

Young Authors' Club

JUNIOR DAY

(Contest Story)

THE BLACK ARTS

Original by Philip Dick

Avery Cooper had an Uncle Jeffery who was a book collector. One day Avery received a letter from him which said briefly, "Avery, I am sending you a book on magic which you will receive in a few weeks." This delighted Avery, for he had always wished to be able to pull rabbits from tall, silk hats.

When the book arrived he opened it as soon as the delivery boy had gone. One glance told him that the book was not crisp and new, but very, very old. The words on the faded cover were: THE BLACK ARTS.

He opened the clasp and turned to the first page where in block letters was written: METHOD OF CHANGING INTO A WERE-WOLF. He quickly turned to the next page where the words: THE WITCHES CIRCLE were printed. The rest of the book contained such charms and spells as: TURNING MEN INTO STONE, HOW TO SUMMON VAMPIRE BATS, and WAYS OF CALLING FORTH THE DEVIL. This was not exactly what Avery had expected. "But anyway," he mused, "I might be able to sell it at a good price." "However," he continued, "I might try one recipe before I sell it, just as a joke of course."

WAYS OF CALLING UP THE DEVIL looked the most interesting to him, so in a loud voice he intoned the first incantation on the page. As he finished the last, words there was a loud pounding on the door!

"Oh, gee-goshi!" said Avery in a stricken voice, and tossing the book into the blazing fireplace, he ran to his bedroom in search of a suitable weapon to combat the forces of evil he had conjured up.

Back with a poker, he opened the door a wee crack. Outside was the delivery boy who had brought the ill-fated book. "Nother package for you," the boy explained, and handed Avery a neatly wrapped parcel. Then he left. Avery closed the door and sank down into a chair. As soon as his heart stopped trying to crawl up his windpipe, he opened the package. There was a letter and another book.

He opened the letter first, and read it carefully. It was from his Uncle, and went like this:

Dear Avery:

I'm afraid I've made a pretty bad mistake. I've sent you the wrong book, a priceless eighteenth century manuscript entitled THE BLACK-ARTS instead of a book called SIMPLE PARLOR TRICKS which I had intended to send earlier. You will find it

with this letter. If you would please send the other book to me I would be very much relieved, for it forms an important part of my collection. Yours,

JEFF.

Avery turned and looked at the fireplace, and at the ashes of what had once been a priceless book.

CREDIT LINE

Five credits for Philip Dick,
Sept. 16, 1942.

Aunt Flo
139 Hagar Ave., Piedmont, Calif.