

HERE BEGINS THE TRUE TALE OF

Zorba the Greep

AS RELATED TO JON SINGER

by the Turk, Ilhan Mimeoglu. (Annotated by Jon Singer.)

There was a dwarf, by the name of Alberich,¹ lived in the woods. This dwarf was, after the manner of his relatives, a dealer in negotiable securities and gold; a knife with chocolate chips, or, as we say in the trade, a finely honed cupcake.

Now, this Alberich was something less than solid, having some copper somewhere in among the carats, ruddy cheeks and all, south-west wind, esquire,² at your service, and he was of a mind to enrich himself at the expense of his customers.

Customers, yes. Alberich was the only gold-and-negotiable-securities dealer in these particular woods, and many of the well-off sorts consulted him with some regularity.

Alberich was particularly taken with the notion of relieving one Belmont, an overly nouveau reesh seegar-stoking badger, of some of his reputedly considerable holdings; but upon reflection, came to the sound conclusion that inasmuch as Belmont's father had been a lavat'ry cleaner,³ there was probably much shrewdness within Belmont himself, and any such attempt would likely result in sadness. In point of fact, the Buddha was stroking his mustaches at the bottom of the garden at the time,⁴ and in many parallels a most distraught dwarf is rotting in Chillon⁵ to this day.

Alberich's evil brain next orbited around the pleasant thought of perpetrating an indecency upon the holdings of a moose of his acquaintance who had a manor not far off, a pleasant if simple type. Named Charles Edwin William Osiris Mossnose. "O," as he liked to be called, had much in the pot, as it were, but in contradistinction to Belmont, came of an established family, by which I mean to say that he hadn't done a goddamned thing to earn the money, and Alberich, probably rightly, decided that he probably couldn't have. Too ~~shabby~~ simple.

Hrrumph.

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1. See (or hear) Anna Russell destroy Wagner's *Ring Cycle*.
 2. Ruskin, John: *The King of the Golden River*.
 3. Me father's a lavat'ry cleaner
'E cleans 'em by day and by night
And when 'e comes 'ome in the evenin'
'E's covered all over wiv...
(Chorus): Shine yer buttons wiv brasso
It's only free-ha'pence a tin
Yew kin buy it or whip it from Woolworf's
But oy don't fink vey've got any in. etc.
 4. Very zen, don'tchaknow? Where was I, Fred?
 5. Poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon." You would perhaps prefer the Chateau d'if? Maybe the Chateau d'if&sf?

Mossnose, sitting at home contemplating his Sterling and his butler (a large squirrel⁶) sees no cloud on the horizon, no ants approaching the picnic table d'hote, and, in point of actual fact, does not realize that the mislabeled jar of "orange marmalade" which he is about to spread on an oak leaf contains a palpable hit⁷ of grapefruit marmalade, acquired by an unscrupulous dealer in gourmet specialties who must remain nameless here.

"FAUGGHH!"

His breakfast interrupted, Mossnose retired to his study to await the arrival of his Yiddish tutor,⁸ and there we leave him for the nonce.

Meanwhile the dwarf, idiot that he is, confided in his wife (a wonderful person of no small wit and cleverness named Michiko Twamoto) that he faunches after the hatrack's pewter marmalade pot with fine silver chasings and mother-of-pearl inlay work, which piece happens to weigh 450 kilos and is rather permanently attached to Antlers, the Mossnose ancestral manse.

Michiko, on top of all her other virtues, was an honest person of fairly strong opinions, and she wasted no time telling Alberich that she thought what he wanted to do was shit.

"This is shit, Berry." (She called him Berry when she felt that he was failing to live up to his potential.) "Purest shit," she said, with her mouth. "If you do this thing, it will come back on you like poorly made kim chi," she also said, still with her mouth. She further told him that if he was actually dumb enough to do it, she wanted no part of it.

Alberich made no further mention of the matter in her presence.

* * *

"So, 'kinchainik' means 'with a teakettle,' huh? Thus we frustrate idiom."⁹

The tutor left, smiling an inscrutable smile and whistling "Boola-Boola."¹⁰ Mossnose went back downstairs to consult with his attorney, a fox named Etienne Scherdlow, saying unto him, "I feel punk."¹¹

Thus Scherdlow was set to righting the accounts, straightway. The factor, you see, which the old boy with the grabby hands had forgot to add to the equation, was the fact that O. Mossnose was a direct descendant of the moose who had cornered the market in wheat and made the Mossnose fortune, one Plurabella Wills Mossnose. This leads to the fact that while O did not have sufficient whatevers to go out and do it himself, he certainly knew his limitations, and had a crew of ready troubleshooters helping him hang on to fine china and such. His dear mother had urged him never to reveal this fact, and his deep and abiding respect for the fact that she herself had tripled the size of the family fortune led him to take her admonition very seriously.

So it was that Alberich was unaware of Scherdlow sniffing along his trail like some Scherdlowek Holmes...¹²

6. How obvious should I get, Natasha?

7. Indeed.

8. Your HUMBLE and OBEDIENT SERVANT, Boss.

9. Hok mir nit kinchainik. Also R.A. Lafferty.

10. Singin'-and-dancing, Bite 'em anyway.

11. Famous last words.

12. I could not say, I *really* could not say.

It took some time for the fox to trace the path of the marching flatware to Alberich's door, and virtually no time at all for him to propose a most lucrative partnership.

*Unfaithful servant. . . .*¹³

At some length, Alberich began to notice that the rate of intake which he expected from this inspired joint venture was not being met.

Then his wife left him with a large aitollydyüso, which he had great difficulty trying to dispose of.

The final shattering blow came when he realized that he had been outfoxed, as it were. He was being taken to the cleaners,¹⁴ and could do nothing to prevent it. . . .

He committed suicide by wrapping a length of primacord around his neck and setting it off with a blasting cap.¹⁵

Mossnose was, of course, broke, and he chose to go out by gambling in the woods in the season of the year. . . .¹⁶ His mournful eyes now permanently oversee the action in the back room at the Blarney Rose in Montclair.

Antlers has been renamed "Foxhaul," and Scherdlow lives there with his wife, the lovely Michiko Twamoto, in grace and luxury, and has greeps crottled in wine every Christmas, in memory. He and the decisive, incisive, witty Michiko shed a tear now and then over times gone by, and on Guy Fawkes day they fire off a cannon, using a dead turkey instead of a ball.¹⁷

Scherdlow is well along in his studies, which are Yiddish and the marvelously complex insurance business, and is frequently heard to whistle "Boola-Boola." I don't wish to know that.¹⁸

13. The Band.

14. The 59-Minute Cleaners in Bond Street.

15. A grisly way to go, but it has the virtue of being quick. Bear with me, though, if you will. The worst is *by the way* yet to come. . . .

16. Well, I was bound apprentice in famous Lincolnshire. . . .

17. With the parson's nose outward.

18. Neither do you. The Buddha, however, is behind that tree over there, picking his nose.

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