

Round Robin #3

Foolscap 2008

It was a bright and stormless day. While this may sound like an ideal day to some, it put Thea in a testy mood. Sunny days meant she would be expected to do something "useful", ~~with her days~~. The sun was rather miserable, really.

Edd Vick

Before one of her parents or the family's ghost could find a chore for her, Thea wished herself off to Vienna for the running of the unicorns. She had heard of old-time days when people had run from bulls. She was sure that running from beasties with horns was much more exciting.

Buying a Choco-Eis (everything in Austria was capitalized!), she wished herself to a cafe's roof for a good look at the festivities. She missed the days when she could wish herself to someplace closed, but she could only go to a place where she had never wished herself before, and she was finding herself walking miles to get home after one of her jaunts. For her birthday the ogre had promised she could return to his underbridge, but she knew better than to take him up on it.

A roar went up to her left, drawing Thea's eyes to the street. A mob of brownies, leprechauns, and pixies rounded the corner. The chase was on!

She ran without knowing where she was going. She rounded a corner and saw a giant tree about the size of the Empire State Building. She suddenly noticed that she had no idea where she was.

Raenelle Sternberg

Kristin F.

Thea's Choco-Eise had melted in its wrapper, leaving a sickly-sweet goo that she licked from her fingers as she stared up at the massive tree. Without thinking, she wished herself to the top. She found herself in a bird's nest the size of her Grandmere Minnie's Pontiac Ventura.

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Kristin F. (cont.)

The view was fantastic. The smell, not so much. Whatever type of birds lived here did not have the Good Housekeeping seal of approval.

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I

Torrey Newcomb

Looking over the side, she could see that things were not going as they should. Worse, she hadn't looked as closely as she might have before climbing up the side. What had looked like yet another white-encrusted pile of feathers gave way under her foot. What she heard - and felt - next caused her to tumble backward in surprise.

Manny Frisberg

The sound of a humungous bird shrieking as it circled for a landing nearly rent her eardrums. Its shadow ~~darkened~~ darkened the bottom of the nest where Thea lay, frozen with terror -- was the mother bird going to crush her under itself? Or perhaps rip her apart with its claws when it discovered that she had taken the place of its chicks? And where were the chicks, anyway?

Gathering her wits about her, the plucky girl rolled to the left and pressed herself up against the wall of the nest, praying that the huge mother would somehow not notice her at all.

"How do I get myself into these predicaments," she thought, not for the first time in her life. Before she had time to construct an answer, the Mama bird descended into the nest, pinning her against the side. Sharp twigs dug into her back but Thea feared what would become of her if she dared make a move.

To her utter surprise, the bird carefully nudged her away from the wall of the nest with the gentlest of touches, then bending its neck to reach her, stuck its beak into ~~Thea's~~ Thea's mouth and regurgitated a half-digested caterpillar the size of the girl's forearm. Thea tried not to gag as it slid down her throat, but remarkably, the thing didn't taste half bad.

Manny Frishberg (cont'd)

"Kind of like chicken" she said aloud before she managed to think of somewhere else x  
leaving  
she would rather be and wished herself away, ~~from~~ the startle bird alone, with the rest  
of the meal dripping from its beak.

\* \* \*

EC

Wishing oneself away, it turned out, was not the wisest thing. For away  
is a vague and strange place, filled with crystallized ~~stuff~~ cough syrup, and  
smogbeams.

K. Anderson

"What did you expect?" purred a voice in Thea's ear. The voice seemed to be  
coming from a mouth with whiskers; Thea could feel them tickling her ~~ear~~. She  
considered trying to wish herself somewhere else, but something warned her  
that going even further than "away" would be unwise.

The whiskers continued to tickle, and Thea shook her head with annoyance,  
whacking the invisible whiskers-wearer a good solid smack with her braid.

"Where are we?" she asked, trying to keep annoyance, and fear, out of her  
voice.

"Bad question," purred the ~~voice~~ voice. "Because I don't know, and I suspect  
you don't really want to."

S. Mohn

"Now why would I \*not\* want to know where I was?" I thought.

"Because, small one, sometimes knowing makes it so."

I didn't really have any idea what the cat was talking about, but the fact  
that the cat \*was\* talking was odd enough. Just how far had I wished myself  
that cats were talking? And reading my mind apparently?

"Farther than you think." The cat smiled (no odder than the cat talking if  
you think about it). "And not so far at all."

K B Retz

"What?" Thea asked, looking around and wondering how the cough syrup had turned into the stakagmites and stalagmites scattered all around her.

The cat butted its head into her shoulder, shoving her off balance. Staggering, Thea reached out and tried to grab one of the cherry-scented pillars nearby. Her hand stuck.

The cat chuck~~led~~ed (it sounded like a staccato for of purring). "You are in your secret place," the cat said.

"I don't have a secret place," Thea said, pulling ~~for~~ futilely on her hand, trying to get loose.

The cat butted her shoulder again. "Of course you do, my dear. How else does cough syrup and smogbeans come together side by side?"

Thea stepped closer to the gooey pillar and peered closely at her hand. "You're saying this is all in my imagination?" She pulled her hand gently, watching her skin closely to see if it was beginning to come loose.

"Yep."

Thea snorted. "That's ridiculous. Why would I dream up sticky piles of cherry-flavored cough syrup? I don't even know what a smogberry it." She poked her free index finger onto the side of her stuck hand, trying to encourage the skin to disengage from the pillar. "Besides, my favorite cough syrup ~~is~~ flavor is grape."

\* \* \*

EC

Crystals fell from the vermillion ceiling, chasing the cat from the chamber.

Alone in the <sup>goo</sup> of her id. Alfred Bester's ghost whispered in her ear and she screamed.

K.F

Looking back on it, she wasn't ce~~r~~tain why she had screamed. ~~Mr~~ Bester was one of her favorite authors and the chance to speak ~~with~~ with him even in ectoplasmic form. was not to be missed. Her scream had propelled Mr. Bester's wispy form into a stalacmite ~~at~~

nearby. The Ghostly Author eyed her with disfavor.

It was looking like she wouldn't be getting an autograph any time soon. ~~However,~~ "Seeing as ~~she~~ I have you undivided attention, she said to her long-time idol, I will now commence to read the sixteen sonnets I composed in your honor."

"Nooooooooo," the ghost wailed, failing to get free of his cough syrupy prison.

Thea opened her journal. Just what she had always wanted, a captive audience.

\* \* \*

G.B.

"Please don't ~~xx~~ ask me to read your manuscript and tell you what I think," Bester's ghost pleaded. "I had enough of that while I was alive."

"But I thought you liked talking about writing," Thea said.

The ghost shook his head vigorously. "Amateurs who ask you what you think of their writing don't want to know what you think, nor do they really want to discuss the art of writing," he explained. "What they want is to hear you say 'This is the greatest thing I have ever read! This is so good, I should give up writing, because I ~~you~~ could never write anything to match it. I'm going to show this to my favorite editor and urge him to print it right away, and while I'm at it, I'm going to nominate it for a H<sup>U</sup>go. ~~xxx~~'"

"That doesn't seem very reasonable," Thea observed.

"Of course not," Bester agreed. "Whoever said writers were reasonable? Aspiring writers are the worst of all, but ~~you~~ ~~sorts~~ the sorts of people who go into writing are the kinds who don't accept reality."

"But writing reveals truth," Thea argued.

"Truth isn't reality," Bester replied. "Facts and figures define reality, but Truth is something else altogether."

"Be that as it may," Thea said, "I've never written a manuscript. I love to read, but don't particularly ~~xx~~ want to write."

"Of course you don't," another voice interjected. "A girl who has never visited her own imagination before? XHow could she write fiction?"

Theax turned to find a midget, dressed all in green, ~~xi~~ with a shock of red hair protruding from under his feathered cap. "How would you know if I had never vistied ~~x~~ my own imagination?" Theas asked.

The little man smirked. "You can ~~x~~only wish yourself to places you've never been before,~~x~~" he explained. "And you wished yourself here, didn't you?"

"He does have a point," the ghost said.

"How do you know how my secret power works?"

The small man snorted derisively. "It's no secret. Besides, we know things. Everyone knows the little people possess secret knowledge."

Theax ~~crossed~~ her arms and frowned. "I don't have to sit here and be insulted by an elf!"

The little man pulled a semi-automatic pistol from his pocket and pointed it at her. "I am NOT an elf!" he snarled.

"Maybe you shouldn't dress like one, then," Thea noted.

The small man's glare became fiercer. "I am a leprechaun~~X~~! Any idiot can tell the difference between an elf and a leprechaun. And I'm here to settle the score!"

T.VINING

↓ "Oh, get over yourself," Thea sneered. "For your information I have been to my imagination ~~x~~before, just never to this part. So much for you knowing everything. Also, in this part of my imagination, guns don't work, and You'all are my captive audience, remember?"

"Wha...HEY, I can't move," the little guy said through clenched teeth.

"See ya'," said Thea as she wished herself to a dusty corner under her bed that she had never seen before, "Whew. Enough of adventuring for now, "she panted as she crawled out and dusted herself off. "I need to work on expanding my imagination a little. It's off to the library for me." And she vanished.

The End