

## *WORKS IN PROGRESS - PLEASE BE GENTLE*

### *WORK #1:*

The Arch-Minotaur of Klesork let the smoke from his para.nic drift slowly through the dwellsegment of the Sphere. "And these traditional sonic modulators from Tharvuld . . . are you quite sure about them, my dear? After all, Tharvuld has had its . . . shall we say its share of problems recently . . ."

How she hated him when he assumed that arrogant Klesorkian attitude. "Yes, Vmeek Tunyib, I'm quite sure about them . . . they are from my mother's people." She fought, unsuccessfully, the temptation to add, "And it seems to me that traditional sonic modulators are scarcely the kind to cause trouble here."

He smiled that enraging Klesorkian smile as the purple para.nic smoke dribbled languidly through his nostril. "I wouldn't be too sure of that."

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### *WORK #2:*

I was born in a lowly slum in a city that has forgotten me far better than I have forgotten it. Of my father I know nothing, of my mother I can say only that she was grey and wrinkled from my first memory of her, and when she died had changed little. She never mentioned my father or her life before my arrival, and turned away my inevitable questions with generalities that left me less enlightened than when I started.

My mother seemed to have had few human friends, but was quite fond of a family of weasels that had moved into our pathetic little back yard amongst the broken glass and discarded food tins. "There's no friend like a weasel," she would often say to no one in particular. Once when I asked if I could

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have a puppy or a kitten like other children at school, I was roundly admonished for even thinking of other animals when we had our very own weasels. She never spoke of them as "pets", but preferred to call them "our little friends" or, somewhat mysteriously, as "the royalty".

I well remember those soft evenings of summer when my mother would take out her fiddle and serenade us all, son, neighbors, and weasels, with sad slow airs from some time and place I would never begin to understand. The picture of the weasel family sitting entranced at her feet as she played, often with tears dropping from her closed eyes, is one I often recalled in my later years as a student at Doctor Umlaut's Academy for Cruel Treatment of Semi-Orphans in an even more depressing section of my native city.

In the days my tale begins, I was about sixteen years of age and known to all and sundry as "young Kip".

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### *WORK #3:*

Back in your father's time  
In the pub that looked and smelled  
Like a used coffin  
Mick the box player had a reel  
By the throat  
And was shaking the last notes out of it  
When the guards entered  
What the hell do you think you're doing  
Said the big red-faced sergeant  
Put that tune down gently now  
Or me and the boys are on you  
Like sparrows on donkeyshite

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Fudge you and your boys  
Shouted Wild Mick  
This is my reel and I'll do goddam  
What I please with it  
And he jumped up on the table  
And played the bejayzus out of the last two bars  
Ah no said the little guard from Tipp  
Sure that's not how it goes at all  
And he jumped up on the table next to Wild Mick  
And started to lilt, not badly  
Until the Sergeant grabbed him by the leg  
Bringing him crashing gracelessly to his arse

Ow, protested the little guard from Tipp  
And waited for an apology from the Sergeant  
But none came, at least that could be heard  
Through the hiccup hurricane of laughter

Whereupon Wild Mick, still up on the table,  
Started another set of reels  
While the Sergeant tried to call for reinforcements

Hello hello this is garda business  
Class One tune abuse flagrante delicto  
Put me through to headquarters immediately  
Is anybody there hello hello  
Jayzus I can't hear anything  
With that goddam accordion going  
Hello hello

At last Paddy the publican  
Tapped him gently on the shoulder

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What now, bellowed the witsended Sergeant  
Can't you see I'm acting  
In an official capacity here

We can all see that, said quiet Paddy  
But we think it would help you to know  
That particular phone hasn't worked  
Since Pecker the banjo player  
Tried to steal it off the wall  
In 1947, July to be exact.  
Cut the wires and everything  
We keep meaning to have it fixed . . .

I recall it well, said Paddy,  
The last time that phone rang:

Then as now  
The rain was falling in silent sheets outside  
In God's own depth of darkness  
For miles and miles around

And there was nobody on the other end

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