

So that the bridge became so rich it hired another bridge to cheat people while it toured the world, stretching over grand and scenic places letting the little fools swarm over it and call it "brother."

#### THE HYPNOTIC TURTLE

A turtle whose shell makes people think they're rich, crawls into a shack and tries to burrow under an unemployed weed-surgeon's foot.

"Momma, bring me a little caviar. And do see that Robert waxes the Caddy before we go to the club," he yells to his wife, who squats in a corner boiling a shoe.

She picks up her crutch to give him a good drubbing, but sees the turtle and coos, "Yes dear, but can I please have a new coat -- chinchilla would be divine."

"Anything for my angel," croons the man, feeling good for the first time in years. "But what's this? Reggie's let some silly animal in the house." He picks up the turtle and walks toward the door.

"I wonder how far I can throw this thing?" he chuckles, grinning at his wife over his shoulder, like a man about to step off a roof.

#### ZINJANTHROPUS DISEASE

What would he do? What would become of him, stricken with Zinjanthropus Disease? No one had ever had it. There were no precedents. But he refused to fool himself. A thing was what it was. Zinjanthropus Disease. How else explain the receding forehead, increasing stoop, flattening nose, hairiness (him, who'd avoided beaches, cursing his naked chest). And the wild craving to sit in a cave by a sacred fire and gnaw on charred giant-sloth leg! How he envied pregnant women, whose pickles-and-yogurt cravings were tolerated, satisfied, encouraged.

Like any smart young man, he'd put off marrying until he'd sowed his wild oats, and put off sowing until his job left him time, which it hadn't yet. Where would he find a mate now, looking like he did? How would he rise in his firm? The grappling hooks he'd thrown over that vice-presidency -- and which had caught, too -- were growing brittle, like vines in winter.

Try as he would, he couldn't conceptualize the way he used to.

"One thing to do," he mused, stifling an urge to put on a bearskin and stalk small, horse-like creatures. "Find a woman, drag her to a lair in the mountains, and infect her with my disease.

"We will learn which gods rule where. Learn how to please them and avoid their anger. We will sing songs to the sun and moon, eat and wear what the forest gives us.

"It will be hard for her at first, but easier with time."

#### WEEB HURLS ONE SMALL MONKEYWRENCH INTO THE WORKS

In a light rain, fire is shooting out of the socker field, right next to the sidewalk. A wispy foot-high flame straight up, like from a bunsen burner. The old dump! 1930's garbage rotting under the grass, giving off natural gas. Add an idiot to light it -- Cataclysm! We could all be blown sky-high.

Not quite convinced enough to run, I walk-fast away and tell the campus cop who guards the Intramural Building door. In an official voice, he assures me the danger is "minimal," the problem will be "taken care of." "As," his eyes imply, "will the one responsible -- probably you."

After class, I walk back past the fire-spot. It's covered with white foam, the fire gone. But not 10 feet away, a patch of mud is fizzing. I dare myself to light a match, stand staring as the flame eats toward my fingers. Tentatively, my hand moves toward the fizz.

A quick hiss. I leap back. A flame!

I dash to my car and speed away, singing like a madman.

#### PLAYING THE FREE SPIRIT, WEEB FALLS ASLEEP IN THE WOODS

He wakes lying on his back, staring at blue sky through the branches of a oak tree. The undersides of the leaves shimmer in a light breeze, the way a lake-surface shimmers under moonlight. He can almost believe he's in an under-sea world.

This would all be very pleasant except that his legs are tied in a hard knot around the tree-trunk, which is just thick enough to make it impossible for him to reach around and untie them.