

# UNKNOWN

FEB. '42

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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—



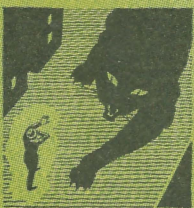
## DESIGN FOR DREAMING . by Henry Kuttner

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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John W. Campbell, Jr., Editor, Catherine Tarrant, Asst. Ed.

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# HE DIDN'T LIKE CATS

By L. Ron Hubbard

● The cat he kicked died—but had its revenge.  
And the worst of it was that he didn't die—

Illustrated by Edd Cartier

A wise man could have told Jacob Findley that vindictiveness is usually synonymous with downfall, even vindictiveness in minute things. But Jacob Findley lived in Washington, D. C.

Ordinarily, Jacob took from life all its faults without complaint for as a civil servant of the United States he was inured to many things and, through practice, quite complaisant in general. But, perhaps, bottling official insults within himself was not wholly possible since common logic tells one that a vessel can be filled just so full, after which it leaks or overflows. Jacob was not

the type of man to overflow. Cup by cup he was filled; somewhere along the route from desk to desk in his department he had to have a means of release.

People in official position quite often pass down in kind what is received from above and Jacob, as a file clerk, was down so low that it was most difficult to find a means of spilling.

So he didn't like cats.

A more defeated and resigned man would have been difficult to find for he was a veritable sponge for abuse. His hair was graying, his eyes down-

cast, his walk a slouch and even his clothes had a tired air.

But he didn't like cats.

His was not a vindictive nature. In most things he was patiently kind, Joblike enduring. He often gave candy to little children, quite strangers to him. While it might be said that his generosity was more like the offering of tribute in turn for immunity, it was still generosity.

However—or perhaps, therefore—he did not like cats.

Tonight he was in an average mood. The day had been tedious, monotonous, wearying. And tonight he was on his way to attend a church supper which, because he would be, as usual, forgotten in the midst of many, would be tedious, monotonous, wearying.

Clad in a shiny Tuxedo, topped by a rusty derby, swinging his cane in half-hearted imitation of his office chief at the state department, he walked patiently up Sixteenth Street toward the Lutheran Church, pausing obediently at all the lights, absence of cars notwithstanding on the lettered streets. A steady parade of cabs and limousines coursed busily upon his left, discordantly giving forth blasts of radio music, a blast bracketed in silence either side, and yelps or laughter or conversation.

He had just crossed N Street when he met his fa—when he met the cat.

It was not a polite meeting nor a sociable contact, for the cat arrogantly ignored Jacob Findley and issued from an apartment-house shrub to lay its course across the bows of the man.

As cats went he was at best a second-rate feline in looks, but in the cat world he must have been singularly respected if his tattered and scarred condition was any indication of victories hardly won. He was a huge cat, a dirty cat and a very proud cat. He was missing half his right ear, several of his port whiskers, a third of his right forefoot and about a sixteenth of his tail, to say nothing of patches where fur had been. His air was gladiatorial for he strutted rather than walked and there was a vain heft to his brows which bespoke his disdain for cats less proficient in the art of plying claw and tooth and for all humans without any exception. Here was a cat that was tough and proud of it, but which had commingled with that toughness a wary glance for possible enemies and a lewd leer in event he passed any ladies.

Jacob was so overlaid with strata of servility that only a sharp start could have brought him leaping out of himself the way he leaped. The cat startled him, for he supposed in the brief glimpse he had that he was about to trip over some treacherous object.

Then he saw that it was a cat.

He realized that he had been startled by a cat. And, as the reader might have gathered, he did not like cats.

"Scat!" cried Jacob Findley.

The feline pursued his swashbuckling way, his strut a bit more pronounced. This effrontery yanked Jacob Findley even further out of himself, far enough for him to act wholly on impulse.

He aimed a kick at the cat. It was not a ferocious kick. It was not even intended to land. But Findley had been led this far to his doom and any momentum yet wanting fate seemed to supply.

The cat received the sharp black toe in his side. He swooped upward with it, draped inextricably over it. He received the inertia thus imparted to him and described a parabola streetward. The cat sought to twist in the air and fall short, but doom was now on the march. The noisy, swift traffic coursed along Sixteenth Street. The cat lit in the road and, having lit, tried to scramble back to the curb.

A tire rocketed catward. The whole car vibrated to the jolt. And then it jolted again.

Clawing and crying, the cat struggled to reach the gutter, hitching himself inch by inch. He was out of the way of further wheels now, but he had done himself an unkindness. His back was broken so that while his hind legs lay twisted to the right, his forefeet convulsed toward the left.

The cat's cry stretched dismally.

Jacob Findley was confused. He was shamed. The agony of the animal reached him and made him shudder and sweat. Having just committed the most violent and wanton act of his life, he felt ill.

He felt his drums would burst under the onslaught of that cry, and it seemed to him that there were words in it, human words and curses.

Gradually the wail changed and faded and then it was as if the cat had truly found, in his death throes, a human voice. But there were no words. Only agony.

Jacob Findley heard the rattling last of it. He trembled.

And then, savage that he should be made to feel so, he stalked angrily upon his way, angrily stating to himself that, for all that, he *still* didn't like cats.

"Good riddance," said Jacob Findley. That heartened him. A cat was a cat and that one had been a filthy and useless cat. He got braver. He turned and looked back toward the shadow in the gutter and raised his voice.

"Good riddance!" jeered Jacob Findley.

He went on and every time a shudder sought to rise along his spine he was there with another statement as to the uselessness of cats in general and of that cat in particular. Still—what had that cat said when—

"Served him right," growled Findley.

Funny, though, how those yowls had sounded—

"Mangiest cat I ever saw. Better off dead, damn him!"

Two wheels had hit it and yet what a long time it had taken to die! It had even been able to move and—

"Hah, hah," said Jacob Findley with false merriment. "I guess I used up all his nine lives in a batch. "Damn him!"

Had he been in error when he had supposed the cat to stare at him, glare at him even in its death—

"Try to run over me, would he? Well, I guess I finished him. Yes, sir! I guess I finished him, all right, all right. Deadest cat I ever saw. Damn him!"

Odd how there had been words in that agonized scream—

"Made enough noise for fifteen cats. Hah, hah. Maybe he had to die nine times and so made nine times as much noise. Cats like that bother me? Not on your life. Kick dozens of them under trucks. Dozens of them. Made recordings of their voices and listen to them of an evening. Yah! Damned, mangy, good-for-nothing cat!"

What had that cat said when it was dying?

"Why, Jacob Findley! Whatever are you muttering about?"

Jacob nearly leaped from his cracked shoes, shying away from the voice. With foolish relief he saw that it was Bessy Green who spoke, and that he had come into the church hall without realizing it. In fact he had even checked his hat and cane and stood now at the entrance to the lower room which was being used for the supper-dance. However had he gotten this far without knowing it?

His perturbation was nearly extinguished by the realization that Bessy Green was smiling at him and chattering on in a merry fashion. This was an oddity, indeed, for while she had never snubbed him, she had never paid any attention to him, either.

She was a secretary to an official in the interior department, employed more because of efficiency than beauty. She was climbing up toward retirement age, and her forthcoming pension had been a target for much amorous attention. She had a fault of wearing too much make-up, poorly applied, and had a head of somewhat scarce hair which she had dyed black.

Jacob's astonishment at her attention was born from the knowledge that she had been receiving for a long time the court of one Krantz, a guard at the department of commerce.

"And I think it is wicked! Terribly, terribly wicked! There are so few men in Washington as it is and then this silly draft sweeps away those who are here. But Joe said that his duty was

with his country and so he left. A dear, dear boy, Jacob, but I don't think I shall ever forgive him."

"The country must be served," said Jacob, having overheard that this day from the protocol.

"Ah, yes, the country must be served. And here we poor lonely women, bereft, must also stand back with bowed heads and submit. Ah, yes. If it weren't for my cats I should be terribly, terribly, terribly lonely."

"Cats?" gulped Jacob.

"Ah, yes, the poor dear things. Isn't it strange how you just can't keep from loving them? You do love cats, don't you, Jacob?"

Jacob blinked rapidly. He kept his wits, however, for attention from Bessy Green was to be valued and her pension was not uninvolved as a factor in her charm.

"Cats?" said Jacob. "Oh, yes, yes, yes. Cats. Certainly I am fond of cats. Shall we dance, Miss Green?"

They danced and Jacob concentrated hard upon the effort, for he was experiencing a great desire not to step upon her or lose the rhythm. Along the side lines ladies and the sparse scattering of men looked on and there was much behind-hand talking.

One woman in particular remarked the intimate way Miss Green was whispering into Jacob's ear and this one woman, Doris Hanson, sat more alertly and her eyes took on a faintly greenish hue. Rival for Krantz, Doris Hanson was not to allow a second male to get securely into the hands of *that woman*.

Quite by accident Doris Hanson was near when the music stopped and Jacob and Bessy walked from the floor. Doris Hanson was a heavily built, purposeful woman whose ideas were intensely practical. She fancied herself as a psychologist, for she had attended a night university for years and years and years.

"Why, Jacob!" said Doris. "I am so happy to see you!"

Jacob was confused. He had never been noticed by Doris Hanson before. In fact, because she was noted as a brainy woman, he had been in fear of her.

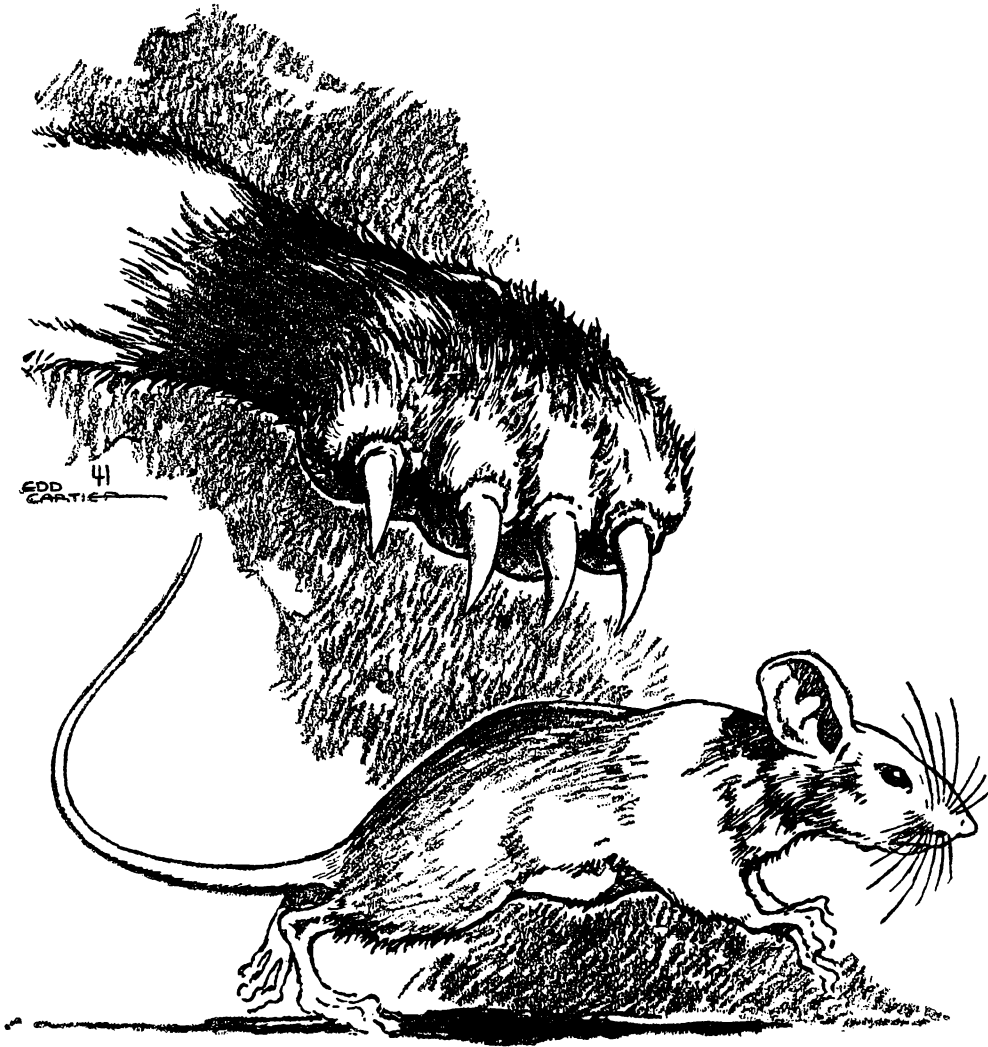
"You look," said Doris Hanson, "exceedingly well tonight. But then, of course, you always look splendid. Oh, how do you do, Miss Green?"

"I do very well," said Miss Green.

The two women smiled at each other. Jacob felt chilly.

"Ah, the music! The 'Tiger Rag'!" said Doris. "My favorite song."

Jacob did not know quite how it had happened, but he found himself being thrust about the floor by this amazon and was aware of acute displeasure from the direction of Bessy Green.



So overwhelmed had he been by such attention that he had nearly forgotten the cat.

He was reminded.

In the piece being played were certain trumpet slurs which were, at first, only jarring to Jacob. And then, little by little, those slurs and wails and cries began to eat into his ears and touch these sympathetic vibrations which, sent again into motion, caused him to behold and hear the dying cat. He grew nervous and if he sagged a little bit, Doris Hanson did not notice.

"Hold that tiger! EEEEEEEYOW! Hold that tiger! EEEEEEEEEEEEEEYOW—"

Jacob felt himself getting ill. Why did they have to keep doing it, bar after bar! Chorus after chorus!

"Hold that tiger! EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE-EEEEEEEEEEYOW! Hold—"

Had he been a less repressed individual, he might have plugged his ears or screamed or damned the orchestra, for now it began to seem to him as if the cat himself was up there in the box, glaring gloatingly about the floor after Jacob and taking high glee in mocking him.

"Hold that tiger! EEEEEEEYOW! Hold that

tiger! EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEYOWWWWWW-  
WW!"

He could see the cat! On the bandstand!

And on that instant the music stopped and Jacob, adrip with perspiration, goggled confusedly at the musicians. No cat. Just some fellows with trumpets and drums.

Feeling ill and weak he was glad of Doris Hanson's support, given quite unconsciously. He was dragged from the floor and again found himself surrounded by the two women. He hardly noticed either of them as he sank into a chair and they, interested in the battle more than the spoils, did not notice his state.

Jacob became angry with himself and commenced to form chains of invective in which to bind the cat.

"And it was an intensely interesting trip," said Doris Hanson. "I don't know when I have ever been so intrigued! It is not usual to be permitted to get into St. Elizabeth's, you know, but I knew a brother of the director—"

"I went visiting there once," said Bessy Green. "Of a Sunday. The public is always admitted on a Sunday—"

"Of course!" said Doris. "But not admitted to the halls, to the corridors, to the very cells of the unfortunate people. As a student of psychiatry I, of course, had a greater insight into the difficulties of attempting to bring sanity back to the poor unfortunates."

"I went there one Sunday," interposed Bessy Green. "I saw a man who was pushing a wheelbarrow, but he had it upside down. And if anybody asked him why he had it upside down, he looked sly and said if he turned it rightside up, why somebody might put something in it. Isn't that funny, Jacob?"

Jacob dutifully, if weakly, laughed.

"He," said Doris Hanson in a superior way, "had a persecution complex. It was fortunate you did not press him for an explanation for they very often require very little to become violent, just as they require little to become insane."

"B-beg pardon?" said Jacob.

"Oh, you have no idea," said Doris, gripping and nearly strangling this spark of interest from the quarry. "In just such a way are some people touched off. Insanity may lie latent and unsuspected in a disposition for years and then, suddenly, *poof!* a full case of dementia praecox!"

"Just—*poof?*" said Jacob.

Doris quickly laughed, an eye on Bessy. "You are so droll, Jacob. Just—*poof!*"

"I—really wanted to know," said Jacob.

"It's true," replied Doris with a sniff in Bessy's direction to make her sensible of a victory, even if a minor one. "It is amazing how so many people go insane. One day a man is a normal, friendly husband and the next he suddenly becomes a raging schizoid and slays his wife and himself as well. The result of what cause? Why, perhaps he chanced to find some schoolgirl treasure of another beau who had been his greatest rival and is stunned to discover that she secretly retains this. But usually the matter is not so simple, you know. Next to nothing may happen, jarring awake some sleeping monstrosity in a man's complex mental machinery and turning him from a sane person to a mentally sick individual. It is wholly impossible to say when a man is sane, for"—she tittered—"scarce one of us is normal."

"You mean—it might happen to any of us?"

"Of course," said Doris, charmed by all this interest. "One moment we are seated here, behaving normally and the next some tiny thing, a certain voice, a certain combination of thoughts may throw out the balance wheel of our intellects and we become potential inmates for asylums the rest of our lives. No, not one of us knows when the world will cease to be a normal, ordinary place. You know, no one ever knows when he goes insane. He supposes it is the world altering, not himself. Rooms become peopled with strange shapes and beings, sounds distort themselves into

awful cries and, *poof!* we are judged insane."

"*Poof!*" said Jacob, feeling weak and ill.

Bessy smiled acidly sweet upon Doris. "Of course that is the tenet of 'modern science,' but there are yet other explanations, you know." She gave Jacob a comforting look.

"Other? I am not aware of mumbo jumbo—"

"Not mumbo jumbo," Bessy interrupted her. "happen to be a very advanced student of spiritualism and it is quite likely that insane people see and hear beings and actualities which are more than the twisted ideas of deranged intellects. If one cares to extend his study beyond mere daily conceptions, he can swiftly realize the immense probability and possibility of such. Belief in evil spirits is too persistent in the history of man to be easily discounted, and it is my belief that our 'insane asylums' house many who are, to be blunt, too psychic."

"Too—psychic?" said Jacob.

"Why, yes. They see and perceive things which are beyond the sight and perception of the ordinary, crass intellect and so are judged, or rather misjudged, by their fellow humans. Ghosts, angry spirits, avenging demons, it is wholly probable that these things exist in truth."

"Exist?" echoed Jacob.

"Wholly possible," said Bessy with a jerk of her sparse, dyed head.

Under this onslaught, calculated to attack and discredit her by doing that to her tenets, Doris remained wholly aloof as though such things were completely ridiculous and beneath any natural consideration.

"Then . . . then things can haunt people?" managed Jacob.

"Naturally," said Bessy, "and I have no doubt at all that many is the murderer who has been driven to the grave by the avenging spirit of his victim!"

"H-how?"

"You have heard of men turning themselves in to the police and confessing crimes which were not otherwise to be solved?" said Bessy. "You have heard of murderers eventually seeing the faces of their victims in everything about them? Very well. Is it not just as possible that the murdered being appeared to him? Or at least caused events and impressions to surround the criminal until the criminal considered himself better off dead?"

"Rubbish," said Doris.

"I beg pardon?" said Bessy.

"I said rubbish! The words of our most learned doctors put everything you say back into the Dark Ages!"

"And the wisest of them all," said Bessy grimly, "has no knowledge or experience of philosophy!"

"That is not philosophy!" said Doris. "That is

stupid African voodoo rubbish!"

"If it is," said Bessy, "then our finest physicists are heading straight for African voodoo rubbish every time they admit that beyond a certain point no knowledge can be gained at all without the admission of God."

"What has God to do with this?" said Doris.

"God has everything to do with it, since he is the regulating factor of the universe and if he chooses to drive men mad with the appearance of evil beings and avenging spirits, then dare you deny his ability to do so?"

Doris opened her mouth to speak and then saw the cunningness of this trap. Almost she had allowed herself to give forth blasphemy. Her wit was not agile enough to encompass a counter measure and she did not dare sniff lest that, too, be accounted blasphemy.

They had argued longer than Doris had supposed, for it was with surprise that she heard the music stop and saw that the supper had been laid out. Thankful for this she rose.

"I shall bring you something, Jacob," said Doris and departed.

Jacob would have protested that food would stick in his throat and lie heavily in his stomach, but he had not the energy to protest. Accordingly he was soon holding a plate which was heaping with lobster salad. He felt it would be an insult to Doris not to eat it. Slowly, he ate it. Thankfully he got rid of the last mouthful. Shudderingly he put the plate away.

Bessy leaped up and seized the plate. "Oh I must get you some more!" And she hurried away to come back in a moment with an even larger portion and a glare for Doris.

Jacob knew he could not refuse. Manfully he marshaled his will power and concentration. He began to eat.

"Speculation in the realm of the Unknowable is a fruitless folly," stated Doris, fondly rolling the words around in her mouth. "Men can only grasp what they can sense. Hence, having sensed a thing, a man cannot lose his belief in it until he has proof which can also be sensed!"

"Ah," glittered Bessy. "What a simple way to deny the existence of everything which man, in his benighted mortal mind, cannot sense! What a charming way to dispose of God!"

"Oh, no!" said Doris.

"Oh, yes," said Bessy, having found the Achilles heel and now not letting go. "You deny the mind any other power than its material senses. In such a way you dare not dispose of the soul! Man's immortal spirit is within him and he is in contact with it and it is in contact with the Immensity of God. With the Immensity of God," she repeated, liking the term. "Belief in itself has performed

many miracles and I do not think one dares take it upon herself to deny the Bible."

"Certainly not!" said Doris, angrily wondering how she could get out of this trap.

"The mind, properly attuned, can become One with All, for man, in the image of God, is certainly a servant of God if he so wishes."

"Naturally, but—"

"And as God can create, so can man create," stated Bessy. "There are miracles and miracles to prove that. Even modern miracles. Faith is belief and, if a man can believe anything enough, then certainly that thing becomes an actuality."

"But—" limped Doris.

"The mind of man, becoming attuned to the All, is, of course, endowed with some of the Power of God. For example, if a man desires a thing enough, then that thing is his. In a sense he has created that thing and his desire for it has altered or shaped it to his liking. A man can create out of his own belief just as God can create, for man is one with the Universe and the Universe is God. Any belief, intense enough, creates actuality." She smiled sweetly upon Jacob, who had now manfully managed the second plate. "Would you have some dessert?"

Jacob was too dazed to protest, physically and mentally slugged into resistlessness. He was trying to rally, but rally he could not, since it weighed upon him that he would somehow have to eat the dessert as well.

Bessy came back and placed it before him. Exerting all the last dregs of determination he sat up, raised the spoon to attack the ice cream and then shuddered.

A cooky lay there. A cooky which was cut in the shape of a cat. And even as he looked the cooky seemed to grin at him.

"Ooooooooooooooh," said Jacob and quietly collapsed.

They escorted him home in a cab, both of them apparently concerned about his condition, but nevertheless finding much time to glare at each other over his back. Under other circumstances Jacob might have been flattered into near expansiveness, but now he was brought to such depths of misery, both physical and mental, that he scarcely heeded their solicitousness.

Of course neither of them had said a thing about that cat, and he certainly could not tell them. But now Bessy, to soothe him, began to rub in the salt.

"You will simply have to come and see my cats sometime," she was saying as the cab rolled to a halt before Jacob's door. "They are so sweet and so cute. Cats are nearly human, don't you think, Jacob?"

"Th-this is where I live," said Jacob.

Supporting himself by gripping the doorknob





no holes in the baseboard. He lunged with a skidding scramble behind the leg of the bureau and, looking out, saw the feet of the stalking cat approach.

Madly Jacob gripped the scarf of the bureau, his leap successful. He scurried behind a stack of books there and crouched with fluttering heart and burning lungs. The bureau rocked. He was staring straight up at those huge eyes.

With one bat of his paw the cat sent him hurtling out into the center of the room and then leaped after him to plant, abruptly, a paw on either side of him.

Jacob trembled. He looked up at the acre of fur chest. He looked higher to the great yellow orbs which were now dilating and contracting with pleasure. The cat's tail made loud sounds as it swished and lashed back and forth.

"RRRRRRRRRRR-RRRRRRRRRRR," said the cat.

Jacob played dead. He lay and shivered and played dead.

After a little the cat arose and became interested in washing its face. Jacob hearkened to the rasp of tongue on fur and finally opened his eyes. A great cavern appeared in the cat's face as it yawned. The fences of teeth gleamed. The cat sighed and wandered away to inspect something interesting.

Now was his chance! He could make a dash for the crack under the door and get out!

He gathered himself. He leaped away. He sped like the wind toward the crack of the door. It got bigger and bigger. He was almost there! He had—

**BOW!**

With a moan Jacob rolled to his feet in the center of the room. His side was bleeding. He was bruised. His beautiful gray fur was plastered flat with blood.

The cat lay down with a paw on either side of him. It batted him to the right paw and then batted him back to the left. The saber claws drew and sheathed in sensuous delight. Back to the left paw. Then to the right paw. Dazed and aching, Jacob fainted.

After a little he came around. He looked for the cat and could find no trace of it. Jacob was lying there, battered and bloody in the center of the room and the cat was gone! He opened the other eye. He studied the chairs. He viewed even the window ledge. Why, the cat had vanished!

Jacob gathered his long black tail about himself and crouched there, studying the exits. That crack under the door still looked good. But he was so broken up inside that he couldn't make much speed. He leaped up and raced for it.

Freedom! Liberty! He was almost there. It grew bigger and bigger. His nose could feel the rush of cold air.

**BOW!**

The cat had leaped down from the bed to knock him tumbling. And now the cat gathered him up in its sharp teeth and carried him back to the center of the room.

Right paw to left paw. Let him run a few inches. Snatch him back. If he lay still for a moment, he was stirred into agonized life by the teeth, and if he ran, he was knocked back by the paws.

Gasping, a mass of pain, slit and slashed and broken, dripping with the thick glue of the cat's saliva, Jacob knew he was nearly done.

He looked across the cobbly expanse of the carpet. He looked about the immensity of his room. Heartbroken, too weary now to move, he knew his end was near.

The cat growled, angry that so little life was left in him. A mighty set of claws scraped him and took the skin from his left side. Teeth worried him. And then, once again, the cat apparently decided that he was dead. The cat got up and strolled away. It became interested in boxing the tassel which hung from the bridge lamp. It knocked a match box across the room and scurried after it.

Jacob hitched himself toward the crack under the door. If only he could get there. If only his broken legs would support him long enough. If only the cat would completely forget him for the seconds necessary for him to bridge this distance.

He halved the width. He quartered it. In agony, which sent waves of nausea over him, he made his broken legs support him, though now the right one showed its shattered bone. Feet to go. And then less distance and less. The cold air there began to revive him. He was going to make it for the cat was too far away. He was going to make it. **HE WAS GOING TO MAKE IT!**

**BOW!**

The cat knocked him back into the center of the room.

Heart and body broken, Jacob lay still. The claws raked him. The teeth punctured him. He lay still.

With a bored sigh the cat opened its mouth and took in his head. There was a crunch. There was another crunch.

Jacob Findley woke up quite sound, quite whole, and—for a moment—vastly thankful that it was, to be sure, no more than a dream. Then he realized, almost simultaneously, two things: the cat had died only once, and rather quickly, and he had a perfectly correct conviction that *he*, on the other hand, would die all night, every night—

**THE END.**