

Re: The Hammer & The Feather

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.physics/2005-01/7189.html>

From: Seymour Grass (*daddio45_at_yahoo.com*)

Date: 01/19/05

Date: Tue, 18 Jan 2005 20:14:25 -0600

"Androcles" <dummy@dummy.net> wrote in message
news:koiHd.173810\$Z7.96205@fe2.news.blueyonder.co.uk...

>> *Boring uncreative idiot troll.*

>

>

> *LOL! He's a fucking sight less boring, a whole lot more creative and far
> less miserable than you, jealous cunt!*

>

> *Androcles.*

Roar, lion, roar!

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From: "Seymour Grass" <daddio45@yahoo.com>

Subject: {Story} House of the Rising Ophiuchus {1,208}

Date: Sunday, January 09, 2005 3:16 AM

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It was a whale of thing to try and keep unfolded and spread out in the mind, a whole sky full of stars all at once, and much as I'd tried, I couldn't hold the entire view of it, so I had to go to the Gypsy Woman--what I've been calling her anyway, even if she is mainly Cajun French, with maybe a dash of Afro-Cuban and a pinch or two of Creole sprinkled in for some real spicy good gumbo; and my, what a dish with that curly black hair, those sparkling eyes and big gold rings--some fine kind of gris-gris come to Chicago here from some little town down on the bayou around Baton Rouge. I found this doll, name of "Mirabelle" working out of a little boutique up on Wells street a few blocks south of the Lincoln Park hotel. She has that whole Zydeco Zodiac thing down pat and has been making her living by drawing up charts of people's horoscopes in her parlor there, where she also does some dealing in potions and herbs, Voodoo dolls and I don't doubt but that she's got a brisk under-the-counter trade in all kind of hoodoo, if maybe you got you a two-dollar bill as the fixings for some of that *John, the Conqueroo* to be mixing for a mojo of red, green or blue, whether its a piece of tail, piece of eight, or peace of mind you might kind of crave, could be she'd have some of that down in the dark somewhere under there, too.

But as to the reason I needed to see her, well, if you knew the name of the newspaper I work for, then you'd know they aren't fussy when it comes to the hire of a science editor like me who still has something to learn about a difference between Astronomy and Astrology. Even so, it wasn't hard to bluff my way into the position when the guy who held the desk before me got too drunk to keep sitting up behind it. I mean, I was available, being just one desk over which pretty much eminently qualified me above all other

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comers. But as to a good solid background in science to justify moving my stuff over to Joe's old desk? Well, I did have a couple years of night courses at Northwestern under my belt, including one in General Physics for Math Dummies (that's the actual title) and another called, "Star Gazing for Amateur Astronomers."

So, that being pretty good for government (or journalism) work, I got the Science desk. It's meant a minor boost in pay to move up from being a lowly police beat reporter, to a full fledged editor, but since I'm the only reporter working under me, the only real change is the desk, and yes, the slight increase in pay--about fifty bucks a month. Of course, I'm rubbing shoulders with a lot of real scientists all the time, got a rolodex full of their office numbers, plus the phone numbers of some of their girlfriends in case they weren't in when I tried to get them--I don't really have too many of those, but a few, from the two or three professors I've managed to get cozy with over cocktails. And come to think, it was by way of Dr. Reuben Schlitzquirt's main squeeze, Meredith Swanson that I got the lead on this Cajun Astrologer dame--and who else but her, Meredith Swanson, I mean? Certainly you don't suppose Schlitzquirt himself, a well-tenured full professor of nuclear particle physics, that such as he would know anything about tea-leaves, the little known 13th House of Ophiuchus, and High John the Conqueror, do you? No, I suppose you most earnestly do not--I'll give you that much anyway.

Face it, this recent Tsunami disaster has caught the whole world of science with its pants down, and it's really been tough knowing where to turn to get down on it from the science angle of the thing. As science editor, it's not my job to be getting the tear-jerker angle on all the misery, the flotsam-jetsam of wrecked lives and villages, so tragic as all that is, if not to me personally--then not. The heart-rending stories of obliteration, the vaporization of whole Islamic terror training camps--I'm not paid to get all wet and gooey over that. No, it's the natural causes for such an event that a science editor/reporter is after--not the divine, or 'spiritual', the emotional, if you will.

So, anyway, one day, I got a call from Dr. Sigurd Nielsen over there in the Geology department at the University of Chicago, and he reports to me that he's got this guy who's been bugging him almost daily at his office with a bunch of calculations he's made which according to his claims, are showing that this is only the beginning of a whole lot more of a big she-bang going on, geophysically and astronomically, in terms of further trouble on the way. The guy had been given the gate over at the Physics department, which is why he came over to Geology where the professors are a just little easier going--hale, hearty outdoor types that they are. So, Nielson says to me on the phone that day, "He may be just another kook with a crank theory, but unlike most of that sort, as he presents himself, his face isn't jumping around from all kind of tics, he isn't sitting there with his hands vibrating in his pockets, eyes bugged, and breathing loud; he's better groomed than most of my students, and there seems to be a certain logic in what he says."

I'm going, "Oh, yeah?"

"Well, put it this way," says Nielsen, "I'm not finding any holes in what he says."

"Nothing like those big black hugely radiating X-class sunspots we've been seeing of late?"

"No, nothing like that, but those are part of his considerations."

"So why do you send him to me?" I mean, I had to ask him: "Why aren't you rocketing his theory off to the professional journals?"

His answer? "It's too risky. We're not going to stake our own scholarly reputations on some anonymous layman's calculations, which could be screwier than a green-tailed bacterial flagellum--know what I mean?"

Well no, I didn't but I said, "You bet I do!"

"You got it," said he.

"Yeah," I said. "Because if somebody's theory doesn't have the imprimatur of that Ph.D. stamped on it, then it might as well be somebody's raggedy old

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Green Arrow comic book, right?"

He said, "Well . . ."

I said, "Sure, because you got to have that brand recognition, else who will buy it? And if it doesn't come from consecrated hands in the priesthood of the black square hat and tassel, forget you, right?"

After some ponderous silence, I got this through the horn: "Look here, McCoy, I'm saying that there may well be something to the stuff this guy's got, and you're the one who is in a position to bring it to the attention of the scientific community, by reporting it as news to the public. I believe the man may have something. I'm doing all I can, here." He hung up.

Imagine that. He actually hung up on me, the Science Editor for a major cosmopolitan newspaper? Yes, he did. So then, anyway, next thing I knew, the morning following, my intercom is dinging me with the jingle bells (they've always got that on there around the Holidays--and it's like, some people never get around to taking that Christmas tree down); it's the receptionist telling me there's some guy named Grassman here with a letter of introduction from U.C. wanting to see me on a very urgent matter. Fine. Urgency is my main m tier. So, what do I do? I tell her to send him right in.

From: "Seymour Grass" <daddio45@yahoo.com>

Subject: Re: Do You Mind If I Smoke?

Date: Tuesday, January 18, 2005 2:37 PM

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Graszmann came in and we talked; he had just a few things to say concerning this recent flooding in California, the Sumatra tsunami--and, okay, then he mentioned something about "Sunspots."

When he saw me looking at him kind of funny, he started squinting his eyes down real narrow-like; so I put on my best smile and said, "Well, sunspots--which ones exactly?" I hadn't known that we'd been having any notable outbreaks of those just of late, so I mentioned that as I looked down to sort through some copy on my desk. Hearing nothing further from him, I glanced up and, oh my, did this guy have a look--it was halfway intelligent, or so it might have seemed, I mean if the look that makes you look like an idiot, can by contrast make the other guy look smart, then yeah, he looked intelligent, but since he wasn't answering my question, I asked him again, "What?" And that's when he asked me if he could smoke. Shocked by the very suggestion, my editorial assistant who happened to be coming through the door, turned to look down on him like he was one of those poisonous little green tree toads of the Amazon jungle; she informed him that he most certainly could not smoke; that if he even so much as tried it, he would be tasered by the nearest security guard, put in plastic wrist and ankle restraints, and be delivered down to the Chicago Police Department rolled up in a drab green piano mover's quilt.

Whoa. Look out. I watched as this guy rose slowly out of his chair--and you know how the Frankenstein monster looks when he's going after somebody?

Well, if a look could go thudding across the room on ten pound boots with its arms stiffly outstretched, that's how the ice green glare in Mr. Seymour Graszman's eyes went reaching across to throttle the throat of poor Ms. Melba Tostquist, right there where she stood--it was such a look! From her shaking hands, she dropped that copy to my desk and backed out of the office never taking her eyes off that man for an instant.

I had to grab my hat and coat so we could go out and find some other place to talk, off the premises . . .

From: "Seymour Grass" <daddio45@yahoo.com>

Subject: The Hammer & The Feather

Date: Tuesday, January 18, 2005 3:22 AM

I was watching the floor numbers flash in descending order when to my dismay I felt a jab to the ribs. I turned to see Graszman there at my right beaming an aggressive looking grin that caused me to take a step beyond range of any more of that! "Tell me, McCoy," he said, closing the distance between us all the more, "what do you think would happen if in a few seconds from now, the cable on this thing were to snap?"

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I braced against my body's downward momentum as the car had abruptly begun slowing to a stop at the 12th floor. We stepped back to admit an elderly woman; the spot on my ribs was yet throbbing from that unwelcome familiarity of his and he was still at me, still talking:

"I'm talking about your feet?" He was pointing toward my shoes. "Would they remain in contact with the floor as we went down, or not?"

I thought it rather an inopportune moment for such a discussion, considering especially that we now had company, and I said so, but soon felt reason to regret it as there appeared something in the stance he was taking, even so slight as he was by comparison to my height of 6'1", and weight of 195; a bearing he had that was oddly intimidating for someone who from the look of it would hardly turn the scale past 150, nor stand any higher than 5'10" in those high-heeled cowboy boots of his.

"I don't know," I said, lowering my voice for his ears alone. "My guess is that we'd soon drift upward toward the ceiling and stay there until the car came down on that spring at the bottom of the shaft." I shrugged at the sardonical look he was now giving me: "Well, that's my guess--for what it's worth."

At the 9th floor, two twenty-somethings of the female flavor had boarded; their laughter not being entirely left echoing behind in the corridor as the doors slid to a close. "Well, you ought to know better than that, McCoy," he was saying. "I thought you were the science editor for this . . ." he raised a hand to indicate the surroundings, ". . . glorified producer of bird cage liner and fish wrap."

To the somewhat distraught expressions of insulted esteem on the other faces about us, I managed a smile of apology for the character of my company. "Of course I'm the science editor, Graszamn. What of it?"

"Then you ought to know that since our bodies inside this car would not be falling, like the car itself, against any resistance of air, our rate of acceleration would be the same as for the car."

Now that he was mentioning it, I did have a glimmer of recollection, having to do with Galileo, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, some feathers and a cannonball.

The elevator had gone past the Mezzanine and was slowing to a stop at "L" for "Lobby". Just as the doors were opening, Graszman was still going on: "I suppose you must recall that they proved it on the Moon."

We were going across toward the expanse of doors leading out of the building. "I'm sorry," I said. "Proved what?"

"Holy Christly Night!" He stared in disgust, as he went out ahead of me into the cold of what was in the proximity of five below zero. For a time, after descending the stair, we strode along huffing our vapors in silence. He bore on his head a tweed stingy-brim cap, and about the neck, a bright red woolen bulky-knit muffler tucked into a Navy surplus "P-coat". As we were nearing the Purple Angus, perhaps the nearest place with a cocktail lounge where smoking was permitted, I suggested we cross at the coming corner and get on over there.

At a table near the window looking out on Randolph Street, we sat in the Mahogany Lounge of the Purple Angus over two steaming mugs of coffee, waiting for the Reuben sandwich for him, a pastrami with Swiss cheese on rye for me. As we talked for those first few minutes, I brought up the fact that according to what I'd heard from Dr. Nielsen, he, Graszman was in no position to talk when it came to scientific credentials, and so who was he to sit there in judgment of me? I further suggested he keep in mind that nobody in the Physics department over there had as yet set the dogs on me. Well, that humbled him well enough and as he began to show some sign of contrition, I reminded him that I was about his only chance to be heard. Of course, he knew this to be true, and apologized for treating another guy just as he hated to be treated himself. I was finally starting to like him a little, so I took a chance: I swore him to secrecy and told him of the extent of my own "science education".

Surprisingly, that seemed greatly to please him, he had a good laugh on the thought of it and then surprised me to confess that he'd pulled a like scam

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once when he got his first job teaching for an accredited music school in Oak Park, explaining that when he'd first applied, he could barely read music, which was a problem since five or six of his students were advanced far beyond him; even so, he'd managed to keep them dazzled by showing them lots of fancy Dick Dale and Chuck Berry riffs, while he took the time to cram like crazy to catch up to their places in the books.

By the time our sandwiches had arrived, we were happy to raise a toast, my pastrami and cheese to his Reuben, upon my pronouncement that there was no hurdle a man could not surmount in this world if he had the acting skills to pull it off, and a will to do the catch-up work to make it look good, as ever it could.

A little later, after our cups had been refilled, the conversation had turned once again to that scary business on the elevator and I was saying that now as we were on the subject, I did recall how Apollo 15 had proved Galileo's theory true, what with the whole thing on film, the feather and the hammer falling together only to hit the dust at the same time. Then he said an odd thing: "But, you see McCoy, scientists who can play only by the book and not at all by ear, they just don't hear in the fall of that feather and the hammer, what silent awesome melody is being played to the mind."

I had to shake my head. "Could you try to be just a little more obscure, arcane and full of metaphorically dangling conversation, there Seymour?" He took a big bite from the Reuben, and some of the sauerkraut got out.

I was waiting: "Help me out a little, here."

After a slug of coffee, he said, "You could go to the Moon, you could build yourself a Leaning Tower of Pisa up there, you could drop from the top of it, at the same time, a grand piano and a hair from the head of--okay, Veronica Lake, you should be so lucky as to find one of her hair-brushes on Ebay?"

I don't know what I'm hearing but I say, "Alright."

"You drop that platinum blonde hair of the Hollywood starlet and the grand piano, and they both hit bottom--at the same time? That needs to be telling you something. There's a song in it, that science has a head too full of jangling facts to hear."

I didn't know about that, and said so: "Well, as I recall, it's all pretty well explained by Newton's laws, something about how the amount of weight in the grand piano as opposed to what's in the hair of Veronica Lake, is like, cancelled out . . . or, how's it go?"

"Yeah, they would explain that it's harder for the piano to get moving, to get over its own inertia than it is for the hair with far less inertia."

I set down my cup: "There's more inertia in the grand piano."

"Yes and no. There's a problem in that thinking, which is part of the reason we're here talking about all this."

I had to consider that over a bite of my sandwich, and when my mouth was almost empty enough, I said, "I would ask what you mean."

--

John <http://jpdavid.freewebspace.com/>

<http://www.virtualtourist.com/m/520b8/>

"Once when Sir Isaac Newton--a mere lad--got over into the man's apple orchard--I don't know what he was doing there--I didn't come all the way from Hartford to q-u-e-s-t-i-o-n Mr. Newton's honesty--but when he was there--in the main orchard--he saw an apple fall and he was a-t-t-racted toward it, and that led to the discovery--not of Mr. Newton (who got back over the fence quick enough) but of the great law of attraction and gravitation." --Mark Twain (if any bowdlerizing parenthesis may be pardoned or ignored)