

WAYWARD FOOL

THE BROAD STREET MANIAC AND
THE VAGABONDS OF CHESTER ALLEY:
A VOYAGE THROUGH THE MIND OF
A 'HALF-HAZARD' ARISTOCRAT



By Stylés Akira



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Chapter One: The Making of a Man and All that One Could Ask

They rumbled into the shop fists-a-blaze in their mortal struggle. Slamming to the ground with a cacophony of crashing pots and broken dishes, he wrapped his unseemly hands around the neck of his nemesis and squeezed until his eyes began to bulge from their sockets, feigning that they would plop to the to the ground and roll about the sales floor of the, now demolished, potter's shop. His face was beet red with rage and onlookers could hear him muttering the strangest statements as he took to the work of ending the wretched life of the one who had slighted him in a game of Twixies¹...

Wait! Wait! Wait!

That cannot be correct. We mustn't begin at such an arbitrary point in the story, for the reader has hardly the slightest what is going on in the tale. It's much too soon wouldn't you say? One cannot go around haphazardly introducing episodes in the midst of their drama without disclosing the events that led to its cause, let alone those that ironed to its effects.²

If the reader will forgive me, the tale that proceeds is one of madness. It is told half-hazardly³ (contrary to being told full-hazardly), and in complete disarray, being upside down, downside up, outside in and inside out, right side left and left side right, east side north and west side south⁴...or something to that effect. At any rate, this story is the story of a man named Huggsly Woodborough. It begins with the tale of his upbringing and coming of age, and proceeds to the conclusion of his life's struggles whereupon he finds happiness. It is intermittently interjected with interruptions, as you will disinter. It is a novella of the most miscellaneous composition including an adventure, a misadventure, a love story, a stage play, and a long list of nonsense that is so convoluted that it is without proper definition or genre. But above all it is a comedy because it concludes with a happy ending, and most of all because it is loaded with an unassuming excess of folly, jokes, and logical humor. If one pays attention even the title is not without several slights of good sense. And so the story continues after our initial disruption and we begin the tale of Huggsly Woodborough at some arbitrary point in his life before we find our way to his beginning.

¹ Don't ask me what Twixies are, this is a story about a madman.

² Lead (Pb) and Iron (Hg) are two metallic elements on the periodic table being used here nonsensically with the logical syntax 'cause and effect' as a result of led being a homonym for the simple past-tense of the verb 'to lead'.

³ [healthy rather than sic] Misspelling of haphazardly.

⁴ The analogy breaks down because the author has no genuine sense of direction, hence the reason why the story is being told scrambled and out of order in the first place.

Now by the later stage in his descent Huggsly had retaken to the old childhood habit of always ‘declaring’ some thing or another, though no one was ever quite for certain what it was he meant to declare. He would enter a room and decidedly begin making declarations to the first unwitting patron he set eyes on. The exchange usually went something similar to the conversation that follows:

“My good man! I do declare!”

To which his victim would reply, “Yes, my good sir. You do declare what?”

Which Huggsly, in his infinite disillusionment, would misinterpret as,

“Yes? My good sir, you do declare? What!!!?”

Taking this response as a challenge to his declaration—which in most cases even he was uncertain of as to its terms of issuance—he would burst into a tirade,

“Why of course I do declare! How dare you challenge my declaration?! This means war!”

Usually this caused a grand scene before he was escorted to private quarters where he would be subdued, by a pair of strongmen belonging to the gambling house, into drinking a dose of lavender water to calm his nerves. After returning to the night’s proceedings in his semi-restrained state he would usually take up the conversation again with his next victim though this time in a much calmer voice.

Part 1: How Huggsly Came to Be

*H*uggsly was all about declarations. He had heard as a child from his grandfather

that in America they had designed a grand document on a sheet of paper larger than his entire body, which was a declaration of freedom from the rule of the British Empire, and they called it the Declaration of Independence. It was a fantastic notion in his feeble five-year-old mind; so full of ‘pulp and circumstance’⁵. To make a declaration of that magnitude—in denouncement of the greatest empire in the world for the freedom of an entire land and its people—was an impossibility beyond the scope of his imagination. And so the young boy fantasized about declarations. Day in and day out he would propose them, to his mother, to his governess and instructors, to the maids, and to the other children whom he visited or who came to visit him. His only shortcoming was that he did not have a cause of declaration because he was not want of independence, nor was he in any position to maintain such independence should it have been granted at the time from the Empire, from school, from his parents or his friends. Therefore from the early age of five he took up the habit of often prefacing his comments with the phrase “I do declare” with no other motive than the fact that he had heard his grandfather and father speak in this way on occasion and he thought it keen of wit. Beyond this, he had an infatuation with the idea of a documented declaration on a very large sheet of paper. In actuality he was more infatuated with the large sheet of paper than its contents. He merely developed the habit of making declarations as an indirect referent to the large sheet of paper, which was the true source of his excitement. He was obsessed in many ways with paper. The writing on it, staining of it with ink, its hardy scent, its ability to communicate information; the drawing of images, the drafting of schematics, but most importantly its use for transferring and balancing values and constructing and equating mathematical functions, and the keeping of secrets.

Paper and secrets absolutely fascinated the boy throughout the years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes and seconds of his childhood. This obsession was hardly a arbitrary occurrence either. For it was his grandfather, Madison Clarke Woodborough V, who first sparked his interest in the secret and the profane. Huggsly’s real name was Madison Clarke Woodborough VII, and this sharing of their names gave he and his grandfather a special bond that lasted all his life. Grandfather would always share riddles with him, enticing him to think outside of conventional logic. He would challenge him to compromise his understanding of the world in order to discover a greater sense of meaning. This had the inadvertent effect of causing young Huggsly to regularly confuse the meanings of homonymous words because his head was always spinning outside the realm of common understanding. Huggsly and his grandfather often called one another ‘Number 7’ and ‘Number 5’, respectively, therefore making his father none other than ‘Number 6’.⁶

⁵ This is the play on the term ‘Pomp and Circumstance’ from a line in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, used to insinuate a demonstration of grandiosity while simultaneously making reference to the fact that the document was recorded on a very large sheet of paper. Huggsly was too young at the time to understand the difference in terminology. This was neither the first nor would it be the last in a very long succession of verbal confusions that would occur throughout his life.

⁶ This child’s play terminology is a reference by the author to the *Wonderland* stories where anthropomorphic playing cards rule the land—the soldiers and the guard consisting of numbered cards in service of the face cards. Here we find the trio of Madisons

One day his grandfather showed him sheets of coded papers that he had sent and received during his time as a general in the British Army, which sparked the boy's imagination. He would sit with him and recite the great tales of battle he endured during the Napoleonic Wars. He filled young Huggsly's head with images of the dense grey sky of smoke filled warfare as he stood alongside his men firing canon, musket, and all manner of arms and legs at 'the enemy'. He spoke of dodging detonating canon shell and the shrapnel it left behind, and the time his horse was struck down by 100 shots of grape as the French Army advanced on his right flank. He was forced to hold his position and eventually routed the French with a trick he liked to call 'Oopsie Daisy'. The trick involved him drawing the enemy's troops into a trap only to have his second platoon ascend from within their ranks, which was possible because they had been laying in the muddy field feigning possum until the moment was right. He showed Huggsly his medals of honor from the crown and the proclamations of the family's noble title issued to Madison Woodborough I the Earl of Edencrest. And he showed him the title of Marquess that had been granted him for his service in the military. He told young Huggsly that these things were also secrets in a sense.

At this young Madison replied, "How so grandfather? People call you Marquess all the time, everyone knows already."

To this his grandfather replied, "Ah, yes! Such a sporting inquiry my dear boy! This secret is the type of secret which everyone knows, but the holder of the secret will never declare."

Now Maddy loved declarations, but he loved riddles and secrets even more. "A secret that everyone knows but one never declares?" He thought to himself. "What a grand idea!"

His grandfather went on to explain, "A truly noble man never declares himself to be so, he is humble, and he only acknowledges his titles in grace on the behalf of others."

Now this was a game that Madison the younger could enjoy. "Canons and Grapes! Oopsies and Daisies! Medals and Honors! Sharp Nails, Flanks, Warfare, Enemies, and Secret Declarations!"

It was all too much for his young imagination and he leaped from his grandfather's lap screaming through the house with his little orange friend. Huggsly was a curious child who lived a life consumed by his imagination. Now every time he saw grapes, or the mere word 'grapes' was mentioned he grabbed his furry companion and

numerically representative of the basis of a winning card hand in Poker; a notion that had not escaped young Huggsly in his childhood. The number seven is also important in its own right, as it is idealized as being 'lucky' in number theory as it is classified as a 'lucky prime'. Furthermore, the author has used this shtick to elucidate the notion that the numbered cards in *Wonderland* were not merely faceless filler characters whose identity was tied to the meaninglessness of their redundant numerical names. The numbers are brought to life in this sense as they are shown, conceptually, in the real world to be connected with real human beings with feelings, and friends, and families, and legacies. The three are not the embodiment of the numbered soldiers, for certainly such trivial characters are not strong enough to represent the counterparts of the Woodboroughs in the alternative society of Wonderland. This is merely a passive suggestion that the genius of Lewis Carroll is so pervasive that even the minor figures in his work are worthy of extensive development and widespread consideration.

dove to the floor. He would be frightened by objects in the dark that he knew deep down to be nothing more than the shadow of furniture, but he would tremble in fear nonetheless at the impossible prospect that there lurked a grizzly monster in the corner of the den in place of the coat tree or beneath the desk of his father's study where his best friend, the cat, Clyde, liked to snuggle for an afternoon nap. I'm sorry I think I forgot to introduce Clyde to the story. Now that we mention him it is important to elaborate on this figure, for the life of Clyde the cat was one so intimately tied to that of our protagonist, one can hardly imagine that things would have become of Huggsly the way that they did if not for the sake of that cat.

Clyde was an orange Tabby that was given to the Bloomfield Estate as a present for the newborn Madison VII when he was just a kitten. Little is known about his parentage, because the Woodboroughs received him in a basket amidst a plethora of other gifts which the maids stored in the den during the baby's christening, and it was uncertain who had given that particular gift. In fact no one even realized that there was a kitten in the basket until later on that day when they heard him awake as he began to 'purr' and 'meow'. To further complicate matters, the basket that Clyde arrived in had no name or dedication attached to it, it simply had a card with some barely legible penmanship that read "To Dream is To Wonder". As peculiar as this may sound, Huggsly's mother and father, Miranda and Clarke, later asked each of the guests that had been in attendance that day if they had given the cat, but all parties denied credit for the little golden wonder and the matter was subsequently dismissed. Never again did they think to determine where the strange basket had come from or what the meaning was to its enigmatic note. They did, however, find a sense of majestic intrigue in the contents of that note, and they had the cat's collar engraved with its letters in commemoration of its unknown donor.⁷

The cat was rich in its brilliant hew with luscious dark strips spread evenly about its coat. He had white socks and a white underbelly, with a pink colored nose and glowing green eyes. Clarke named him Clyde because it was a suiting name for an orange cat, and orange cats should always have suiting names, especially when they sport white suites on the front of their fur. The baby and the cat became the best of friends immediately, save for a few sporadic instances of tail grabbing and pouncing, they got along swimmingly...and hikingly as well. Clyde was a passive cat with a determined will to master his domain, which essentially constituted little more than himself and the field mice he would escort from the internal premises rather than killing. He was after all a civilized cat, sophisticated and full of wit as a result of his high breeding. He was kind and polite, always pleasing to his caregivers, and he was notoriously protective of the younger Madison. As they began as fledglings in life together, they grew with one another, and as Huggsly first learned to walk, Clyde would accompany him through the garden with his mother or the nannies. Clyde would run circles around Huggsly or teach him how to hunt butterflies, and fireflies, and toast flies, and waterflies, and orange marmalade flies, and tea flies, and biscuit flies, and cream flies and so on. They would

⁷ Clyde was actually a present from Huggsly's grandfather, who was very fond of secrets and got a rouse of giving things without receiving credit. Madison Clarke Woodborough V, the Marquess of Edencrest was a noble man of the highest order—tall and strapping and devilishly handsome. He believed in the idea of noblesse oblige, and he held a particular contempt for the arrogance he saw in his peers. He was a man of humble disposition and he raised his children and his grandchildren to be the same way, which he had been taught by his father and his grandfather. In this way the Woodboroughs came to be powerful beyond the wildest dreams of many, yet humble patrons of the needy, philanthropists of the public good, and friends to those in want.

never catch any, for Huggsly was too slow, and Clyde was too gentle to kill another living creature. But they made a time of it at any rate...the boy and his kitten.

As the pair grew older, with Huggsly being an only child, their bond grew stronger, and they would embark on great adventures together. One time they lay waste to an entire platter of tarts⁸ being prepared by René the French Chef, without anyone ever figuring out. Clyde sent one of the field mice through kitchen as a distraction, whereupon the Sous-Chef Matilda began screaming for the cat to catch the vermin. Clyde chased the little mouse, whose name was Edward, around the kitchen and out the back door, while Huggsly, under cloak of a kitchen staff uniform—imagine a four year old wearing the smallest staff uniform possible—nabbed the tarts and met the gang at the rendezvous by the rose thorn hedges to divide the spoils. Clyde would often get Huggsly out of his studies when he sensed he needed a departure by snuggling up to the governess while she was providing instruction so that she would pick him up, which was an irresistible reaction. When she got close enough to the writing desk where Huggsly was working Clyde would leap from the governesses' arms, snatching his paper from the table and Huggsly would chase after him until study was over. However, Clyde knew how important Huggsly's studies were so he only agreed to this prank every so often. The shenanigans that these two would pull were beyond mad. They would have Tea Parties in the garden, and eat lunch together everyday. At times the cat would sit upright as if he were a human. At times Huggsly would crawl on all fours as if he were a cat. The site was a marvel to see.

When they were young Clyde kept his residence in Huggsly's nursery where he watched over his companion as guardian. As they grew older they continued to share a room out of mere habit. Clarke and Miranda loved the cat also and they encouraged the companionship. Though at times they questioned the soundness of their parenting as they swore that they heard the little boy speaking in cat to the cat and the cat replying back. But it was a healthy friendship nonetheless, and it had gone exactly how Madison V had planned it, right down to the spilling of the blackberry pudding on the lap of Evelyn Crumpshell, whom he despised. Clyde did the deed as he was a non-human and could not be reprimanded. It was a warm summer day and he enlisted the assistance of a pair of Pilcrows⁹ named Brit and Bagley. They swooped down onto the lunch table and began stalking the main platter—a row of roast Cornish hens. Mrs. Crumpshell saw the pests and began to strike out at them, at which point Clyde, knowing full well that Grandfather despised the woman pretended as though he was assisting her by giving pursuit to the birds. He 'accidentally' tread his hind paw inside the bowl of blackberry pudding sitting before her, splashing a gush of the creamy delicacy into her face. Then, as his leg withdrew to run forward, he toppled the entire bowl over into her lap—effectively spoiling her lunch. Grandfather folded his head into his palms in what most guests present assumed to be dismay and he was accordingly escorted inside to the sitting room for relaxing—though in actuality he was trying his best to restrain every molecule in his body from bursting into full-out laughter in delight of the unseating of his nemesis from her mighty self-proclaimed throne of social rank.

⁸ The telling of this event is an allusion to Carroll's telling of the trial of the Knave of Hearts who stole the tarts.

⁹ These were black crows that became known as such because they were always there at the beginning of every conversation, not in the middle, never in the end.

Other guests were delighted as well. Crumpshell had a nasty personality that spoiled the day for all that she encountered as long as she was around. Even her husband, the banker, Henry Crumpshell, sniggled as the pudding splashed into her face. For he had taken largely to the habit of ignoring her very existence besides the visceral head nod and ‘Yes, Dear’ that allowed her the mental space to carry on her vitriolic circumlocutions as though she actually retained an audience of one. Their daughter, the deplorable nine-year-old Agnes Crumpshell, was all up in arms insisting that the footmen track down those wretched crows and place them on a spit. Such vile language for a young lady! At any rate Madison V and his wife Ophelia¹⁰ retired to their upstairs quarters under the guise of duress as the Crumpshells were led to their coach. When Madison V and Ophelia arrived in their chamber the servants could hear them bawling with laughter at the thought of the entire incident. It is a little known fact that prior to the afternoon’s proceedings Madison V had instructed the string quartet that under no circumstances were they to cease in playing. Therefore, when the pudding incident occurred the snarks and sniggles of the crowd could only be heard as a slight rumble beneath the sound of Beethoven’s Opus 127 - String Quartet No. 12 in E-flat major. Huggsly, who followed closely in his grandfather’s footsteps, was aware of the entire set up before it happened and when it all went down he stood with one finger in the air and shouted, “I DO DECLARE!!!” and the madness ensued before he went storming off into the garden to congratulate his crew of miscreants on a job well done as they chuckled into the late afternoon dining on a store of lunch rations that they had stashed aside in preparation for the tomfoolery, which included none other than Cornish hens and blackberry pudding to boot.

It had been noticed by the house staff at Bloomington as well as well as Castle Edencrest, Longshore, Ashley, the High Street Row of family townhouses and several other of the Woodboroughs vast holdings of estates, that young Madison often appeared to speak to animals when no-one was looking. Not only the cat, but it also looked as though he and the cat had taken to congregating with birds, mice, and chipmunks, and dogs all the same. There were two owls¹¹, named Percival and Malcolm, that came by at the same time every day to visit, and roosters and ducks that would follow Huggsly and Clyde around on the country farmland. The staff began to whisper about the eccentricities of the boy, beyond the obvious eccentricities of the family in general. It was said that the grandson was much like the grandfather had been in his day, speaking with animals and full of mischief. The old man was rumored to have gone mad once in battle, taking only a cutlass and a horse to the front lines and mowing down a thousand enemy in the face of certain defeat in order to claim his victory—this part was actually true. It was well known that he had a very odd sense of humor and he appeared to speak in unknown languages. He also had a way of communicating with babies, small children and animals that others could not comprehend. However, these foibles were forgiven, and never made it beyond the premises of their estates to the servants of other high houses, because the Woodboroughs, for all of their strange, and at times mad, tendencies, were respectable, honest and dignified. They took the greatest care of their servants and made certain that

¹⁰ The name Ophelia is used by the author in reference to both the character from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and, in a greater sense, the painting by Sir John Everett Millais with whom Charles Dodgson was acquainted through John Ruskin as a member of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

¹¹ This is significant, and odd because owls don’t generally come out during the day unless for extremely important matters, which this obviously was.

all of their children were well appointed with professional careers in favored positions in the Woodborough business empire when they came of age.

While we are on the topic of coming of age, as Huggsly grew older he demonstrated a prodigious aptitude for learning. His governesses grew intimidated by his avaricious thirst for knowledge by the time he reached eleven. He was fluent in French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Russian. And from these he had constructed his own Indo-European language group, which only the cat and the grandfather seemed to comprehend, and he called it Huggslian. He had already mastered the basics of calculus and was moving forward at a rapid pace into advanced theoretical mathematics, and he had superseded the current scientific knowledge of cell theory and begun working on his own biological and chemical experiments in his bedroom turned laboratory. Of course Clyde was his faithful assistant in all of his scientific follies. Thus, when he turned his hands and face blue and couldn't go outside in public for a week Clyde was also humiliated with coat of Azure fur that had to be cut down because the stains would not fully wash. Eventually his head governess, Mrs. Thinsdale, approached his parents and told them that the boy would have to be sent off, for there was no more that she could teach him. His manners and his grace were of the highest standard. His physical condition was beyond its peak for a boy his age, and should she continue to see him for academic training any longer, it would be her that would have to compensate them because it would be Huggsly giving her instruction on history, chemistry and mathematics. She recommended he be sent to board at the Lancaster Royal Grammar School, which had recently been given Royal appointment by Queen Victoria herself. Miranda thought reluctantly of it, but eventually came to the conclusion that this would be best for her boy.

Huggsly and Clyde spent the summer making mischief and running a general muck about the Bloomington Estate as always. There was the now infamous incident of the running rabbits that occurred when Huggsly and Clyde set free a cage of a dozen rabbits that Chef René had purchased from a trapper for making hasenpfeffer for the evening's supper. When the rabbits got loose in the house they ran wild with glee, and proved too fast even for Clyde to catch, and they began breeding in all manner of bookshelf and closet so that within a months time there were three dozen rabbits running loose in the house. Grandfather Madison V had been away on business that month and when he came to visit he somehow managed to get all the rabbits to hop to him and he led them out into the yard and set them free in the west woods.

In July, while staying in the townhouse Maddy and Clyde befriended a hefty bulldog named Walter who belonged to a nearby neighbor. Huggsly somehow got the idea to dress Clyde as a horse jockey, and he fashioned a miniature saddle for Walter and he orchestrated a gambling ring where other children would spend penny's to bet on his horse, although the horse did not actually race anyone, so the children never got their payout. In truth they were just happy to see the spectacle, and Huggsly gave it to them.

In the fall his parents saw him off to Lancaster, and rest assured that his mother shed a silent tear as the carriage drew away. But within a few nights Huggsly was settled in at the school and Clyde was with him, so she knew she had little to worry about. In Lancaster he aimed to make himself as smart as humanly possible so that he could transcend his human form and enter the abstract realm of the metaphysical. He had been reading Aristotle and was delighted at the idea that there was somehow another universe within the one he already knew. This, much like secrets, and paper eventually became an

obsession for him that would later play a major role in his life. He spent his time mostly to in the library and mostly to himself, taking after both his parents. Although one cold and rainy day, shortly after classes began he was walking through the schoolyard when he noticed a group of large boys picking on a smaller boy.

“Fudge!” he thought to himself, Clyde was in the room and he didn’t have any backup. He searched around. There were two pigeons perched on a street lamp, so he looked to them and gave them a sign. They nodded and he went forward to engage the situation. Now Huggsly was not one to make trouble by any means. Though he was mischievous he always meant well, but watching someone be mistreated who could not help themselves was something he could not tolerate under any circumstances. He was outmanned and outweighed. The central provocateur was a hulking boy with freckles and a great round potbelly named James Huddleston and he was flanked by two henchmen, Smedley O’Hare, and Winston Andrews. The crew had been notorious for terrorizing younger students in the school when no one was looking. The victim in this particular incident was a young man from Greenwich named Charles Anderson. Knowing he stood no chance with the bullies even with the aid of the pigeons, he thought of a plan. He walked in the midst of their company just as James was directing Smedley to twist young Charles’ arm for not doing his homework for him.

“Why didn’t you do it?” He demanded.

“Because you didn’t tell me to, class just started I didn’t even know you were in the class.” Charles cried with a face full of tears.

“I wasn’t in class! But didn’t you hear my name in the role?”

“I swear it, I swear it James, they didn’t call your name!” He shouted.

“That’s because I didn’t sign in yet, so why didn’t you come by my dorm room and ask me what classes I was taking so you could do my homework?”

“I promise I will next time, just please let me go Jam...”

Just then James punched him in the stomach.

“Don’t call me James! The name is Bruiser, get it?”

This was all Huggsly could stand. He came closer until he could see the cold mist bellowing from the necks of his the hulking bullies and from the tears streaming down the poor boy’s face. He looked down in despair for he couldn’t bear to watch. “What would Grandfather do?” he asked himself. Without hesitating, he walked into their triangle of torture. He knew that he would catch them off guard as he closed in on their ranks, and that their first reaction would be intimidation, despite his smaller size, by the mere fact of his audacity. His grandfather had taught him this and so he decided to play on it to his advantage.

He walked before them saying, "Well what do we have here? A little wimp do we? You gonna cry because you forgot to do Bruiser's homework here? You deserve to be roughed up. You deserve to eat mud don't you?" He reached down into the puddled schoolyard and dug up a handful of mud as he continued. "You're going to eat it aren't you?" and he turned to the bullies who were looking more perplexed than he'd expected and he said, "Well don't just hog all the fun boys, let me get a piece of the action." And they began to smile and chuckle at the sight of a bully smaller but more insecure and ruthless than they were. Huggsly turned back to Charles and held the mud just out of his face's reach and screamed, "Eat it!" Just then our two pigeon friends, who were named Stifle and Stomp, began descending from their perch atop the lamp post. As they approached he screamed for Charles to eat the mud again this time with even greater intensity, as he held it deceptively just out of his mouth's reach. He knelt down towards Charles, who was still being held by James' goons, to address him face to face, and he winked at him with a smile which caused the tortured boy to be confused, as he realized events were not about to turn out anything like he'd expected. Huggsly stood back up and raised his hand as though he was about to smash the mud into Charles' face and as he swung his hand downward, with the pigeons now over his head, he swooped it back up, he turned and he planted it smack dab into the mouth of James. Stomp and Stifle were just in time to drop unpleasantries into the faces of Smedley and Winston, causing them to lose their grip on Charles as Huggsly had become the master of the situation.

"Eat it!" He shouted at the James. "What's your name friend?" He asked the smaller boy.

"Charles sir...Charles Anderson." Said the boy in a pitched voice with his eyes bursting with gratitude.

"This here is my friend Charles!" Began Huggsly. "If anyone on this campus so much as touches a speck of dust on his shoe I will force you to answer to me for it. Understand?"

"I can't see, It's in my eyes! Please just let us go. It won't happen again, honest." Sobbed the overgrown coward, as his minions basked in the glory of Stifle and Stomp's superb aim.

Clyde witnessed all of this from the dorm room window, growing anxious until he saw his comrade handle the ordeal with such grace and finesse.

"Run along now! And don't forget what I said! ...The name's Huggsly...Huggsly Woodborough!"

At this the trio began to tremble in fear. For they had just been accosted by a member of the famed Woodborough family, which was known to have wealth and power rivaling that of monarchs. Worse yet, they were known to behave a bit madly at times and it appeared to them that they had ended up on the wrong end of one of those times.

The night went by without a peep of trouble until the next day Huggsly happened to see James and his henchmen following Charles and they seemed to be causing a ruckus. Upon closer inspection he realized that the trio were shoving other students out of

the way in an effort to make sure young Charles was not discomforted in any way, moreover, that no one touched a speck of dust from his shoe.

“Out of the way you hear me! If any one of you so much as touches a speck of dust on young Charlie’s shoe it’ll be the death of you! Am I understood?” Shouted James as the students jostled and stumbled over one another to clear a path.

Charles for the life of him was humiliated by all of this unwanted attention. But it was better than having his arm twisted in the rainy schoolyard.

Witnessing the commotion Huggsly dropped his head into his hand and said to himself, “What have I done?” He caught the attention of James and motioned for him to come quickly.

He rushed toward him quickly with a humbled demeanor that aimed to please.

“What will it be Mr. Woodborough?” He inquired.

“Listen James, this isn’t necessary.” Said Huggsly.

“But sir, you said...”

“I know, I know but you haven’t got to go about it like this. We can all be friends. Everyone here deserves to be treated with respect. You can be my enforcer against people who try to bully other students like you did yesterday. Maybe that’s who you are...the protector of the weak.”

“Hey there, the protector. That don’t sound half bad sir.” Said James

“That’s right my good friend, you’ll protect us all, and people will look up to you rather than fearing you.”

And just then in the passage of the great Old School House James Huddleston had an epiphany, and his life changed in that moment at the hands of young Madison Woodborough. He decided he would bully no more, and that his purpose was to be a protector. Smedley and Winston both shared one essential fate in life—namely to do whatever James said to do. And so they followed suit as he immediately took to the task of checking the wellbeing of every student in the hallway.

“How do you do? Is everything fine today? Can I give you a hand with that?”

Dumbfounded, the other students just stared in amazement at what had transpired, but they stared in greater awe at the new student, Huggsly, for his part in the matter, as the trio proceeded down the hallway with the mission of spreading their congeniality to the world.

“Thank you Mr. Woodborough!” Shouted James.

“You can just call me Huggsly.” He replied.

“Thank you Huggsly, and have a great day.”

Now you may be wondering how it is that the subject of this bazaar tale came to have such a strange name as Huggsly. Well, the fact of the matter is that his name by birth was Madison Clarke Woodborough VII. He acquired the name Huggsly as a very young child, when he would sit inside his nursery with his mother after taking his bath in the evenings. They would play a game, much like the games that all mothers use to entertain their small infants, called Snuggles & Huggles where Mrs. Woodborough would place young Madison in her lap and coax him to falling asleep through the following exchange:

“What does the Mama want?”

To which young Madison would reply, “Nuggles!!!” (Meaning ‘snuggles’ in baby talk).

And she would place her face into the nape of his neck and kiss him ever so gently; just enough to draw a tickle and the high pitched shrill of a toddling baby’s laughter.

And Mrs. Woodborough would respond, “And what does the baby want?”

To which he would this time reply, “Huggsly!!!” (Meaning ‘Hug me’)

And she would wrap her arms around his tiny frame and squeeze him tightly in her warm embrace. Not enough to draw the breath from him, but just enough so that he would know that he would always be safe with her in his world.

And after a good five minutes of this back and forth exchange he would grow weary and his eyes would begin to droop. And like all toddlers he would resist as long as his will could withstand the heavy weight of slumber now upon his head. But by that time the spell had been cast, and his mother would be busy applying the final soothing sways of the great oak rocking chair, softly creaking to and fro, as she put her child to sleep; whispering and humming some quiet melody from her vast repertoire of mother’s lullabies. Then, as she gave the final kiss goodnight, little Maddy would give up the fight, hypnotically breathing to the rhythm of her song. His consciousness vanished in the meditation of their synchronous beating hearts as the great oak chair would cease to perform its dance. The scent of her perfume, the lilac candle burning in the breeze, and the pinewood floors of the nursery filled his nose with pleasantries so that even in his subconscious he knew that he was home in the midst of that familiar aroma. Now, fast asleep she laid him in his bassinette and his mind journeyed to that other place where dreams are made. A master at her craft, the work was done. And she blew out the candle’s burning wick and left him in the basket with the golden tabby cat sitting watch beside him on the floor. She cracked the door and in the still of the night stalked the halls of her great estate to the chamber next door where she and Madison VI shared the world they had created. And they would talk for hours sometimes about their hopes and dreams,

their past and their future, and the things they liked the most. And before she lay her head fast asleep she would always think of her only son and crack the slightest smile at the thought of his voice saying, “Huggsly”. And that is how he earned the name. The name somehow stuck and it followed him into adulthood and Huggsly hardly minded as he deemed it infinitely more suiting to his character than ‘Maddy’.

Miranda Woodborough was a loving wife and a caring mother. She was the matron of the Bloomfield Estate, and she ran a tight ship with a velvet fist and an iron glove. Meaning she was strict on the outside but deep down she and all those around her knew she could never resist an act of kindness or gentility in the face of controversy. She employed the finest tutors and governesses to train young Huggsly in the arts and sciences, sports, and high etiquette when he became of age. The final part of this statement is of critical importance, as it became a point of great contention for her later in life, as to whether or not she had given him too much freedom for too long a period in his early childhood before she began his formal discipline. Though she would eventually discover that the case was not so. For Madison Woodborough VII was a free spirit, destined to his fate under all circumstances, and no one could have ever prevented it or made it otherwise. It made him into the man that he would eventually become. But that is a matter for later in the story. Now where was I? Oh yes, yes, yes. For now suffice it to say that, though he was a pleasant child by his nature, he was exceedingly undisciplined as a young boy.

Part 2: Miranda and Clarke

*H*uggsly's father, Madison VI, was an astute businessman who earned a monthly income of several hundred thousand pounds through his commercial activities alone. That is to say nothing of his investment holdings, let alone his monthly inheritance reaching back five generations to his great-great-great-grandfather Madison I. To put it simply, the Woodborough family, though publicly lesser known, was one of the most affluent dynasties in London society, and they liked it precisely like that—lesser known, that is.

"Beneath the view of public scrutiny and above the sights of common ambition," his father, Madison V, would always say.

To put it vulgarly the Woodboroughs were filthy rich, and when I say filthy I don't mean filthy. I mean they had so much money and lived a life so pristine that there are no more terms synonymous with clean to describe it and so people were forced to begin using antonyms. Clarke, as his wife affectionately styled him, was a very reserved man, quiet and complacent, highly agreeable and always one to avoid conflict. It was the perfect storm of events and the luckiest moment in the entirety of his life the day that he met Miranda, and from that moment they knew very well that they would always belong to one-another. But he had come into close calls once or twice with quite the loathsome lady of society anxious to dump her ungrateful, controlling, or clueless daughter off on some undeserved poor sap from a family of high breeding. And there was no greater prize, outside The Royal Family, in London society than one of the much raved about Woodboroughs; dashing handsome, devilishly charming, and polite beyond words.

There were ruthless women of high standing fighting one another for an opportunity to claim connections to the vast Woodborough Estate and all its holdings. Reports had gone about town of mice being dropped in the handbags of young adversaries, coaches being ambushed at the roadside, hair being cropped clandestinely, and someone even fed a flock of swans and drew them over the head of one young woman and her mother. The competition was fierce to say the least. But, much to his parents' delight, Madison VI was able to avoid making ties with such a clan of ruffians. One summer evening he attended the cotillion of Jane Hampton as she made her debut. Jane had been called on by Maddy's younger brother, Pierce, and the two had been a much talked about item in all the fashionable salons for the prior two months. You don't even want to *know* what they were saying in the unfashionable salons, but that is a matter for some other time. In any event, Pierce, of course, accepted his invite and he dragged his two sisters, Elizabeth and Priscilla, and three brothers, Eric, George, and Madison with him as a base of support. For should he lose his wits at the stunning sight of the fair lady of his affections, he would surely need to be carried away and administered a tonic; and the strong-armed manservants in the Tillary Ballroom would never do.

But I digress. Pierce accepted the invite and dragged his siblings with him—most reluctantly, Madison. Being concerned with more practical matters than the pompous pageantry carried on by the gentry of polite society, Madison withdrew from the festivities, reluctant to take his place in the quadrille, and he sat at his table half the night

secretly scribbling numbers and figures into a journal he had bought along with him. He had been studying advanced mathematics and accounting at Cambridge, and he was on the brink of closing two major business deals he was working on for his father—one with a railroad company in Belgium and another with a dairy farm in the south of France. He looked up and realized that hardly a soul remained in the dining hall as everyone departed to the ballroom. And so he walked out to the garden and stood beneath the gazebo staring at the moon, which was particularly bright that night. He could hear the celebrations and libations, the striking of the orchestra and the magic in the air. It was their celebration. It was his for the taking but he did not want it. He could have been the brightest star in that arena, but he dared not tread a foot. For his preoccupation required more serious matters. His heart longed not for the prim mannerisms of silly girls who only knew to curtsy at their mother's whim for fear of being lost inside their dreams with disappointment. He wanted nothing to do with Agnes Griffin and her lustful entreats, nor Melanie Riverdale and her wickedly demanding sense of character, always asserting her opinions of what was proper and what was not. And if Eliza Francis' mother attempted to pass her off on him one more time he swore that he would share with her his mid-day's lunch and tea...after it had been consumed.¹² "What would he want with such stupid girls?" he thought to himself. "And their stupid mothers, with their stupid notes and their stupid cotillion balls for their stupid debuts into stupid high society?" he continued; now murmuring to himself. "And what a stupid way of..." Just then he was interrupted. A voice spoke out in the cool dense night. And there, beneath the silver moonlight he turned and lost his way. It was a face, beautiful and determined, staring at him in the darkness and her cheeks were illuminated by the starlight as she stood smiling with an engaged curiosity that struck him deep in the core of his soul. For no other person had ever looked upon him that way in his life, and no other ever would again.

"I'm sorry, were you speaking to me? I didn't catch that quite so well?" He said with a confidence that betrayed his nervousness. For he could barely manage to piece that sentence together and force it out of his mouth. Should she enter him into a full-out conversation it might surely spell the end, he thought to himself.

"I said, 'Who is stupid?'" she replied, smiling with an amused grin in the corner of her lips. Her pale cheeks had by this point grown red and covered in blush, and her eyes were wide and full of night like a newborn dove.

And he was speechless, dumbfounded and lost in that moment. He attempted to respond to her to no avail and began to stutter, shocked at the thought that someone had been listening to his private rant. "Ssstu....sttttu."

"Stupid." she replied. "You were saying someone is stupid."

"I...I...I."

"Oh bother, it couldn't have been that important if you can't remember by now." She answered, knowing full well the reason he was unable to respond. She had caught him off

¹² He swore that he would vomit in her face.

guard, as she would continue to do for a very long time. Her look, her voice, her words were all exhilarating and full of mystique. He could smell the fragrance in her hair through the shadows. Her demeanor was refined, and not careless like the others. Her words were choice and elegant, and lacking the gross naïveté of pretentious social princesses.

Growing fearful that she had violated his privacy she prepared to withdraw and return to the party. "I'm sorry I've been so rude. My name is Miranda Hampton. Janie is my first cousin on my father's side, and so I was dragged to this ridiculous affair kicking and screaming against my will. I'd noticed that you'd been writing something all night long and when you came into the garden in lieu of dancing, I thought you might need some company. I beg your pardon if I've offended you. I only hoped you might have given me a moment of respite from all the suitors here tonight and their self-indulgent gazes." Now she began to grow nervous. "I've spent the last several months avoiding many of the bloated, red-nosed faces in that ballroom and standing here with you beneath this pavilion for this brief moment has been the sweetest escape that anyone could ask from the night of torture that lay ahead. I pray thee forgive me if I have disturbed your complacency. Please carry on as you were." And she curtsied with her head bowed low and turned to walk away.

Now, Madison, standing there like a babbling fool without his wits, felt a sudden invigoration of life and sensibility overcome him in that moment just as a thousand thoughts were rushing through his spinning head. She had noticed him writing in his journal "all night long". She did not even recognize him as a Woodborough and therefore was not hungering to make his acquaintance for the sake of social prestige. She was Miranda Hampton, the son of Sir Edward Hampton, a partner in the Belgian railroad company his father was setting up. She had come to the garden to avoid her suitors just as he had. This was no vile leach of aristocratic rank, or some stupid princess of a two-bit estate. This delicate creature that had come to him was led into the garden on that night by the universe. "What are you doing? For the love of god, speak man, speak!!" He shouted uncontrollably before he could prevent the words from falling out of his mouth. (I've never had words literally fall from my mouth but according to the story they literally tumbled off of his tongue and into the night air.) He had startled her, and startled himself even. She turned in surprise and he slapped his hands over his mouth in utter disbelief. Now, he was regaining his composure and before the moment could turn awkward once again (for up until this point this incredibly romantic affair had been little more than a series of awkward encounters for him) he spoke in his most debonair voice and said to her, "A man is not want of loneliness when he is in good company. I'm sorry; you caught me off guard initially. Please, would you stand here with me for a moment and enjoy this night?"

Finally her mind was at ease that she had not made a fool of herself and she exhaled her anxieties, extending her hand to him replying, "Why, it would be my pleasure. And might I ask, the gentleman's name whom I will be sharing this evening with?"

He leaped into attention from his debonair pose at the realization that he had failed to properly introduce himself. "Oh my lady, forgive me please. A thousand pardons, I beg of you." He reached forward his hand to grab hers and he bowed his forehead before her

extended fingers sweeping his arm across his waist, and he said, “I am Madison, the sixth of the house of Woodborough. And it is my deepest pleasure to make your acquaintance.”

This startled her more than his unexpected outburst minutes ago, and it sent a chill down her spine, for she had not realized who it was that she was speaking to. She had known that Pierce had been calling upon Jane and that he would surely arrive with several of his siblings for support, should he faint from the sight of her ever-loving grace or whatever nonsense the two of them had conjured up in the name of their mutual adoration. But she did not expect for Madison to show his face at the Tillary Ballroom. He had a slight reputation for his reserved character and a certain—Shall we say—lack of appreciation for the high shenanigans of society courtship. He had ousted the entreats of at least three girls that she knew of, but now that she came to think of it, he had done the girls less harm. It was actually their mothers who bore the brunt of the humiliation, though in several cases the embarrassment had done some of those highfalutin brats some good by checking their overgrown egos into reality¹³. Nevertheless, she grew excruciatingly nervous at the thought that she had exposed her hand to a man that had no desire to partake, and that she was making a fool of herself. But just then she remembered something and she remembered it well. And in that moment the magic in the air was allowed to take its course, as the stars aligned and in one of those very, very rare occasions fate took its proper place in the annals of history. What she remembered was that she was not afraid of being humiliated, and by dint of that fact she never ever was. Well by dint of that fact, and by ping¹⁴ of the fact that she had an incredible sense of self-awareness and censor.

Miranda Hampton was an immensely intelligent young lady for her age, and she had the sensibility and composure of a Gregorian monk. She spent her days mostly reading, to educate herself, and she was not particularly fond of the things that fancied the imaginations of most other girls her age. She did not enjoy the game of courtship in which she was expected to indulge, and as a consequence she was rarely forced to do so. Much like Madison, she preferred to engage the arts and sciences. She was reserved in her personality but had a highly desirable social charisma about her that made her the absolute darling of every room she entered. Unlike Madison, she had learned to walk the line between the outright rejection of the vapid social values that dictated their aristocratic culture and the ability to garner the esteem from a world, which she despised. And she was marvelous at it. Now, Madison was by no means outcast in that world, he was simply identified more so as one who preferred to run beneath the scope. A self-imposed ostracization, if you will. But those who knew Miranda would tell you, she always had something prudent to say, and she never said the wrong thing. She had been that way since the day she muttered her first words and all throughout her childhood. And so it was, armed with that bold confidence, her womanly grace, and her natural charm, she again abandoned her anxieties and she engaged his conversation fully.

They spoke that night of all of their misgivings toward their social milieu, and the self-important pretentiousness that dominated that sphere. They revealed the mutual sense of startle that they experienced during their initial encounter, and how they each had overcome those fears by the sense of comfort they felt in the gravity that was

¹³ It is not without a sense of irony that the words “checking into reality” are being used here

¹⁴ It was by ‘dint’ of the fact that she was impervious to humiliation—‘dint’ being used here as the homonym of ‘dent’—thus making it by ping of the fact that her self-awareness and censor were incredible—for a ping is significant but less so than a dent.

bonding them together. And they spoke of the future, about their hopes and their ambitions, and what lay ahead for their lives, their families, and the families they hoped to build. As the night proceeded those families that they hoped to build eventually came to be understood as *the family* that they would one day build together and they departed that evening with a mutual respect for one another that few in that ballroom would ever understand. For, certainly they would all live grand lives of superficial sophistication and have beautiful spoiled brats that would one day grow to make their time on earth as miserable as they had done for their parents before them and all those around them. But they would never find, in the scandals of their mistresses and the affairs of their indecent suitors, the thing that Clarke and Miranda found on that night in the starlit garden beneath the gazebo.

The next day he began to call on her, much to the delight of both sets of parents. For each set had feared that their own would grow old and lonely in this world without the joy of having ever found that thing that makes it all worthwhile outside of their work and their studies. Or worst yet, that they would be forced to wed some vile creature of a spoiled half-witted upbringing, with their clumsily overbearing parents, and their handmaidens who have never been trained to clean properly, and the ferocious beasts that they keep as pets. And they would find all too often the opportunity to visit their in-laws. The type that never find a reason not to arrive and always find a reason to stay too long...Nevertheless, I again digress. Surely the reader understands the point. But while we are here, let me mention to you that it is by no mere chance that both Madison and Miranda¹⁵ descended from households of sensible and respectable parentage. Because it is obvious that good sense breeds good sense and this notion will come into play later in the story, but for now let us return.

He called on her every week for a month, until the next month when he would see her two to three times a week and so on until it was the case that several months later they became inseparable, and he would see her every day. They had found love in their youth, and they were quite the item about town. The autumn came and they enjoyed the touch of the gentle hand's warm embrace as the sky grew soft with amber tones in the early evening and the leaves began to fall. Eventually the first snowy down tumbled gently upon their heads as they shared the very first of many kisses to come, without anyone ever knowing of course. Indeed because they were respectable and such an honorable young duo would never wonder off without their chaperones in pursuit of unsanctioned canoodling¹⁶, or sailing, or swimming or what have you. Of course not! However, in the winter on an unusually warm November day he called upon her father for her hand—much to his delight. Her father asked him what had taken him so long. He was under no pressure to rid himself of his only daughter, but he was so impressed by the wit and strong character of the young man, that he was eager to see him make her happy. The following August they wed, and they moved into the country estate held by the House of Woodborough called Bloomfield, which had been unused for quite some time and had fallen into disrepair until the previous year when Madison V had it fully restored

¹⁵ The story of Miranda and Clarke is an allusion to Jane Austen's Georgian Era romance novels. Though Austen's work preceded the life and work of Lewis Carroll, her sentiments of love and romance are very much compliant with his thoughtful and good-humored nature. In an effort to produce the most comprehensive interpretation of a Carrollian literary piece, the author here has borrowed from several predecessors, contemporaries and successors of Carroll himself so as to provide the richest context in which to situate Carrolls literary temperament through a modern lens of perspective.

¹⁶ Here being confused for canoeing.

in preparation of events to come. The newlyweds were ecstatic, and they delighted in their new life together knowing how rare the thing that they had found in one another was. He would teach her the inner workings of his business and they would sit in their spare time tending to their horses or strolling through their garden. She would play the piano and he would serenade her with his violin. Some evenings they would walk the wooded grounds of Bloomfield by night in pursuit of what, no one knows. But more importantly she would teach him the art that she had acquired of maintaining power by internally distancing himself from those that meant no good, but externally becoming the object of their interest. And they both learned from one another and they grew together. They had become best friends and their romance was the sort that is timeless.

The following year a boy was born and he was named Madison VII after his father and his father's father before him etcetera. This baby was particularly joyous, and when he came into their lives he brought a sense of unity into the house of Bloomfield that they previously dreamed unachievable. Their bond became stronger than it already was and their lives grew happier still.

There now, it seems that we've begun in the middle and ended at the beginning. As odd as it appears, it is in keeping with the promises set forth for this story. Round and round the voyage goes, stricken with ambiguity as we carry forward with the tale of our hero and the descent into madness.

Chapter Two: The Breaking of a Man and the Descent

*N*ow Huggsly advanced rapidly through his courses at Lancaster and before he

knew what happened had graduated at the age of seventeen. He had grown more mature, though still full of antics his stride was now full of contemplation. He followed directly after both parents, as he was a careful man who generally shied from the center of attention, but once that attention was his, he would light up the room. In the fall he matriculated, with Clyde by his side, into Oxford to study Mathematics at Christ Church and he seemed to be finding his way just fine. At the University he had one professor who spoke to him in a way that reached him more closely than all others combined, and his name was Charles Dodgson. Dodgson had authored children's books several years prior and he was as witty and charismatic as one would expect the author of such fantastical tales to be. The way their minds worked seemed to be uncannily similar. It was as if their brains spoke to one another when their mouths were not moving and no one was listening. They were two of the same kind and while Dodgson had no trouble holding the young man's fascination, he was equally impressed with this academic prodigy in whom he saw so much of himself. After meeting Dodgson the first day in class Huggsly immediately ran to the bookstore and purchased a copy of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. For he was well beyond an interest in children's literature at the times the books were published, but his admiration for the lecturer gave impetus to a sudden interest in his published creative writing.

Huggsly was enthralled by Dodgson's writing and his impression of his professor grew even greater after reading the Alice tales. The charisma of it all shocked him. That this reserved mathematician was capable of producing such masterful works of color and inspiration opened Huggsly's mind to a world of opportunity. Now it happened that by the mid-point in the school term Dodgson had agreed to mentor young Huggsly outside of the classroom under the condition that his studies remain up to par. This was no problem because as Dodgson would soon discover, one thing that he and Huggsly didn't have in common was the inability to apply himself in school, or easy susceptibility to distraction. Huggsly was all work and no play when it came to his discipline. It was a trait that he had earned honestly from both his mother and his father and he had no problem whatsoever exceeding Dodgson's expectations three fold. The pair would meet regularly to play chess, to exchange riddles, to analyze their literary pursuits, and to speak on Huggsly's future.

One fine Saturday afternoon the duo decided to meet for tea, and it so happened, by Dodgson's own arrangement that he was also to meet the art professor, John Ruskin, at the same time as Huggsly, and thus the duo became a trio. After tea Ruskin had a grand idea to travel to Bridgewater in Somerset and bring Huggsly along to the salon of Fanny Talbot, who had recently gifted Ruskin's philanthropic 'St. George's Company' with a donation of eight cottages. Now it just so happened that on this fateful day there was a large party gathering in Mrs. Talbot's home and among them were many great artists and thinkers of the day, not to mention Dodgson and Ruskin. Huggsly was by no means out

of his league in this company as he was wise beyond his years and was quite familiar with more than half of the faces in attendance that night, as he had grown up as a fixture in London society. But one thing he did not expect to find in the salon of Fanny Talbot was Penelope Prescott.

She was svelte with grey eyes and long, shimmering dark hair that stretched to the small of her back. Her face was like no face he had ever seen before and she was beautiful beyond his eye's belief. The moment he stepped beyond the foyer their eyes locked and just like that his fate was sealed. He knew that he belonged to her and she belonged to him, and if not her then he could never live another day of life, for he could never belong to another. That is what his heart told him and that is what he knew to be true. And in those stone cold eyes she confessed the same sentiment in the desperation of her gaze. She had been taken aback by his handsome brow, and the gentle curves of his manly face. She had garnered a reputation for her unmoved composure and that was now all coming to an end. And their worlds collided in that moment, and so the fact of the matter was that as that collision took its course, the entire world around them was beginning to fall apart. This was love like no other. Even the romance of Clarke and Miranda could not compare to this uncanny infection that now grappled at their tender hearts. This was a love that was dangerous; the type that could easily drive a man or woman to madness. And there in the salon of Fanny Talbot's townhouse the madness ensued.

Scene 1:

The Talbots' Salon—Penelope and Huggsly¹⁷

Setting: The Salon of Fanny Talbot. Many guests arrive and begin to mingle before the scene begins. Dignified men and women of society, including a good number of noble peers dressed in attire glittering with regalia, renowned artists, powerful business persons and members of the intelligencia fill the stage entering from the foyer set on the right. A limelight shines on one lady fair, Penelope Prescott, beautiful beyond the ages she entertains but does not seek attention. In an instant three unassuming guests stumble into the door amidst their own conversation. Enter Ruskin, Dodgson, and Huggsly who are greeted by the lady of the house and offered entrée into the ongoing party. Just then a second light shines on Huggsly. The room pauses and the background dims as the scene begins.

Huggsly: What have I done? Where have I come? Within this room I spy a maiden fair with my blind eyes. For even a blind man could see what a fool does not. Am I the fool pretending she sees me? What game is this that Cupid plays upon my poor and lonely heart? For I have seen the ending from beginning to the start. And I've not known this joy since Clyde and I once stole the tarts. And greater still is this sensation. A bumblebee my blood has taken. Swallow me and break me whole. For beauty here hath quaked my soul.

Penelope: I did not come into this place for this. I did not come to see his handsome hair, his loving eyes, his smile so fair, I think I've died. What madness have I fallen into? I see he walks at Dodgson's side. Have I tumbled through the rabbit hole? Is my Wonderland this place so cold? To see the thing I've wanted all the days of my short life...and not to know his name, this pain is pressing like a knife. I have fallen. Beauty, scar my flesh and make me hideous. For what is this world worth when I have spent a lifetime in the disadvantage of not having this stunning creature by my side? And I fear that I have lost already, for if it cannot be so...for if there is another. Oh, wait Penelope; let me jump not unto conclusion. He's only entered now and yet awakened a confusion. Dear Heaven come and break my soul for 'ever fair' shall make me whole, and if he cannot make it so, with my dear life I'll pay the toll.

The lights rise again as the scene sets back into active motion. The trio smiles, waves, and shakes hands, exchanging pleasantries with the party as they stand in the entrance to the salon, continuously greeting guests who are already in attendance as they carry on their conversation.

¹⁷ The stage play format introduced in Chapter 2 is borrowed from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise*, because although Fitzgerald was an American author who came to prominence during the Jazz Age—significantly later than Carroll with his Victorian Era, British sentiments—the random mismatching of literary formats appeared to be quite suiting to the notion of the haphazard story of a man who faces great challenge being presented here in the Carrollian style.

Huggsly: (Leaning into Dodgson, gripping the lapels of his coat ferociously) My professor, my mentor, my teacher, my savior. What have you done this day?

Dodgson: What are you talking about dear boy?

Huggsly: Can you not see? I am dreaming, yes I knew I was! You cannot see what lies before me? My destiny, my fate, has met me on this day. And you have brought me to this place that my dear mind might slip away. Is this a joke, perhaps a riddle? Am I now down the rabbit whole? For this fair maiden standing crosswise you can see her, say it's so.

Dodgson: Fair maiden? (Inquires Dodgson as he peers about the room until his eyes land on the object of Huggsly's affection) Oh Dear! Yes my dear boy. I ca... ca...ca...catch your drift now. I do, I do, I do. I as...as...as...assure you that this is not a game, nor have I played a riddle. My apologies I mean that the other way around. But at any rate, if you mean to inquire about the young lady standing there, yes indeed I see her. She is very much in this room, and she is very much looking in your direction. And you are very much cutting off my circulation by the gripping of my frock.

Huggsly: (Looking down Huggsly realizes his overbearing grip) Oh Dear! My apologies dear Dodgson I meant you no offense. It is only that the lady has my blood drawn so intense. And now you say that you can see her and she looks now at my way. I am dying now to meet her, but by Lord what shall I say? Are you alright?

Dodgson: N...n...n...no. Don't say that.

Huggsly: Don't say what?

Dodgson: Don't ask her if she's alright. You don't want to begin a conversation with the insinuation that something is wrong, if for no other reason than that if something should go wrong you could be held to blame. People these days are very much weary of superstitions and conspiracies you know.

Huggsly: No, no, no. I'm not going to ask her is she alright. I'm asking you are you alright. You seem to be sweating rather profusely, and somehow you've suddenly developed a stammer in your speech.

Dodgson: I'm sweating because you are standing so close and you've been breathing heavily down my neck for the past two minutes as you've become consumed by the sights of our lovely young friend. And my hesitation is an effect of me now being nervous on your behalf. Because the look in your eyes, countered by the look in her eyes is something I've rarely ever seen in life. I fear for you. For should you ruin this moment by some misfortunate happenstance or nervous act of buffoonery amidst all of this pomp of high society, I do believe

that it could be quite humiliating. I doubt a fellow would ever get beyond such a moment. To be humiliated in the salon of a well-regarded lady amongst noble peers and the most brilliant minds in the world gathered in one place. Then to lose the opportunity of a lifetime with the one for whom the affections of your heart are destined. AND to suffer this double insult in a single stroke...I do believe might spell your end. Well, her name is Penelope Prescott, good luck and god speed dear Huggsly!

Huggsly: Well thank you for your support. We wouldn't want me to be overwhelmed with anxiety now would we? (Now turning toward Ruskin, again with his desperate grip of the lapels) Ruskin! I am in dire need of your assistance.

Ruskin: Anything you need dear boy, what shall it be?

Huggsly: What do you know about Penelope Prescott?

Ruskin: (With a confused look of uncertainty and discomfort as he entreats Huggsly to release his coat by placing his hands gently atop Huggsly's hands) I know she's standing across the room right there. And I do believe she's looking at you. What did you do to her?

Huggsly: Do to her? I didn't do anything. I know she's standing right there. I mean what do you know about her in life, in society? Who is calling upon her? By God there must be a thousand suitors tearing ruthlessly at her doorstep. Who is her family, what are her connections? Who did she come here with? (Now in a delusionally lightened voice) ...Where is she going afterwards?

Ruskin: Oh, oh, yes of course! Ehem! (Fixing himself in denouncement of his folly) She is the daughter of Sir Sterling and Lady Caroline Prescott who own the great lumber yards in Derbyshire. She has not been receiving calls as of yet because she has yet to make her debut, being that her sixteenth birthday was just three months ago. Actually her cotillion is set for a month from now. You may be interested in attending. I would go ask her about it if I were you, she's a very nice girl, very kind and polite. I have no idea who she's come here with, but I assume the young lady standing next to her, Jasmine Hochschild of the Hochschild wine estates, I do believe they do some business with your family in France and in the north. She and Jasmine are best friends this month; I don't keep close watch of the inner politics of teenage girls and their social arrangements so you will forgive me if I am curt on information in that capacity. And where is she going after this? Well my boy that you'll have to find out for yourself. (Smiling, he taps Huggsly on the back)

The stage dims, the party pauses, and the spotlight now focuses on Huggsly.

Huggsly: Why oh why must I have been stricken by Cupid's arrow on this day? I was not prepared for any of this. Then again who is ever prepared for any of this? I

will go to her myself and introduce myself. If I can remember my own name. “Hello there, I am Myself. How do you do?” What would Clyde say in this situation? Meow! Yes I think that’s exactly what he would say. My goodness I’m taking love advice from a cat in absentia. Has it really come to this? Oh Venus, strike me low that if I do not succeed, I may not return. This is all too much to bear. I was chasing weasels and playing with mice in the gardens of Bloomfield yesterday. I want to have a tea party with the Pilcrows and the owls. Where are my rabbit friends? Why has luck abandoned me to this fate? I remember my mother singing me to sleep. The softness of her lips on my cheek always dealt the final blow. I was safe in that place. But I was brave to wander out to distant lands, away from home, away from my safety into the world of insecurities. Now they have gotten the best of me. For a mother’s lips upon my face is well indeed. But my chest now flames with a longing for another kiss, and the cheek will never do. I have succumbed to my adulthood and the passions of the heart have taken me into their deluge. It has roused an inner turmoil that I might never pray to surmount. I am defeated. Dumb, deaf, and blind. I can hardly stand, let alone walk across this room and utter the things that I know I must say. Perhaps the world will end before I reach her. No harm, no foul, all is lost with humanity and though my good intentions were in place the fate of mankind happened and I ended up not having to go...Inundated with these emotions, I curse myself and this preoccupation. Oh bother, here I go!

The spotlight dims and the room lights again with commotion. The spotlight now brightens on Jasmine and Penelope as they continue to gesture small notions of pleasantries towards the party.

Penelope: (Grasping tightly at Jasmine’s hand) Dear companion, tell me that you have seen this man before. Tell me you know his name. Tell me he is not with wife and child; that he calls upon no other at their doorstep; that his carriage is not overwhelmed with the scent of a woman. Tell me sweet Jasmine that he has not known the delicacies of another set of lips than mine own. I would walk with you into the sunset my faithful companion. You, my only confidant in this world besides my lovely darling Jade—dark as the night, the queen of cats. But you have surely seen this one about town. His face is unfamiliar but his grace is unmatched. Tell me all the things I long to hear. What is his name? Who are his confidants? With what purpose has he come to this salon? (In a similarly delusional tone) More importantly where is he going after?

Jasmine: (Pulling her hand from Penelope’s deathly grip) I do not know my sweet. I do not know him at all. (Now squinting her eyes to be certain). I have seen him once or twice I do believe. He’s here with John Ruskin and Charles Dodgson. That means he must be brilliant. Yes indeed, I could never forget those broad shoulders. I know! He attends Oxford. He is a friend of Charles Anderson who is currently calling on Eleanor Winthrop. I do not know his name nor his temperament. I would tell you that we could ask Eleanor but I doubt you would survive the wait. Besides it looks as though he is heading our direction.

The light now dims as all the party pauses. The spotlight brightens on Penelope as she grows nervous in anticipation of Huggsly's move forward.

Penelope: Is there no salvation? What have I done to deserve this bitter end? My life is swirling to a rapid close and now I think the fates will take me down into the house of Hades. This rabbit hole has led me nothing but grief. For with neither sight nor sound of intelligence as to the desire of my eye he marches now in my direction. I will be made into a fool here in this salon before these noble lords and ladies of society. I will be the mockery of the British Empire! Would that I had gouged my eyes from my head rather than to have played the deadly game of glances with this handsome man. And beauty, what have you gotten me? Trouble spells uncertainty in the land of the weary. My precious Jade what would you have me do in this dire circumstance? Oh my, the polka dots have arrived to color my dull vision. I am surely losing my senses. Have I gone mad? What have you done to me you nameless Roman god? Might I depart from this encounter with a shred of mortal dignity or will this be my last? And if it is my last then I will face it without fear. All of my childhood hopes and dreams are now shattered! I wanted to be a princess and a ruler like Queen Victoria. Now I am a feast for the Jackals on the Serengeti planes. Has Dodgson brought him here to sever my head for the Queen of Hearts? Was it not enough for him to fill my early years with fantasy and laughter? I was charmed by all his antics now he brings me nothing but misery. And is not Ruskin also held accountable as a guilty party in the debacle that will end my mortal days? For it was he who first introduced this prankster Lewis Carroll into this salon where Jasmine and I would lounge on weekend afternoons in an effort to stimulate our minds apart from the drab of civil poppycock that young girls of society are expected to partake in these days. Corrupted this sacred sanctuary and transformed it into a den of iniquity. These culprits are to blame. Will the vultures not feast on my rotting flesh until even the desert flea cannot draw nutrients from the marrow of my bare bones? I ask you why have you descended upon me with this *momento mori* in the midst of my fair youth. Damned to lie with the dogs in the street.¹⁸ What will they say became of her? That she was strangled by her pride in a Saturday salon? But No! I will not fear you my champion. Come hither and I will make your acquaintance with grace. Because I suppose I have no choice.

The lights rise again and Huggsly crosses the stage away from Ruskin and Dodgson towards Penelope and the two arrive at the moment of truth.

Huggsly: Hello, how do you do? My name is Myself? I mean Myself is my name. Wait one second. (He bows his head to gather his composure with a deep breath and turns back to her and rises to the occasion) Hello, my name is Madison Clarke,

¹⁸ Here Penelope is alluding to the Biblical story of Jezebel who was given her *fait accompli* as a result of her transgressions. The passage overall takes a dramatically more sober tone as the speaker experiences her *momento mori*, contemplating the meaning of her life which she fancies must soon come to an end as she will be humiliated to death by her inability to respond to the invites Huggsly, the young man who has captured her attention.

the seventh of the house Woodborough. Forgive me for being forward, but I have not had the chance to make your acquaintance. May I ask how you do, as well as your name and that of your lovely friend?

Both Penelope and Jasmine stand in utter shock, just short of their jaws dropping from their face. They are mesmerized by his charm and the fact that he is a Woodborough and they begin speechless and then baffled.

Penelope: Well, it is an acquaintance to make your pleasure, I'm Jasmine Prescott and she is Penelope Hochschild...I mean, it is a Jasmine to make your Penelope, I am pleasure and she is acquaintance...wait one second. (Gritting her teeth, she turns towards Jasmine who has now wide eyed with her jaw dropped fully in disbelief with a forced smile. She turns back to him and also rises to the occasion extending her hand.) It is a greatest pleasure to meet you. This is my dearest friend Jasmine.

Jasmine: (Still in shock with her mouth wide open until she receives an elbow in the arm from Penelope at which point she gathers herself extending her hand) I am Jasmine and the pleasure is all mine.

He takes each of their hands and he bows as they curtsy. Jasmine signals that she is going to step off to engage with the remainder of the party while the two talk.

Huggsly: I'm sorry I did not introduce myself sooner. I was busy dispensing with the pleasantries required upon entrance.

Penelope: I noticed. I was watching you. (She swings her fingers to her mouth in embarrassment in realization of what she has just said)

Huggsly: And I was nervous because I was watching you watching me and I didn't know what to do.

Penelope: (At his confession she drops her guard) How is it that I've never crossed paths with you before?

Huggsly: Because I don't go out much. I'm not quite the young man about town. You've probably seen my cousins out often. The Woodborough clan is always to be found at an affair. But then I suppose it's also because you aren't quite the girl about town.

Penelope: How do you know that?

Huggsly: Because if you were you would belong to another by now, and this conversation wouldn't happen.

Penelope: What makes you say that?

Huggsly: Because you aren't the flirtatious type.

Penelope: And how do you know that?

Huggsly: Because you told me when I looked into you steel grey eyes.

Her heart flutters and convulses ever so slightly as she gasps for breath. Just then George Talbot, the man of the house, placed a warm embrace upon both of their shoulders and spoke out loud to the party.

George: Come one come all into the study. I have now a great machine I'd like you all to see.

The party shuffled into the grand study of the Talbot's country estate¹⁹. There is massive confusion as everyone on stage swarms in one common direction back and forth. Huggsly and Penelope are at times drawn apart and in other instances forced into one another's close embrace as a result of their efforts to remain in contact amidst the shoving and chaos. The set changes in the background signaling that they have finally meandered into the study.

George: My dear friends we have amongst us this lovely afternoon a great company. Some of the most brilliant minds in all the world gather here in this room, many of you men of letters who will have a particular appreciation for the phenomenal contraption I am about to reveal to you. My friends witness the Remington No. 2 Typewriter with its new and improved QWERTY layout. This machine will revolutionize the work of the modern writer as it is being produced on a large scale so that every author will have the power of print at the palm of his hands!

He removes the fabric cover to unveil the device and they all gather around in awe. He sits down before the machine, sets in a sheet of paper and begins typing a letter.

Everyone: Oooohhhh....Ohhhhhhhh....Aaaaaahhhh!!!

George: Incidentally there is a secret to this contraption and I'll give you a hint.

Both Charles and Huggsly can be seen becoming aroused with giddiness at the thought of a riddle.

George: You ask of me there are but five. From top we stem but not most high. Used to convey, each one our kind. A dark impression left behind. (And he turns to the crowd with a great grin on his face like a Cheshire Cat)

¹⁹ Which had previously been the residents of Fanny's parents John and Mary Browne.

Voice No. 1: Fingers!

Voice No. 2: Toes!

George: No. No. No. Not fingers, not toes, anyone else?

Dodgson: Words!

Everyone: Aaaah!

George: (Swiftly losing the smile from his face in fascination) Who said that? Dodgson? Come forward my dear friend, come forward. You are correct. Now might I challenge you before the room, which I'm sure is no challenge for your brilliant mind at all, to tell us why the answer is words.

Dodgson: (Sliding quietly to the front of the crowd) The answer is found in the reverse of the riddle. A dark impression left behind...used to convey, each one our kind signifies that they are words because the machine uses black ink to *leave dark impressions* in the shape of letters to create *words*, which are *used to convey* meaning. You ask of me there are but five. Meaning there are *five words in specific* of interest that we are considering from this contraption, which can produce every single word in the English language. And finally—From top we stem but not most high. The final part of the riddle tells us that these five words *must be typed from the top row of letters, which is not the highest row on the keyboard as there is a row of numbers above. Therefore there are but five words that are able to be typed using only the top row of letters.*

Everyone claps and congratulates Dodgson for his genius.

George: Very impressive my boy! Very impressive indeed! Now can you tell me what those five words are?

Dodgson: I do not know at the moment.

Crowd: Awwwww!!!!

Dodgson: (Raising his hand to his audience) But I can figure it out with time. But I have some thing better. I have a trick of my own now waiting up my sleeve.

Crowd: Oooohhhhhh!!!

Dodgson: I would like to reveal to you all something rarely spotted in the lime lite of society because it is always hard at work in the library at Oxford making the most of candle and fire, paper and ink, number and letter. This thing that I reveal to you is not a contraption, but a man! He is my apprentice and understudy, Huggsly Woodborough. Come forward and introduce yourself!

Huggsly can tell you all exactly what the five words are in no time. Just ask him.

Huggsly: (Still smiling in excitement at his mentor's genius, he suddenly realizes that the attention has all been averted to him and he is now expected to perform. A ghastly look of startle comes over his face) Ma...mamama...me? (Taking a deep breath) Very well then!

Crowd: Yay!!!!!! (Cheering and Clapping)

George: (Leaning forward quietly to Dodgson) Are you sure the boy can do this?

Ruskin: Charles what are you doing? Are you sure the boy can do this?

Huggsly: Charles what are you doing how am I supposed to do this?

Dodgson: I'm sure! I'm sure! He can do it! (To Huggsly) You'll be fine. You can do it!

George: Very well then! What are the five words of which your mentor speaks? You have sixty seconds starting now! (He turns over a large hourglass taken from the desk and sits it atop so everyone can see as he begins his stopwatch looking down into his palm)

Huggsly: (Staring swiftly at the keyboard) Perpetuity!

George: Good! ...Fifty seconds!

Huggsly: Prerequisite!

George: Good! ...Forty-five seconds!

Huggsly: Proprietor!

George: Good! ...Thirty seconds! Two words left!

Huggsly: Repertoire!

George: Good! ...Twenty seconds! ...Ten second!

Just that instant he turns and looks at Penelope and smiles with a reassuring glance. Her eyes say to him "You can do it." He blinks and it appeared that time has stopped. She realizes that he already has the answer. A spotlight shine on each of them from across the room as the rest of the room dims in silence but is still in motion.

Huggsly: Is this what I came here for? To find happiness in this house, in this room, on this day? It feels as though the clocks have stopped and something is calling me. I think that fate has played its hand at last and I shall answer it.

Penelope: Oh thank the Heavens for denying my requests for my premature demise. Oh thank Jasmine for dragging me out of the house this morning. Oh thank Dodgson for bringing this into my life. Whither would I be without this moment. It seems to last forever, and yet forever never ends.

The lights undim and the crowd becomes audible again.

George: ...Five seconds!

Huggsly: Typewriter!

George: Great Scott my boy you've done it!

Crowd: Yaaayyyyy!!!!!!

Everyone cheers and congratulates Huggsly though his eyes are fixed on one thing in the room, and his concentration proves impossible to shake.

Dodgson: You did it! I knew you could do it my boy!

Ruskin: How did you know he could do it?

Dodgson: I didn't but the boy is a genius, I wouldn't have sent him if he didn't stand a chance.

Huggsly signals to Penelope to duck beneath the jeering crowd in order to move closer to one another. They duck and they pop up in exchange of one another's place when their heads emerge. They try again only to end up farther apart. Finally they duck their heads down and come up face to face. They hug and celebrate together and the scene dims as the night proceeds. Exit Scene.

Scene 2: The Sitting Room at Evergreen— The Calling and The Falling

Setting: The Prescott Estate called Evergreen in Derbyshire. The butler approaches the front door and opens it revealing a footman²⁰ on the steps to announce that Madison Woodborough VII has just arrived to call upon Penelope Prescott and her chaperon, Mother Prescott (her paternal grandmother). It is a late Sunday morning and they have agreed to go strolling upon Carsington Water. Three weeks have passed since the day at the Talbot's salon and this is the third call that Madison has made at the Prescott estate. Her parents were already delighted by the boy's last name but upon meeting him they were ecstatic to have him call upon their daughter. Even mother Prescott has grown fond of our protagonist in this short time.

The trio has gathered in the sitting room in preparation for the day's outing. Sir Sterling and Lady Caroline are headed to London for the day and are also preparing their departure. In the midst of all of this they were also discussing the final touches of Penelope's cotillion.

Butler: Sir, the Marquess of Edencrest, Madison Woodborough VII has a rived to call on young Penelope and Mother Prescott, for the days outing to Carsington Water.

Sterling: Oh Splendid! Darling! Huggsly is here!

Penelope: Oh! Daddy what should I wear the teal or the blue?

Sterling: My favorite color is gold. Yellow and blue make green, so wear the teal.

Caroline: Oh Dearest you can't possibly go out wearing teal, you know your father knows absolutely nothing about fashion. You can't listen to a word he says. It's much too cold for teal, it will offset in a way that isn't complementary to your eyes. Why don't you try something grey? Oh but then again it's November. One cannot go about wearing grey in November it just isn't acceptable on any level. Perhaps you should try something rose. But rose isn't at all your color especially on a Sunday, unless we were in the city, but you'll be by the lakeside so rose is definitely out. Heaven forbid a bull or some sort of ferocious bovine should see you, unless Huggsly is a matador amongst his many talents, you'd be in for quite a run for your money. Like they do in Spain.

Sterling: (Staring into his important documents with his spectacles resting on his nose)
Darling there aren't any bulls in Carsington.

Caroline: Oh hush Sterling! You're never any fun! Remember we saw the bulls running in Pamploma at the festival of San Vermin...

²⁰ Alluding to the fish and the frog from *Wonderland*.

Sterling: The Festival of San Fermín darling.

Caroline: Oh what do you know! Anyways, they do have elk and deer in Carsington and you might become an easy target if you wear anything with red in it. I absolutely forbid it. No rogue elk is ever going to take my darling away from me. But as I was saying...grey is unacceptable and rose will never do. Why don't you try the olive dearie? The olive compliments your skin phenomenally. Plus it's autumn, and one should always incorporate earth tones in the autumn. Here take this paisley scarf. Oh fudge! I can't have you wearing paisley because the white silk scarves that accent the midnight blue chiffon dresses of the cotillion party have paisley embroidery in them. Here take this tartan. Tartan and olive that will be delightful!

Enter Huggsly. Penelope slips up the stairs to finish getting dressed.

Sterling: Huggsly my boy, how have things been?

Huggsly: Quite excellent sir.

Sterling: Good, good, good. Always good to see a man of high stock in fine health and good spirits.

Huggsly: All men are of excellent stock sir. It is only that some of us have greater opportunities to make use of the stock we are dealt.

Sterling: Excellent, excellent my boy! You see that darling? The boy has his head on his shoulders. Humility. A man that has humility will always put the well being of others first. Only such a man is worthy of my daughter's company.

Huggsly: I thank you sir. Though I could never consider myself worthy of her company, it is a privilege that I behold and cherish nonetheless. And I am grateful for your words.

Mother Prescott: My dear boy you have to come sit next to me and tell me how your week was at Oxford?

Huggsly: Everything is going swimmingly Mother Prescott. Did you get my letter?

Mother Prescott: I absolutely did, and the basket of apricots, such a delight.

Caroline: The apricots were so sweet Madison, how do you find them of such high quality this late in the year?

Huggsly: They were imported from Naples mam. They're always best this time of year from that region.

Caroline: I always find it fashionable to consume fruit that is out of season when it's imported. It's such a choice display. So bold, and full of bravado. It isn't ostentatious like serving delicacies at high tea. Sophia Winthrop is always serving some Eastern delicacy at high tea. It isn't fully in bad taste but I seem to find it a bit parvenu if you will. And I don't see the point of having biscuits aside of delicacies. A biscuit is a thoughtful and meaningful British food. When we took our trip to India last year we always had biscuits with our tea in the afternoon, but only after noon, never in the morning. It was summer time and Mother Prescott never allows us biscuits with our breakfast tea.²¹

Mother Prescott: It isn't civil in the summer time to have biscuits with one's tea in the morning, especially under the hot Indian sun. We stayed in the Raja's palace in Bombay. They always gave us toast with orange marmalade and it was so delightful. Caroline and I would have much preferred raspberry but orange was perfectly suiting considering.

Huggsly: I wouldn't hear of it had I been there. My ladies dining on orange marmalade in the Indian summer heat in the morning? Why I'm surprised Sir Sterling didn't toss someone from a balcony window.

Caroline: Believe me darling he tried.

Sterling: I only meant to scare the chap I wasn't going to actually toss someone to their death over the flavor of the marmalade. Besides, if I had wanted him finished he'd be finished.

Penelope: (From the upstairs hall heard from off-stage) Oh mother the tartan isn't contrasting with the olive well. What ever will I do?

Caroline: (To Penelope) Huggsly is here Penelope. He and Mother are waiting on you. I'll be right up! (To the sitting room party) Oh the things a mother must do for her child. (To Penelope) Coming darling!

Exit Caroline stage left up the stairs.

Mother Prescott: Speaking of raspberries, you absolutely have to stay for dinner tonight Huggsly. I've instructed the chef to prepare a roast quail with sautéed artichoke hearts for the first course, flamed lamb chops for the second course with seared red potatoes, and a raspberry pudding for desert.

²¹ The 'fashionable tea' concept is a literary motif derived from Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Though significantly younger than Lewis Carroll, Wilde was a Victorian literary contemporary who died at an early age just two years after him. The motif is in good fitting with the Carrollian nonsense style because although placed within the context of a rational conversation the absurdities of butter and biscuits as being fashionable or not is similar to the sentiment's expressed by Carroll's Hatter at the Tea Party with the March Hare and the Dormouse.

Huggsly: (Staring at the audience with a knowing grimace) How could I ever decline?

Mother Prescott: Very well then, it will all be splendid.

Huggsly: Oh I nearly forgot! (He rises from his seat with Mother Prescott) If you will excuse me I shall return presently.

Mother Prescott: Why of course my boy.

Huggsly: Very well then. (He bows and Exits stage right)

Mother Prescott: He is a darling boy isn't he Sterling?

Sterling: The very best one could ask, for Penelope.

Enter Penelope and Caroline stage left.

Penelope: What's that Daddy?

Sterling: I was just telling your grandmother how lucky we are to have Madison and you together as you are now. We couldn't have made a better choice had we hand selected from every man of age in the British Empire.

Caroline: Oh absolutely. He truly is wonder to behold. It all reminds me so much of Sterling and I when we were your age.

Enter Huggsly stage right followed by the footman and the butler carrying some large object resting on a table covered with a sheet.

Huggsly: It's a surprise!

Penelope: Oh Madison you know I hate surprises, what could it be?

Caroline: I absolutely love surprises, what could it be?

Sterling: Huggsly you devil! What have you gone and done this time!

Mother Prescott: Really darling, you're too good for words.

Huggsly: (Pulling the sheet away as he makes his announcement) It's a Remington No. 2 Typewriter!

The eyes of the entire sitting room light up, as the surprise is unveiled. They all gasp with excitement.

Sterling: Huggsly you shouldn't have!

Caroline: Oh my goodness you've really outdone yourself this time!

Penelope: Now we can write our correspondence in print if we like.

Mother Prescott: The world is a different place when every man can have a print shop in his study. Good job my boy. Let us give Madison and Penelope a moment to breathe before we head off to Carsington.

Caroline: They certainly deserve it for putting up with us all this time.

Huggsly: Oh it's no fuss. I rather enjoy sitting in this room in such fine company. A man is not want of loneliness when he is in good company.

Sterling: (Tapping Huggsly affectionately on the shoulder) Be careful with your words my boy, they just might decide to stay.

Mother Prescott: Come along dearies.

Exit Mother Prescott, Caroline, and Sterling stage right.

Penelope: Oh dearest mother and father loved the surprised, and of course my grandmother adores everything you do. You really shouldn't have.

Huggsly: It was really no trouble at all. I purchased one for my room and I saw it only fitting that you should have one to match.

Penelope: I'm going to write to you every day. But if I'm in the sitting room, everyone will see my affections to you. And that will never do.

Huggsly: I've already planned for that. You see the keyboard on the typewriter is called a QWERTY layout. You remember the day at Fanny and George Talbot's?

Penelope: How could I forget?

Huggsly: But of course. Well, you remember that one of the special things about this device is its alphabetical keyboard design is called a QWERTY layout because the first letters on the top row of letters are literally Q, W, E, R, T, and Y.

Penelope: Yes dear.

Huggsly: Well I've got a solution.

Penelope: Do tell, do tell!

Huggsly: I've invented a code that will render your messages incomprehensible as you type them in the sitting room. No matter who looks at them they will appear as nonsense.

Penelope: And how will you do that dearest?

Huggsly: Instead of typing in the QWERTY layout we will type in the WERTY layout?

Penelope: Call me dense, but I'm not understanding.

Huggsly: Of course I would never call you dense, but what I mean is if you shift all of your fingers one key to the right and type as though they were in the proper position, then you will be typing letters that appear as though they make no sense to those looking over your shoulder, but that I can decipher because I know the code.

Penelope: Oh Huggsly it's ingenious! I'm going to try it out right now! (She kisses his cheek, sits down at the desk, pulls a sheet of paper, sets it and begins typing)

Enter Mother Prescott, Caroline and Sterling stage right amidst conversation

Sterling: Oh good you've got it up and running

Caroline: What on earth are you typing dear? It looks like complete nonsense.

Mother Prescott now holding Huggsly's arm looks toward him with an endearing expression and notices the smear of lipstick about his cheek. She signals for him to wipe it away before anyone takes notice. He embarrassingly removes his pocket square and rubs it clean. He misses a spot and she wipes it with her thumb to no one's notice. He can be seen gesturing his appreciation, to which she gestures an acceptance for his gratitude.

Sterling: I think it may be broken dear.

Penelope: It's not broken father, you'll see. I'm only typing nonsense because I want to test out the letters, besides I have nothing to say at the moment so why should I waste words on paper that have no meaning to me. Better to write words that have no meaning to everyone if I'm going to write words with no meaning.

Caroline: She takes after her mother.

Sterling: That she does. We'd better be headed off darling.

Mother Prescott: Yes, the day is advancing at a frightening pace. We'd better head off also.

They exchange farewells with hugs and kisses as the lights dim and the scene comes to a close. The butler can be seen as a shadowy figure, nearly a silhouette, sitting at the typewriter and pulling out his own sheets of paper from his coat and typing a letter before the set changes. He places the letter in an envelope and slides it beneath a door and departs. The silhouette of the maid can be seen opening the door and discovering the letter. Later their shadows are seen speaking in the hallway as they share a warm embrace before the set is completely dismantled and the actors fall out of character and depart.

The WERTY Love Letters

Penelope's letter read as follows:

,u Frstrdy Jihhd;u.

Sd O doy smf etoyr yjod ;ryyrt O vsmmpy jr;[niy dyp[gtp, ntrsyjomh/ ,u sggrvyopm gpt
upi od dp frf[O ytr,n;r sy yjr yjpihjy pg drromh upi/ Og yjod od ejys s ftrs, od ;olr. O grst
yjsy O jsbr d[rmy yjr htrsyr [ptyopm pg ,u d;rr[omh ;ogr [;shirf nu fpt,smy yjpihjyd/ O
;pmh yp grr; yjr ypivj pg upit yrmftr gomhrtd h;ofr nyerrm ,omr pem/ O [tsu yjrr vs;;
i[pm ,r yeovr yjod errl nrgptr yjr mohjy pg yjr vpyo;;opm/ ,u jrsty vsm yslr grert ,ptr pg
fsud eoypiy upi/

Upotd Yti;u.

[rmr;p[r Vstp;omr [trdvpyy

TRANSLATION:

My Dearest Huggsly,

As I sit and write this letter I cannot help but stop from breathing. My affection for you is so deep I tremble at the thought of seeing you. If this is what a dream is like, I fear that I have spent the greater portion of my sleeping life plagued by dormant thoughts. I long to feel the touch of your tender fingers glide between mine own. I pray thee call upon me twice this week before the night of the cotillion. My heart can take fewer more of days without you.

Yours Truly,

Penelope Caroline Prescott

Huggsly replied to her as follows:

,u Derryrdy]rmr;p[r.

O htpe o;; mpe npyj [judovs;;u smf om d[otoy ejrm O fr[sty gtp, upi/ Pm;u yjr dvrmy pg
upit ;pbomh ;ryyrt jsy vitrf yjod ,r;smvjp;u gpt ejovj yjr fpvyptd jsbr mp [tphmpdod/
Yjru pm;u dsu yjsy oy od ;pbr/ Gpt ;pbr jsyj yptm ,r s[sty/ ,u pm;u trd[oyr gtp, yjr shpmu
pg ,u dp;oyifr od yjr ,p,rmy yjsy ,u vpsvj sttobrd sy Rbrthtrm/ O djs;; ditr;u vs;; pm upi
yeovr om yjr vp,omh errl. smf om yjr eslr pg upit vpyo;;opm O djs;; vs;; mp ;rdd yjsm
yeovr rbrtu errl yjrtsgyrt imyo; er str yphryjrt rbrtu fsu smf mpyjomh vsm yrst id s[sty/
,u pm;u trhtry od yjsy O vsmmpy ytsbr; om yjrdr eptfd/ Yjpihj om yjrdr eptfd O s, s;esud
eoyj upi/

Eoyj Frr[rdy Sggrvyopm.

,sfodpm V;stlr Eppfnptpihj BOO

TRANSLATION:

My Sweetest Penelope,

I grow ill now both physically and in spirit when I depart from you. Only the scent of your loving letter hath cured this melancholy for which the doctors have no prognosis. They only say that it is love. For love hath torn me apart. My only respite from the agony of my solitude is the moment that my coach arrives at Evergreen. I shall surely call on you twice in the coming week, and in the wake of your cotillion I shall call no less than twice every week thereafter until we are together every day and nothing can tear us apart. My only regret is that I cannot travel in these words. Though in these words I am always with you.

With Deepest Affection,

Madison Clarke Woodborough VII

Scene 3: The Cotillion

The writing of the letters became a point of great enthusiasm for the young couple.

They became so skilled that at some point they gained the ability to decipher the text without rewriting or using some form of decoder. No one had any idea what was going on. Both sets of parents thought the lovers may have been going mad, save for the fact that their every other action seemed very much sane. The cotillion was held at the Branfield ballroom in Derbyshire, and it was by far the most sensational of the season. In fact it was possibly the most exquisite debut that any girl had or would have for five seasons coming and going. Penelope had twenty-five maidens at her side and there were seven hundred guests in attendance in all. Of course the very closest of them was Jasmine, who had served as her trusted confidant in this recent obsession, which had consumed Penelope's life. Because of course, Jasmine had been there in the Talbot's salon the day that they first met. She was a loyal friend, never the jealous sort. Besides, Penelope being fairly disinterested in romance for the past two years or so had waited patiently on Jasmine as she spent months swooning and then agonizing over one beau or another. She was currently without a love interest but that would surely change the night of the ball with 700 guests in attendance.

Huggsly was beside himself with excitement as they awaited their coach and rode to the venue. He was accompanied by a retinue of three, including Charles Anderson, his roommate at Oxford, who was still calling on Eleanor Winthrop—also in attendance that night—and his twin cousins Jonathan and Jennings Woodborough²², sons of his uncle Eric. All in all there were twenty-two Woodborough cousins in attendance, but Huggsly decided to ride with these two because they were the most amusing. They had the funny habit that many twins share of completing one another's sentences. Charles was also deeply amused by the antics of the twin brothers.

"Jennings, would you fix my buttonhole?" Requested Jonathan leaning his shoulder forward for his brother's assistance.

"Here you go... Wait a minute, that's my button hole! That means..." Replied Jennings.

"You've got mine!" Replied the twin.

And they began the lengthy drawn out process of exchanging buttonholes in the seat of the coach. This was just the beginning, but it carried on throughout the duration of the voyage to the ballroom. When they arrived there was a line down the road of coaches waiting to deliver their guests, but Huggsly was able to bypass the bottleneck because the valets were instructed to look for the coach with three red roses and that would be a guest of honor. Penelope had devised this clever code as she had been taking instruction from Huggsly on the construction of secrets and riddles, shibboleth and codes.

When they arrived the ballroom was laid out with a winter's theme and it had shreds of whitened parchment strewn all about in imitation of the snow. The *débutante's* party of honor all wore royal blue dresses of chiffon, with white silk sashes and scarves with paisley embroidery. But the reader has regularly heard of this account from Lady

²² These allude to Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum.

Caroline of course. Penelope wore a dress similar to the others, though more elaborate except that her color was ice blue, and she wore a silver tiara atop her head. This was her night and she shined like no other in her moment of glory. Each of the male partners to the maidens of honor brought forth a white rose corsage, and Huggsly, accompanied by two footmen held his corsage in his hand while the valets each carried a bouquet of forty roses, one in white one in pale blue, both wrapped in silver ribbon. The crowd was in awe as Penelope blushed when she was presented with this grand gesture. The dance engagement cards were shaped in the form of a Chinese hand fans in ivory white with powder blue and they had sterling silver hardware accents, with white swan feather tassels and a sterling silver stylus. Before the Quadrille began there was a performance of fifty dancers dressed as swans with real feathers. They performed a sequence for the entertainment of all as the one hundred-piece orchestra provided an elegant arrangement of background music. There were seven courses served in the dining hall by renowned French Chef François Ghesquière. He prepared an immaculate table including oysters on the half shell with mignonette sauce, roasted peacock with almonds, hasenpfeffer with Brussels sprouts, poached salmon with tarragon sauce and fingerling potatoes, chicken Milanese, duck à l'orange, and filet mignon. For desert he served strawberries with crème fraîche. And he imported a thousand bottles of Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin champagne from the French Champagne wine country.²³

Many were in attendance that night. Of course the noble gentry all came out to honor the Prescotts on this special rite of passage for their only daughter. Clarke and Miranda also attended that night and they could not stop glowing with happiness knowing that their child would find the same joy in romance that they had discovered so long ago. And they got along Swimmingly with Sterling and Claudia, with whom they had previously been mildly acquainted through many of Clarke and Madison V's business dealings. It was as though the families were a match made in heaven.

There was a masquerade section toward the end of the night's proceedings and Huggsly and Penelope used this opportunity to escape into the garden for a moment of reprieve. They laughed as they trotted out to the gazebo, hand-in-hand beneath the stars. It was all so perfect. They looked to the sky and spoke of their pasts and the days since the salon leading up to that moment. Naturally the next course of conversation was to discuss their futures, and as the night wore on those futures became a singular future together. They wondered how Clyde and Jade would get along. Their parents had absolutely adored one another. And they knew that their temperaments were a perfect compliment for each other. What could go wrong? It truly was a dream that they had walked into, and they both had Dodgson to thank for it. There that night, just as his father had done before him, beneath the stars and the gazebo in the garden of the rear grand ballroom, Madison Woodborough found love, in defiance of all of the pleasures this world had to offer right at his back, he found love. The couple basked in the embrace of one another's arms and shared a few choice words in one of the secret languages they had concocted and they returned to the party with their masks on before anyone noticed them missing. They danced the night away and retired with the other guests when the hour grew late. It was a night to remember because it was truly a spectacular event but more so because that night sealed the fate of the young lovers.

²³ Now there were seven hundred guests in attendance and one thousand bottles of champagne. I will let the reader do the math and use their imagination.

Over the course of the next few months Huggsly continued to call regularly on Penelope, visiting twice every week the first month and then three and four times in the months that followed until the couple had become inseparable, much to the approval of both their parents. He would bring Clyde over to visit Jade and even they seemed to get along without flaw. They sent dozens upon dozens of letters back and forth in WERTY code, which no one ever figured out. Huggsly would often hold Mother Prescott's hand as the trio walked through the garden and the woods or took a stroll at the beach or by the lake. He would always bring gifts for the house, and special treats for her as a form of delighting the Prescott matriarch, whom he had a deep respect for. On one or two occasions Penelope and even the cats dozed into a nap as Huggsly and her grandmother sat in the sitting room laughing and conversing over all the things that young men would talk about to the grandmothers of their love interests.

Another two months had passed and before anyone realized it June had arrived. Huggsly called one Tuesday at noon, while Penelope was playing at the piano with an added vocal performance of song. When she concluded Huggsly stood and congratulated her on a moving performance and asked Sir Sterling into the study for a word. When they arrived in private, Huggsly reached into his pocket and presented a small wooden box, which he opened to reveal a black velvet pillow with a brilliant golden ring formed of patterns of leaves and branches with sparkling round white diamond gemstone flanked by two green triangular cut emeralds.

"It was my great, great grandmother's." Said Huggsly.

Sterling looked with a confused face of deep consternation and he hesitantly replied in a most confused voice,

"Oh Huggsly I'm so sorry but I'm already spoken for by Lady Caroline."

"No, no, it's not for you Sir Sterling, it's for Penelope. I ask your blessing for her hand in marriage. I want to betroth her tomorrow at the park in London."

"Oh splendid Madison! I thought you had grown overly fond of me for a moment. I felt a ghastly disappointment in my spirit for Penelope at the thought that you had chosen another, and a Prescott at that. But I am more than delighted at your request and I assure you that you have all of the blessings I could ever offer you. In every way shape and form I unabatedly grant you my approval to take my daughter's hand in marriage, and I wish the two of you many, many happy years together as Lady Caroline and I have shared, and I am sure your parents have also shared. You will make an excellent addition to the family. Our houses have many mutual interests together, and the most important is the affection that our children show for one another."

Then suddenly he began to tear up and sniffle. Huggsly being of such complacent temperament saw this and immediately offered his support taking his arms around him in confidence and his head on his shoulder.

“There, there Sir Sterling you aren’t losing a daughter at all, you’re only gaining a son. I will not take her from you, but only bring additions to your life.” He said.

“It’s not just that.” Sniffled Sir Sterling convulsing as he began to sob.

“Well then what could it be Sir?”

“It’s that although I have no personal interest in your hand in marriage for myself, it is such a magnificent ring, I am a little touched now that I realize it was never for me, moreover by the fact that I was willing to turn it down in the first place. I feel as though I’ve just lost a fortune of money.”

“Oh dear!” Said Huggsly. “I’ll be sure to have wonderful gifts of gold and diamonds for all of the party of honor at the wedding, that way you have no need to worry.”

“Do you promise?” Inquired Sir Sterling.

“Am I not a man of my word?” Replied Huggsly.

“That you are young Woodborough. I’m so sorry I have no idea what has come over me. Call it Gold Fever if you will. I get out of character every so often in the presence of precious metal and jewels.”

And he withdrew himself from Huggsly’s brotherly embrace and began to adjust his frock and dust his shoulders in an effort to regain his composure and reassert his status. Huggsly was a deeply honest man and he swore to never allow a single peep of the incident reach beyond the confines of that room, and he never did.

The family outted in the garden at Evergreen that lovely summer day and when the night grew late Huggsly eventually retired to his waiting coach and rode to his London flat where he would be staying for the summer. He had advanced quite prodigiously through his studies at Oxford and was expected to complete his Bachelorette by the following spring if he kept his current rate. He had already been appointed a lectureship for incoming mathematics, art and literary scholars under Dodgson’s tutelage. He arrived at the flat and saw the bull dog Walter walking down the street and he stopped to say hello. They parted ways and Huggsly entered into his apartment to think of the magnificent thing that had happened to him. It was a perfect life. Now let me tell you how it all unraveled.

Huggsly had been taking one-on-one study with Dodgson to advance his knowledge of enigma. The two fascinated each other equally with their understanding and ability to read patterns and codes. They incorporated much of this trickery into mathematical equations they would work on, often spelling out words with variables, and writing secret encoded messages throughout the solutions to some highly complex function. They also took extensive time to review the reading of the *Wonderland* tales, as these were of substantial interest to young Huggsly. Dodgson taught him the meaning behind the nonsense and helped him create his own style within the genre. But he left

many of the mysteries of Wonderland for Huggsly to decipher on his own. He thought it would be more exciting that way. And so fate would have it that as he laid down that Tuesday evening he grabbed one of several journals he kept and he began to write in continuation of a nonsense story he had been working on with Dodgson's help. It was about a man who did not recognize his own reflection. Although he wrote by hand, he used the WERTY code he had by now memorized as a result of his many affectionate exchanges with Penelope.

He grew drowsy and began to dream about his future fiancée and the wedding, and the splendor of it all, only these dreams became crossed with the nonsensical story of the foolish man. To complicate matters further, between his severe love sickness for Penelope and his unabandoned childhood habit of befriending and speaking with animals, in addition to the lifetime of codes and secrets, mistaking of homonyms, the mathematical equations plus the writing of nonsense literature, and now this pivotal moment in the entirety of his life, his mind was beginning to slip into the deep end of a place where it might be very difficult to retrieve.

Everything was too perfect, so something had to go wrong. Sir Sterling's breakdown in the study earlier that day was the first guaranteed sign of this. For in reality the breakdown never happened. There was a pause in time, much like the pause when he guessed the final word in George Talbot's study, where that sequence of events was allowed to invade young Madisons psyche, except this time it was not real, for in actuality Sir Sterling only spoke his words of approval. He did not mistake the ring as a gift for himself and there was no sobbing and crying. Huggsly knew this was the case and he coped with it by telling himself that it would all be over once he and Penelope were wed in a month's time. If he could just hold on until then and focus on his studies all would be well. But the fact of the matter is that his studies drew him further down the proverbial rabbit hole. From Aristotle's metaphysics to mathematics to literature he could not escape the constant riddle, the constant trick of madness. That night he dreamed a series of dreams so strange, with so many lucid dreams and false awakenings, when he finally came to he was not certain that he was actually awake, actually alive, actually in the real world or still asleep and dreaming. Perhaps he had traveled to some alternate physical reality or he had really gone to Wonderland.

Whatever the case he knew he felt quite odd that morning but he pressed through it by owing it to nervousness in anticipation of his proposal. In truth he was having a nervous breakdown and going slightly insane as an effect of the above stated complications. He was in dire need of medical attention and he was on the edge of complete disaster should anything go wrong in the course of what he had built in his mind to be the end-all-be-all of his mortal existence. Even Clyde sensed that something was wrong and he begged for him to rest and send the footman to make arrangements for another day. But that was all foolishness to Huggsly. He insisted that he was fit and of well enough spirits to go through with the ordeal. Besides he didn't want Sir Sterling to think that he had gotten cold feet. Had he listened to Clyde that day things most likely would have turned out very different. He would have gone and gotten proper treatment from his mother and the physicians and here would be the end of the story and they would have all lived happily ever after. But Huggsly Woodborough was no pushover, nor was he a man of great ego. Yet he refused to admit defeat, that he was weak, in need of

help and losing his mind. And so he dressed himself and went forward alone by horseback that day to meet the love of his life and ask her hand in marriage.

Now fate would also have it that day that Penelope's brother Edwin was back in country from his term of service in the Royal Navy. Going along with the theme of constant surprises that ran throughout the course of their relationship Penelope had convinced the family to say nothing of Edwin's arrival to Huggsly, and so the matter was kept secret until they were to meet that day in the park, and Edwin was to be at her side with Mother Prescott when she accepted his proposal. And then they were to all live happily ever after. Or so they thought. What happened next can be described as a transition of sorts in the lives of all involved.

Chapter Three: The Broad Street Maniac

**For I have seen the souls of men change weary with discontent
 Whether this shall be my fate remains still to be determined
 But in their eyes there lies the heavy burden of desperation,
 The lust for things uncanny, the savage craving for acceptance
 And a safe return the realm of common places
 These are the ambitions of the insane
 But for love a man will suffer dire feats
 And where he goes he ends up so it bears repeat
 Like a madman chasing shadows in the street
 Like a madman chasing shadows in the street**

N

ow I assume the reader would not think so ill of me to believe that I would have

omitted all of the adventures and misadventures, the calamity and the comedy and left you with a simple love story. By no chance indeed! With just a shred of patience the reader will soon find his or her self in the midst of a folly so impractical one may do well to find a private space for fear of being committed oneself.

Huggsly rode hard that day trying desperately to shake his nervousness. He could tell that something was off, but he refused to accept that he was a man on the brink. He recited his lines in his head as he traveled from the High Street flat to Ham Park where he Penelope and Mother Prescott were set to meet. Now when he rounded the corner from Devenay Road to Ham Park Road en route to the rendezvous point he noticed something strange. It seemed to him as though all of the dogs he saw this Wednesday afternoon were walking their masters. He shook it off and continued to ride until he noticed purple lines screeching down the sky, blurring his vision. The lines began to change color first into green and red plaid, then polka dots of blue, orange, red and yellow. He slowed his pace and took a deep breath. He looked down at his horse and it seemed to be sticking his tongue out at him. It was large and bulging, and he could see the veins on the underside of it beating fiercely with blood. It was grotesque. The hideous tongue was covered in slobber and it was beginning to splash in his face. It was taunting him. He hated it. He could take no more. It was happening. He held back and pressed forward but then he screamed out suddenly at the top of his lungs,

“Well you see if you can ride faster then! Hop on my back and you give it a try!”

Luckily there was no one around to hear this outburst. And he was still sane enough to realize what he had done and he slowed to a trot and tried one more time to gather his composure. Just then he came upon the location where Penelope was standing from a distance and he saw her there looking as gorgeous as ever. He did not see Mother Prescott, for she had taken to a bench by a statue out of his view so that she may sit and

enjoy the sun while she fed the pigeons. What Huggsly did notice was a strange man standing next to his future fiancée, and he shook his head because he thought that this must have been more hallucination. But when he charged towards them to see what was happening he caught a better view. Now in the meantime fate would also have it that Penelope and Edwin were in the midst of having a bit of fun pretending that she was Penelope and he was Huggsly. It was actually because of her insistence that he play along. It was all she could dream about—to be the wife of Huggsly Woodborough. She knew that he would ask her soon but she had no idea that this would be the day, and neither had Mother Prescott. At any rate she obliged him to participate in her little fancy and they carried on as such,

“Now you be Huggsly and bow down and ask me to marry you.” She said.

“Oh Penelope this is silly!” Said Edwin.

“Oh just do it!” She entreated.

Edwin had always watched out for his younger sister when they were children, and he had always given into her. Unfortunately for them both, this time was no different. And so he agreed to pacify her with these childish games and he knelt down and in a dull and unaffected voice professed,

“Penelope Prescott you are the love of my life would you take this oversized chunk of precious gold and gemstone from me, Huggsly Woodborough, in exchange for your hand in marriage so that you can boss me around and drive me half mad for the rest of my days?”

“No, No! That’s not how he’s going to do it you’ve got to do it right!” she rejoined.

But Huggsly stood about a hundred yards out on his horse and he had been witness to all of their tomfoolery and in his highly vulnerable state he took it not as tomfoolery but as an affront.

Enter the Wayward Fool.

He thought to himself that some stranger had waltzed his way into her heart and beat him to the prize. His world began spinning as he became delusional with madness. He felt a sickness in his stomach that could not be explained and a lightness in his head that he had never known before. He could not speak, he could not breath, he could not stop the tears from streaming down his face. Just that moment all of the emotions and confusion and mysteries and hopes and dreams that made up the mind of Huggsly Woodborough exploded into a great confusing mess, and he was no more the man that his mother and father and grandfather had raised. He became a lunatic without soundness of senses. He began to drool upon himself and mutter preposterous gibberish that would cause a newborn to sound eloquent. Just then on the grassy lawn of Ham Park he became a man apart and he descended into madness. Down the rabbit hole his better half escaped

and on the surface of his character remained only some unknown crazed fool. With a swirling gloss over his dilated eyes, now unusually wide, his brows became high arched and his face began to twitch with a nervous tick. He screamed out at the top of his lungs so that all within a circumference of five acres could hear,

“Nooooooooooo!”

Startled, Penelope and Edwin turned in haste to see what the alarm was. Just then she noticed Huggsly but she had not realized that it was he who had let out the ghastly cry she had heard coming from a distance. They both turned again and waved their arms at him entreating him to come forward but in his madness he imagined that they were announcing their betrothal and smiling in mockery, inviting him to come and see what he had missed out on. He charged at them with great speed and just then he saw Mother Prescott sitting on the bench some distance away and he reared his horse to a halt. For a brief moment at the face of this angelic confidant of his, from his now former life, he felt his sanity return to him one last time. But then she saw the crazed look in his eyes and she, being a woman of experience in the world, knew exactly what it was. He had been stricken mad by love sickness. Her face changed into a look of concern, which in his hallucinatory state appeared to change into the face of a jackal. He grew frightened and continued with his mad fantasy. He reached into his frock coat and pulled the small wooden box from his inner lining pocket. He launched it at Edwin, who did not see it coming, and struck him directly in the head knocking him out cold. He turned his horse about face and rode away shouting madness into the air.

After attending to Edwin, who was thankfully without serious injury, Penelope looked at the object he had been struck across the head with. It was her ring of engagement. Mother Prescott had come to help her grandson when she saw Penelope holding the ring in her hand beginning to weep.

“Oh grandmother, what have I done? This is all my fault.” She cried.

“No, no dearest, no it isn’t. This isn’t anyone’s fault. I saw the look in his eyes and he isn’t in his right mind. He’s been stricken with love sickness. His mind has snapped. Nothing can bring him back now but time. When he comes to, if he hasn’t killed himself he will come back and all will be well you will see. Madison is a good man. Your grandfather was a good man and the same thing happened to him. Trust me dear I know of what I speak. It was all too good to be true. Something had to go wrong, and thank heaven this is all that came of it. We mustn’t utter a word of this to anyone beyond our circles. He’ll be unrecognizable by tomorrow and with any luck he’ll be cured in a fortnight. Now come along dear, help me get your brother off the ground.”

They assisted Edwin with his disoriented condition and they made their way to their coach and rode home to Evergreen. That Evening when Sir Sterling came home ready to celebrate he was perplexed to find that Huggsly was not there as well. When he heard the news he was mildly devastated, save for the fact that he had heard similar stories all his life about his father when he was to wed his mother. That was the only thing that kept him from over reacting. Lady Caroline on the other hand was frantic.

“Oh my, why has this happened to us?” She Sobbed. “I knew I shouldn’t have had Chef prepare the rhubarb pie with honey instead of sugar. I thought it would be tasteful given the summer season, but who eats a pie prepared with honey in June? This is a disaster! What are we going to do? We need to dress for the occasion darling, I don’t care if summer has just begun no one in Evergreen is to wear any color outside of black for the rest of the month or until we get our Huggsly back!”

She had difficulty enforcing this proclamation on anyone except the help who were also in great misery at the news of the kind boy who had come to marry their princess. The greatest challenge came when they all piled into the coach and called upon the house of the Marquess in Edencrest. Miranda and Clarke were staying with Madison V and Ophelia for the summer and it was a solemn ride to the southern province when they arranged to tell them what had come of their beloved Huggsly the next morning. However at their arrival their spirits were cheered by a vigorous sense of optimism that lived in that house.

“Well aren’t you going to send someone to retrieve him?” Asked Carolyn

“It wouldn’t do any good. He’d just run off again. It might only make it worse.” Replied Mother Prescott.

“She’s right.” Argued Madison V. “A man drawn so to madness cannot be cured once he has traveled down the rabbit hole. He has to find his way back through the world he has created for himself. I hope I’ve given him the tools to make his way back safely.”

“He will be fine.” Declared Miranda. “Clyde will find him in the city and he will protect him at all costs.”

Edwin was confused by this statement, “Who is Clyde?” He asked. “And if he can find him and protect him why can’t we.”

Madison V explained to him that Miranda was right, that Clyde was the cat that he had given the boy on the day of his christening. Up until that point no one had ever bothered to determine where the cat had come from but he felt it proper to reveal all that he knew at that point.

“Clyde is no ordinary orange tabby. He is half African Wildcat from Egypt. A desert shaman sold him to me one night in the streets of Cairo. He told me that the keeper of the cat would have great fortune and if ever a moment of dismay may come the cat would serve as a protector, even sacrificing from its nine lives for the safety of its owner. I’ve watched that cat watch after the boy since before he could walk. He taught him to communicate with animals as well. If Clyde can find him rest assured we have nothing to worry about.”

Meanwhile Clyde, was racing down the street chasing the sound of Huggsly’s screams, which he heard from afar, as he went romping through London like a madman

on his horse. Not knowing where he was going or what he was doing Huggsly made it all the way to the Broad Street district where he found Bloomfield Street thinking he was going home to his parent's house before the horse, growing weary of his abuses, dismounted our deranged friend hurling him to the ground. He nearly snapped his neck during the fall and was in great pain, though not enough to sober him from his madness. He crawled into the nearby side street called Chester Alley where he found refuge amongst a heap of detritus. There he was king of the mountain. No one would ever stop him! But, 'Stop him from what?' was a question even he had not the answer to. He lay down in the rubbish and Clyde followed his scent and the sent of the horse until he found him there. The horse, whose name was Jiminy, waited for Clyde to arrive whereupon he told him everything that had happened. Clyde thanked him for handling the situation as he did and sent Jiminy to return home to Bloomfield where he would find the Pilcrows—Brit and Bagley, the owls—Percival and Malcolm, the pigeons—Stifle and Stomp and the field mouse Edward, to help. That night they met in the dark alley. The birds had flown in as soon as they got the word. Edward rode atop of Malcolm's back and he came with word that he had recruited a crew of other mice, weasels, and rabbits to come and help as well. They were expected by the next evening.

Huggsly lay in Chester Alley in a stupor all afternoon and evening long barely rousing besides to shout some utterance of nonsense. He had dreamed that all had went according to plan with the proposal, that he and Penelope spent the day with Mother Prescott in Ham park and that his life had been carried out the way he'd intended the day prior. And then he dreamed about his future. He dreamed that he had graduated from Oxford and become the head of his family's businesses, eventually branching out and building an even larger addition to the Woodborough Empire.

Once more the red light began to glow as its soft crimson warmth radiated from the surface of the distant floating mass.

Fading amber, now its yellow brilliance danced upon their sleeping faces in its full glory.

Resplendent with twinkles, the bastion of wealth, apart from the savagery that lay beyond its outer realm.

Dark and cold, where wild things loomed and mystery escaped as sanity and the greater good had come undone.

The spawn of iniquity rose up from those shadows, chastised by the inklings of nevermore, and sank into the infinite abyss where reflection ceased and the winds of every storm lay wait in the mouth of oblivion.

The madman rages in his illusory plight.

When he awoke he found Clyde perched atop his chest and he took not care to notice that he was not actually lying in his own bedroom rather that he had slept in a trash

heaped alley in Broad Street. He rose and all of the animals stirred from their positions in hopes that it would only last one night. He rubbed his eyes and stroked his face and said,

“Clyde, run to the cupboard and poor us a bath for breakfast wont you?”

In a moment of grand despair they all sighed a sigh of disappointment that their friend was no better than was to be expected. He awoke and went out into the street to greet his new neighbors. His physical state was very much disheveled from sleeping in the trash all night. His clothing was all soiled, his clean-shaven boyish face had grown an unusually unkempt layer of stubble as an effect of his madness, and his newly acquired facial tic was very much in tact. As he stood there he imagined that he was atop his family’s fortune, and that all the hustle and fuss on the street was in motion at his very command. For all he had to do was lift his finger and it would cease, and should he lower it again it would continue as it wore. Dare he put his finger down it would double at its pace. He tried it and in his mind it actually worked. There he was **The Broad Street Maniac** in the midst of his domain commanding his underlings with the wave of his magic wand.

“Stop! I command you! Stop!”

And in his head they all came to a halt, though no one stopped much at all save for to glance at him as if he were mad. And indeed he was, and he was proving it by the second. He walked to one of his employees and demanded,

“What size is a shoe that never fits a soul?”

“What?” Responded the gentleman.

“Wrong! You’re fired!”

He approached another.

“What goes up and never comes down?”

“Excuse me my good man.” Replied a tall man in a top hat.

“Wrong! You’re fired!”

All while this was occurring his animal friends were following his every move lest he stray too far away and be lost.

“Clyde!” He snapped.

“Meow!” Replied Clyde.

“We’ve got much business to attend to! Pour me my papers! Hand me my tea! Clean out the bank and make a deposit in the gutters! Well don’t just stand there, what are you waiting for? Get to it!”

“Meow!” Clyde responded.

He walked into a café and ordered three-dozen tarts and a dozen cups of Earl Grey.

They handed him his order and rang him up at £14 and he wrote them a check signed in WERTY as:

,sfodpm V;stlr Eppfnptpihj BOO

They tried to grab his attention but he was off and out the door and handing out breakfast to his ‘workers’ before they knew what happened.

“Here’s a tea of cup, I need you to finish that report by six o’clock last night! Move!” He said to one gentleman.

“Take these rooms to the fourth ceiling meeting tarts and set them up for our two o’clock conference today Miss Cunningham! Now! Move! Move! Move!” He said handing an entire box of tarts to one woman with six cups of tea.

Though she was offended by the tone he took at her, and she had no idea what his instructions were, she was more delighted that he had given her breakfast at no expense and so she took the tarts and tea and moved along as he insisted. Next, he sat on a bench and the owls and the Pilcrows and all his childhood animal friends came gathering around.

“Clyde!” He shouted. “I’m having a one man tea party right now, this night!”

It was morning and Clyde was severely confused about what constituted a one man party but Huggsly proceeded to demonstrate by devouring an entire box of tarts without sharing any with anyone.

“I do declare, what are you all standing around for? Get back to work!” He shouted, swinging a cup of tee at Malcolm, nearly splashing him with its scolding contents.

“I do declare, I am the boss of this parade! Me! All of you are fired! Fired!”

Passersby would look in bewilderment, and it was of little help that he was surrounded by wild animals. He dozed off on the bench after having consumed an entire box of tarts and drinking five cups of Earl Gray, and the animals finished the third box for him before he woke. He had eaten like a heathen and spilled all manner of tea and crumbs about his face and his belly, thus making his appearance even more shameful

than it already was. When he awoke there was a beggar sitting by his side inquiring about the food he'd devoured evidenced by the boxes and teacups surrounding him.

"Hello friend! Where'd you get the tarts? Big score you found yourself there!"

Huggsly awoke and looked upon the man imagining that he was some business associate and he replied, "Yes, yes. We did well in the West Indies last month but we need to pick it up in the East Indies, not to mention the Indy Indies. It'll be a bad day in Exchange Alley if your boys don't come back with those shipping crates in tact."

The beggar was clueless as to what Huggsly was talking about and decided to depart before he'd bitten off more than he could chew in search of a meal. But it was too late. The Broad Street Maniac was already hard at work.

"Well now where do you think you're going old boy? Have a seat. I've hardly gotten started, and you're like the autumn you know, you're ready to leave."

Huggsly's half waken brain was now spinning through different mind states like a roulette wheel. Where the ball would land no one could be certain.

"I've had a ball since yesterday and now I'm feeling square, don't you know any triangles? Not the isosceles type! It's much too late in the year to go finding one's way into isosceles triangles." Said Huggsly.

"Why, what do you mean good sir?" Asked the beggar.

"I'm talking about one hundred and eighty degrees. It's called an about face and if you turn around you'll see one!"

"About face? One hundred eighty degrees?" Replied the bemused beggar.

"Well it's summer time, so triangles are out of season. They're one hundred and eighty degrees each, and right now it's barely seventy-five. If we go to the Bank of England within the hour we'll be sure to catch a sail! Well don't just sit there; don't you see all of these squawking accountants around here? (He was talking about the birds at this point) They've got jobs to do! You've got a job to do! Get to work then, the whole lot of you!"

The beggar snapped into attention and walked five blocks down the street prepared to go to work before he realized he didn't have a job. He wandered off to a crowd of other vagrants to tell them about the mad man he'd encountered who communicated with animals and spoke of strange numbers. Before long word of the Broad Street Maniac was out and as his reputation preceded him, Huggsly was never one to forgo living up to expectations.

One thing that Clyde had noticed about his dear friend's new temperament was that he had lost his kind disposition, and had grown into a cruel tyrant of sorts. Huggsly hadn't noticed this about himself because he hadn't noticed anything. He was completely

out of control. Just then it began to rain as the sun was still shining. A rainbow formed in the sky and he could hear someone saying,

“Look there, it’s a rainbow! If you follow it to the end there’s a leprechaun with a pot of gold!”

“Pot of gold?” Huggsly thought to himself. He was no longer the business magnate of the Woodborough Empire, but now a great adventurer like his grandfather described when he was a child. “Leopard Khan! ...I’ve got to find the Leopard Khan!” The gold fever that he imagined Sir Sterling to be stricken with was now overtaking his mind. And so he took off running. He needed some protection from the coconuts that might fall onto his head in the jungle so he ripped one sleeve from his frock coat and stretched it onto the top of his head, so that he truly did appear entirely insane. He ran north to the Broad Street station, which he thought to be the end of the rainbow. In actuality he ran in circles for a good hour as he could never actually reach the rainbow, but upon witnessing the grandeur of the station, he concluded that that must be the end and so he entered wandering about. He searched and searched but he could not find the Khan. He approached multiple shop owners with his tomfoolery asking, “Where’s the pot of Khan?” But they all refused to engage his nonsense and had him moved from the store leading him to shout out, “I do declare!”

He entered into an oriental dry goods shop and the shopkeeper had a Siamese cat sitting atop the counter and he concluded to himself that this must be the Khan. He envisioned him as a man-sized, talking, upright walking, anthropomorphic leopard with peacock spots in place of leopard spots, and a great peacock tail rather than a cat tail, wearing a Samurai coat of arms like the ones being sold in the shop.

“Are you the Leopard Khan?” He asked

“I am no leopard I am a Siamese! Leopards have spots!” The cat retorted.

Huggsly then licked the cat and smacked his tongue three times fast. “You taste like a Leopard Khan!” He insisted.

The cat actually enjoyed being licked as all cats do. Then, of all of the mishaps in the world occurring at that moment, this one Siamese cat decided to grant validity to his insane propositions by entertaining the notion that he was in fact the Leopard Khan.

“Ahh yes, do that again, I think I know what you mean now. I am the Leopard Khan of which you speak.”

Clyde had followed Huggsly into the station but left the others outside for fear of rousing further attention to this already deranged figure with soiled clothing a one-sleeved jacket and a jacket sleeve hanging from his head asking for leprechauns. He leaped atop the counter and placed his face into his paw shaking his head.

“Don’t encourage him.” He advised the unknowing cat.

“What did I do?” He inquired. “He wants me to be the Leopard so I’ll be the leopard, I don’t see any harm in that.”

So Khan played along.

“Where is the gold?” Huggsly asked.

He started to understand what Clyde had meant in his warning. Realizing that he was in a shop full of rare eastern valuables speaking to a crazy man as if he were a leprechaun he decided to draw Huggsly away from his owner’s shop for fear of inciting a one-man riot.

“Follow me!” Commanded Khan (for lack of a better name)

And Huggsly trailed swiftly behind the cat as he led him from the station and out of harms way.

“There, there is your gold! Run and get it before it disappears!” said the Siamese cat directing Huggsly towards a pile of rocks.

Clyde turned to Khan and said, “Thank you for this my friend, he really could have gotten himself in trouble.”

“Oh it’s no trouble at all. I really could have gotten into a lot of trouble. Besides I like the idea of being the Leopard Khan! I think I’ll keep the title. Until next time good friend...Farewell.” Said the Khan as he turned and ran back into the station.

Huggsly ran toward the pile, sliding to the ground and picking up as many rocks from the pile as he could and he began stuffing them into his pocket desperately, thinking that it was precious gold. He rushed down the street back towards Chester Alley and he took refuge behind a streetlamp and he began launching rocks at the glass storefront window of a potter’s shop called McCormick & Sons Fine Pottery. He had come up with the sudden random idea that McCormick & Sons were a ruff-house crew of Irish goons coming to steel his gold, so he figured he’d give them what they were looking for. Luckily the shop had closed by that point, and by the time the Scotland Yard sent a couple of patrol men to inquire about the disturbance in their tall midnight blue hats with billysticks and their shiny Victoria Regina badges, Huggsly had vanished from the scene. He felt that his work for the day was done. He had consulted with all of his men about his current business transactions and in between a busy day of hard work he had traveled to the Far East and discovered the large gold deposit of the Leopard Khan, and ward of a gang of viscous hoodlums. All in all it was a day well spent. He retired to the alley that he now called home.

The birds all perched high and the landed animals gathered around him. And so he closed his eyes and nestled his face against the fluffy golden fur of the cat that was his brother. He did not remember his friends for who they were. Trapped inside his deranged

fantasy, he could see nothing but madness around him and all of his behavior was mad. He settled down among the great heap of rubbish. Even the insects in Chester Alley appeared to be behaving in a crazed fashion. He looked to the side and he saw a swarm of flies holding a cotillion ball dancing the valse, then the waltz, then the lancers, then the polka. They seemed to be upper class flies, demonstrating exquisite etiquette, singing and humming and swaying to the rhythm. And they had a forty-piece orchestra of crickets and grasshoppers playing in the background as it all went along. It was really quite lovely, Huggsly thought to himself. The swirling colors began to blind him again and he grew tired. He closed his eyes and let the night take him away in the silence of that dark, empty alley and he began to dream the things that madmen dream.

Chapter Four: The Vagabonds of Chester Alley

The following morning he awoke and stepped out onto the street. He noticed that his house was in slight disrepair and so he saw fit to go about the task of roaming through the allies retrieving every manner of shipping crate he could get his hands on. Now imagine if you will,

This strange character roaming through the back allies of Broad Street with one sleeve on his frock and the other dangling from his head like some type of twill night cap.

Filthy with soot and dirt, and all manner of soil and stains from rubbish in the alley.

Clumps of food about his clothing and his fingers and his face.

Followed by a retinue of birds and small animals.

Giggling hysterically, walking back and forth with wooden crates.

Whenever he encountered a pedestrian on the streets he screamed out boisterously at the top of his lungs, "I do declare! Get back to work! Back I say!"

That is what had become of our dear friend Huggsly Woodborough. His condition was worsening and Clyde noticed that he was becoming more aggressive and more cantankerous by the day. Indeed he was, as he screamed and threw a tantrum at all of his animal friends, whom he now deemed to be his workers, because they were not moving fast enough to keep the pace he commanded with his fingers. He literally threw the tantrum in the form of rotten cabbage and tomatoes. Some of which was launched from the Chester Alley onto the street, barely missing passersby and in some cases hitting them smack in the face or head. He splattered lace parasols with mutton grease and toppled the hats of dignified gentlemen with rotten apples and other spoiled fruit. From the alleyway all that could be heard was a ruckus of bangs and clanks, splashes and dings, groans and grunts, and the occasional absurdity blurted out at random in keeping with the bazar behavior of the deranged lunatic. He worked half the morning until he had constructed a miniature complex of crates, which he called his castle. Just then a group of vagabonds walked by in the company of the beggar from the previous day from the park bench who asked about the tarts.

"There he is, he's the tart master! He sent me off to work yesterday until I realized that I happened to be unemployed at the moment." He shouted from the street as the others laughed.

"What have you got there?" One of them inquired.

“I’m making repairs to the castle, and you my dear friends are standing in the mote.”

“Get a load of this one boys! He’s making repairs to his castle!” Shouted another tramp. And they all began to laugh vociferously.

“What are you doing standing around anyways? Get back to work the lot of you or you’ll be standing on the corner begging for bread and pennies!” Huggsly shouted.

“Bread and pennies?” One of them said.

“What corner is that? Boys, this bloke says they’re giving away bread and pennies on the corner! The last one there’s a filthy bum!” Said another.

“We’re all filthy bums!” Yelled a third.

They took off frantically running down the street, much to the dismay of all those making their way to work or business that morning. Where they were going they knew not, but they were certain that anywhere that had pennies and bread up for grabs was a place they wanted to be. Huggsly started after them in an effort to command them back to work but a group of vagabonds on the hunt for bread and pennies are an impossibility to catch on foot, so he abandoned the chase after several blocks. He walked back to his alley to find surprisingly that his work was completed. His independent empire was ready to be built, and he would be its grand ruler. In his eyes it was his finest moment and he stood there with a smile on his face and his chest bulging with pride. In the view of onlookers he was merely a sad sight for sore eyes. A worthless tramp that had nothing better to do with his idle time than stack crates atop one another and run around town dressed like a buffoon harassing civil folk. There he was in all of his miserable existence **The Broad Street Maniac, King of the Rubbish.**

Just then on the street there were a pair of work hands carrying a heavy sheet of glass to the shop whose window he had broken out during the previous night’s antics. Just beyond the glass he saw a strange gentleman that looked extremely familiar to the tip of his tongue staring intensely at him. He couldn’t put his finger on his name but he knew he knew the fellow and he knew he knew him well. They stood there in the middle of Broad Street staring at one another intensely. The man’s gaze seemed to pierce through Huggsly’s deranged flesh, deep into the core of his soul. He was a well-dressed gentleman, with a flawless sense of style and impeccable taste—obviously a member of the upper crust. But there was something convicting about his gaze. It was haunting to Huggsly, even in his unhinged state. Clyde noticed his friend appeared to be caught inside a trance and approached him swiftly nestling against his leg in an effort to snap him out of it. Huggsly looked down at the sensation of the cat and when he looked back up the men with the glass had made their way to the street and the gentleman was nowhere to be found. He immediately gave chase in the northern bound direction in hopes of catching the fellow. He ran so fast not even Clyde could catch him and he was forced to follow the trail of his scent. He didn’t know what he wanted from him but he wanted to see him again. There was something mysterious in his eyes, something metaphysical. He absolutely had to know what it was. He ran for several hundred yards

and grew tired and gave up the chase. However when he stopped he saw standing across the street none other than the crew of vagrants that had come by to see him earlier.

“You there!” He shouted at them condescendingly.

The vagrants were highly used to being harassed by the police and civil folk, and Huggsly still held a very admirable air of high breeding in his voice. Therefore when they heard the sound of his voice and its tone of admonishment, they all froze and checked themselves into attention. It was even some time after they saw him approaching that they realized it was he who was calling upon them and they felt it safe to relax.

“What on earth are you doing? Get back to work! I’m not paying you to stand around frolicking in circles all day. We’ve got a job to do! I have MONEY to make and you’re costing me by the second! Back with you now!” Demanded Huggsly.

Now between the lot of, half of the vagrants were totally convinced by his tone and the other half of them sat frozen in shock, and in a state of confusion for they knew not what to do. But the one that had approached him the previous day in search of tarts was not to be fooled again. He had acquired an immunity to Huggsly’s unsubstantiated tone of authority and he spoke back as he saw the other men preparing to run back to work as he had done the previous day.

“Now you wait just a minute you! You’re not going to catch me again with that one. You wanted all the tarts to yourself and you tried to run me off with your thespian trickery and all your barking! Well it ain’t gonna work!” He said

“Not going to work? Well then you’re fired! The whole lot of you!” Shouted Huggsly.

“You can’t fire us! We don’t work for you!” Replied the vagrant.

At this reply Huggsly had the deepest look of confusion on his face as did all the other vagabonds standing still in attention for fear of what they knew not.

“Very well then, you’re hired!” Said Huggsly in rebuttal.

“You can’t hire us!” Said the tramp.

“And why not?” Asked Huggsly.

“You ain’t got the funds mate!” He shouted with grave irreverence.

Just then Huggsly had one of the few moments of brilliance he would ever experience in his maddened state as he realized he actually did have the money. He turned to them and pulled the rocks out of his pockets that he had collected by the train station.

“Well what do you call this my friend?” He asked with great enthusiasm.

They all looked with a gaze of bewildered uncertainty. They glanced around at one another and then broke into uncontrollable laughter.

“Why, what are you all laughing at? There’s nothing funny!” Huggsly insisted.

“Those ain’t nothing mate, those is rocks!” Belted one of them.

Frustrated, Huggsly did not see the humor in any of this. He still believed in his heart that he had carried with him the gold of the Leopard Khan and he saw no reason to laugh at golden nuggets as if they were merely rocks. However, Madison Woodborough VII was not to be easily outdone, even in his maddened state. He thought of a bright Idea when he realized that he had several hundred pounds in bank notes in his billfold, a book full of unwritten checks in his left coat pocket, and a purse filled with forty-five pounds in gold sovereign²⁴ in his right pocket. He pulled out the billfold and the purse.

“Name your price.” He stated calmly with a sheer sense of absolute confidence.

They reared back in awe of the fact that this fellow whom they had taken largely to be a joke—for he was filthy and absurd in appearance even by vagrant standards—was in possession of such great wealth. They first feared that he had robbed someone, then they placed one and one together and they figured that he must be the son of some wealthy merchant or noble who had gone off the deep end. They did not know whether to accept his offer or leave the poor fellow to his own devices. They huddled around one another and congregated for some time debating whether to stay or walk away. Being that they were homeless and uncertain of their next meal they opted for the lesser of two evils and agreed amongst themselves to render their services to him—which up until this point constituted little more than walking away from him—under certain conditions. The first of them whom he’d met the day prior turned to him and laid out the terms.

“Okay friend, you’ve got a deal.” He said. “We’ll take you up on your offer under agreed terms of certain conditions. First of all we have names and we like to be referred to as those names if you don’t mind. That there is Joe, this here is Moe, this fellow here’s name is Peezely, and that over there is Mick. And I would be Quincy but you can call me Quince. We work for a half a pound a day and not a shilling less, and we don’t do dishes.”

“Is that all?” asked Huggsly.

“That and we want a Christmas bonus with New Years and St. Patrick’s off.” Demanded Quince.

“Done!” Declared Huggsly.

²⁴ A Victorian Era gold sovereign was worth one pound at the time.

The group cheered at the terms of their brilliant negotiation not knowing what they had gotten themselves into.

“And now YOU’RE FIRED!!!!” Screamed Huggsly with a glee of self satisfaction as he turned and skipped away without a care in the world.

The vagabonds were delusional over the oddity of the entire situation. They chased after Huggsly crawling to their knees begging for redemption.

“Please take us back Mister Sir, Please, I’ve got a wife and two kids to feed!” Cried Joe, whom incidentally had neither a wife nor child to feed.

But Huggsly would hear none of it and he waltzed down the street as they stood in utter disbelief of what had just happened. In his mind the vagrants were no rag-tag band of tramps gathering in the alleys of seedy districts. He thought he was barking orders at an executive staff of professional sycophants from the fourth floor conference room of his Gothic styled office building. At the same time as this was occurring, across town on the actual fourth floor conference room of a Gothic building the peculiar man from that morning was roasting his team of sycophant executives for lunch.

“Why isn’t this done? Can’t you do anything right? Where did you go to school? Kindergarten?” He roared as his team of dutiful employees took his constant abuse with great resilience.

He was a thoughtful man but he had a certain cruel streak, and he could be crass if he felt the situation called for it. He was unwilling to listen to reason if he felt he had no reason to listen, and he never felt he had a reason to as long as he reasoned it so. His employees all despised him but were all too intimidated by his sadistic temperament to ever utter a word of it. And so his day went, screaming and yelling throwing tantrum after fit, fit after tantrum at the doorman, at the footman, at his secretary, at his clerk, at the scrivener, at the Chef, at the interior decorators of his office. Nothing was ever good enough and everything was always done wrong even when it was right. He made a task of torturing those around him just for the fun of it. It gave him a perverse sense of pleasure and he noticed something similar to himself in Huggsly that day as he stood in the street watching him bark orders at his battalion of furry friends. He felt that somehow their lives had been connected through some strange force in the universe. And when they made eye contact he could feel the vagabond looking into his soul. It was eerie and startling to him. He rushed away from that scene with haste for fear that he might discover something he didn’t want to know. Though he felt a constant force drawing him back to Chester Alley in back of McCormick & Sons.

Huggsly woke the next day with more shenanigans of course. He arose and began yelling at his comrades as before, though this time he had a particularly nasty tone in his voice. He moseyed out to the street and smelled the scent of fresh bread baking when he suddenly realized he hadn’t eaten since he’d gluttonously devoured the entire box of tarts. There standing on the street he was approached from behind by none other than Quince and the band of vagrants. They had followed the same trail of the scent of fresh bread to

François' Café adjacent to McCormick & Sons. They bumped into Huggsly on the corner and he immediately took to screaming at them.

"What are you doing? This isn't right! No, no, no! Where are my dispensations from India? Why hasn't the clerk drafted the contracts for Mr. Crosby? Where are the minutemen for the eleven-thirty appointment with Mr. Brock? You've better get on the ball or you'll be begging for scraps out in the streets with the vagabonds!" He hollered.

"But Mister, you fired us!" Replied Peezely.

"Well then you're unfired! Now get to work." Huggsly shouted back.

"But sir we haven't gotten paid yet." Answered Joe.

"What? What do you mean? Whose fault is this? Clyde!!!!" Said Huggsly as he turned to the golden cat. "Why haven't these men been paid? You were supposed to handle the payroll since two weeks ago when I fired Edmond. Can't you do anything right? And where is my BREAKFAST?????" He screamed!

Clyde just stood there with a look of confusion. "Meow?" He replied.

"Clyde you're fired, find me someone else to scream at!"

Clyde arched his back and unleashed the claws from his paws having grown weary of his long time companion's delusional disabuse. He began to hiss.

"Hisssssssss!"

This sobered Huggsly up for the moment at least enough to stop abusing Clyde. Meanwhile Clyde jumped into the arms of Quince in an effort to take refuge from the dysfunctional scene after having lost his own temper. Quince was happy to have made a new friend after having suffered the severe gaze of Clyde's suspicion several times in the previous two days.

"Oh dear, we cannot go any further on an empty stomach. Moe! Go and get us something to eat." Ordered Huggsly.

"Right away boss" Followed Moe.

He handed him ten pounds and he moseyed over to François' Café where he ordered breakfast for everyone, including a loaf of bread for the pigeons and smoked salmon locks for the Pilcrows and the owls, as well as a half-dozen eggs for the weasels a basket of apples for the rabbits and a muffin for the field mice. Clyde and the vagrants ate hot links of sausage and eggs with English muffins and tea along with Huggsly. It was a site to see in the middle of Broad Street—**The Vagabonds of Chester Alley** with a menagerie of animals eating a royal breakfast amidst a tower of shipping crates.

Part E: The Party of Buffoons

*T*hough still deranged Huggsly was in better spirits after breakfast, by which point

he'd forgotten that he'd fired Clyde. He saw fit to take the day off and he paid all of his employees in sterling. Then suddenly he decided that he didn't want to play business anymore so he up and all at once changed scenes from the office to the town. He and his retinue were going to go out that evening and they had to fit the bill. They walked all the way to Piccadilly Circus once it became evident to several members of the crew that they were never going to hail a coach in their disagreeable state followed by a flock of birds and vermin. When they got to Savile Row they were refused entry into any of the tailors on the grounds of their pungent, fowl odor. They couldn't dispute this argument so they went into a barber's shop and purchased six bars of soap. They strolled over to the River Thames and took a long deep dip scrubbing every nook and cranny under the sun. When they emerged they were hardly recognizable. They ran in circles like a gang of crazies trying to dry their tattered clothes off. When they finally got dry enough they went back to the barber's for fresh clean shaves and haircuts. They even took the opportunity to brush their teeth (a rarity in the vagrant world). They returned to the tailors and were fitted with the frocks of the finest bespoke cloth that any of them had ever felt, except Huggsly of course. They strolled back onto the streets of London dapper and ready to take the town, all suited in full evening dress with ties, and white gloves, and top hats, with fresh leather boots and canes. When they touched the street they had no difficulty hailing a coach, because the coaches were hailing them. The six of them piled into two carriages leaving the animals behind except for Clyde who had since forgiven Huggsly for their little spat earlier.

The party headed over to Wellington Street²⁵ near Covent Garden where they entered a gentlemen's club. Huggsly gave each of his men one hundred pounds in notes from the Bank of England, which they then cashed into chips. It was here that we first began our tale...not at the top of the page, but at the first row of the actual story narrative.²⁶ Now the reader has heard of Huggsly's skylarking regarding his declarations. But this calamity was nothing compared to the fiasco that ensued when he set five vagabonds loose in a Wellington Street gentleman's club with drinking and gambling and one hundred pounds sterling to each of their names. The patrons inside the establishment were all considerable drinkers and they prided themselves on the ability to outdrink the next man without passing out. They drank whisky and gin, wine and larger, champagne and rum, and everything they could put their lips to with the exception of water. The company out-drunk every man in the establishment. One could notice their presence in the house because everywhere they were standing men were toppling over from drunkenness like bowling pins. And they gambled ferociously. They won at craps and roulette, black jack and poker, horse racing and billiards. It seemed as though the drunker they got, the smarter they got, the more precise their calculations became, and the more they would win. By the end of the night there was not a single one of them holding less

²⁵ Wellington Street was a primary strip in a district infamous for its illicit activity which later became a popular grounds for gentlemanly wage placing on racing horses—not to be confused with gambling.

²⁶ This is a reference to the riddle told by George Talbot in Chapter 2

than a thousand pounds, ten hors d'oeuvres and five handfuls of peanuts in his pockets. It was a sight to see those savvy tramps making the most of the lowlife in high society.

The Man from the Street was also in need of relief that night and so after verbally berating his employees throughout a long day of work he saw fit to blow some steam by heading into the gentlemen's club that night. He forced his employees to accompany him so that he would not be lonely. Little did he know that he and Huggsly were at the same party. He drank and drank The Macallan Scotch whisky all night long attempting to drown away his sorrows. The inner turmoil he had felt had been driving him into despair, and the whisky he had over-consumed was now making him giddy—a dangerous combination for a man of his position.

He hadn't noticed Huggsly all night long and Huggsly had not noticed him, in part as a result of the latter's new found image, complements of Savile Row. Huggsly had spent the better half of the evening stating his 'declarations' when he decided to sit down to a poker table, now subdued by his dose of lavender water, and try his hand at a game. The Man from the Street also sat down at this same time at the table end opposite of Huggsly. The dealer placed the cards on the table and madman gauged his competition in order to decide how he would play his hand. As he glanced from player to player he did not notice the Man from the Street. But the man had noticed him and he sat there with frightened look on his face as he realized that there at the poker table on the opposite end from himself sat The Maniac of Broad Street. The players threw down their cards and the strangest coincidence happened. Huggsly dropped with the hand 5-Hearts, 6-Spades, 7-Diamonds, Queen Hearts, Big Joker, while the Man from the Street dropped with 5-Diamonds, 6-Clubs, 7-Hearts, Queen-Diamonds, Little Joker. The coincidence was phenomenal. Both players lost to the dealer who had landed a royal flush, but the odds were impossible. The Man from the Street quickly turned his back and walked away before Huggsly could see his face and departed from the game feigning irritation at having lost his hand. Huggsly noticed the coincidence and felt something strange and quickly stood to see who the mysterious player was who'd complemented his hand number for number, letter for later, suit for suit.

He walked through the club for quite some time looking for this mysterious player but he had rounded every corner to no avail and he eventually gave up the hunt. He leaned upon a curtain and pulled it aside, gazing out into the night air, and just then he could see in the window's reflection the man in the street staring directly at his back. His heart skipped a beat. His lungs stopped pumping and he began to choke on his own spittle. He felt his hands growing weak and uncontrollable as if he were fighting a faceless enemy in a dream. He sank into himself and when he mustered the courage to turn around the man was there no longer. He searched high and low with haste in such a wild frenzy that the strong men ended up escorting him from the club. The Vagabonds saw Huggsly being manhandled and didn't take kindly to the act so they caused an uproar eventually landing themselves on the curb as well. The house was losing so much money on them—not to mention hors d'oeuvres—they were begging for an excuse to put them out anyway. There they stood in the middle of Wellington Street all dressed up and nowhere to go.

"Well what'll we do next boss?" Asked Mick.

“What? Next? Boss?” He replied.

Huggsly was still in a state of frenzy and he was shaken of the apparition that seemed to be following him through the streets of London. Clyde saw his friend was in danger so he leaped into his arms to comfort him. The trick had worked and the familiar brush of his old friends tale snapped him out of it. Quince decided that they should go home and so they piled back into two coaches and headed back to Broad Street. Huggsly insisted that his party stay in his castle and seeing that the great tower of shipping crates in all its intricate compartmentalization was actually plusher, more concealed and more stable shelter than the tree stumps and rubbish bins they had frequented, they obliged. They slept that night, the vagabonds six, in their fine evening dress, in the tower of crates in Chester Alley with a horde of wild animals.

The next morning was a Saturday and the Man from the Street sat in his study thinking about the vagrant he had seen on Broad Street dressed in fancy clothes at the poker table of the gentleman’s club on Wellington. “How could it be?” He asked himself. Was he going mad? This experience was all too much for him to let go. He rushed to his room and got dressed and ordered his coach to speed him down to Broad Street near Chester Alley so he could see for himself. There he saw our Party of Vagabonds heaped in the tower of crates still sporting their evening dress from the previous night. He had seen all that he had come to see, though he did not tell his driver to move on. He just stayed. He stared at Huggsly at the top of the tower in the ‘penthouse’. Sleeping uncomfortably as he too had been haunted the night before. He stayed there for several hours in the early morning just staring at him until the first of the party began to rouse, then he slipped away without notice for fear that he may be seen.

Days went by and little improved in Huggsly’s condition. He only appeared to grow more abusive of his companions. Penelope was in and out of fainting spells with grief as was her mother. Miranda and Mother Prescott held it together, while Sterling and Clarke grew closer to one another over the aged oak cask. His father had sent his most loyal footmen to keep a distant watch on Huggsly as well and they reported back on all of his deeds and misadventures. He had paid for the window at McCormick & Sons as well as the service in the café where Huggsly wrote the check in WERTY, which the Bank of England refused to cash. It seemed all they could do is wait.

Each morning and each night the Man from the Street would ride by Chester Alley to see what our friends were up to. It became an obsession for him to spy on the company of vagrants, especially their leader. He thought about Huggsly more and more each day and wondered what it could all mean, regarding his strange ties to this lunatic vagabond. He had no idea but he knew that the moment he saw him first in the alley he felt a strange ache in his spirit as though his life was no more, and he knew he had to figure it out.

Huggsly would continue his antics, with his entourage of vagabonds and animals always attempting to steer him from trouble to little avail. There was the time he snatched a ragdoll from a three-year-old girl thinking it was a golden monkey he had been searching for on a safari treasure hunt. The little girl wrestled her arm free of her mother and chased him down herself, tripping him with a broomstick and delivering him two lumps to the head as payback. Later on that day the girl’s five year old brother came to Chester Alley with a group of four pint-sized goons looking for Huggsly, but the vagrants

warded them off, telling him that it had all been a mistake, as Huggsly slept off his injuries. Or there was the time he dragged his men to the Exchange Alley coffee shops for the sole purpose of standing in the midst of the stock traders' madness and shouting absurdities adding further to the chaos of financial exchange. They would stand in the alley and hand out random pieces of paper to men passing by that had various statements of nonsense on them such "5 = Other than 5" or "276 Now bring me my tea and get back to work!" They would pop their heads into the windows and open doors of coffee shops and shout random series of numbers at Huggsly's command. Or they would carry on imaginary conversations leading some to believe they were catching the inside scoop on a private deal going down just beyond the reach of others. Huggsly even stayed up one night writing an entire role of ticker tape, which he split into ten foot increments and tossed about the alley in front of all manner of coffee shop so that those coming and going to Cornhill Street²⁷ thought they had landed a valuable resource only to look more closely and realize the ticker was also full of nonsense written in WERTY or just plain full of poppycock such as "Haricots Verts" or "Oxymoron".

And then there was the time he foiled the police officers with an Oopsie Daisy. Huggsly had been digging a hole in Finsbury Circus and covering it with leaves all afternoon one day. No one thought much of it. They just assumed it part of the man's many odd tendencies. There were two particularly unlucky officers assigned to walk the beaten path past Chester Alley every day, and their names were Wilson and Atherton. They were the oddest pair of partners in Scotland Yard. Wilson was a great rotund man who looked like a giant Number 10 billiard²⁸ when he got dressed for work. Atherton was very tall and thin, and he looked like sausage that had been stretched and flattened. Their vagrant advisories had privately nicknamed the duo 'Ten and Link', respectively. The officers had been hunting for the Broad Street Maniac²⁹ for over a week when they caught a sign that he was on the move. Huggsly had woken that day and decided he would have a piano recital in the middle of the street with a broken upright that someone had discarded in his alley. The monstrosity had every key as far out of tune in every way possible such that when he played all the listener could hear consisted of every inharmonic combination of tones known to man. It was as though he was playing in WERTY. Now Huggsly was actually an excellent player and he could still play finely even in his crazed condition, but as he beat the contraption so viciously in search of a decent sound, he lost further touch with reality and he began beating the instrument out of pure enthusiasm. He eventually stood up and started stomping on the keys and bashing its keys with one of its own legs. A crowd had gathered round and dogs began howling in discomfort. Small children started to cry with their hands over their ears and the general public became incredibly irritated at the cacophony that was allowed to take place in the middle of the street. Wilson and Atherton heard the ruckus and they immediately began to close in on Huggsly blowing their whistles. Seeing the commotion coming towards him Huggsly jumped over the piano and raced up the street as the two officers gave chase. They chased him up and down Broad Street for over an hour when it began to rain.

²⁷ Cornhill Street is the location of the Royal Exchange in the City of London.

²⁸ The Number 10 billiard is striped with a thick line of navy blue with ivory at the top and bottom.

²⁹ Wilson and Atherton were idiots and they were abusive policemen of little good to those around them. They made a habit of misusing their power to the detriment of the vagrants over the course of years and none of them could stand the duo. Their incompetence is duly demonstrated here as they had difficulty locating the Broad Street Maniac when he slept in a mountain of unsealed crates in Chester Alley. This explains why they were able to torment the vagrants for so long, because they were never offered promotion to the rank of inspector or given any tasks of noteworthy responsibility.

He ran all the way up London Wall and into Finsbury Circus where they followed him. The grass became wet and slippery as the soil had by that point moistened into mud. Huggsly let the officers catch up right behind him and then he lured them into his trap. They fell straight into the leaf-covered hole he had dug which was now a muddy pit. Huggsly turned around and gave them his rear-end to ponder and turned back around and stuck out his tongue before skipping out of the park and down the street yelling, "Oopsie Daisy! Oopsie Daisy!" The officers were furious and vowed to pay the lunatic back who did this to them.

Part 2: The Windfall

When Huggsly made it back to the alley the boys were all waiting for him and

cheering him on. They had no idea how he'd done it and so he sat with them and recounted the tale of how he foiled the police in Finsbury Circus. At that particular moment the Man from the Street had been sailing a small vessel outside of the mouth of the River Thames into the North Sea and around to the English Channel. He was alone when the rain began to fall and he noticed a great black tide coming for him and he felt that metaphysical disturbance in his soul again. He did not fear for his life, despite the fact that he was relatively far out in a relatively small vessel facing a relatively large swelling of the sea tides. But he feared for his inner being because he felt a strange presence looming over him that was somehow embodied in the waves that had begun tossing him violently in the open sea. He held on for dear life with his head down and his grip tight. Meanwhile back in the alley, the party was just celebrating the victory of their fearless leader over the ruthless police who had at some point harassed each and every one of them.

Suddenly Huggsly felt a strange presence as well and he stood up to everyone's confusion and he turned around and went into the street. They stood there beneath the crates wondering what he would do this time as he stared in a daze. There he saw moving back and forth before him nothing but waves of darkness and swirling tides as the people moved to and fro, carrying their black umbrellas with the collars flipped up on their black coats with their black hats pulled down firmly upon their heads. Huggsly knew not what it was he felt nor what he was looking at but it all seemed to be consuming him in that moment and so he felt the irrational urge to break free and so he rushed as fast as he could through the crowd slipping and sliding between the moving mass of people that had swollen into a great tidal wave. It wanted to take him under. It longed to bring him down and he could not let it. And so he ran with all his strength, and when his strength gave out he ran with all his might. And when his might gave out he ran still ever more until the rain subsided and he had withstood the storm. The sun came out again and a rainbow formed in the sky. Someone on the street said something about a pot of gold and it reminded Huggsly to go and see the Leopard Khan. He ran into Broad Street station exhausted from his duel with the ocean of mankind and he called upon the Siamese cat.

Khan was ecstatic to see him, as was he to see the great peacock-spotted cat. Several trains were arriving and departing from the station in that moment and so their conversation was held at the top of their lungs in the type of slow drawn out speech that people use when they can barely hear one another.

"Khan, why did you give me fools gold from your pot?" he asked.

Khan remembered what nearly happened the last time he decided to play with fire in a madman's camp and so he decided to be Frank, for that was his real name rather than Khan, he was Frank the cat.

“My name isn’t Khan, my name is Frank. I don’t have any gold. I only told you that because you were mad and you seemed lost. And you would have never taken no for an answer so I gave you what you were looking for.” Said Frank.

“But why was I mad? I didn’t feel mad. I felt very happy. I had just found you and I thought you had a pot of gold for me. Why would I be mad?” Responded Huggsly.

“You see that’s what I mean, you’re still mad. But don’t worry it will get better. You just have to wait. You’ll understand soon enough.”

“Khan! You aren’t making any sense. I think you’re the one losing it not me.”

“Yes, yes, but you’re the one looking for a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.”

At that Huggsly paused. He thought about it and still could make no sense of anything that was going on but somehow he knew the cat was right. He thanked him for being Frank and licked him once for good luck and then he departed the gift shop and the station. Meanwhile in the Channel, the man in the street had also endured the storm and he felt a sense of release as the tide lowered and the storm dissipated from the sky once more revealing the sun. The fortnight was almost over and the first signs of relief in Huggsly’s condition began to show the next day.

Now the reader must take care to note that I said the first signs, not the last signs. The very next day Huggsly, being somewhat more polite to his ‘employees’ decided to build an addition to the castle and so the entire party went about the alley seeking more crates. They came upon one heap of crates and everyone took one except Huggsly’s crate was not empty. He carried it halfway to Chester Alley before he realized that his was the only that was heavy in weight and he slammed it to the ground cracking it open. Only, it was full of deep red pigment from India in the form of powder, and when it shattered the pigment erupted into the air and splattered all over Huggsly in the alley way. The men all laughed profusely and Huggsly being of good sport in his condition found it equally as amusing. There he was covered from head to toe and dripping with the color red. He continued walking back to Chester Alley with the men when Atherton came upon him and brushed into him staining his midnight blue uniform with a brilliant red shoulder mark.

“Watch wear you’re going you lousy bum!” Yelled the officer.

When he looked at his clothing he grew furious and looked around realizing it was the vagrants. He didn’t recognize Huggsly as his face was covered in red so he took him to be one of the others. He shoved him away forcefully and drew his billystick in preparation of an assault.

But Huggsly was no coward and he stood up to the officer slapping him red handed dead across the face while shouting out, “I do declare!”

After stating his piece he saw no further need to stick around and take the beating so he began to run diverting the officers' attention and sparing his comrades any further persecution. The officers chased Huggsly all through the alleys of Broad Street and onto the main streets as well. But Clyde had grown tired of the abusive pair of law enforcers and he called the menagerie to work out a plan. Meanwhile, Huggsly was running so fast he almost ran out of his shoes. As luck would have it Queen Victoria had been in the Broad Street district on official business that day, and she was in the midst of being escorted into her Royal Chariot flanked by two guard and two beefeaters when Huggsly came careening down the street and slivered right through the guard and slammed straight into the Queen hurling him self backward into the ground and nearly knocking the queen off balance. He left a red imprint all about her front half and when he realized this he was deeply apologetic. He stood and made matters worse by hugging her and bowing before her kissing her hands and feet in apology before dashing off in escape of the officers in pursuit. The Queen was flattered by his apologies and had forgotten all about the accident. The guard were so confused that rather than seizing him for accidentally assaulting the Queen under their watch, they stood there staring the entire time up until the point that he jogged beyond the corner and out of their sights.

In the mean time Wilson and Atherton were doing their best to stay behind Huggsly in their unconditioned form. They too nearly ran into the Queen as she and the guard were still standing in the same spot caught in somewhat of a daze when the oddly shaped duo came up the block. They were so slow and so loud in their huffing and wheezing that the guard had time to gather their attention, and just before they nearly violated the Queen by running her over the guard assaulted them before seizing them and taking them into custody. They were ready to make someone pay for the unexpected, but clearly accidental, assault on the Queen, which was not only humiliating for the guard but it was doubly so because it left a blatantly conspicuous sign of evidence that the assault had occurred in the form of the red pigment that Huggsly left all over Her Royal Highness. As Atherton also had a heavy mark of pigment on his uniform and across his face similar to that left on the Queen they sought to use this as evidence that he was the culprit and dismiss all claims that she had been assaulted by the Broad Street Maniac on their watch, and that he'd gotten away. It was lucky for Huggsly as well, because had it not been for the pride of the beefeaters and the guard, all of Scotland Yard, the Royal Guard, and the Army would have come looking for him. But as it was the Queen saw no justified cause to charge Wilson and Atherton, as it was obvious that they were in pursuit of the culprit, and furthermore she also saw the perpetrator's actions as no legitimate violation on account of his most flattering display of groveling before her on the ground in request of forgiveness. Therefore the charges were written off in all directions with no resolution and no violations against the guard, the police officers, or the Maniac.

When Madison Woodborough V got word that his grandson had assaulted the Queen, whether on accident or on purpose, he feared for his life, as did all of those around him. Now it happened to be the case that Charles Anderson, Huggsly's roommate at Oxford, had visited Edencrest in search of his friend that day and they told him what had become of his comrade. Charles had heard of the antics of the crazed Maniac on Broad Street but legend had it that the man was eight feet tall and had a beard that scraped the earth. He never in a million years would have guessed that this was what became of his roommate. After he departed that day Charles was unable to concentrate at

the thought of his dear friend suffering so on the streets. He thought long and hard about Huggsly and what he could do to help. But that is a matter for later in the story.

The following day was one day short of a fortnight and Huggsly appeared to be showing considerable improvement until they were all sitting on the bench eating breakfast, laughing about the story of the Queen that had by now made its way through the streets. Huggsly was the talk of the town. Just then a man walked by carrying broom with a shimmering, copper plated handle stick. Huggsly looked in the man's direction and he somehow thought he had seen the Man from the Street. He lunged forward and snatched the broom from the man's hand. Charged through the front door of McCormick's & Sons and...well the reader knows how this story goes because it is where we first began at the very top row. At any rate he squeezed at the broomstick trying to snap the copper handle in two, thinking it the man's neck, and frightening McCormick and both of his sons. The man with the broom was behind him fighting to get his broom back. Wilson and Atherton had witnessed the entire series of events and they struggled across the street into the shop, knowing it was the Maniac, and seeking to take their revenge for the previous days' humiliation and near prosecution, persecution, and cusecution (whatever that means). The officers came into the shop and broke more dishes than the madman in their exhausted state adding further to the confusion. Huggsly seemed to not be breaking with the spell that had overtaken him and he did not notice the officers behind him. The police both removed their billy clubs and were prepared to strike Huggsly across the head and face when a large hand grabbed each of their arms from behind applying great pressure. The pressure was so intense that each of them eventually received medical treatments for severe stress fractures in both the ulna and radius.

A great deep voice came from behind them saying, "Now why do you want to hurt my friend officer?"

It was none other than James Huddleston faithfully flanked by Smedley O'Hare, and Winston Andrews, who now had the officer's arms in their grip. Huggsly saw none of this going on as he was intent on murdering the broomstick before it got the best of him, and he eventually exhausted himself in the process and grew short of breath. Just then Charles Anderson walked into the shop and he apologized to the McCormicks, promising that everything damaged would be paid for in addition to his troubles. To which Mr. McCormick replied that he already had an arrangement with the Woodboroughs, and that they could continue to break everything they liked.

James Huddleston had graduated from Cambridge along with Smedley and Winston, and the three went to work for James' father in the bank after finishing. James and his sidekicks started off as loan officers but they were so kind and generous that they gave far too many loans out and not nearly enough denials so James' father fired the three of them. He then found that every loan they gave out was paid back in time with interest on account of their intimidating size and he hired them all back and promoted them to senior director positions in his financial firm. James had done extremely well for himself in life (and for Smedley and for Winston), considering the path he had been on at Lancaster, and he felt he owed it all to Huggsly. It was his greatest pleasure in life to offer whatever assistance he could to this man that had, as a boy, changed his entire

outlook on the world. And so the great giant kneeled over and he gathered Huggsly from the ground, the broom still clasped in his hand, and he carried him to their coach where they had arranged to take him to Edencrest. The man eventually got his broom back and the officers eventually stumbled out of the potters shop gripping their arms. When they did they were met with a barrage of verbal abuses from the crew of vagabonds whereupon they were assaulted by a menagerie of wild animals who began hurling all manner of rotten food at them, splashing them in the face and all over their bodies until they fainted there on the street in front of the demolished shop.

Chapter Five: The Awakening

*H*uggsly slept the final two days of his fortnight in his bed at his grandfather's

castle and when he began to arouse Penelope was there by his side. He was still somewhat out of his wits when came to, and when he awoke in a strange room he imagined that he had been carried to Saint Bartholomew's Hospital in Broad Street. As he opened his eyes again he did not see Penelope, in the corner waiting patiently but as he glanced to his right he saw his reflection in the silver kettle by his bedside, and imagined for a brief second that the Man from the Street had survived his attempt to strangle him and that he was now sharing a hospital bed next to him. Then suddenly the last of his maniacal delusions faded, and he was in the world again. The madness was over. He realized that the Man in the Street was his reflection all along, and that he had been a crazed lunatic running wild on Chester Alley for the past fortnight, and now he was home. The Man on the Street was actually a product of the dream he had dreamed on the first night of his trip down the rabbit hole. He had imagined what his life would have went like had nothing went wrong that day, and the Man on the Street was, by contrast, the manifestation of what his life would turn out as had he continued on the path he had taken without Penelope, cruel and ruthless with a heart grown cold. He realized that he had only seen the figure through glass and polished surfaces—in the replacement glass for the potter's shop, and the window of the gentleman's club, and the handle of the copper broomstick. In fact he had thought his reflection was that same figure inside McCormick's when he began hurling the Leopard Khan's gold at the storefront. All the times the man came and stared at him in the mornings and the late hours of day he was merely imagining that the figure which was him, was looking back upon himself there in the alley. But he also learned something important from this lesson. He learned a greater respect for all humans and animals than he had ever known before. He realized that he had been abusive to his animal friends, and he spent many days afterwards apologizing and trying to make it up to them. He also realized that he had been abusive to his new human friends, and that though he had never been cruel to the vagabonds he crossed in the street, he had never looked upon them with compassion, but merely dismissed them as meaningless ciphers occupying space in the background of the city. His experiences humanized them and gave new meaning to his understanding of the world. They had protected him in his time of greatest need and they made a tremendously jolly group of companions.

He arose from his comatose state and sought to make right all that he had done wrong. He apologized to Penelope, her father, mother and grandmother for losing his mind first. Then he apologized to her brother, Edwin, for knocking him unconscious, and the two got along effortlessly ever since. He found the little girl whose ragdoll he'd attempted to heist and he brought her and her brother a steam trunk full of playthings to enjoy. He issued a formal apology to the Queen and met at her court to offer her a gift of amends by giving her a golden and ruby broach in the form of a red heart rumored to have cost one quarter million pounds sterling. The Queen was ecstatic and she had the entire incident stricken from the public records citing that if anyone should ever raise mention of it again it would be "Off with their heads!". He apologized to the Vagabonds

of Chester Alley, telling them that he was so grateful to them for saving him, and that he never meant to utter a single unkindness to them. They understood well and they were happy to see him under better conditions, but sad to see him leave though they knew he could not stay. He apologized to Wilson and Atherton for the Oopsie Daisy. He, of course apologized to McCormick & Sons, who were not only not displeased with him, but joyful that he had come into their lives and destroyed their shop on both occasions because his father had paid for everything he broke and business had never been better. He apologized to his parents and his grandparents for potentially tarnishing the family name and not being strong enough to resist his spell of madness. Though they refused to accept his apology under consideration of the fact that nobody in the street had for one moment ever believed him to be a Woodborough, and that they knew that no one could have ever withstood the pressure that he endured that drove him insane. They told him that his succumbing to madness was not a weakness but gift, because it showed him who he really was by allowing him to glimpse the worst parts of his character that he might dare to become. And so he made a vow never to become that Man in the Street, and with that vow he made his final apology to himself.

In another week he gave the diamond and emerald ring to Penelope the proper way. That is, by bowing down on his knee rather than hurling it in her direction and striking her brother in the head with it from forty yards out while mounted atop a horse. The loving couple was wed that August just like his parents and the world appeared to be a splendid place again. They married just a month after Christopher Anderson married Eleanor Winthrop. Clyde and Jade became housemates and they had their first litter that December in time for Christmas. Huggsly finished Oxford under the guidance of Dodgson and Ruskin the following spring and he went on to start his own branch of the Woodborough Empire just like in his dream. Only this time he did not go on to hire a team of obedient sycophants. Rather he found a team of trusted advisors in the vagabonds of Chester Alley. He went back to Broad Street and had a tower constructed, and he had his company of five men fitted at Savile Row with entire wardrobes of finely tailored three-piece suits. He paid them each a salary of ten thousand pounds sterling, and set them up in lovely townhouses close to the office. He even got Wilson and Atherton jobs working as loan officers for James Huddleston. He felt it suiting that a former bully should teach bullies to stop bullying. That following summer 'Number' 8 was born in the family's estate in Nottingham newly rechristened Chesterton Castle. And so it was that all was right with the world. I had braved the storm and come out unscathed.

...Because I am Madison Clarke Woodborough VII, Marquess of Edencrest, and the Maniac of Broad Street.

And they all lived happily ever after.

Yjr Rmf

TRANSLATION:

The End

Wayward Fool: Artist Statement

By the Letter

As I wrote the *Wayward Fool* for the Wonderland competition my inspiration came in the form of the question, “What does Lewis Carroll mean to me?”

The author of the *Alice* tales was a creative of the highest order and in an effort to engage his style and temperament most comprehensively I placed myself in the mental framework of writing from the mindset of an author engaged in Victorian society and literary culture. It is difficult at times to imagine world without telephones, computers, smart devices, and propulsion engines. This work is representative of a mental departure of sorts on behalf of the author to commit to the worldview of an individual that must be preoccupied by human words and actions largely to the exclusion of machines. With the aim of producing the most comprehensive interpretation of a Carrollian literary piece, the author here has borrowed from several predecessors, contemporaries and successors of Carroll himself so as to provide the richest context in which to situate Carrolls literary temperament through a modern lens of perspective.

The story is written from a third person narrative, although the reader discovers in the end that the author and narrator is in fact the protagonist. The *Wayward fool* is very much an allegory, a story of coming of age in the Victorian Era and the rite of passage through madness into a frame of self-actualization. The lead character, Huggsly Woodborough was made to endure the experience of Wonderland from a different viewpoint. Rather than travel down the proverbial rabbit hole and escape to a fantastical world of dreamlike surrealism, the protagonist goes insane and experiences Wonderland in the real world, with real consequences much to the dismay of those around him. Though modern interpretations in many cases may capture Carroll’s comedic edge, they often fail to retain the esoteric nuance of his literary genius. This work attempts to achieve this by examining the concept of Wonderland with a materialist perspective. Thus we find the countless references to actual tea parties gone mad; codes and riddles surrounding meaningful real life events such as stock exchanges and romance; actual persons referred to as 5, 6, and 7; and the globalized effects of a person losing their mental sanity on their family and their community.

The story also deals with ‘the fantastic’ as the lead character is supported by the ubiquitous cat which was also incorporated as a an allusion to Alice’s Dinah, but was meant as well to serve as a counterbalance to the self-constraining effects of human sophistication that are likely to become evident when one’s mental state is compromised. Cats are also reported to have highly volatile mental states, and so the resilience of Clyde is a testament to his imperviousness as a figure of divinity similar to Dante’s Virgil. Likewise the Vagabonds of Chester Alley have certain divine qualities and can be understood to be metaphoric representations of sheep seeking salvation, led by a shepherd who has lost his way. The story offers a critique of elitism and aspirational ambitions present both throughout the Victorian Era and the current day. The lambasting

of London's financial district was a direct expression of this, as were the frequent references by the noble main characters in their disdain for their own social faction. The text is extensive in its ideological reference and so many of these points have been mentioned in the footnotes within the manuscript to offer greater insight at the point of context.

Most important was the meticulous attention to detail which was achieved through extensive research conducted in devising the historic narrative including people places and events, save for those invented such as Chester Alley, Evergreen Estate, or Eleanor Winthrop. Otherwise, historical figures such as John Ruskin, Fanny Talbot and her Husband George Talbot were accurately detailed, as was the location of their estate in Somerset. It was particularly complicated aligning the dates of events to maintain historical accuracy, with the Remington No. 2 being released in 1874, while the Fanny Talbot had donated the cabins to Ruskin in 1873, however the Remington No. 1 was released with its QWERTY keyboard in 1872, yet this keyboard had the period sign (.) in place of the (R) and it only typed in capital letters therefore it was necessary to align Huggsly's entry into Oxford at 1874 rather than later dates which would have put him in better alignment to have read the *Alice* tales as a child. These types of sacrifices are especially complex when writing literary fiction, but it was deemed important in keeping with the authenticity of Lewis Carroll—the man and author to whom this work is a tribute.

Research for the piece was conducted at the USC Doheny Library, including the Lewis Carroll collection, in addition to online resources gathered primarily for referential and historical accuracy.

By the Brush

The painting was done as a complement to the written novella and is composed of acrylic on canvas with Baby's Breath, Dill, Thyme, and Sweet Oregano. The incorporation of these unconventional media was part of the artist's attempt to literally manifest the story's themes within the artwork itself. The herbs were used as a reference to the use of herbs throughout the Victorian Era for their medicinal, healing, and psychiatric properties. Indeed, as the Wayward Fool begins the lead character is being subdued with lavender water as a form of suppressant to his nervous fit. We see the treatment of psychology and hysteria dealt with, in the stories, from an authentic nineteenth century perspective. The baby's breath found in the subjects' buttonholes, though not an herb, is a flower used here to symbolize the first section of the story, which deals with the making of Huggsly Woodborough. Dill was used because of its sour qualities as an expression of the protagonist's life taking a turn for the worse. Thyme was used homonymically in representation of the fact that only 'time' could heal the damage that had been done. And finally, the sweet oregano represents the return to happiness and the redemption of the hero.

The ‘all-seeing eye’ was placed in the lower border of the faux picture frame as a reference to the Man in the Street, who was always watching Huggsly closely; though in reality he was an internalized manifestation of the lead character’s super ego. Therefore the eye here represents not a clandestine sense of voyeurism, but a greater sense of introspection and self-reflection that we achieve through the endurance of our life’s hardships. The portrait features Huggsly and the Broad Street maniac positioned converse to one another in the motif of a face-level playing card. Although the card is represented as the 7 of Hearts, in reference to Huggsly being Madison Woodborough VII, the character is presented as a face card nonetheless as he is the Marquess of the fictional Edencrest. The Hearts suite was used in reference to the *Wonderland* stories; however, rather than a large heart aside the number and corner suit indicator, the author’s handprint in red paint has been used as a reference to the slapping of Officer Atherton, because the handprint also approximates the shape of the heart motif.

The characters are positioned in a nearly absurd, highfalutin pose which is an expression giving visual mention to the constant references to tea throughout the story—also a shtick taken from the *Wonderland* tales. The characters’ dress is decidedly Victorian as the proper Huggsly is seen wearing a frock coat and top hat with white gloves golden cufflinks and a waistcoat. Meanwhile the Maniac wears the same attire, though he has traded his top hat for the sleeve of his jacket, which is torn off as described in the story, and he is unshaven, and his hair was given a more disheveled appearance. One will also note that Huggsly has maintained an expression of distinction as he raises his tea to his face, while the Maniac has extended his lips forward in anticipation of its consumption. This would have been considered particularly uncouth in a tea setting coming from Huggsly’s social milieu and therefore the expression is given as a final gesture of the disconformity embodied in the liberated spirit that has no check on social appropriateness and has dethatched itself from the reality whose rules govern the rest of us.