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PRAIRIE LIGHT REVIEW

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE L.R.C.
by Craig Gustafson

The Learning Resources Center at the University of Southern Glen Ellyn is a mind-boggling sight, and it was with a properly boggled mind that I sought out the director of the L.R.C., Malcolm Bass, for an interview and a tour. Mr. Bass cordially greeted me at the front entrance. As I was passing through the gate, a large woman who had just checked out approximately twenty-seven books was making her fat way through the exit gate. But something was wrong; an alarm sounded. There was evidently an uncleared book in her pile. Four large goons came and took her away.

"Where are they taking the fat lady?" I asked Mr. Bass.

"To the dungeon," he replied. "We've got to show these people we mean business. But you didn't come here to discuss my hobbies..."

"True," said I. "I came to see the library." Bass's hand shot out faster than I could see and sent me sprawling. He stood over me, hellfire in his eyes.

"Learning Resources Center, you swine!" He gave me a kick and I arose, humbled in the presence of knowledge. Mr. Bass began the tour; it was a wonderous day, filled with surprises and delights. I saw the microfilm files; the rentable artwork; the record albums; the Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature!!! Nirvana. Mr. Bass spoke articulately and eloquently, describing the various functions of each section and detailing what happens to people who abuse those functions. The only disharmony I encountered in the whole shebang was at the videotape section, where one man had knifed two old ladies and a candy-striper in his frenzied attempts to get "The World According to Garp" and "Myra Breckenridge."

Along about the third hour, Mr. Bass became a trifle agitated. Nothing historic; but he seemed annoyed. I finally asked what was wrong.

"Oh," he said with displeasure. "I don't recognize this section. No big deal."

We traveled on for quite a while, now merely trying to find a way out. Mr. Bass had had the foresight to bring such equipment as we might need, including a pith helmet for each of us, to guard our heads against the unyielding fluorescent lights beating down upon us.

The aisles grew dense. Copies of "Crime and Punishment," "Martin Chuzzlewit" and other big fat books began to blot out the lights. We were in Deep Trouble, and we both knew it.

On the fourth day the water ran out. The plumbing in the fountains had been rusted for several years.

On the sixth day I saved Mr. Bass's life. He had wandered by mistake into a section of Harlequin romances and, when I found him, was weeping piteously over the tribulations of someone named Eloise. I quickly unlooped my belt, threw it to Bass and pulled him out into the aisle before he could get completely bogged down.

Day Ten: With hunger, delirium is setting in. Bass believes himself to be the Scarlet Pimpernel. I am apparently (to him) his arch-enemy, Chauvelin. Even in his most lucid moments, he'll smile insolently and murmur,

"We seek him here, we seek him there,
Those Frenchies seek him everywhere.
Is he in Heaven; or is he in Hell?
That demmed, elusive Malcolm Bass."

Then he challenges me to a duel. It could be worse, I suppose. He could think I was the Pimpernel's wife, Margarite. I prefer being Chauvelin.

Day Eleven: I am now Margarite. It is disgusting.

Day Fourteen: The going is getting rougher. While passing through a section on mimes, we spent two hours Walking Against the Wind. This so exhausted Bass that he collapsed on the spot, his legs now useless. Suddenly, I heard a noise.

It was my knuckles cracking.

Then I heard another noise. This one was a search party. A search party at least two days away. We communicated by megaphone and the leader of the search party promised to start after us as soon as the pizza has been delivered. The problem is this: Neither Bass nor myself has two days to spare. I was at this in-juncture that Bass suggested cannibalism. Not that he was thinking of self-sacrifice, mind you. No, he wanted me to kill myself and leave the body close to him.

This got me a tad miffed. Then I thought of doing the old curmudgeon in and cannibalizing him until the search party got there. I could do it. One quick shot over the head with "War and Peace" and the geek was mine. All the food I could hope for, until rescued.

But... could I take a human life? Flies are one thing, but...

If I don't, neither of us will live and they'll have ordered the pizza for nothing. But could I take a human life? I must decide quickly. Since books have played such an important role in this adventure of mine, I shall let a book decide the outcome. Self-preservation and the murder of a fellow human being, or death with honor... a slow, horrible, painful death with honor... let's see. Here's a book. This shall give me the clue. Frank R. Stockton. "The Lady or the Tiger". I'll find the answer there.

C.O.D.

by James Settecase

Of the many fine memories I hold, none are so near and dear to my heart as my school daze at College of DuPage. Ahh, College of DuPage, nestled amidst the flood plains of lower Glen Ellyn. Your incredibly overcrowded parking lots and muddy, slippery sidewalks are forever etched in my mind. This edifice depreciated to higher education proved an unflagging source of inspiration, intimidation, consternation and desperation.

SATIRE

EPILOGUE: You really thought I was going to pimp you with that ending, didn't you? What happened was this: as I was deciding whether to kill Bass, he suddenly woke up and screamed, "LOOK!" I looked. Over in the corner was a skeleton of a well-dressed man. I went to investigate. The initials on the solid gold jockey shorts said "R.B." I informed Bass of this fact. He turned a cheerful shade of white.

"Robert Burghermeister!" he exclaimed. "The former president of the college. He was ousted after holding a press conference in which he described the college philosophy as 'making whoopee'. He disappeared soon after. He must have died down here while looking for his secret wine cache. Too bad he isn't alive. He could help us get out. Or at least get us a drink."

I stared at the skeleton, with it's right arm stretched in a calling gesture.

"He can help us," I said. "He is helping us."

"Good," said Bass. "Get me a Blue Hawaii."

"No, I mean he's pointing the way out," I remarked casually. Our eyes followed the direction of the skeletal limb. There they were: a set of fire doors! We crawled quickly through the fire doors and looked out. Escape!

As we pushed through the doors, an alarm sounded. Good, we thought. People will be here soon. Neither of us could walk by now. We waited. Two days. Nothing. With an air of reckless abandon and wild hunger, Bass grabbed the local fire alarm and pulled. Three seconds later four goons scooped him up and took him away. He was babbling James Mason's final speech from "Journey to the Center of the Earth".

"Who knows? Someday one of you may follow us to that strange land. It may be you, my lad, or your sons or your grandsons. That I cannot say. But this I know. The spirit of man cannot be stopped!"

He was taken to join the fat lady in the dungeon.

So it goes for all who would mock man's beaucroatic laws.

This was a true story.