

## Re: The Hammer & The Feather

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.physics/2005-01/7398.html>

---

**From:** Androcles (*dummy\_at\_dummy.net*)

**Date:** 01/19/05

Date: Wed, 19 Jan 2005 18:30:07 GMT

"Seymour Grass" <daddio45@yahoo.com> wrote in message  
news:355u43F4jo2mtU1@individual.net...

>

> *"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!*

Newton is my lion, bubba, and yes, he can roar.

Androcles.

> --

>

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

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

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

>

> --

> *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*

sci.physics: Re: The Hammer & The Feather

> 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 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 Conqueroo, 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

sci.physics: Re: The Hammer & The Feather

> *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 Green Arrow comic book, right?"*  
>  
> *He said, "Well . . ."*  
>  
> *I said, "Sure, because you got to have that brand recognition, else*

sci.physics: Re: The Hammer & The Feather

> *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*  
> *métier. 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*  
> --  
> *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*

sci.physics: Re: The Hammer & The Feather

> 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?"  
>  
> 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 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

sci.physics: Re: The Hammer & The Feather

- > *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*

sci.physics: Re: The Hammer & The Feather

- > *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)*
- >
- >
- >