soon opening an Australian branch, we have chosen you from among the whole living persons of that continent for our below rock-bottom Special Admission Offer. We are therefore inviting you to join us for a "quiet hour" at midnight in the crypt of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, on Thursday 19 March next. No special preparations are necessary. Drinks will be served within reason. While we are not in the stern meaning a secret society AND HAVE NO AFFILIATION WITH SCIENTOLOGY, we are however having a distinct preference that you are not informing even your nearest and dearest where you are going and why. That way we all enjoy the surprise to the fill! We are looking forward to feeling you there.

Yours for that extra bit of mindless evil,

Verm