

UNKNOWN

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FANTASY FICTION

Worlds

THE UNDESIRE PRINCESS . . . by L. Sprague de Camp

She was Good, Beautiful, and Intelligent—as all good princesses should be. But because she was a princess of a world of Aristotelian logic, where a thing is either 100% true or 100% false—she gave the hero a severe case of inferiority complex. When she was good and intelligent, she was most frightfully good and most frighteningly intelligent—



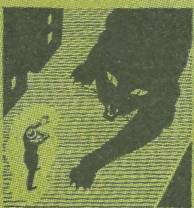
DESIGN FOR DREAMING . by Henry Kuttner

Concerning the Hollywood script writer who, seeking a vacation, got mixed up in his destinations. Instead of the Elysian Fields, he wound up in what was practically—for him at least—Hell. He got into the dimension of the dream-script writers, writing scenarios for all the world's dreamers—



ETAOIN SHRDLU by Fredric Brown

The little man from Somewhere wanted to use a linotype machine for a little while—just long enough to set up certain special characters. But when he'd finished setting that up—the linotype had a will of its own, an unstoppable, terrific urge to set type endlessly—



HE DIDN'T LIKE CATS . by L. Ron Hubbard

The small man had one large aversion—cats. A mousy little fellow ordinarily, with a thorough and vicious pleasure he murdered one large and ownerless alley cat. The cat, however, came back; it came back that night with an unfair advantage.

U N K N O W N W O R L D S

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NEXT ISSUE
ON SALE
FEB. 27th
25c PER COPY



Printed in the U.S.A.

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STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC. • 79 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK



DESIGN FOR DREAMING

By Henry Kuttner

● A Hollywood script writer has a tough time, nervously speaking. And when a magician sends him to the world where the scripts for dreams are written instead of to the Elysian Fields for a vacation—the imagination-peddler has recourse!

Illustrated by M. Isip

Too much Hollywood was the cause. The result, for Timothy Macklin, screen writer, was a severe case of practically psychopathic jitters. His thin, intense face grew thinner, he smoked innumerable cigarettes,

and he found himself quivering like jelly each morning when he drove to his office on the Summit Studio lot.

The cure was obvious, of course. Macklin's physician sent him to a psychologist, who ad-

vised rest and a change of scene. The writer got a leave of absence, thumbed through a sheaf of travel folders, and then telephoned Betsi Gardner, the columnist. Nobody in Hollywood made a move without notifying

Betsi. It just wasn't done.

"Hello, rat," the lady said companionably. "What's up? You missed the shindig last night at Laguna. Jumping catfish, have I got a hangover."

"I got worse than that," Macklin remarked. "I'm a fugitive from a nervous breakdown. My doctor just told me to make tracks."

"So? That's worth a stick or two. Where're you going?"

"Dunno. Got any suggestions?"

"I've one," Betsi said slowly, "but you'd better not laugh. Go see Jerome Dunn."

"Who's he?"

"You must have been hibernating for the last few months, Tim. I know Dunn hasn't been in the papers, but you must have heard about him on the grapevine. He's the boy Hollywood goes to see now. Cures anything from mumps to unrequited love."

"What's his racket?" Macklin inquired.

"He's a—magician," Betsi said. "A sorcerer. Shut up and listen. I'm not kidding. The guy's got something. His love philters really work." She chuckled at some stray thought. "Matter of fact, there's a certain producer who's got a curse on him now. He doesn't know what's wrong, but he's suddenly developed a dozen or so phobias. He fired one of his directors, and the director went to see Dunn. Figure it out."

"What's the rib?" Macklin grunted.

Betsi sighed. "Skeptical so-and-so, aren't you? O. K. Don't believe me. Just go see Dunn, tell him I sent you, and see what happens. Better have your check book along. Here's his address. Luck!"

"Thanks," the writer said, and hung up. He reached for a decanter, changed his mind, and turned to view his apartment. It was filled with luggage. Certainly it was high time for Macklin to get tickets for wherever he was going. Oh, well—

He took a drink. He really didn't want to go anywhere. Except, maybe, a South Sea island without telephone facilities. But the prospect of seeing his luggage safely on board the boat was definitely unpleasant. Macklin wanted to relax. His mind was racing like an outboard motor in air. He kept visualizing Summit Studios, Hollywood's special madhouse.

Ugh!

Well, what about Jerome Dunn? The guy was a faker, obviously, but perhaps he had something on the ball. Possibly he was a hypnotist. Mesmerism might be the exact thing Macklin needed. On an impulse, he donned a hat, went downstairs, and hailed a taxi, giving the address Betsi had mentioned.

Twenty minutes later he climbed a steep gravel walk in the heart of the Hollywood hills, toward a comfortable-looking bungalow of white stucco which nestled amid yew trees. A card above the push button said, Jerome Dunn, Consulting Sorcerer." His finger aimed and ready, Macklin hesitated, listening. A high-pitched, rather tuneless voice was singing from within the house.

"If you want a proud foe to make tracks—

If you'd melt a rich uncle in wax—
You've but to look in

On our resident Djinn,
Number seventy, Simmery Axe—"

Macklin rolled up his eyes and rang the bell. Instantly the door swung open. On the threshold was standing a fat little man with an extraordinarily sharp, pointed nose, which quivered slightly as though with excitement. Mr. Dunn wore a faded dressing gown, moth-eaten carpet slippers, and an expression of violent greed.

"A customer!" he said, his plump cheeks bouncing. "Come in! Oh, wonderful! I shall soon have more money!"

"Uh—" Macklin gulped, taken

by surprise. The little man was unorthodox, even for Hollywood. But Dunn seized the other's arm and dragged him across the threshold.

"Oh, fine, fine!" he gurgled happily. "I love money. You'll pay me for my services, won't you? You're not . . . not a dead-beat?" His beady little eyes darkened with a sudden suspicion. "You have money? Answer me?"

"Yes. But that doesn't mean you're going to get any of it. You're Jerome Dunn?"

"Me! Oh, yes. Sit down. It's wonderful to be a magician. I get so much money—sit down, please!"

Carefully Macklin lowered himself into a chair and stared around. The room looked perfectly ordinary. A lounge, a center table with a bowl of wax fruit upon it, some bad pictures on the wall—bad in the artistic sense, Macklin thought regretfully—and the usual arrangement of carpet, lamps, and bric-a-brac. Everything was slightly greasy.

"Yes," Dunn said, "very greasy. It's the smoke. The nasty stuff I have to burn sometimes before the demons will appear! My! And then things go wrong so often." He sighed. "But it isn't my fault. Think something!" he ended urgently.

"Huh?" Macklin's eyes widened.

Dunn beamed. "No, I'm not crazy. See? I'm reading your mind. I'm clever—a real magician. Who are you?"

"If you're such a swell magician, you ought to know without asking me. My name's Timothy Macklin. Betsi Gardner suggested I see you."

"Why?"

For answer Macklin took out a complete medical report—X rays and all—and handed them to Dunn, who examined the material with interest. "I see. Neuroses. And—"

"You any good at hypnotism?"

"Wonderful," Dunn said firmly. "But—"

"No buts. That's what I need. Something to soothe my mind—to make me forget all this merry-go-round. Adaptations, continuities, screen credits, directors, producers—I'm fed up. I need a rest. When I came to Hollywood, I figured I could make dough. I have. But I'm going rapidly nuts. Have you ever been in a movie studio, Dunn?"

The magician shuddered. "I've heard stories. What you need, Mr. Macklin, is a drink."

"I've tried that—"

"Of Lethe."

"Never tried *that*," Macklin said. "But . . . huh?"

"Lethe," Dunn explained, "is the Water of Forgetfulness. You don't want too much of it, of course. A few sips once in a while. The Water will lull you . . . you won't have a bit of trouble with nerves. See?"

"I'll try anything once," Macklin agreed wearily. "How much is it by the quart?"

"You'll have to go after it," Dunn said. "Lethian Water can't be taken out of the Greek Hades. They're very strict about that. Lethe's a river, you know—it flows past the Elysian Fields. I've been there. Nice place, but pretty dead. I jest," he added hastily. "Get it?"

"No," said Macklin, slightly confused.

"You wanted a trip—well, I'll throw that in free of charge. You'll have to go get the Lethe yourself. I can send you to the Elysian Fields, and, once you're there, you can just take it easy. Drink Lethe whenever you like, and, after you're completely rested, come back to Earth. That's simple, isn't it?"

"Sure. But now let's talk sense. What—"

Dunn jumped up, rummaged in a cupboard, and came back with two small rolls of parchment. "Here are your tickets. One will take you to the Elysian Fields and the other will bring you back here. I guarantee the

cure. I won't tell you how to use the scrips till you write me a check. Five thousand dollars, please. Jerome Dunn, with a J."

Macklin wrote the check, wondering why he did so. He couldn't think clearly. This excitable little man was like a cricket rasping on his nerves. But maybe Dunn could cure him. Magic, of course, was out, but—this was probably a psychological build-up to the hypnotic angle. Moreover, Macklin thoughtfully postdated the check by a few days. No use to take chances.

Dunn didn't notice. He seized the check, gloated over it, and practically licked it. Then he thrust it into a capacious wallet and sighed happily.

"Just burn one of the scrips," he said. "Keep the other handy. Don't lose it. When you're ready to come back, burn *that*. Simple, isn't it?"

Macklin said, "Yeah," and sat looking at the two rolls of parchment. He opened one, to find its surface covered with cryptic heiroglyphics in red ink.

"Well, burn it," Dunn said. "Got a cigarette lighter?"

Macklin nodded, thumbed a flame, and applied it to one of the parchments. Instantly the thing sizzled and melted in his hand, sending up a thick cloud of greasy, black smoke. Macklin cursed, jumped up and shook his hand, which had been burned. He coughed rackingly, his eyes stinging. The smoke was so thick he couldn't see Dunn, seated across from him.

Gradually it cleared away. Macklin took one look and closed his eyes in shocked disbelief. Hypnotism. That's what it was. He *couldn't* be standing in a . . . a room where everything was—*floating*.

"Hi!" said a shrill voice. "A rookie, huh? Where's that phone? Tassel your ears, Snule, where is it?"

"Here, Broscop," came a

deeper reply. "By the chandelier. What world is he from? Mars or Valhalla, I'll bet."

Macklin opened his eyes. He was in an office. It wasn't quite a normal office. The chief reason was that everything was floating in midair. A heavy mahogany desk was angled up near the ceiling, and chairs were drifting about in a confused fashion. The carpet looked like something out of the Arabian Nights. And the two occupants of the room were also afloat.

One was a very small green man, with pointed ears and no clothes. The other was a merman, with gills, weed-green hair, and a tapering fish tail.

"Emergency," said the green man into a telephone slightly smaller than himself. "I don't care! So they're all at a preview—did I send 'em there? It's a rookie—yeah. O. K. We will. Doing anything tonight, blonde?" He hung up with a tiny sigh. "One of Queen Mab's girls. I could go for her."

"You'd best get back to work," growled the merman. "This dream's got to be past the censors by four o'clock. It's a super-special."

"Dream," Macklin remarked incoherently. "That's it. I'm dreaming. Or else I've gone off my crock." He clawed at a drifting chair and found himself somersaulting in midair. When he recovered, the merman had swum forward to face him.

"Cool off," the creature advised. "This isn't a dream. It's the place where they make dreams. You'll get used to it after a while."

"I . . . ugg—"

"I," said the green man, "am Broscop. A leprechaun. This merlad here is Snule. We're collaborating just now. Your name is—"

"Timothy Macklin," the other said automatically. "It's all right. I'm crazy. I must be. D-does everything float around this way all the time?"



Broscep laughed shrilly. "Of course not. We were getting in the mood for a flying dream. We're working on a weightless sequence—it'll go to a Jovian eventually, for its first showing. I dunno where the second run will be. Here!" He swam to the wall, pushed a few buttons, and the furniture slowly sank back to a more usual position. So did Macklin and his two odd companions. The merman curled himself into a curious chair shaped to accommodate his nether extremity. Broscep perched on the edge of the desk.

"Sit down and take it easy," he advised. "You're new here, and that's always tough. Wait'll you see the director, though! He'll set you right."

"Tough on the kid," the merman rumbled.

Broscep nodded. "Yeah, it's Old Growly this week, isn't it? He's a hard case. Come on, Timothy Macklin. You're in the army now."

"B-but—"

The leprechaun jumped down from the desk, reached up to clutch one of Macklin's fingers, and urged him to the door. "Come on!" he commanded.

Outside was a brightly lighted corridor, quite empty. Little Broscep said in an undertone, "I'll look out for you, lad. Snule's just dyspeptic. Bad tempered—all mermen are. Now listen, Timothy Macklin—you've gotta go see Old Growly. Play along with him. He likes yes-men. I'll pull some wires and get you assigned to working on a dream with me. I'll show you the ropes. Here's the place. Good luck."

Macklin found himself entering a gigantic office. The door closed behind him; Broscep was gone. He looked across several acres of bare, gleaming desk, at a gentleman with horns.

Old Growly was a repulsively fat creature with the plated dark

skin of an alligator, a bulldog face, and two stubby horns that grew in the conventional place. He slammed huge fists on the desk and bellowed, "You're Timothy Macklin! I'll tell you right now that I can't afford to waste time. Shut up and listen!"

Macklin found himself growing angry. Even in a madman's dream, he had his rights. He said so. Old Growly wasn't listening.

"You're assigned to dream-making. Now listen! Where do you suppose dreams come from?"

"The subconscious," Macklin said automatically.

Old Growly seemed slightly taken aback. "All right," he said at last. "But it isn't like taking rabbits out of a hat. Dreams are written, see? We've got a whole crew of workers framing 'em up. And we never have enough writers on the job. We gotta supply the whole universe, and population keeps increasing. So we get recruits all

the time. We got scouts out looking for likely talent. When they find a good prospect, they sign him up. Who signed you up? Belphegor's covering Earth this month—it was him, huh?"

"It was *he*," Macklin corrected instinctively. "I mean it wasn't he. Nobody signed me up."

"Trying to renege, huh? We got your John Henry on the contract—"

"John Hancock."

"Shut up!" screamed the infuriated creature behind the desk. "Don't go correcting what I say! Blood of Cain, for two pins I'd assign you to the nightmare department! Just remember this, Mr. Timothy Macklin—you're a cog in a big machine here. Just a cog, that's all. And I'm your boss. What I say goes."

"Now wait a minute," Macklin interrupted. "Even if this is a dream, I want to set you right on a few things. Nobody signed me up to anything. I don't understand the set-up here, and I don't want to."

"By Father Satan," said Old Growly softly, "you do talk big, don't you? Well, you'll learn—you'll learn. Now listen, once and for all. This is the dimension of the dream-makers. It's the place where the dreams are manufactured for every intelligent being in the universe. Belphegor saw you, signed you up, and you're here, like it or not. And you're going to get to work here and like it!"

"And I tell you I don't know anybody named Belphegor," Macklin snapped. "A guy named Dunn sent me here. He—"

"Well?"

"Why . . . uh . . . nothing." Macklin was staring at the parchment roll he still clutched in his left hand. The return ticket—

Suppose Dunn actually was a magician? Suppose—then something must have gone wrong. Macklin had landed in the wrong dimension. Instead of going to

the Elysian Fields, he had arrived here.

But he still had the return ticket! Hastily Macklin snatched out his cigarette lighter. The flame didn't spring into existence the first time he tried it. Before he could make another attempt, a burly thunderbolt had hurled itself across the desk and seized the scrip.

"What's this?" Old Growly snarled, examining the parchment. "Magic?"

"Give me that!" Macklin tried to recover the lost scrip. The other held him back with one long arm.

"I thought so," Old Growly nodded. "A spell. Satan knows what! Well, it's against the rules to work magic here. You'll learn to obey the rules, Mr. Timothy Macklin." So saying, he crumpled the parchment into a ball, thrust it into his capacious mouth, and ate it.

"Only way to get rid of spells," he said inarticulately. "Burn 'em and . . . *mph* . . . never know what'll happen. Now you get to work or I'll give you a week's leave in Hell."

Macklin breathed hoarsely. "You . . . you—"

"Shut up, see? I'm the boss here, and what I say goes!"

"O. K.," Macklin whispered, his eyes ablaze. "But you can't do this to me—"

Old Growly laughed coarsely. "He says!"

"Yeah. I'll bust this racket of yours wide open. I've worked in Hollywood, Mister. All I've got to say is—just wait!"

The telephone rang. Old Growly answered it. "Yeah, it's me. Whatcha want? Huh? But that super-special's gotta go out tonight, Broscop. You can't . . . oh, he is? Well, that's different. Sure, you can have this new guy for a while. If you want the nuisance of breaking him in. Still, he may have some good ideas. . . . O. K."

Old Growly hung up. "Broscop wants to work with you. Scram outta here. I gotta date.

There's a new gambling hell—didn't ya hear me tell ya to get out? The door, see? Out!"

Macklin's impotent fury was arrested when the leprechaun popped in and beckoned urgently. With a parting glare for Old Growly, he followed Broscop into the hall.

"What happened, Tim, me lad?"

Macklin explained as the leprechaun led him through a labyrinth of corridors, past a series of closed doors. Broscop shook his smooth, green grapefruit of a head.

"Better not get too tough with Old Growly. There's only one punishment for insubordination, but that's a dilly. A few days in Hell."

"This is Hell," Macklin groaned.

"No, it's another dimension entirely. But there's a transpatial service there."

"There wouldn't be a transpatial service to Earth, world there?"

"Nope. You're here to stay. If you didn't want the job, why'd you sign the contract?"

"I didn't!" Macklin snapped. "Damn it all, I . . . I was mis-sent. I was supposed to go to the Elysian Fields."

"Well, that's your story," the leprechaun said doubtfully. "Here's the office. Take it easy. I'll do all the work till you get used to it. Been a long time since I've seen an Irishman. You wouldn't know the Kerry Dance, would you?"

"Sure." Macklin hummed a few bars. His voice wasn't bad.

Broscop capered with delight. "Och, that does me a world of good! Now sit down; I'll explain. This'll be your office. I'm right next door." He pointed to a door.

Macklin sank into a chair before a desk and glanced around. The room was sparsely furnished, with a dictaphone handy; there were no windows, he noticed.

"What am I supposed to do?"

"Write dreams," the leprechaun advised. "Me, I was the greatest minstrel among the Little Folk in my day. That's why I was signed up. It isn't a bad life here. I do Irish dreams mostly. You . . . I dunno. Here's the way we work it." Broscop clicked a button on the dictagraph. "File on Agara Zohn, Sunsa, Rigel. Yeah." He grinned at Macklin. "I'm composing a dream for him . . . we both are, I mean. He's right up my alley. A mystic type." The top of the desk popped open, and a bundle of closely typed cards appeared. Broscop seized the sheaf.

"You see," he explained, "we keep files on everybody. We have to, or people would be dreaming the wrong dreams. That'd never do. We have to write the dreams to fit the psychology of the individual. Let's see this case-history, now. Agara Zohn. As a child, afraid of the dark. Check that. Once was badly clawed by a *zoptanga*. Dissatisfied with his job. He's a hunter. Hates his superior officer—who uses musk perfume. We'll use musk as the dream motif. Subconscious desires . . . hm-m-m. Well, let that go. What's next? Wants power, sure—they all do. Hated his father, but never realized it consciously. How can we work that in?"

Broscop touched the dictaphone button, and the wax cylinder began to spin. "Agara Zohn—rough notes. Mm-m—they're having a heat wave on his planet just now. Start off with Zohn in a volcano. His . . . yeah—I got it! . . . there's a lot of stepping-stones leading to a ladder hanging down inside the crater. No—change that. Cut out the ladder; the censors would be sure to cut it. Make it an elevator. Agara runs across the stepping-stones toward the elevator. Each stone, as he steps on it, turns out to be his father's head. He feels sorry as hell, but he can't do anything about it now.

Maybe he goes back to help his old man. It's too late, of course. Tim, reach me that Jung from the shelf, will you? And the Adler beside it. No, not the Freud—he's out-dated. We only use him on New Yorkers. Now—" Broscop turned back to the dictaphone.

"Where was I? Agara goes up in the elevator. He smells musk. It chokes him. There's something crouching on top of the elevator. It's a *zoptanga*! Yeah! Now look, it gets dark all of a sudden. And then . . . and then . . . and then—" The leprechaun slowed down and stopped. After a moment he shrugged.

"That's enough to start on. I'll leave you here. Get acquainted. I'll be in the next office if you want me." He seized the dictaphone roll and scurried out, leaving a dazed Macklin glaring after him.

Merciful Heaven! This was worse than Summit Studio! What sort of damnable poetic justice had landed Macklin here—

He shut his eyes and tried to think. Jerome Dunn, very obviously, was a real magician. But how . . . why—

"First of all," Macklin said silently, "I'll have to work from an impossible premise. Magic. Dunn sent me off to the Elysian Fields and, somehow, I got short-circuited and landed here. Now how did that happen?"

He gave it up, for the while. Instead, he used the telephone and called Old Growly. It was some time before an answer came.

"You!" said Old Growly, in a blaze of furious profanity. "What the devil is it now? I'm a busy man! Who do you think you're—"

"Wait," Macklin said, trying to make his voice friendly. "I just want to ask you something. You say I signed a contract. Can I get a look at it?"

"No, you can't!" Old Growly

yelled. "We can't go searching through a mountain of files just to amuse you!"

"But that's just it. There isn't any contract. If you'd only have somebody look and—"

"There is a contract or you wouldn't be here. Shut up. If I hear anything from you for at least a week, I'll shoot you to Hell so fast you'll burn to a crisp before you get there."

There was a crash that shook Macklin's eardrum. Seething, he pronged the receiver and let loose with a few soul-satisfying oaths. Of all the unfair, tyrannical—

Wait a minute. It was a bit of shockingly bad luck that Macklin had landed here, of all places, but the blackness of the cloud might indicate a silver lining. Macklin knew the ropes in a Hollywood studio. If the same ropes existed here, he might be able to get out of the mess. Though it seemed quite improbable.

He used the telephone again. "Hello? I want the file on Jerome Dunn, Hollywood, Earth."

"Earth? I'm sorry, sir, but—oh. I remember. Earth! It'll be right up."

A moment later the desk popped open again, and a sheaf of cards was revealed. Macklin fell upon it with avid fingers.

"Jerome Dunn, born April 7, 1896, in Pittsburgh." There was a mass of psychological data which Macklin ignored, for the moment. He was interested in practical, hard facts. And he found them.

"In 1938 Dunn sold his soul to Satan, in exchange for magic powers. Dunn is noted for careless workmanship. Has not the logical mind necessary for an accomplished sorcerer. Actually a dilettante. Works in a very slipshod manner; confuses love potions with blue magic, and makes similar errors. His thoughts are pre-empted by money. Has no sense of loyalty; is completely ruthless in his desire to acquire riches."

Macklin grinned with mirthless fury. "Slipshod—careless workmanship—" So it was Dunn's fault, after all! Macklin thought wildly of the crying need for a strict union among sorcerers. He was the victim of a magician who had done a sloppy job. Instead of going to the Elysian Fields, he was in the dimension of the dream-makers. But why here, of all places?

After pondering vainly for a while, Macklin phoned for a file of information on magical spells. He explained what he wanted. When finally the bulky volume arrived, he found that whole pages had been removed, and lines here and there were blacked out. Censorship, naturally. It was against the rules to work magic here.

He found a few revealing paragraphs—enough to enable him to fit the jig saw together. There were innumerable dimensions, and it was possible to visit most of them by means of certain spells. "The parchment scrip" was cited as one of the methods. If, however, the spell was carelessly made, the person using it would not arrive at his destination. He would be cast out at random into trans-spatial existence. Thence he would gravitate, instantly and naturally, to the plane for which he had the most in common. "A devil would probably fall into Alpha Centauri," said the footnote. "A miser would reach Ghel; a warrior, Valhalla."

Macklin was a writer. So, of course—

"Hell!" he said, with baffled fury, wondering what good this new information would be to him. Very little, he felt sure. What he needed was a way to get out of this impossible world.

And there was no way, unless—unless—

Macklin's eyes brightened. If you fell in a well, you'd scream for help. And you'd scream for somebody with a rope.

Well, there was one man who

had such a rope, figuratively speaking. That was Jerome Dunn, Consulting Sorcerer. He might demand an exorbitant sum for rescuing Macklin, but money was certainly no object, under the circumstances. Besides, once Macklin got back to Earth, he could arrange matters to suit himself. His fist clenched, Macklin pounded reflectively against his knee.

How could he get a message through to Dunn? Not by telephone—that was clear. He scowled at the card that lay before him on the desk.

"Jerome Dunn, born April 7, 1896—"

Macklin suddenly gasped in awe of his own brilliance. Of course! That was it! He'd simply compose a dream for Dunn—a dream that would explain the situation to the magician. "Don't write—dream," Macklin paraphrased, and beamed happily.

He whirled to the dictaphone and began to talk rapidly into the mouthpiece.

A half hour later Broscop came back into the office. The little leprechaun was grinning.

"All done, Tim me lad. I just shot it down to the producer. You'll get dream-credit on the job, too." He paused to stare. "Hey, what's going on? Working?"

"Why not? It's what I'm here for, isn't it?"

Broscop picked up Dunn's file cards from the desk. "An Earthman—fair enough. Let's hear what you've got?"

"Sure."

The dictaphone played back. Broscop's expression changed. He looked at Macklin askance.

"What's wrong?"

Broscop stopped the cylinder's revolution. "Och, it's no good! Lad, that'd never pass the board of censors. You don't understand how we work here. Did you study this man Dunn's psychology?" He put a stubby finger on a file card.

"Why—"

"Of course not! Dreams have to be fitted to the individual. Like—well, when I used to compose ballads for Titania, she was always the heroine. And Oberon was hero, except when the two were squabbling. There are rules to follow. The censors are very strict indeed."

"Well," Macklin hesitated, "maybe I can change this a bit—"

Broscop shook his head. "It won't do. No, it won't do at all. Your continuity doesn't fit in with Dunn's psychology the least bit. He wants money, it says. So start, perhaps, with a sequence in which he's Midas. That's a wish-fulfillment dream—if it's a fear dream, you'd handle it different."

Macklin considered. "Do the censors have a dope sheet?"

"A list of what's forbidden? Sure. I'll get me one. You'll have to hew to the line. You won't even be assigned to doing Dunn's dreams unless there's good cause. You may be better suited to handling other types."

"That so? Hm-m-m."

"I've got to report to Old Growly about you—I'll tell him you're getting along swell—and then I'll come back and we can go out for a bite. That suit you?"

"That's fine. Listen, Broscop!"

"What?"

"I've got to be assigned to writing Dunn's dreams. I've just got to!"

The leprechaun bit his lip. "That takes a bit of doing. Let's see, now. If you only had an in with Skull—"

"Who?"

"Skull. He's one of the partners. The only one who's active in the business now. He's the guy who runs this factory, Timothy lad. Tell you what, we'll hunt up Skull tonight and see what we can do. If he takes a shine to you, you can do pretty much as you like. I must scram. Wait here for me."

Macklin waited, brooding blackly, till the small leprechaun returned. "I gave Old Growly the oil," he grinned. "Buttered him up. Said you'd caught on right away."

"Maybe I have," the other remarked cryptically. "What now?"

"We feed. Then we look for Skull. He's probably at one of the hot spots. About the only fun we have," Broscop said mournfully, "is night-clubbing. Still, that ain't hay." He brightened. "Come on. I'm starving."

Macklin was not averse. So far, he had seen nothing of this world but three offices and a hall. But when he was ushered into a dining room, he rather regretted it.

It reminded him of a studio commissary, crowded, noisy, and garishly lighted. That didn't matter. What mattered were the people who thronged it. None of them was human. A rarer assortment of freaks Macklin had never seen.

"You'll get used to 'em," Broscop said, in an amused voice. "Still, maybe we'd better sit in a booth tonight. Over here. Yeah. Ah, the rosy cheeks on ye, mavournin," he ended, and Macklin looked up, startled, to see the leprechaun ogling a waitress with two heads. He gulped and looked away.

"You order for me, Broscop. I . . . how about a drink?"

"Why, sure. A fine idea. Two Hellfire cocktails, double quick and double strong. How do you feel about eels?" the leprechaun inquired suddenly.

Seeing the little man's eyes were fixed on him, Macklin groped for an answer. "Why, I . . . eels? Don't tell me they've got eels working here!"

"For dinner, I mean," Broscop said shortly. "Stewed eels. Not bad, either. How about it?"

"I want a steak, if you've got one."

"Mammoth, cow, or human?" the waitress asked, in an unpleasantly grating voice.

"Ug—cow," Macklin said, suppressing a vague nausea.

He was aroused from his apathy by the arrival of the Hellfire cocktails. The liquor went down his throat with a stealthy sort of promise, which was immediately fulfilled in his stomach. The stuff was potent. It warmed. Macklin decided he wanted another.

He drank his way through the dinner, presently arriving at a state of hazy grandeur in which he could bring himself to look at the other diners, inhuman as most of them were. Presently Macklin giggled.

Broscop speared a tasty morsel of eel. "Something?"

"Vampire. Look at her teeth."

"Oh, her," Broscop said.

"She's an actress. Plays in nightmares, mostly."

"There's plenty of odd ducks here," Macklin remarked, "but they seem pretty mild, compared to some of the nightmares I've had. I remember one big spider with eyes like soup plates—"

"Technical stuff," the leprechaun murmured. "Special effects. Monsters like that are made in the laboratory and animated. Animated with life force—*aqua vita*. They're all synthetic, of course. Our technicians are plenty clever. I saw a montage effect yesterday that—" He paused. Macklin was no longer listening. He was, instead, several feet away, plowing determinedly through the mob. With a quick bound Broscop caught up with him.

"Hey, where do you think you're going?"

Macklin pointed. "There. Old Growly. Stuffing himself in that booth. Probably eating human flesh. I'm gonna tell him a thing or two."

"Oh-oh," the startled leprechaun whistled. "Listen, Timothy me lad, I think we better get out of here. Right now! Remember, we have to find Skull. He's in a bar. A big, beautiful bar," Broscop tempted. "With lots of liquor in it."

"Gonna see Old Crowley," Macklin objected. "Gonna tell him to pull in his horns." He hesitated, an expression of amazed wonder creeping over his face. Then he laughed delightfully.

"Joke, see? Boy, that's good. Gonna tell him—"

Chuckling gleefully to himself, Macklin allowed Broscop to urge him to the door. Once outside, the night air brought a measure of sobriety. He stared around.

"What happened to the restaurant? Where—"

"We're going to find Skull. Remember?"

"You," said Macklin thickly, "are drunk. Where's a taxi."

There were taxis in this world, apparently, for one drew up almost immediately after Broscop had whistled. Macklin peered vaguely through a cloud of Hellfire cocktails and considered life. It wasn't so bad, considering. Only one thing troubled him. A guy named Dunn. Jerome Dunn. A dirty little magician. A dirty, double-crossing—

"Pull in his horns," Macklin giggled. "That's a dilly."

The taxi drew up before a café ablaze with neon lights. Broscop led his companion into the establishment and located a table.

"Hellfire cocktails," Macklin screamed suddenly, during a lull in the orchestra's din. "Six of 'em."

"Sh-h!" the leprechaun hissed. "You've got four of 'em right before you. Don't you remember ordering them?"

There was something decidedly peculiar about those cocktails. Macklin had drunk almost every known variety of liquor, plain and mixed, but never had he swallowed anything that nullified gravity so easily. He kept floating up off his chair, and had to clutch at the table edge to drag himself down again.

"If I didn't know better," he



remarked to the leprechaun, "I'd think I was floating."

"You are," Broscop told him. "You're not drinking Earthly liquor now. This isn't *uisquebaugh*. Hellfire cocktails, lad, really nullify gravity, just as Styro-liqueur alters you physically."

"It . . . how?"

"Brings out your worst side. It shows," Broscop explained cryptically.

Macklin said something about Jekyll and Hyde, and gulped another drink. This time he actually floated up till his toes got tangled with the tablecloth. A waiter, who was entirely covered with white plush, hurried over and replaced Macklin in his seat.

"I know," the writer said, writhing free of the other's arms. "Don't tell me. You're a werewolf."

"No, sir. I'm a werebear," murmured the waiter, and padded off.

About to reply, Macklin's attention was attracted by a skeleton who sat in a booth some distance away. In his inebriated state, the sight seemed definitely amusing. He pointed out the horror to Broscop.

"You'd think he'd catch cold," Macklin theorized, in a thoughtful manner. "Maybe he's a she. A strip-teaser, eh? I'd hate to be its masseuse, anyway."

"*Sh-h!*" the leprechaun admonished. "We're in luck."

"In luck!" Macklin stared, astonished. "What are we, grave robbers?"

"That's Skull," Broscop explained. "Remember what I told you? He's the big boss here. Come over and be introduced." He towed Macklin behind him, which wasn't difficult, since the writer had by now, under the influence of the Hellfire cocktails, lost nearly all his weight.

"His tibia's chipped," Macklin remarked. "How do you say hello to a skeleton? Hope he's feeling well? That's plain silly. If I were a skeleton, I'm damn certain I'd be feeling lousy."

"*Sh-h!* Sir, this is Timothy Macklin. He's a new one. Wants

to present his compliments."

The skeleton looked friendly enough—at least, he was grinning. Macklin felt grateful that the horror did not offer to shake hands.

"Timothy Macklin, eh?" asked a deep, grating voice. "How are you, Timothy Macklin?"

"Oh, I'm fine," said the man, wondering just how drunk he was. "I must be fine. If I wasn't, I couldn't be standing here talking to a fugitive from a graveyard."

Broscoop covered up hastily. "He's a little drunk, sir. Hell-fire cocktails, you know—"

"He's certainly floating," the skeleton said, eying Macklin with hollow interest.

"I may be drunk, but I'm not dead." Macklin was slightly agrieved. Here he was, mustering up enough courage and courtesy to talk face to face with a skeleton, and all he got was insults. It was a hell of a note. He wanted another cocktail.

Just then Old Growly appeared, adding a note of further disharmony to the scene. By this time Macklin had lost all sense of caution. He remembered only insults.

Old Growly, ignoring everyone but Skull, sat down beside the skeleton. He waved a casual hand at Macklin and Broscoop. "Go away, boys," he rumbled. "We've business to discuss."

Macklin ignored the leprechaun's frantic tugs. He looked around, located a bowl of pretzels on a nearby table, and annexed them. Then he took a careful stance and began tossing pretzels at Old Growly, trying to ring the creature's horns.

"Timothy me lad! In the name of Titania, come away!"

"Have a pretzel," Macklin invited. "Win a prize. Ha! A ringer!"

Old Growly carefully disengaged a pretzel from his left horn. He eyed Macklin up and down with slow hatred.

"I know you," he said.

"To know me is to love me,"

Macklin remarked at random. "Who asked you to horn in anyway—" He broke off to laugh wildly. "Horn in. Get it? Where was I? Oh, yeah—this is a private party, crocodile-puss, and you're not invited."

Old Growly seemed about to explode. Skull nodded to the leprechaun.

"Better get your friend out of here. He's only a writer, isn't he? Well, you ought to know that directors take precedence over writers."

"I've eaten marrow out of better specimens than you," Macklin said insultingly, his annoyance now transferred to the skeleton. "Don't interrupt, or I'll sic a worm on you." He writhed free of Broscoop's clutch, and a sudden bound sent him shooting up to the ceiling, where he remained, maintaining his altitude by paddling slightly with his feet. He stared down at upturned faces—Old Growly's horned one, the leprechaun's small green face, and the skull. "I," he announced, "rise to make a few remarks. You can't treat me like one of your contract men. I don't belong here. I was framed. And if you don't send me back to Earth pronto, I'll raise so much hell here that—"

Old Growly bellowed, "Where is the bouncer?"

Across the room something swooped—Dracula, Macklin thought in abrupt panic. It was black and shapeless and had the wings of a bat. He felt hard talons grip him, and fought frantically to free himself.

"Throw him out," Skull said quietly.

Macklin felt himself being towed through the air. He caught a glimpse of Broscoop's horrified little face—and then the lights went out entirely. The ghosts of sixteen Hellfire cocktails drowned his senses in blackness.

Macklin felt much better for his spree, even though he awoke

in Hell. His nerves were no longer under that unendurable nervous tension. He no longer doubted his own sanity. Liquor had purged and cleansed his mind till he could calmly accept the existence of magic, without falling back on psychoses and neuroses.

There were two drawbacks, though. One was Macklin's hangover. The other was his surroundings—most disturbing. He felt uncomfortably hot, and, when he opened his eyes, the reason was obvious. He was in Hell.

The sky, far above his head, was of seething flames—tides of fire that rolled endlessly across the vault, with a noise of distant thunder. An acrid, sulphurous odor made him choke.

He sat up, giddy with sudden vertigo, and looked around. He was on a . . . a plateau. The black metal on which he sat was painfully warm. He was, apparently, on an island.

No. Perspective came back. He was atop a gigantic tower, and the ground was shockingly far down. He walked gingerly toward the edge, stopping well away from it. Beneath him a black city lay. It was a city ringed with flame, and the sounds that drifted faintly up to Macklin made him shiver a bit. Yes—this was Hell.

The heat was growing worse. Tongues of flame licked up, searing and blinding. Macklin instinctively dodged. He—

Woosh!

He was no longer in Hell. He was lying, fully clothed, on a rather hard bed, and the small green face of the leprechaun was hanging above him like a Christmas tree light.

"Thought it was time for you to get back," Broscoop sighed. "They only gave you twenty-four hours in Hell. Och, lad, why didn't you listen to me?"

Macklin sat up. He was in a huge dormitory, filled with rows of beds, but otherwise empty.

Brosco was perched on the head-rail, looking worried.

"You're all right?"

"I . . . yeah. I think so. W-what happened?"

"Get up; you need food. And coffee. It'll be time to work soon, anyway."

"Work?" Macklin groaned at the thought, but obediently rose and followed Brosco into a washroom. There he made a hasty toilet, and was presently seated in the commissary, gulping down black coffee and shakily smoking a cigarette.

"It was thus," Brosco explained. "After you insulted Skull and Old Growly—you do remember that, don't you? Well, you were given a leave in Hell as a punishment. Insubordination's a serious crime here. How'd you get on?"

Macklin said it wasn't so bad.

"Eh? Oh, I see. You were lucky. You slept through most of your sentence."

"Just where was I?"

"On the tallest tower of the City Dis. That's where we're always sent. If we got closer to the ground, we'd be singed to cinders. You'd best mind your p's and q's from now on, lad—Old Growly hates you, and Skull has no reason to love you. Why did you act that way? You wanted to ask a favor of Skull, and—"

"That's right," Macklin said, biting his lip. "I did. I wanted to get assigned to writing Dunn's dreams."

"Have some more coffee," Brosco urged. "You can't go around here asking favors now, very well. You'll get assigned to writing for your own psychology group, and that's that."

The coffee was clearing Macklin's head. For the first time in months he felt calm and clear-headed. The morning after was always a good time to plan.

"Brosco," he said thoughtfully, "I've kicked around Hollywood for some years. And I'm a pretty bright lad. Don't lose any sleep over me. I even used

to write movie serials, and after you've done that, nothing's a problem. This business, now—" He stood up. "Let's go. I want to get to work."

Leprechaun and human went out into bright morning sunlight. Staring up, Macklin had a well-founded suspicion that the "sun" was something in the nature of an arc light, affixed to a . . . a ceiling. The world of the dream-makers was a curious one in many ways.

On the way they passed a set where actors were already working. The scenery reminded Macklin of Caligari, cubistic and distorted. From every window eyes peered. An oddly shaped camera was grinding away steadily—it reminded Macklin strongly of Hollywood.

Then — *something* — scuttled out of a doorway and hobbled rapidly down the street, and Macklin changed his mind. This wasn't Hollywood. It was the place where nightmares were made.

Brosco finally deposited him in his office and vanished. Macklin went quickly to the desk, but the file on Jerome Dunn was gone—returned to its usual place, no doubt. He picked up the phone, smiling crookedly.

"Hello? Get me the file on Jerome Dunn again. Yeah. And the one on Timothy Macklin—Hollywood, Earth. That's right. And send up some blank cards, too. Oh—I want to add a few things. Sure I've got authority," he bluffed, and sat back with a sigh of relief. Presently he sprang into activity, hunting for a typewriter. It was concealed inside the desk, but leaped out at him when he pushed the right button.

The file cards arrived. Macklin studied his own, his brow wrinkling. "Good heavens," he muttered. "Is that me? Oh, well—" He shoved a fresh card into the typewriter and went to work. Much of the information he copied verbatim. But the

psychological data he cut out entirely, typing in its stead certain items from Dunn's card.

It was finished at last. Macklin chuckled. According to the records—the slightly altered records!—Jerome Dunn and Timothy Macklin were kindred souls, with almost identical psychology patterns. It was, therefore, only logical that Macklin be assigned to writing Dunn's dreams.

He sent the card files back, via the magic desk, and shrugged. Nothing to do now but wait. He lit a cigarette—there were still several in his case—and wandered into Brosco's office. The little leprechaun was pacing the floor, glaring at the dictaphone and rubbing his eyes angrily.

"In trouble?"

"I've got to fit in an old dream—and it doesn't fit. Sure, we use old dreams," Brosco nodded, perching himself on the edge of the desk. "Figure it out for yourself. We supply dreams for every intelligent creature in the universe—and that's plenty. Even working on double shifts, we couldn't have a new dream for each person every night—or every week."

"I'd wondered about that," Macklin admitted.

"Time helps. Time has very little to do with dreams. A one-reel dream may last all night, but on the other hand, it's possible to dream a ten-reeler in half a second. Here's how it's done, Timothy me lad. Yesterday I wrote a dream for Agara Zohn, on Rigel. He's had it last night. Tonight the dream goes to—let's see—at least a thousand people of the same psychology pattern as Zohn. Not on Rigel, of course. Betelgeuse, Avalon, Venus—all over. Tomorrow night, the same thing. Eventually there aren't any people of Zohn's pattern left. But there are plenty who are *almost* identical. The dream just needs a few changes to be applicable to them. We keep stock shots on file for such cases. The original dream

is cut and changed as it goes down the line, till finally it's unrecognizable. But in each case it fits the individual. See?"

"Vaguely," said Macklin. "Maybe I can help you with this job. After all, I've got to learn the business."

They worked together for a while. It wasn't too difficult. Macklin was catching on, and Broscop was grateful for the help.

"I'm wondering something," Macklin interrupted after a while. "How about audience reaction? Don't you keep track of that?"

"Sure. We stick in test-dream sequences sometimes. Disguised questions, especially when we are not quite certain about the dreamer's psychology. An individual changes, naturally . . . well, take this case. There's a question about his pet neuroses—claustrophobia. He's just been imprisoned in a lightless dungeon on Mercury, and that'll either kill or cure him. I'll run a test to find out how he's changed." Broscop turned to the dictaphone. "Sequence seven, pan shot. Inquisition scene. Word association test. Check time lapses carefully. Send this sequence back to writer for reclassification after preview. Test follows: Sun, stars, moon, *ladz*, wall, shell, eclipse, pressure—"

A bell rang in Macklin's office. Broscop broke off to say, "That's an assignment for you. If you need help, sing out."

"Thanks," said Macklin, and went out. On his desk a card lay. It said:

"Timothy Macklin—classification 7-B-132-JJ-90. Any persons in this code number are suitable as material. Warning: Don't write dreams for any other group. Ask Information if in doubt."

Macklin used the phone. Information said: "I'll send up the files for that group. There's a lot of them. Do you want them

alphabetically or geographically?"

"Alphabetically. The D's."

"Yes, sir. Do you have a copy of the censorship code? No? I'll send that, too."

The desk popped again. There was a drawer of cards visible, labeled "Daaaaaa-Daaaaab." There was also a closely typewritten sheet. Macklin seized the last and sent back the cards.

"I want the Du index, please."

"There are fourteen of them, sir. Which—"

"Dunn," Macklin said desperately. "Jerome Dunn."

He got what he wanted at last. The drawer was labeled, 7-B-132-JJ-90—Dunn—Duno." Thumbing through the cards, Macklin gasped with relief when he found one headed "Jerome Dunn, born April 7, 1896." So Dunn was within his jurisdiction, thanks to his tampering with the file record of his own history!

All that was necessary now was to compose a code message in a dream for Dunn. That was all—except for the necessity of avoiding trouble with the censors.

Macklin thumbed through the censorship code. There were innumerable and fantastic restrictions. No kiss could last longer than two seconds. Kissing was forbidden in Japan. No dreams involving light-vibration could be used in a place named Spodgerblu, in the Coal Sack. Dreams must hew strictly to the psychology of the individual—

Macklin picked up Dunn's card and studied it. Could he find a loophole? An apparent reason for running a test-dream sequence? And one that would serve his purpose? Let's see—

There was a new entry on the card, since Macklin had last read it. "Dunn recently refused an offer of fifty thousand dollars to appear in a motion picture."

So? And Dunn's chief trait seemed to be avarice. That didn't jibe. It was a question—just the question Macklin

needed. Had Dunn's psychology pattern been altered?

He picked up the dictaphone mouthpiece. "Insert sequence on Jerome Dunn. Test scene. Send back to writer after . . . uh . . . preview." Macklin paused, suddenly struck by the madness of the situation in which he found himself. Writing dreams for a magician. He tightened his lips and went on thoughtfully:

"An Inquisition scene. No. Change that." It wouldn't jibe with Dunn's background. "Make it a Black Mass. Satan questioning Dunn." He went on more easily as he got into the swing of the work. One thought troubled him: how could he convey the message? How could he bring in a reference to himself without running afoul of the censors?

By symbolism, of course!

What symbol—hm-m-m! A postdated check for five thousand dollars. That would almost certainly represent Macklin in Dunn's mind. Yeah. Well, then—

It was done at last. Not only the test sequence, but the complete dream. It was a lovely thing, based soundly on Dunn's inner self, involving an earthquake that crumbled all the banks in Hollywood and sent tons of gold and bills showering out in the streets, where Dunn himself, the only person awake at the time, was scampering about busily with a wheelbarrow. He carried the treasure load by load to his cellar. With a touch of malice, Macklin turned the money into pebbles and overdue bills. It was a fear-dream.

He asked Broscop for an opinion, and the leprechaun listened to the play-back and chuckled. "You're catching on. That's fine, Timothy lad."

"The censors won't—"

"They won't. A few minor changes, though, maybe. Better cut out the reference to that gold tooth. Teeth are a bit

risky. Otherwise fine. Shoot the stuff down to a producer now, and that's all there is to it."

The phone rang. Macklin picked up the receiver. "Yeah?"

"I'm sending up another file card on Jerome Dunn—it was mislaid. You had his docket this morning, didn't you?"

"That's right."

The desk popped. A card lay there, covered with typewritten notes. Macklin scanned it.

"Add history Jerome Dunn," it said. "Subheading 'Slipshod Magic.' Dunn accidentally mixed arsenic in a love-potion for a man named—" There was much more of the same. But several items were of especial interest.

"Trans-spatial work very sloppy. Dunn has lost six people through carelessly prepared scrips. (He uses the parchment scrip method.) One Michael MacBryan, ticketed for a visit to Heaven, landed in the Egyptian Hell through error. Dunn learned of his mistake but refused to rescue MacBryan, afraid of the consequences. Feared MacBryan might sue him. Five other similar cases. One landed in Davy Jones' Locker—"

"What's the matter?" Broscop asked.

Macklin gulped. "Nothing. Just a slight kick in the face. From a rat. It's bad enough to make mistakes, but a guy ought to try and fix 'em up afterward, oughtn't he?"

"Huh?"

"Let it lay. I'm not feeling so good, pal. What about some more Hellfire cocktails?"

"Well," the leprechaun said doubtfully, "all right. But you know what happened last time."

"It won't happen again," Macklin swore—and he was right.

It didn't happen again. There was no trouble. Seated in a bar, Macklin steadily drank Hellfire cocktails till he floated up to the ceiling and passed out. Some

time later, he awoke in his own bed in the studio dormitory. He had a hangover, as usual, but breakfast and black coffee remedied the trouble.

He was anxious to get to his office. On his desk there was a note of commendation from Old Growly himself, together with a transcribed document. Broscop laughed delightedly.

"See? It says 'Good Work.' And it's initialed O. G. You'll be a director yet, Timothy me lad."

"Sure," Macklin said, absently lighting a cigarette. He was studying the other paper. It was the report on the test scene he had inserted in Dunn's dream.

He sent for the magician's card file billet, and then brooded over the report. Broscop tiptoed into his own office. Macklin's eyes narrowed; he blew smoke through his nostrils and cursed under his breath. The report was not encouraging.

It was in the form of a running dialogue between Satan and Dunn. Dunn, of course, had supplied the answers himself, but Macklin had written the questions—

Q. (by Satan). "You promised to serve me?"

A. (by Dunn). "That's right."

Q. "You sold me your soul in return for magical powers?"

A. "Sure. So I could get money. I love money. It's wonderful."

Q. "You have not changed your mind?"

A. "Who says so?"

Q. "You were offered a large sum to star in a motion picture, and yet you refused it. Why?"

A. "You ought to know. If that film ever showed in St. Louis or Chicago, the police would try to extradite me. My . . . uh . . . magic didn't work so well then."

Q. "Do you value money more than loyalty or honesty?"

A. "That's plain silly."

Q. "If you failed to deliver the goods to a customer, would you refund the money?"

A. "Well—if it came to court—I suppose—"

Q. "If one of your customers got in trouble—"

A. "I know what you mean. The poison in those love potions. Just an accident. That was all. And those chaps who landed in the wrong dimensions. Well, I hadn't inscribed the parchments exactly right, but—so what? If I'd brought those guys back to Earth, they might have sued me. Or insisted on their money back. It's my money and nobody can have it but me."

Q. "How about a postdated check for five thousand dollars?"

A. "Uh—I remember. Well, that makes seven. I guess he had the wrong scrip. I dunno where he is now. I haven't time to look for him in every dimension. Besides, I can't cash the check for three days yet. And if Macklin came back and talked, it'd hurt my reputation. People would stop paying me money. That would never do."

The catechism continued, but there was a little else to be learned. Macklin sat back with a sigh. He was right. Jerome Dunn was a dirty, double-crossing rat. The magician realized what he'd done, and simply refused to remedy matters.

Then—Macklin's eyes hardened—sterner measures were justified. Dunn deserved a severe kick in the teeth. The only trouble was the obvious difficulty of delivering it.

Item, Macklin wanted to get back to Earth.

Item, he had lost his return ticket.

Ergo, he had to get another.

How?

Macklin began to sing softly under his breath. A slow smile broadened on his face.

"We've a first-class assortment of magic;

And for raising a posthumous shade
With effects that are comic or tragic,
There's no cheaper house in the trade—"

He jumped up and fled into Broscop's office. The leprechaun was cursing the dictaphone.

"Broscop!"

"Whup! Oh, it's you. Don't jump out on a leprechaun like that. What's wrong?"

"Listen, you say insubordination here is punished in only one way?"

"Sure—a trip to Hell. Why?"

"Whereabouts in Hell? That tower?"

"The tallest tower of Dis. Always."

"Suppose I punched Old Growly in the nose. Would I be sent there?"

"You would," Broscop said, chuckling.

"No other place?"

"The tower is the only place. Why? Hey! You don't intend to—"

"Not yet, anyway," Macklin said, and returned to his office. There he used the phone.

"Information on souls sold to Satan? Yes, sir. I'll send the volume up immediately."

It was a large book, profusely and unpleasantly illustrated. Presently Macklin found the information he wanted.

"When Satan buys a soul, he holds it as security. It is preserved in the Ammonia Crater, frozen stiff, until the death of the original owner. When that happens, the life force enters the soul, and the soul enters into its period of torment."

Another item said, "Such souls are perfect replicas of the body, except that they are dead-white, like ectoplasm. The Ammonia Crater is always well guarded, for men have been known to attempt to recapture their souls. None have succeeded. Satan objects to being cheated. If a man could reclaim his soul from the Ammonia Crater, he could, of course, enter into Heaven in his due time. But—"

Macklin grinned ferociously. He turned to the dictaphone, slid a roll on to the cylinder, and began to dictate.

"Dream for Jerome Dunn. Set it in Hell. On top of the tallest tower of Dis. Fake Dunn's soul. Or—better yet. Start with the Ammonia Crater." He talked fast, ending at last, "Hurry this up. I want to see the rushes before it goes out."

Two hours later Macklin sat in a projection room, little Broscop by his side. The leprechaun was excited.

"Why, you've got dream-credit! Swell! And approved by the board of censors! Timothy me lad, you'll make your mark in this world—"

Macklin didn't answer. He was watching the drama on the screen unfold.

It started with a montage of Hell—clever trick technical stuff. Then there was a fade-in to the Ammonia Crater, where stacks of frozen souls were piled up in rows. The camera panned down to a soul at the end of a row. It was milky white, but otherwise was a perfect double for Jerome Dunn.

Over the edge of the crater a tongue of flame licked. It touched the frozen soul, bathing it in fire. The soul stirred, visibly thawing. And then, abruptly, it leaped up and sprang high into the air. Over Hell it soared, heading for the black city Dis.

It came to rest on the summit of the tallest tower. And there it lay, motionless, panting a little.

The scene changed, becoming more conventional. It turned into an ordinary nightmare. But threaded through the dream, like a motif, were shots of Dunn's soul resting on the dark tower of Dis.

"Bait," Macklin said silently. "Broscop, when will that dream go out?"

The leprechaun called a question. From the projection room a voice answered.

"There's a print being rushed to Earth now. It's due for a *première* tonight."

"O. K.," Macklin said. He turned and gripped Broscop's hand.

"Good luck. In case—anything happens. You're a swell guy, Broscop, and thanks for everything."

"But . . . but Timothy, me lad—"

Macklin was already gone. He went directly to Old Growly's office. The horned creature was squatting behind his desk, smoking a gigantic cigar.

He looked up. "You! I'm busy. Get out. Phone for an appointment."

Macklin's answer was audible but inarticulate. He vibrated his tongue rapidly between his lips.

Old Growly bellowed like a bull. He sprang up, circled the desk, and faced Macklin. That was what the man had been awaiting.

"You crawling little sea-slug! By Baal and Beelzebub, I'll not have insubordination in my own depar—"

"Why not send me to Hell?" Macklin suggested.

"*Uk . . . uk . . .* I will! I'll give you a month! Two months! I—"

"That's the worst you can do? It is? Well, then!" Macklin smiled happily, poised himself, and rammed a hard fist into Old Growly's unpleasant face. He felt a delightful *thwack* against his knuckles, and his eardrums were almost pierced by the agonized yell Old Growly let out. Macklin stepped back and waited, ready for attack.

No attack came. Old Growly staggered back to his desk, clutching at a pulped nose, and furiously rang bells and pushed buttons. He howled commands into the dictagraph.

"Get the studio police! Quick! There's a maniac in my office! A homicidal maniac! Hurry—"

There was a movement behind Macklin; he felt his arms seized. Old Growly sank into his chair, panting. His gaze dripped vitriol.

"Five years in Hell for you.

Five long years," he sputtered. "Take him away. Get him out of my sight!" His voice rose to a shrill scream. "Take him away before he wrecks the joint!"

Macklin was urged toward the door. He waved blithely at Old Growly.

"So long, pal. Hell will be a rest cure after this abattoir. Look it up," he advised. "You'll find a dictionary in the library, if you know how to read."

The door closed. Someone said, "Five years in Hell is a long stretch, buddy. I feel sorry for you."

Macklin yawned—

Even fifteen hours in Hell was unpleasant. The tower of Dis kept getting hotter. It burned Macklin's feet. The parched, acrid air made him thirsty. He paced back and forth, scowling, wondering if his plans would go wrong.

Time dragged on, slowing down by visible degrees. The tides of flame raced across the vault of the sky. Faint noises drifted up from below. Five years in Hell—ugh! Macklin was beginning to be worried.

If he had failed—

No, he couldn't have failed. Psychology couldn't be wrong. Logic was logic. X plus x equals $2x$. On the other hand, x times x equals x^2 . Maybe he had added when he should have multiplied.

But the bait he had used was sure-fire. Dunn had dreamed that his soul—in pawn to Satan—had escaped from the Ammonia Crater and was hiding atop this very tower. He wouldn't scent a trap. He'd want to reclaim his soul and cheat Satan of his bargain.

On the other hand, Dunn might believe that the dream was simply so much guff—a wish-fulfillment vision. Could be. Yet, even if Dunn consciously thought that, he would also realize that there was a chance that the vision might be founded in fact. It would cost nothing to investigate. Dunn would sense

no danger. Why should he? He would see the bait, hesitate—and then walk into the trap.

Perhaps—

Twenty feet away a pillar of black smoke sprang into existence. Macklin saw it from the corner of his eye. His breath catching in his throat, he whirled and raced toward the inky cloud. Hidden in the darkness, he could make out the vague outline of a man. The smoke cleared—

Dunn!

The magician stood motionless, a bit of charred parchment visible in his right hand. In his left he held a fresh, unburned roll. The beady little eyes were alight with greed. But before they could blink away the smoke, Macklin acted. He swooped on the startled magician like a vulture and tore the parchment roll from his hand.

Dunn said, "Hey! What—"

Macklin's cigarette lighter was ready. "I'm just letting the punishment fit the crime, pal," he snapped—and touched flame to the scrip. Dunn yelled and leaped forward, too late. A burst of greasy black smoke billowed out.

The magician's voice seemed to fade into immeasurable distance. Macklin opened his eyes, which stung painfully. He was

back in Dunn's parlor, in exactly the same spot where he had burned the first parchment days before.

The room was otherwise empty. Morning sunlight slanted in through the windows. Distantly Macklin heard the hum of traffic from Hollywood Boulevard.

He pocketed the cigarette lighter. "Dunn!" he called softly.

No answer.

"Dunn!"

Macklin shivered slightly and hastened to let himself out of the house—

The disappearance of Jerome Dunn, Consulting Sorcerer, caused a slight tumult in Hollywood circles for a few weeks, but soon the matter was forgotten. Events moved on as usual. Betsi Gardner, the movie columnist, ran a brief squib in her paper, and Timothy Macklin returned to work, feeling vastly refreshed by his vacation. "Just ran down to Mexico for a while," he explained airily. "What's on the docket? Oh, I feel fine now. I just got a bit stale, I guess."

His career thereafter was an enviable one. Eventually he married Betsi Gardner. Five years exactly after Macklin's return from Hell, he woke up in the night yelling at the top of his voice.

Betsi snapped on the light. "Tim! What's the matter?"

Macklin stared around wildly. "Huh? Oh. I—nothing, honey. Just a bad dream."

"It must have been a nightmare!"

"Yeah . . . say, what's the date?"

Betsi told him. Macklin looked thoughtful.

"Just five years to the day. So he's been in Hell ever since—and now he's back in my old job."

"What on Earth are you talking about?"

"Nothing—on Earth," Macklin said cryptically. "I just got a . . . well, a message from an old friend. Go to sleep, Betsi."

"Sure you're all right?"

"Well—yeah. Quite all right. Only I expect I'll do a good deal of dreaming from now on. Still—sticks and stones will break my bones, but dreams will never hurt me."

Betsi lay back and closed her eyes, rather puzzled. She drifted back into slumber . . . then, startled, she awoke. Her husband was softly singing himself to sleep:

"If anyone anything lacks,
He'll find it all ready in stacks,
If he'll only look in
On the resident Djinn,
Number seventy, Simmery Axe!"

THE END.