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R. Bretnor's *The Gnurrs Come From the Voodvork Out* (recently reprinted in the Bleiler-Dikty BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES — 1951) was as uproariously rowdy a satire as F&SF has printed, cheerfully pointing out the absurdity of war, science, invention, the cavalry, pigsticking and other facets of modern culture. What few subjects were omitted from *The Gnurrs* now come in for Bretnorian attention in Mrs. Poppledore's *Id*, which deals, inter alia, with poltergeister, the publishing business, exorcists, archimandrites and (inter alienists), Freudians, parapsychologists and the commercial purveyors of Peace of Mind, Soul, and Whathaveyou. Especially noteworthy is Bretnor's handling of a variety of facets of religious and quasi-religious thought. Science fiction has too often been crudely and sophomorically anti-religious. That it can be the vehicle of deeply sincere religious expression is demonstrated elsewhere in this issue by Edward Everett Hale and Mildred Clingerman. Bretnor has chosen a third approach: a satiric depiction of the religious insecurity of our contemporary civilization, and a biting (and exceedingly funny) portrayal of the shallow opportunists who feed on the shell of religiosity without ever penetrating to the kernel of religion. Bretnor has a fine lively sense of the absurd that can make a weary editor chortle aloud while reading a story, for the nth time, in galley proofs; and he's rarely chosen material more precisely suited to his talents.

Mrs. Poppledore's *Id*

by R. BRETNOR

"NAMES," said Constance Poppledore. "People's names." Her large brown eyes regarded Dr. Vole. She asked herself why ugly, hairy little men so often were attracted to psychiatry. She sighed. "I think about them all the time," she said. "People's names, I mean. They're always like their hats. Why do you suppose Mildred Bunny's hats make her look as if she had long, floppy ears? Ugh!" She shivered. "Each time I see her, I think of nothing else for hours and hours."

Dr. Manfred Vole smoothed the fur on the back of his left hand, and made a soft professional noise. The garment which enveloped Mrs. Poppledore's rotundities was, like the *chaise longue* which supported them, chastely

Hellenic. Hellenic, too, was the pear-shaped cluster of red grapes held in an antique attitude above her small red mouth. The balance of the Poppledore apartment was spare and angular with chrome and desiccated wood and zebra skin. The over-all effect, thought Dr. Vole, was as though Isadora Duncan had been swallowed, young and whole, by some unpromising designer of svelte powder rooms.

"Now, Mrs. Poppledore," he suggested gently, "weren't we beginning to discuss the Id?"

Constance Poppledore ate a grape. "That's what's so sad about it," she informed him. "Poor Canon Bunny. She doesn't understand him, and people are always laughing at his name. But *I* think it's really rather nice. *V. Bede Bunny*. The Reverend Canon V. Bede Bunny. It has a Trollopey, Old English sort of sound. And it's only because his mother was a Venable, and his father was so clever and devout. And you can't name a little boy *Venerable*, now can you?"

Politely, Dr. Vole agreed that you could not. Mr. Julian Poppledore had urged upon him the problem of V. Bede Bunny's growing influence; and now, opening his notebook, he hastily scribbled *FF?* to remind himself that a father fixation might be worth looking into.

"Freud's concept of the Id," he stated with determination, "is something every really intelligent person should understand." He paused to let the flattery take effect; and Mrs. Poppledore reached out to him at once.

"Do have a grape," she said.

"No, thank you. Now, the Id —"

"That's what I mean! The things I feel about deep down inside. That's why I mentioned Canon Bunny, don't you see? It's so unfair! Especially with all those bishops so against him, and just when we're publishing his book. Why, if it hadn't been for that old Charles Laughton king with all the wives, *you* know, the whole thing might be different. Because *Peace Of Heart* is ever so much better than those other books. It's full of quotations from the Fathers, and from John Donne and Tristram Shandy and all sorts of people."

Dr. Vole experienced an emotion, instantly diagnosed it as acute annoyance, and applied a simple therapy, reminding himself that within six months his bill to Mr. Poppledore would more than meet the purchase price of a new Cadillac convertible, a yellow one. He saw himself driving up to the nurses' quarters at the Defective Children's Home and —

He shook himself. As the convertible dissolved, he remarked that Canon Bunny seemed to have a keen eye for a trend. "Freud was the same way," he said. "The concept of the Id —"

"Oh, was he? You must tell Canon Bunny all about it. He'll be so interested. But really, isn't it unfair? *They* have them all the time. I mean, they

had one just a week ago. And in the *Bronx*!" She pouted. "It's quite absurd!" "They?" asked Dr. Vole. "I don't seem to recall —"

"Of course you do! A week ago. It happened to some little Polish child. The picture wept real tears when she said her prayers, even on television. Naturally, the Cardinal wouldn't say whether it was or wasn't, but then they never do."

It came to Dr. Vole that she was speaking of the Roman Church — and that miracles, through some grave error of the Reformation, were denied to Canon Bunny.

"I think about it all the time!" said Constance Popple-dore. "Why couldn't Mildred be cured of her neuralgia, even though she does wear those hats? Or maybe some old leper? That would be better yet. *That* might mean half a million extra copies — and think of all the *good* they'd do! Besides, it would be nice for Rummage House, and dear Henry Rummage, and of course Julian. Publishing is such a dreadful gamble nowadays." She took a final grape, lowered her head, allowed her eyes to close. "But I suppose there's nothing we can do," she said resignedly. "Now you can tell me all about the Id."

Dr. Vole's bemused mental mechanism whirled into action. A gleam came to his eye. "Yes, Mrs. Popple-dore. Yes, indeed. The Id —"

He broke off sharply — the door had opened. He turned his head.

"I'm sorry," said Constance Popple-dore's maid, "but Canon Bunny's here."

V. Bede Bunny was portly but very pale. He hesitated at the door, one finger touching diffidently his pectoral cross. "I am so sorry, Mrs. Popple-dore!" He glanced apology at Dr. Vole. "Surely I intrude?"

"Why, Canon Bunny!" Constance Popple-dore swept up to greet him. "You? Intrude?" Laughing, she took his arm. "This is a dear new friend of mine and Julian's, Dr. Manfred Vole. He's my psychiatrist."

Dr. Vole rose reluctantly and shook a big white hand.

"Doctor, it's very good of you, allowing me to interrupt like this. I won't be long." As Constance Popple-dore resumed her couch, he sat down comfortably. "A painful situation has come up," he told her. "A most important convert from Bombay is here, and I must entertain him tomorrow. The invitations have gone out; it's all prepared. And now poor Mildred —"

Mrs. Popple-dore gave him a long and understanding look.

"— feels her neuralgia coming on again. So *she* suggested that you might be my hostess in her stead."

"How sweet of her! I'd love to, naturally. That is, if Dr. Vole thinks it won't hurt my Id."

"Your — *Id*?"

"He says my *Id* needs mending — that something horrible happened to it when I was small, in a dramatic episode."

"Traumatic," objected Dr. Vole.

She dismissed the technicality. "He says that if I think and think maybe I can remember just what happened, and then my *Id* will be all together again."

"That isn't quite correct —"

"Like Humpty-Dumpty," she persisted. "And the only thing I can remember is how I had the poltergeist when I was thirteen, and it threw stones and the furniture, and I was *so* annoyed."

"You should have told me!" Dr. Vole was irritated.

"John Wesley," put in Canon Bunny, uneasily, "wrote of his troubles with a poltergeist. I mention it in *Peace Of Heart*, as an example of how the wayward intellect can lead the soul astray."

"Well," said Constance Poppledore, "I'm sure his wasn't half as good as mine. And I wasn't led astray either, because mine started in right after Papa had been so mean to me —"

"Ah-h!" murmured Dr. Vole.

"— and afterwards he treated me ever so much better — Papa, I mean. He even let me ride with him Saturdays when he drove into Sioux Falls."

"I'm sure there was no parallel." The Canon flushed. "On the one hand, we have a misfit, a dissenter; on the other, the pretty innocence of a pink-cheeked country girl." He rose and made a bow at Mrs. Poppledore. "Dear me, it's *very* late, and I must run along. At four tomorrow, then? Good, good. Doctor, I trust we'll meet again, and — ha-ha! — discuss the *cure of souls* at greater length. No, don't get up. I'll find my way very nicely, thank you. Goodbye, goodbye."

The door closed behind him — and Dr. Vole turned to his patient testily. "It is significant," he told her, "that your hatred for your father produced hallucinations in your adolescence."

"I didn't *hate* him. It's only that he was horrid all the time, and mean to me. And it wasn't an hallucination!"

Dr. Vole thought of the Cadillac, and regained a measure of his self-possession. "How was he mean to you?"

"That's what I can't remember."

"Oh, but you must." His voice assumed a note of calm authority. "We must retrieve these dark experiences in order to deprive them of their power. Now we will try. Lie back — that's better. And close your eyes. Imagine that you're a little girl again, on the farm. There's your nasty father, just as he was. It's that same day. Now, think back —"

"I am. Only —"

"Try, try. He's getting ready to be mean to you! But don't get scared. He can't really hurt you anymore. He can't because —"

A sudden inspiration came to Dr. Vole.

"— *because Canon Bunny's right there by your side.* Now! What is your father doing?"

"Why, I *remember*," cried Constance Poppledore. "He's —"

And just then, without any warning whatsoever, Dr. Manfred Vole was lifted, chair and all, and hurled violently through the air to land with a crash on a zebra-skin rug some yards away.

"Did something fall?" she asked. "How strange! And I feel so much better! Do you suppose my Id is all right now?"

There was a silence. After a moment, dreamily, she said, "I'm sure that we could find a leper somewhere, couldn't we, if we tried hard?"

Dr. Vole could never quite recall his farewell to Mrs. Poppledore. Something had pelted him with two cubistic ashtrays, an old copy of *Flair*, and a table-lamp that looked like a toadstool with the bends; yet even this assault left only a blurred impression on his memory.

Blind instinct turned him to the nearest bar. He entered, staggered to a stool, and tried to think of something alcoholic. Finally —

"A — a double Muscatel," he squeaked.

Administering this dose, he ordered another. When that was gone, he said, "Now I shall have some whisky," decisively.

"Scotch —" The bartender winced. "— or rye?"

"Both!" said Dr. Vole.

Presently he looked up from the contemplation of his empty glass, and, handling each word with great delicacy, said, "*There are . . . more things . . . under heaven and earth . . . Ho-Horatio . . . than are . . . than are . . .* I can't seem to remember the next line. *For — For you shall stand . . . at my right hand . . . and keep the bridge with me?*"

"That's right!" affirmed the bartender. "Horatio On The Bridge. It's about a Limey admiral."

"Thank you," said Dr. Vole. He descended, walked very carefully to the telephone, and called Mr. Poppledore's number at Rummage House.

"This is Dr. Vole. V-O-L-E. I want to talk —"

"I want to talk to you!" shouted the telephone. "What's all this nonsense you've been giving Connie? About lepers. Yes, dammit, *lepers!* She just got through calling me. Wants *me* to find a leper! You think we can afford to let the Press catch on this whacky Bunny character is trying to heal lepers? His bishop's already trying to unfrock him!"

Dr. Vole held the instrument at a safe distance. "That's not important! The polter —"

"NOT IMPORTANT? How much do you suppose we've sunk in *Peace Of Heart*? Now you get busy, Vole, and get her psycho'ed out of this, you hear me? What do you think I'm paying you for?"

There was an angry click, and Dr. Vole abruptly saw that Mr. Poppledore had no intention of holding the bridge with him.

He rang up Canon Bunny — who listened politely until he was informed that the poltergeist transferred the case of Constance Poppledore from the doctor's own mundane province to his more ghostly one.

"My province?" he exclaimed. "Oh, dear me, no! I feel that there must be some perfectly natural explanation — Exorcism? Doctor, this isn't the Sixteenth Century! Really, you sound a little overwrought. Can you have just imagined —? No? Well, take my advice; discuss it with some good psychia — Why, so you are! Of course! . . . The strain of modern life; it tells on all of us! There's a whole chapter on it in *Peace Of Heart*. I'll have a copy sent to you, inscribed. Goodness, now there's the bell! I do hope you'll feel better. Goodbye."

Dr. Vole peered sadly at the telephone. He saw that it was fuzzing at the edges and trying to waver off into a new dimension — as though it had no further reason for existence now that the connection with the Canon had been broken.

This circumstance disturbed and angered him. "I'll show you!" he exploded, grabbing the dial with both hands. "There *are* more things in — h-heaven and earth — H-Horazhio —"

Immediately, a flash of inspiration gave him the inner meaning of the words. How clearly they referred to the multiplicity of clergymen — here, there, everywhere — most of them probably eager to stand at his right hand!

He leaned against the wall. "Pes-bry-terians," he murmured happily, "Luther-ans, B-B-Baptists, Southern-fried Methodists, all sorts of other Prot — Ah-hal!"

Before his eyes swam the remembered countenance of Winton Furnwillie, Doctor of Divinity, consulting editor for Rummage House, author of *Satan: A Case History*, and pastor of a decorously prosperous North Side congregation.

"I'll take a cab!" declared Dr. Vole. He made a futile effort to retrieve his dime; then left the booth and tacked around the bar. "A Bunnyphone — tha's what you've got!" he called. "Long floppy ears. I saw 'em."

"Uh-huh —" The bartender was unperturbed. "— it's Easter. Bye-bye, Horatio."

Some moments later, Dr. Vole rode away wrapped in a rosy dream — of Mrs. Poppledore rising, purged and pure of Id, from the remains of her vanquished poltergeist; which lay, much like a wilted lettuce, at his feet.

Seated at his desk, penning the rough draft of some future sermon, the Reverend Winton Furnwillie looked like a carefully expurgated version of Bertrand Russell. When Dr. Vole appeared, he showed almost no surprise. He appraised him for the space of half a second. Then, with a quiet sigh, he motioned to his panting secretary to release the doctor's sleeve.

"Won't you sit down?" he said.

The chemical reactions in Dr. Vole had progressed somewhat. He bowed, lost his balance, caught at the edge of the desk, and lowered himself delicately to the floor. "F-Furnwillie," he giggled. "The Reveren' Doctor Winton F-F-Furnwillie. 'Stoo long. I'll call you Revdoc. Cincpac, Ingsoc, Revdoc — get it?" He composed his features. "The boy — stood — at my burning bridge," he began sonorously.

"Ah?" Dr. Furnwillie lifted a fine white brow.

"Yes," said Dr. Vole, "but doesn' soun' right. Try again." Closing one eye, he held a mock spyglass to it with both hands. "Sbetter. Uh — England expec's more things in heaven and earth, H-Horazhio — than every man —"

"The *correct* reading," interrupted Dr. Furnwillie, "is, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' Hamlet, Act I, Scene V."

"Ph'losophy!" remarked Dr. Vole, wide-eyed. "Ol' William Shage-speare!"

Dr. Furnwillie beamed. "Excuse me for a moment." He rose and left the room, and there was a sound of running water. When he returned, he gave a brimming glass to Dr. Vole. "Drink this," he said, "and you'll feel ever so much better."

Dr. Vole did as he was told. He drained the glass. He gasped. His eyes glazed. Dreadful things started happening to his midriff.

"A mild restorative," observed Dr. Furnwillie, seating himself again. "Water and spirits of ammonia. And now —" He lifted his hands in a gesture of commiseration. "— I see that you are troubled?"

"Gug!" said Dr. Vole emphatically.

"I understand. And you shall have my sympathy, my spiritual support, my counsel."

"Gug-splut!"

"Now, now! You mustn't thank me. And don't explain. The burden of even the most wretched sinner is mine to share. Nor does its nature matter.

Our troubles and concerns proceed from Satan, whom I have analyzed quite thoroughly. We shall be practical. I will explain to you how Satan works, how best to thwart him. You will go forth thrice-armed. Satan, you see —"

Dr. Vole clutched the top of his head, which suddenly was threatening to come off. He wanted desperately to tell of his dilemma. His mind formed sentences. He forced words to his lips —

They came out as, "Ooh-blug!"

"Satan —" Dr. Furnwillie's tone became rather firmer than before. "— frightens too many people. It's been the propaganda — Faust and that sort of thing. It lends him stature. It hides his basic motives. Believe me, Dr. Vole, Satan is a social climber and nothing more. Incredible? Yes, to the old theologians. But I have proved it. He tries to curry favor, to worm or buy his way into our midst, to draw attention to himself. How shall we handle him? Well, how do we usually handle *hoi polloi*? We turn our backs on them. We refuse to admit that they exist. In short, we snub them — and they go away."

Dr. Furnwillie, his eyes flashing enthusiasm and good will, stood up and came to Dr. Vole, who was distinctly blue around the gills. He helped him to his feet, and steered him tenderly toward the door. "You must snub Satan, Dr. Vole," he said. "Ignore your worries, and they will go away. Yes, and read Emerson. How simple it all is!"

"B-bu —"

"My secretary will show you out. Don't forget, now — E-M-E-R-S-O-N. And do come by again —"

Dr. Vole stumbled down a corridor and out into the street. Feeling himself alone and friendless, he sat down and wept. But presently, perhaps as a result of Dr. Furnwillie's therapeutic potion, he happened to recall a high school playmate whom he had not seen for several years. Hope flickered faintly in his breast. "Ol' frien's, bes' frien's," he thought sentimentally. "Why not? *They* have them all the time!"

He hailed another cab. And twenty minutes later, clammy sober, he entered the gymnasium of one of the many colleges named after St. Ignatius of Loyola. There he found his friend, appropriately garbed, working out with Indian clubs.

"Hi, Spike!" moaned Dr. Vole.

His friend lifted a bushy brow. "Hi, Jitters," he replied coldly. "How's atheism?"

Uncomfortably, Dr. Vole recalled that certain statements of his own had caused a protracted rupture of relations. He sat down on a convenient bench, hiccupped humbly, and addressed Horatio in the most dismal tones.

His friend promptly dropped the clubs.

"Spike — I mean, Father Crabtree — I need your help."

Father Crabtree surveyed him doubtfully. He beheld the clear evidences of despair. He frowned — Jitters had been a pretty good kid back in his innocent pre-Freudian days. Perhaps — Abruptly, a picture came to him of Dr. Manfred Vole, attired in the rough habiliments of the Trappist order, piously hoeing turnips in the Wyoming wilderness.

He came over, and sat beside the doctor, and said, "Tell me about it, Jitters," in the voice he had heard his superiors use on roughly similar occasions.

After half an hour, Dr. Vole left the college, his head erect, a new spring in his walk. But his own hopes for his personal future were not at all like Father Crabtree's. For the first time since the appearance of the poltergeist, he was thinking of the Cadillac.

The happenings of the next few days were mildly puzzling to Constance Poppleadore. She now remembered how that horrid man, her father, had tweaked her pigtails by way of punishment; and sometimes, when she considered the insolence of this mistreatment, the piano would start joggling up and down, or maybe a phone book would fly across the room. She had retrieved the dark experience — and the poltergeist. But was that anything to get upset about?

First there was that funny Dr. Vole, returning the same evening with all his talk about the Roman Church and someone named Horatio, and a petition to the Archbishop to exorcise the poltergeist. Not that it wasn't nice to have *them* on her side — but she certainly wouldn't have signed the petition if the doctor hadn't promised to use his medical connections to find a leper.

Then, at the party, that convert from Bombay came right out and insulted her! He told her how his fellow Hindus suffered, and that they had lots and lots of lepers there. And, when she asked if he would send her one by plane, he lost his temper — even though she offered to pay the fare both ways.

Ever since, there had been just one thing after another. Just for fun, she had shown off the poltergeist to Canon Bunny, and he'd been almost as upset as Dr. Vole — but more polite about it, naturally. The newspapers had started calling her to ask if it was true that something startling was going to happen at the Canon's Sunday services, and they hadn't believed her when she denied it, and they hadn't given her the least bit of help in trying to find a leper. Finally, on Tuesday, Dr. Vole had phoned to tell her that the Archbishop's investigator was coming on Thursday afternoon.

Excitedly, Constance Poppledore spent Thursday morning selecting her apparel for the visitation. Out of deference to the Archbishop, she finally chose a lavender *peignoir* expensively contrived to suggest a friar's habit complete with cowl and cord. Congratulating herself on the felicity of this chance purchase, she brought a copy of Flaubert's *Temptation Of St. Anthony* from Julian's bookcase, and placed it with a dish of grapes and a pair of studious spectacles beside her couch.

It was thus that, shortly after luncheon, she greeted the Reverend Mathias Gansfleisch, O.F.M.

She was disappointed. She had expected a Savonarola, tall and terrible and burning-eyed, with bell, book, candle, and stoup of holy water. Instead, she saw a very thick old man with a bald, pear-shaped head, who walked as though his shoes pinched. He was accompanied by Dr. Vole, who performed the introductions, and by two middle-aged clerics bearing brief cases — and it was immediately apparent that he disapproved of her.

"Father Gansfleisch," asserted the awed Dr. Vole, "is Visitor General of the Order of Friars Minor. He is an Exorcist. He holds a Doctorate of Sacred Theology and *three* Ph.D.'s."

"It is correct," said the Franciscan.

"Canon Bunny," boasted Constance Poppledore, "almost got to be a Rhodes scholar."

There was no response.

"He's an honorary canon — of a cathedral, I think. He doesn't spend much time at it, because he's the Rector of St. Ethelred's-at-Sea, and everybody just adores him. I'm sure you'd love him too, in spite of Mildred. Of course, he's not a *Roman* Catholic, but he always says that after all he is a fellow traveller."

There was a frigid silence.

"Besides," she persisted, heedless of the faces Dr. Vole was making, "it's not as if he and Mildred were, well, *really* married. I mean, when you see the poor old thing in one of her dreadful hats, you simply can't imagine —" Still silence.

She extended the dish of grapes; and the Exorcist drew back as though an ingratiating serpent had offered him an apple.

"Do you make a mockery?" he snapped at Dr. Vole. "You told me an innocent soul was in grave danger. Bah! I can see nothing to investigate!"

"P-p-possession!" stammered Dr. Vole.

Constance Poppledore clapped her hands. "It's nine points of the law, isn't it? But really I'm not worried about my poltergeist, Father. You see, I'm sure it's just my Id!"

And then, before the doctor could think of a reply —

"It's Canon Bunny, ma'am," announced the maid. "He's brought a friend."

The pastor of St. Ethelred's-at-Sea pumped Father Gansfleisch's unresponsive hand, greeted Dr. Vole like a long-lost brother, and smiled a nervous benediction at Constance Poppledore.

"Dear me! I've worried so — and now I see I needn't have at all!" He glowed. "Such reinforcements of sanctity and learning! Our little differences forgotten in adversity! I wish it weren't too late to mention it in *Peace Of Heart*. Perhaps the next edition —"

"He'll put your name in and everything!" cried Constance Poppledore. "Won't that be splendid, Father Gansfleisch?"

"No. It will not."

"Well —" Canon Bunny coughed. "— we're all up against something we don't understand, aren't we? That's why I thought I'd do my little bit — ha-ha! — to arm the bastions of the Spirit with the guns of Science." He beckoned to a small man shifting his feet uneasily at the door. "This is Dr. Espey of Duke University, where they study all these things. He'll be a great help to us, I'm sure."

Dr. Espey mumbled that hadn't he better — er — well — come back tomorrow?

"No, no, no!" protested Mrs. Poppledore. "Why, it'll be such *fun*! All of you after my poor little poltergeist at once! Father Gansfleisch can ring his bell, and Professor Espey can take photographs or something. And Canon Bunny can read the Song Of Solomon aloud — he does it beautifully!"

V. Bede Bunny reddened. "Only — only in sermons."

"And then, on Saturday, you must *all* come to our party for *Peace Of Heart*, and we can tell everybody how you chased my poltergeist away!"

Deliberately, Father Gansfleisch turned to the man from Duke. "I should like to ask — do you, a man of science, have an hypothesis about the poltergeist?"

"I shall assume," said Dr. Espey, "that you refer to poltergeists in general, and not necessarily to any specific specimen which may be present locally. In that sense, I consider *poltergeist* simply a term for whatever it is that causes otherwise unexplainable manifestations of a senseless nature — stone-throwing, bed-shaking, and so on. It is usually associated with an adolescent of — of retarded intellect."

They both regarded the thirtyish Mrs. Poppledore.

"The phenomena persist for a few weeks and then die down. There seems to be no serious malice behind them, and no great harm is done."

"You do not think that there can be danger to an immortal soul?"

"Well — frankly, no. I don't think that any exterior agent is responsible. Perhaps some latent psychokinetic faculty emerges —"

"That's what I tried to tell you!" put in Constance Poppledore. "It's my Id."

"In a manner of speaking, yes. Some submerged part of — well, her mentality."

"An interesting theory," declared Father Gansfleisch. "Perhaps we can observe together. However —" He glanced at Canon Bunny. "— it will not be necessary to read aloud the Canticle."

"I had no intention, sir," puffed the Canon, "of doing so!"

Father Gansfleisch waved a peremptory hand. "Let us proceed!"

"Is there something I can do?" sniffed Constance Poppledore sarcastically.

"Think of your papa being mean to you," coaxed Dr. Vole.

"Oh, well. I'll try." She removed the spectacles, pulled the cowl forward over her head, and ate a grape.

After a minute, she ate another; then, a third. Nothing stirred. Nothing flew.

They waited, Father Gansfleisch stolid in his chair, Dr. Espey acutely observant, Canon Bunny fidgeting. Several additional grapes disappeared.

When half an hour had passed, the Exorcist pulled out a large steel watch. "Well?" he said.

"Please, Mrs. Poppledore," begged Dr. Vole, "do try!"

"I am. I'm trying hard!" She sulked. "If you think you can do any better, go get your own old poltergeists!"

Father Gansfleisch rose. "I have seen enough," he proclaimed. "I shall report to the Archbishop this absurdity. I can only hope that Dr. Vole has been deluded, without a part in planning this. As for you, Mrs. Poppledore —"

His two clerics ranged themselves beside him.

"— you should have shame!"

Constance Poppledore turned over lazily, letting a golden sandal dangle from a pale pink toe. "Well, I think you're a horrid old man!" she tossed back over her shoulder. "And anyhow you can't heal lepers like Canon Bunny can!"

Father Gansfleisch gasped. So did the clerics. So did Canon Bunny.

"Oh!" Her hand flew to her mouth. "I shouldn't have said that!"

"Indeed!" blurted the Canon. "*Indeed* —!" His eyes darted from Father Gansfleisch, striding out, to Dr. Espey. "I'm afraid that we must go!" he croaked. "We really must!"

A moment later, Constance Poppledore was alone with Dr. Vole. She

turned to him, all smiles. "That awful man! Do you think I'd let him watch my poltergeist after he was so mean to poor Canon Bunny? I simply lay there and thought of flowers and birds, and of how maybe we could find a leper after all. I never thought of Papa even once!"

A floor-lamp hopped up and down. A driftwood book-end thumped against the wall.

"I guess I can do what I want with my own poltergeist!" said Constance Poppledore.

Though Julian Poppledore's office overlooked the Rummage House roof garden, the gay clatter from *Peace Of Heart's* pre-publication party tempted him not at all.

"Damn the poltergeist!" he shouted, across the executive expanses of his desk. "It's lepers I'm losing sleep about! Get a load of this!" He shoved a newspaper at Dr. Vole.

The doctor blinked at a page two headline. BISHOP TO PROBE MIRACLE PUBLICITY, he read. *Peace Of Heart Author Denies Loaves-Fishes Rumor.*

"Look, Vole! The Bunny book is strictly for the *high-class* trade. This stuff'll ruin it! Two bishops came to see me yesterday. The papers are phoning every fifteen minutes. Winchell has started talking about Lazarus. Furnwillie keeps telling me to ignore the whole business. And you — you sit there doing nothing!" He snatched the paper back. "Well, get this! You straighten Connie out before tomorrow — or else!"

"Or — what?"

"Or no Cadillac!"

Flushing, Dr. Vole assumed the dignity of his diploma. "The purpose of psychiatry," he said, "is not merely to extract an idea like a tooth, but to adjust the entire personality. Mrs. Poppledore's innocent affection for Canon Bunny, her desire for a miracle — these are only two strands in a dark pattern which still requires patient exploration and sympathetic therapy."

Mr. Poppledore made a rude noise. "Any more of that stuff, and I turn you and your spook-hunter over to the A.M.A. No fee. No Cadillac. Maybe no license."

Dr. Vole realized that the threat against his license was a strategic exaggeration, but the possibility of publicizing his momentary lapse from Freudian grace did not appeal to him.

More reasonably, he said, "I shall do what I can, Mr. Poppledore. But you mustn't expect miracles."

"I don't. That's why I'm making damn sure nobody with as much as a

pimple gets in that church tomorrow. I've hired the best detective agency in town. Their men are going to be at every door. Otherwise, I'm holding you responsible."

Mr. Poppledore relaxed his frown, displaying the forehead which made his pictures look so intellectual in *The Saturday Review*. He rose. "Shall we join the party?" he suggested pleasantly.

"Er — yes," replied Dr. Vole.

And they walked out together, almost arm in arm, into the throng of critics, clerics, purveyors of literary merchandise, and friends. Immediately, two intense Communists accosted them, exhibited a volume piquantly entitled *Collectivistic Peace Of Conditioned Reaction In The Workers' And Peasants' Socialistic State*, and, before they managed to escape, shouted that it had been translated from the Russian long before anyone ever heard of the war-mongering Rabbi Liebman.

"Where is Canon Bunny?" panted Mr. Poppledore at a middle-aged lady.

"The Vulnerable Bede? Mrs. Poppledore's right behind me, so he must be 'way over there. He's been acting funny ever since she came — like maybe she'd got leprosy or something."

Mr. Poppledore winced. "Take care of Connie," he hissed at Dr. Vole, and vanished in the crowd.

The doctor found Constance Poppledore talking to the Archimandrite Pyotru, of the Near-Eastern Semi-Orthodox Church, who consisted of a square black hat, an enormous red robe, and a big black beard with lots of teeth in it.

"... so whenever I think of Papa, things start flying all by themselves; but I'm not afraid of it, not any more, now that I know it's just my —" She broke off, catching sight of Dr. Vole. "Why, here he is now!" she exclaimed. "If it hadn't been for him I wouldn't have a poltergeist at all."

The Archimandrite, who was ambidextrously depleting a platter of *hors d'oeuvres*, grinned at the doctor between two anchovies, and roared, "O-ho-ho! Thinks vly yin ehr!"

"Exactly!" cried Constance Poppledore. "Look —"

The table, the *hors d'oeuvres*, and an advance copy of *Peace Of Heart* rose three feet in the air, hovered for a moment, and came down again.

"Ya!" boomed the Archimandrite, helping himself to the salami. "Vine Amerigun mazhine vor defeission! Thinks vly!"

"Mrs. Poppledore," said Dr. Vole. "I hate to interrupt, but are you still determined to find yourself a leper?"

"A leper?" murmured Constance Poppledore. "Oh, dear me, no! I realized this morning that scrofula would be every bit as good — and now I've an idea that's even better yet."

"Make vly!" The Archimandrite waved a pickle violently. "More, more!"

Somebody's handbag thumped into the lap of an astonished swami — and Constance Poppledore giggled girlishly. "That's nothing! Weight doesn't mean anything at all. Watch this!"

Some yards away, an Australian tea tree grew in a huge porcelain tub. She gestured at it. It began to rise. The Archimandrite applauded gleefully.

The potted tree rose six inches in the air. It tipped first one way, then the other. Then —

Suddenly she squealed. The roof shook as the tree came crashing down. There was a silence.

"Mazhine vus bruk?" exclaimed the Archimandrite. "Zum dube blow-sout?"

"*There* she is!" Constance Poppledore, all rigid, was pointing at a small, round woman who clung to Canon Bunny's arm in the far corner; and Dr. Vole saw that the woman was wearing a flat and unremarkable straw hat.

"*Ugh!*" whispered Mrs. Poppledore with venom. "Can't you just see her ears *wiggle*? And now my Id won't work again for hours!" She stamped her foot. "Well, anyhow —" surprisingly, she smiled "— she doesn't know about my big surprise tomorrow. When he's famous, he'll owe it all to me."

Dr. Manfred Vole, after endeavoring vainly to cajole Constance Poppledore into disclosing her secret, spent an almost sleepless night, his imagination presenting him, alternately, with a panorama of the loathsome maladies more readily obtainable, and with a foretaste of the rigors of a Cadillac-less existence. He entered St. Ethelred's-at-Sea, next morning, in poor spirits.

Mr. Poppledore, accompanied by Dr. Furnwillie and by two ominously muscular men with beady eyes, intercepted him at the door, warned him to stay right next to Connie, and delayed him just long enough to prevent his doing so. He found the front pew full, and barely managed to squeeze himself into the one behind it.

At first, craning his neck and squirming, he irritated the spinster to his left and evoked angry grunts from a bulky, egg-bald gentleman who pressed against him from the right.

Presently, though, he started to relax, reassured by the clear complexions of the congregation and by the absence of strangers in the pew ahead. Mrs. Poppledore sat on the aisle, with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Rummage close beside her. Then came the pale horse, the Archimandrite Pyotru in full canonicals, the heads of several Rummage House departments, and — almost immediately in front of him — Mildred Bunny, flanked by two little Bunnies, male, aged eight and twelve respectively.

He sighed, rubbed his red-rimmed eyes, and settled back. After a while, his last remaining shred of apprehension disappeared. Half dozing, half awake, he dreamed about the Cadillac convertible. Even the sight of Canon Bunny, splendidly attired (as a sharp feminine voice behind him pointed out) in everything but the Triple Crown, did not disturb his reveries. And it was only when the sermon was about to start that he was jerked cruelly out of them.

"W-what's *that*?" gasped the spinster suddenly.

Dr. Vole sat up, all his fears returning. He could see nothing. No one exhibited a ravaged face or mutilated member. The aisles were empty. The lame, the halt, the blind were absent.

Canon Bunny was just entering the carven eminence of his pulpit —

"*There!*" cried the spinster. "I *knew* I saw it move!"

She pointed, her finger trembling — and, as she did so, a crimson fald-stool slowly rose six inches, moved nimbly to the left, and came down again. An instant later, as though experimentally, it rose again and resumed its place.

Full realization hit Dr. Manfred Vole between the eyes. All thought of physical afflictions vanished from his mind. The yellow Cadillac popped like a bubble and disappeared in limbo.

The Canon cleared his throat. "Dearly beloved —" he began, benignly.

The doctor saw that Constance Poppledore was leaning forward tensely. Then, in a flash, the memory of what had happened to the potted tea tree came back to him. Constance Poppledore, obviously, had not seen Mildred Bunny. There was a chance. A chance to salvage all!

He darted a covert glance to either side. His neighbors seemed to be ignoring him. Unobtrusively, his hand stole forward — toward the narrow aperture where Mrs. Bunny's plump posterior pressed against the pew —

"Dearly beloved, by a strange coincidence, many months ago I chose for my text today these words out of Ecclesiastes —" The Canon beamed. "'— To the making of many books there is no end —' "

Three inches from their vulnerable objective, the doctor's forefinger and thumb poised threateningly. An instant — and the Canon's wife would scream, would leap erect. Her hat's long, floppy ears would wiggle for Mrs. Poppledore —

A huge hand clamped his wrist.

"A pincher, eh?" whispered the bulky person in his ear. "Oh, no you don't! Not in a church! You ought to be ashamed —"

He did not finish. There was a dreadful hush.

Slowly, with all the dignity of a well-filled balloon, the Reverend Canon V. Bede Bunny was rising in the air. Two feet, five feet, ten —

At first, he seemed surprised. But, having been taken up, he was, if nothing else, quick on the uptake. At fifteen feet, his countenance composed itself in sweet humility. At twenty, he brought his hands together as though in prayer. At thirty-five, picking up forward speed, he leaned a little forward, in the attitude of the more accomplished seraphim.

Mildred Bunny writhed — and, momentarily, a tiny ray of hope gleamed in the doctor's heart. Then it, too, died. Her offspring were standing in their seats, waving ecstatically at their airborne parent. But she had fainted.

"O-ho-ho-ho!" the Archimandrite roared. "Zo clefer defeffission! Iss vly!"

Somebody screamed. Batteries of flash-bulbs opened fire. And Dr. Vole, following the Canon's progress in despair, caught Constance Poppledore's eye.

She waved at him. She smiled excitedly. Her mouth formed words. They were inaudible, but he saw what they were. "*Don't worry, dear Dr. Vole,*" she said. "*It's just my Id!*"

Triumphantly, she put the Canon through his paces. He dipped and soared. He banked and swerved. Climbing suddenly, he performed a perfect Immelman turn. With a *whoosh*, he dived and, flying backwards, hedgehopped the bobbing bonnets of his congregation —

And it was then, just as he levelled off, that the elder of Mildred Bunny's children accomplished that which Dr. Vole had tried to do in vain. He clutched his mother's arm. He shook it violently. "Gee, Mama, *look!*" he yelled. "Daddy's got *anti-grav!*"

Mildred Bunny regained consciousness. She shook herself. She staggered to her feet. "*Venable!*" she called hysterically. "You come right *down* from there!"

Dr. Vole saw Mrs. Poppledore turn her head. He saw her fix her gaze on Mildred Bunny's hat. Instinctively, he ducked —

For an instant, the Canon stayed suspended — but only for an instant. He started folding in the middle. Abruptly, with a frightened squawk, he fell.

Fortunately, the Archimandrite's well-upholstered lap was immediately under him.

Dr. Manfred Vole played no part in resolving the pandemonium which, at the Canon's landing, engulfed St. Ethelred's-at-Sea. In a daze, he watched his bulky neighbor vanish in the throng. Still in a daze, he watched him reappear with Mr. Poppledore's detectives at his heels, and take command. He found himself pushed, shoved, prodded forward. Finally, in a corner, surrounded by the occupants of the front pew, he was corralled. Not until

several minutes later, when the last protesting worshippers and reporters had been herded out, did he realize that the net of the Law had enmeshed them all.

Deliberately, the bulky man locked the great doors of St. Ethelred's. Deliberately, he pocketed the key and strode across the church. As he faced them, his eyes were hard; his jaw was grim.

"He's from the *FBI*!" whispered the pale horse right into Dr. Vole's left ear.

"Ooh, Secret Service!" bleated Mrs. Henry Rummage, in his right.

"An oudraith!" Wildly, the Archimandrite waved his arms. "You zecret bolice! Me, who is un-Amerigan citizen, you could nod arrest! I call my Gonsul! I —"

Mr. Julian Poppleadore perspired and puffed. "What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. "Release us instantly, I say! My congressman shall hear of it! My senator shall —"

"*Sit down*," said the bulky man.

Mr. Poppleadore sat.

"All right." The man opened his billfold and showed them a large card. "That's who I am. It ought to be enough, but I'll explain. Reverend Bunny here —" He indicated the rumpled Canon, huddling with his small family some distance from the rest. "— was seen to rise into the air without any visible means of propulsion or support, and to fly successfully for a considerable period of time. The natural assumption — supported by the remark of his own son — is that some anti-gravity device has been employed. If that is the case, the present state of international affairs will make it necessary to apply full security measures, and —"

"Why, how *exciting*!" gasped Constance Poppleadore. "We'll all be classified Top Secret, like — like a bomb or something. Although it really isn't anything like *that*. It's purely spiritual, and dear Canon Bunny tells all about it in *Peace Of Heart*. That's his book, you know, the one we're bringing out this week."

The bulky man made a brief note. "I'm afraid," he said, "that it may be necessary to defer the publication of that book indefinitely —"

Julian Poppleadore uttered a hollow groan.

"As for you people — well, we'll have to wait until we hear from Washington, except for this man here." He glared down his nose at Dr. Vole. "He's just a pincher. We'll turn him over to the city police."

"I'm not!" The doctor flushed. "I'm a psychiatrist. I came to be beside my patient, Mrs. Poppleadore."

Julian Poppleadore gave him a look of utter loathing. "We never saw the man before in my life," he stated flatly.

"Oh, that's not *true!* Julian's just being mean. If it hadn't been for Dr. Vole, and how he fixed my Id, there would not have been a miracle at all!"

The Archimandrite was spitting foreign objurgations through his beard. The staff of Rummage House was twittering nervously. Mildred Bunny was snuffling into her sodden handkerchief. And the Canon, ignoring the awed questions of his progeny, was staring fearfully at Constance Poppledore and muttering something about Babylon. Of the assemblage, only the Reverend Winton Furnwillie appeared quite self-possessed. He now looked up from a small volume of Emerson, which he habitually carried with him, smiled gravely, and in a loud, clear voice said, "*Nonsense!*"

"Huh?" said the bulky man.

"I said the word, 'Nonsense.' It was a comment on the foregoing conversation. I am, if I may say so, an authority on Satan, who seems to have been busy here today —"

"For Pete's sake, Furnwillie," breathed Julian Poppledore, "haven't we lost enough sales already? Do you have to go putting your big foot in it too?"

"*Shush,*" said Dr. Furnwillie reprovingly. "We must be practical. It is quite obvious that there has been no miracle." He peered significantly at the Canon. "I can assure you of *that*. And I can also say that nothing of a scientific nature is involved. If it were, the instrument could not be spirited away. It still would be about the person of one of us, where a brief search would certainly reveal it. Do you not find that very simple and very logical?"

Reluctantly, the bulky man conceded that Dr. Furnwillie might have a point. "But all the same," he said, "I did see him fly myself. How about that?"

"You did not see him *fly*. You saw him rise some distance in the air. There is a difference." Dr. Furnwillie pointed at the ceiling. "There, sir, is your explanation. Like so many too-ostentatious churches, St. Ethelred's-at-Sea is carelessly designed and poorly situated. It is surrounded by tall buildings. Its vast, high windows are scarcely suitable for proper ventilation. Under such circumstances, curious and powerful currents of air come into being — up-drafts they're called. And with the obvious lifting power of our dear friend's capacious vestments — Well, need I say more?"

Oh, good boy, Furnwillie, thought Mr. Poppledore fervently. *Let's get in there and pitch!*

"All right, all right, I'll search them." The bulky man sounded a little frantic. "But being picked up by air currents — that's pretty hard to take!"

"It does sound just a bit improbable," commented Dr. Vole.

Dr. Furnwillie smiled at the psychiatrist. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio," he quoted gently, "than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

And the search commenced. Not one of them had said a word about the poltergeist.

Constance Poppledore left the church two hours later, arm in arm with Dr. Manfred Vole, and in fine fettle. Julian Poppledore followed two paces to the rear, making disgruntled noises.

"Dear Dr. Vole," she murmured as they reached the car, "it was *so* nice of that big man to let you go, although I'm sure he couldn't prove a thing. And now let's celebrate! Julian can drive, and you can sit behind with me." She paused to waggle a flirtatious finger. "But promise me you won't pinch!"

Dr. Vole stood on his dignity, making no reply. He followed Constance Poppledore into the car, ruefully noted that it was a Cadillac, and edged himself into his corner, as far away from her as he could get.

Julian Poppledore gnashed his teeth and then the gears, and they were on their way.

His wife sighed dreamily. "Well, it was *almost* perfect, anyhow," she said, after awhile. "At least he didn't fall so very far, and I can't help feeling that I've done him good. Wasn't it noble of him to resign his pastorate, right there and then, and tell us he was going to be a missionary in Basutoland? He'll be so happy there, among the heathens. *They* won't mind Mildred's bats — that is unless they're cannibals, of course."

"Well?" grated their driver. "Where do we drop you, Vole?"

"Oh, but we won't!" she cried. "We'll take him home! He's the only one who understands my poltergeist — and he's going to write a book!"

"Who, me?" croaked Dr. Vole.

She stretched luxuriously. She closed her eyes. "Yes, you," she sang. "It's all arranged. I thought of it this very minute, because I feel so — well, so *at rest*, and so serene. I even have the title for it —"

A horrible premonition came to Dr. Vole. "W-what?" he said.

"Peace —" purred Constance Poppledore. "*Peace Of Id.*"

