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Creature Feature

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Malodorous, little less than a meter and a half in height, crushed, little more than forty-five kilograms in weight, landlady Clarissa Vanessa Mabinogion Lamont (them’s her names) rents a demi-cottage, a wee riverside apartment to indigent scholars who harbor uncloseted skeletons in the name of osteology. The scholars’re enrolled in the local med school, never pay their monthly dues on time, swindle in chicks within hours of the assumptions of their tenancies—all in all are among the sources of C.V.M.L.’s bestiary migraines . . . they, her genetic tendency to petit mal and the frustration of her prayers for the leasing of her efficiency apartment—the studio she panelled in conspiracy with her two hooligan swine (proper, Baptist, murderous, stay-at-home)—by one or another tax-free Foundation. Clarissa’s a bitch, a witch, wears a monstrous upper denture innocent of her crimes; when Clarissa smiles, there’s the acrylic resin, there’s the plastic of her plate—drab, mottled pink plaqued with deposit. Clarissa’s breath stinks. At most the cincture of her grey denim hot pants grabs perhaps fifty centimeters of stony waist; her ribs can be seen, her calves are decent enough, thighs acceptable, sequential alliance with the State predictable, wee ass barely observable; haltered, there are breasts; hennaed, there is wispy orange hair; and lists, endlessly this woman talks of lists, routes she must travel, duties she must complete, roles she must bake, codes by which she must live. None has informed her that poor Hemingway died of a code. Clarissa is driven mad by indigent scholars who uncodifledly do not tend marigolds, trash cans, underwater reefs, Clarissa, ugly Charmian (who is her dearest companion, who deals in destruction for the State); Clarissa’s tale though wee is horrible. A true convention of the most viable state-of-the-art at the moment, Clarissa’s is a horror story.

Otherwise sunlit, tideless, placid, careened upon by the phantasmagoric dune buggy driven murderously by two drunken, cowering, hooligan swine, a dead end route, by nature of the cruelly darkened terminus of its northernmost extension Coquina Ridge Drive compels the knowledgeless driver, thrashes him, into the exhaust-grey air of U. S. I’s seventy-mile-an-hour, oncoming traffic.
Tintern-Abbey-like, beside a Cornwall-coast-like road, with an adjoining demi-cottage-(once a petit rectory)-at-lease, recently repossessed from its chapelship in the service of a failed Christian sect of the African Methodist Episcopal church, by moonlight, a spired, single-story, lemon-tinted, stucco villa harbors Luther Firbank—an indigent scholar—and three plotters: Clarissa and her two bastards who intentionally darken the terminus of Coquina Ridge Drive’s northern-most extension, who in effect, as it is required by their foul needs, on a regular basis shoot out the incandescent bulb pendant from the sole street lamp and who with equal regularity grimly await as they gleefully anticipate the ultimate completion of their deception of the unwary, the knowledgeless and the thrashed for whom they stand or sit—or for that matter restlessly pace—coiled to plunder.

Upon dispossession from an A. M. E. chapel on C. R. Drive the Reverend Leon Josey, blacker—for purposes of the period—than the space between aids, is Macho, Incorporated. Such is one or another of the identities Josey is mandated to assume upon deposition: having been deposed from yet another identity upon courtroom exposition of his and his sect’s $ plight. After some hours of brooding—uncharacteristic of Josey—relative to flock maintenance (spiritual feeding of his pals in order to retain some semblance of unity in the AME gang), five feet eleven inches in height, bass-voiced, facial skin pitted, thirty-two, successful lover of all women and men, hulking shouldered, barrel chested, aimiable, jocular, pushy, Tampan, aware of the conditions, careerist, dealer, 175 pounder, fundamentally warlord, centrist, planful, scheming, sharing power, upon one occasion and another, a guest of Miles Davis, Charlie Pride and Jimmy Brown at their riverfront estates, elitist, preternaturally predisposed to antipal, dynastic visions, as he damned well plots, Josey’s in touch with his agent, Luther Firbank and sets up a luncheon meeting for the following Wednesday at the only decent rib joint in town between Luther, the grants and illuminations consultant from Florida Power and Light (tax-free) Foundation, the State’s destruction type (Charmian! Clarissa’s Charmian!) and himself.

Moonlit evening, Coquina Ridge Drive. An Oldsmobile 88. Daniel and Betsy Winthrop Fitzgerald and Rosemary Shabbaz. At the wheel he’s Roman Catholic; separated from him by a good two meters, well up against the door, not having slammed down the safety lock, latterly, as at first, cool with her conversion, capable, aware, gentle, terrified, she’s
a proper Winthrop, mother of a ruined three, sunken-cheeked, wears Wragge; butterflies widow, retrospective lover and well rid of the rug merchant, Shabbaz, spindleshanks straddling the transmission hump, allied as is brother Daniel to a Monsignor brother, grackle Rosie dips sun-eaten lips into geography, motel, pain, gingerly pokes her cankers, is Daniel F.’s honor. Safely exurb-ed of Detroit, St. Clair Shores hustled for three weeks, St. Clair Shores’ neighbors safely hustled for months to come (the system be damned! this year Fla.! next year the moon), plunderers’ bypass sign seen, Coquina Ridge Drive’s election’s lieu-ed out 1 North. “How’re your lipsores, Auntie Rosemary,” once Woodward Avenue’s Danny chants. “Oh, a motel, Danny Dan,” Prattler presses. “Now, now, Auntie Rosemary.” “I’ve given my share, Betsy Bets.” “We know, Auntie Rosemary.” “Just a little longer,” Michigan System’s hustler soothes. “Wonder if the children are,” Betsy coos. “Little Betsy and her jew? little Danny and his spade? teeny one, speed-y one?” Second hand Rose tinkles for, joins giggles of despairing pride with, all. “Now, now, now,” all chorus a good old tune, murder another moonlit evening: are good souls! as well as the next are God’s tender fools!

Untended, driven mad by uncodified squeak made on Simmons Beautyrest mattress by tenant/indigent scholar Luther Firbank and his swindled-in chick Handsome Edwina, Clarissa Vanessa Mabinogion Lamont’s slit-narrow, Tlingit eyes gleam like those of Jack o’ Lantern’s. “That one, Momma?” Surveying a passing Lincoln Continental Mark IV a tawny hooligan swine inquires. Mattress-maddened C. V. M. L. is unresponsive. Tawny turns irritatedly from his post as lookout. “Momma?” A flash of Clarissa’s beringed fingers and clutching his cheek Tawny whines. “Moustache,” CV whips. “Madre mio,” Tawny’s brub salutes a peremptory, deadly Ma. (Sullen, gamy, bulky-nosed, Moustache is a favorite.)

Five feet ten or eleven inches in height, small-breasted, sweet-bellied, a lonely figure whom at first he had passed as trailed by Irish setter Casey he strode the beach, mattress-maddened Luther now finds Edwina astride, above, beside, inverted, straddled, now straddling him. This woman of Scandinavian antecedents, massive dishwater-coarsened hands, voluminous vaginal interior, passion’s embraces, tender lovingness (geography’s arrangement, an arrangement for utility’s sake, a sensible, unjarring, more-than-companionable, passionate arrangement that will continue for as long as it does, is Firbank’s understanding of tender lovingness) so enchants Firbank as to allow this tenant of the Lamonts to pant rested in the assurance that the internal-combustion-engine-sensitive tape recorder he’s planted among the coconuts of a palm truly named royal, phallic, will place Coquina Ridge Drive’s itinerant automobilist on guard as, upon his approach to the Drive’s darkened, northernmost terminus in his
machine operated by an internal combustion engine, the recorder gently suggests, "There is no reason to be driving here. There is no reason to be driving here. There is no reason..." Has Firbank planted such a tape recorder as the Reverend Josey's agent? No. Has Firbank become the Rev. Josey's agent because of Firbank's indigence? Contrarily his indifference to indigence would or would not have countermanded such an act! Then is this a Firbank of sensibility aware that within the brevity of his tenancy there have been two or three devastating destructions at the Drive's dead end? at that point where automobilists rather than making U-turns have ploughed into and been ploughed under by Route 1's seventy-mile-an-hour, oncoming traffic? Yes. Has a youthful med student viewed these appals as the result of some horrible conspiracy? No. Has Firbank been informed by the Reverend in any way of the Rev J's suspicions, if not certainties, of foul play? No.

CVML daubs Tawny's ring-flayed cheek, has not to request that the wee bottle of mercurial medicament be taken from her hand; as she French-kisses Tawny, drops the wee bottle, Moustache whisks it from the air, cabinets it. Wiping the spittle from his lips with the back of his hand Tawny supplicates dangerously, "Lincoln Continental Mark IV..." "Offends against us!" CVML arches her back, is a bony-waisted tigress. "Occupants offend against us," CVML purrs, strokes Tawny's throat, strikes claws against its flesh. "Conspicuous consumers," she says on. "Such occupants can be none other than thieves and pols who with vaults and lock boxes carry no valuables—threaten us." Tawny whirls, points to Coquina Ridge Drive, motions to a passing Pinto. "Offends us. The motorists of such and those motorists' immediate constituencies unaware of opportunity bear little in the way of American Express or Thomas Cook or Bank America travelers checks, or cash, or jewels. They are an offense." "Then..." "Tawny, dear Tawny," a patient, in effect amatory Momma implores. Enter Moustache. "The middling touring cars. Those are the vehicles for us. Prepotently the automotive combinations of those hurricaned in by all around, obsessed with all around: more aware than those of the Pinto, less destructive than the pols and thieves—operating in smaller arenas, within fewer opportunities. Their imaginations, brub Tawny! their swallowing all of it whole, dear Tawny!" "Aha!" Like a river sheeted by the wind, swept across by recognition are the features of a spotter, the features of a lookout now returning to a position fabled as the stucco's crow's nest. "There then! There! An Olds 88," a man at point palavers. As if by signal from Clarissa, at once 3 strip the flesh-like masks from their faces, and three, matron and swine, strike hard toward a phantasmagoric dune buggy, board it, engine it—with brights on tour behind an Olds. "In our immemorial fashion blinding these blind, our art added to that of the Drive thrashing these swallowers of it whole onto the seventy-mile-an-hour, oncoming traffic of Route 1 in order
upon their calamitous mincing to plunder them to their very ends." Calamitous laughter clots the sulfurous river air with the stench of denture breath.

"What lights on our rear windows and brakes, Betsy Bets, Auntie Rose?" "None but the loony, Heart," Betsy Bets embraces a barren lover with a quintet of words. "Dune-y. Dune-y," Shabbaz prattles. "Loony, dune-y, buggy," remembering the brogue of his Woodward Avenue, Detroit father, Daniel Fitzgerald chirrups. "Yet they blind me; they blind me, Betsy Bets, sister Rose. They blind me," the broguer adds, the adder brouges. "More than before?" From only a Rose. "On this darkling, plane-treed Drive," this man of songster blood adjures. "And palm-treed. Royal, phallic—such palms I esp'y, dear Daniel, dear Daniel," a proper Winthrop whispers direly. "Hasten then! Hasten! Speed . . . Wait! These unfleshed faces quartered in piratic color. . . ." Rosemary Shabbaz turns eyes from an Olds 88's rear window to a driving Fitzgerald's occiput. "These are devils! Devils behind us," Rosemary barks, grackles. Glancing in a rear-view mirror, seeing those spiteful, diabolic faces, Fitzgerald Daniel accelerates a sedan, rivets his eyes on black Drive before windshield, kinesthetically senses the thrust of engine, chassis, body, curses, "Why me?", hears at last and forever, "There is no reason."

"We have them." "As is the custom, treasurable Momma. They are ruined, murdered," Tawny and Moustache replay as one. "As, for the purposes of comradeship and the receptions of grants and lesseeships from one or another tax-free Foundation, I have agreed then with Charmian who deals in such destruction for the State, let us empty the purses of the destroyed as we have further emptied out their becomings, their carryings on, the fatuities they have addressed as livings." "To it then. Rest here in a dune buggy, dearest Ma. Rest here . . . and have no share," a Tawny and a Moustache triumph mutedly as they scat for loot. "My dearest kine."

"What in hell was that?" "Luther," sweating, tranquil Edwina embraces, embraces Firbank further . . . as she giggles at peace refuses to release Firbank. "No, Edwina." His lips upon Edwina's in sweet kiss, Firbank rises from her body, hears three great cries of agony, further three cries of omnivorous lust, stands listening thus for no longer than a fraction of a millisecond, whips his denim cut-offs from a bureau top, whips them on, zips them up, turns to Edwina, reveals his intent in a fraction of a micromillisecond, moves it from the demi-cottage, as Edwina has so chosen like a Cheshire cat leaves for Edwina, her mind, the sight, memory, thought and relish of his figure she so adores: those pectorals, that flat abdominal musculature, those potent golden thighs, those tenderly arched feet, that shoulder-length hair, silken beard,
Cervantes—gentle visage. Great, handsome Edwina rises from her bed (for it is truly her bed! Firbank wishes that sense to prevail for a while, wishes to bring this one, this Edwina, forth!), knocks on a wrapper Firbank keeps about, foolishly barefoot steps lively from a demi-cottage, after commitment to a coquina-sharp driveway—finding it too late to return to Firbank's apt.—hastens over a coquina-prickly Coquina Ridge Drive, grunts and utters "Ooh!" sharply a number of times as she wends a way toward a darkened, northernmost terminus, once there appreciates Route 1, appreciates all, observes Firbank rising from the man impaled upon the steering column, gently touching the cheek of the woman strangled by windshield wiper, walking . . . now walking is Firbank. Firbank bends over a shoeless figure, a blown out sidewall of a woman, kneels beside this woman, touches a carotid pulse, feels such a ragged, thready beating, carefully examines this female figure's lip ulcers, presses his lips to these cancraneous sores, impels air, impels air, sees old prideful eyes opening, hears a prattling tongue chant, "Now, now, now . . . ", hears the rattle of death which as even a youthful student of the art of healing he knows . . . is the rattle of death. Sensing her, turning to her from where he kneels, Firbank perceives Edwina, calls softly, "Go back, Edwina. Go back . . . cold . . .”

Expansive is the Rev. Josey, mumbling of ohms and watts and General Grants! is Florida Power and Light (tax-free) Foundation’s seersucker-suited serf, cagey is an indigent agent med-student Firbank, ugly is the State’s dealer in destruction, Charmian. It is upon the last of these figures that the first of these figures makes interior considerations. "This is an ugly chick,” the Rev. measures unto himself. “Them sausage curls. Is this a wig this Charmian wears? sausages or wig which mounted over her tapering kisser gives that hook-nose its hookedness, those crowded incisors their Gothic arch? that body bloused over in hound’s tooth pants suit its toothness? Barely a moment before, to the tune of fox-trot which seemed endemic to this woman, I whirled this woman across this rib joint’s dancing napkin and in doing so found pressed vulgarly to my chest two nubbins of breasts, wee rocks—pebbles of tits, found the palm of my hand resting on the gaunt and fleshless, naked small of her back—for it was to that bony place my hand had insinuated itself upon vanishing beneath her jacket. Is this then a man or a dagger of a woman whose slat frame and vanishing-point skull I see pointed toward me? Ugly! this is truly an ugly woman, this Charmian. But enough! There are all sorts of things about that must be tended: an agenda, a code which must be pursued to achieve mine, and an A. M. E.’s failed Christian sect’s, ends.” “Not a penny for your thoughts, Rev,” a bony figure of destructions shrills sensuously, taunts intimatingly, harrumphs hilariously. “What’s it all
about, Palfrey?” The contentious, not inconceivably hermaphroditic Charmian tosses an interrogatory about for a mumbling Foundation man. Removing a digital computer from his wallet, pounding a finger against it, Foundation’s Palfrey lifts two well-trained eyelids. “As I see it then. In terms of ohms and watts. Watts it all comes down to . . .” As he has been customized to do, Foundation man blinks a scabrous lid. “Is questions of destructions: your department, dear one of the State.” Charmian acquiesces silently. “Your suspicions relative to same,” Foundation addresses theology fella. “Your failed attempt at treatment of a possibly salvageable destructee.” Palfrey waves a digital computer at a cool agent: Firbank. “Then what’s it all about,” Charmian recommences. “Foundation grants—who gets ’em, Foundation concern for pendant light bulbs shot out, as outpost of destruction and observation Foundation lease of the demi-cottage of a lemon-tinted stucco villa repossessed from its chapelship. Foundation lease implicit with allsorts: reward to that lemon-tinted stucco villa’s current operator in terms of her and her hooligan swine in service to man or . . .” Here an ohms and watts dude glances at the Rev. “Or perhaps giving over all to Rev. Josey here—for his purposes or whatever.” Pausing Palfrey glances askance at an apparently-about-to-be-dispossessed-of-a-demi-cottage Firbank. Retreating by custom, in paling Palfrey reduces further for an icy indigent, “And of course there’s this indigent scholar to be thought of. Certainly the Foundation would ever . . .” Reassuring Palfrey with a shoulder clasp Firbank attends what is to be the ohms and watts man’s further, interminable reduction. Of course Firbank counts firmly on the fact that nothing is to be settled at all. As attention has predicted of all participants at the meeting, the meetingees will break up into caucuses for sub-meetings. As it is the conclusion of all present, so Firbank concludes that it is at these sub-meetings that, from his point of view, the only possible resolution will root, oak that fixedly (Firbank’s is an herbal, a D’Artagnan, a serpentine, a poker mind) as to . . . but that remains to happen. It is upon this remonstrance, in a cunning stroke of duel that, as is his intention for the act to remain unseen, guileful, Firbank unlegs, shakes from denim cut-offs a brazenly concealed Ace, “Hot Charmian.” Firbank palms, fondles the cleft between a dealer in destruction’s thighs. “Palfrey, excellent fella. Rev Josey.” All eyes riveted upon himself, Firbank rapes, “We shall . . .

that is your choice, dearest companion, continuing-to-charm, if so you opt, Charmy.” “But I . . .” “Attend! You will not, you have no will, you are not, you have no R, no reserves—without my attention, payments, Charmian, my Charmian; without what little of my largesse I upon you endow—you perish, dye . . .” Clarissa Lamont casts an eye upon crudely blanched sausage curls or wig. “Nothing more,” CV continues. “Or die,” CVM rasps, touches her skull. “In this mind, on the tendrils of the vines I throw up—what it is, Charmian, Charmian . . .” CVML rests easy. “In other words,” Cissy alto-sopranos. Charmian, knowing upon which side her butt is breaded.

Sub-meeting 2. Luther and the Rev. “Agent mine, agent mine, what is thine?” “There are murderous destructions, Rev.” “Conspiratorial?” “Such is the condition, the tradition, the circumstance prior of the conspirators.” “This is fixed?” Josey jousts. Firbank shakes a leg, spills card cascades upon common carpet. Rev. J observes; poker-minded Luther F. conserves.


Sub-meeting 4. Clarissa, Charmian, Palfrey. “Attend!”

Sub-meeting 5. Rev. Josey, Charmian, Tawny, Palfrey, Moustache and CVML. “No dealing with a dealer.” “There is but one dealer.” “Deal with that dealer.” “Gold star, Momma.” “Splits?” “No cutting up game or touches with you-know-who.”

Sub-meeting 6. Luther F. and Handsome Edwina. “Spread out those great legs of yours.” “Stretch out those great legs of yours.”

Sub-meeting 6’. Luther F. and Handsome Edwina afterwards. “Dearest?” “Dearest?” “Arrangement, Honey.” “So it is?” “Utter words.” “So it is.” “Those massive, dishwater-coarsened hands—a good honor.” “Those Ace-bulky cut-offs, those thighs goaty, that pubis unpoll’d.” “Just short of the northernmost terminus, to where the phantasmagoric buggy dodges the instant before the unwary and thrashed plunge onward to destruction—it is at this place where hands and thighs shall carve the balls off royal palms, weaken them thus, allow them to fall at the merest touch, allow them to make bole bridge to Route 1’s oncoming, seventy-mile-an-hour traffic.” “And thus?” “Unfail by option the women and men of a failed Christian sect; as they choose, leaderless they shall or shall not be, creedless they shall or shall not be; when from time to time in a lemon-tinted stucco villa repossessed for chapelship these women and men meet or do not, it

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shall be as they elect or choose otherwise to do.” “Then no longer need we sub-meet?”

Sub-meeting 7. Her whole gang and untended and driven mad by squeak, Clarissa. Her hand cupped to her ear the better to rend her spirit, Momma manacles a shriek, “This too, this squeak, must have a stop. Indigence, malnutrition, agentry, uncodification—collusions of such extent will leave their marks, and then those two . . .” Momma maims sheetrock separating a demi-cottage from her loins, her mind. “Must proceed along Coquina Ridge Drive, know nothing more than destruction there. Listen to them. Attend! Attend the squeaking associated with their revels. I am wound down as is the agency of that squeaking. I am undone as they remain yet undone.” CV presses handpalms to ears, cannot escape sound, hears! cries out in continuance, “There are yet routes I must travel. Enough! Enough!”

Of all there are 3 survivors: root, oak and frond-savaged fetus.