

Foreword from D.

The legend of Madcap Clyde is as positively (or negatively) endearing as it is anonymous. Because campus lore can be in itself as provocative as it is austere, it lacks any real serious, academic composition. We know this is the nature of all superstitions and telltales.

I first heard of the uncouth eponym at an obscure student seminar hosted in the Oakland Center's Gold Room one lazy winter afternoon; one of those days that contain no antecedent, no drive whatsoever. A lanky, ash-en-faced alumnus of liberal studies with obnoxiously thin, hairy arms gave the soapbox lecture at a desk, reading his notes verbatim from a single piece of paper to a piteously empty room inhabited only by a meager clump of sleepy, malnourished students. Snacks were offered and subsequently devoured and now they sat in the drowsy sun with their chins in their hands. Some dozed fitfully, lost in fleeting dreams.

"The Unmethodical Essence of Local Folklore, Fable and Fantasy" touched vaguely upon oblivious rumors of occult-like abnormalities through the whole of Oakland County history; the haunted Holly Hotel and White Horse Inn to the north, near Genesee; Cabin #2 at Bald Mountain, lonely and forlorn upon gray, murky Tamarack Lake; the former site of the Clinton Valley Center in Pontiac, previously known as the Eastern Michigan Asylum for the Insane; as well as nearby Oak Hill Cemetery, where eidolic grave robbers burgled saturnine crypts nightly and scattered ancient bones. He merely referred to Clyde as a passing sideline, not bothering to embellish the details. He seemed reluctant to even speak the name aloud, but I locked it in the empty hindquarters of my mind for the future, in the event I should suddenly be inspired by some dark muse.

This narration is the incomplete flotsam of authentic human testimony, hundreds of Oakland University police media logs and yellowed back-copies of Oakland Post crime briefs, most of them ill-gained through deceiving connivance and, yes, even common thievery. But when one is repeatedly, regularly dismissed with suspicious skepticism or masked condescension behind bleak smiles instead of given actual answers, one seeks to acquire information in any such way as one can. It is a presumably Machiavellian approach, but necessary in the grand order of things.

And therein lies the Great Irony; that Clyde should have a de facto, physical basis for his ghoulish existence, and, despite the macabre and graphic disposition his story presents, his existence should be virtually unknown on today's Oakland University campus.

-D.-

PART I - Preamble to Villainy

During the fall semester of 1976, the student community witnessed an unsavory trend of collegiate misconduct that, though petty in nature, cast a brooding pallor of quiet speculation and rumor that quickly and melodramatically dispersed throughout the student community. It also appears to have set an immoral pretext for future incidents of like quality, all of which was presumably the consequential nature of the university's prankish agents and nothing more.

A female sophomore chemistry student was tiredly and unguardedly crossing Bear Lake Bridge toward Vandenburg Hall one late night when she was bushwhacked by a "tall, lanky subject dressed in a Halloween devil-mask". The dreadful agitator leapt athletically from a nearby tree and puckishly slapped the girl straight across her face in one graceful sweep of a cold and steely palm. The assailant then "cackled" (the actual word used in the incident report) and fled in a fiendishly delightful manner, bounding and prancing "like a deer" toward Pioneer Drive and the night darkness beyond.

This is generally believed to be the “maiden sighting” of the deleterious Madcap Clyde.

The related complaints that followed were all strikingly analogous: a tall, sometimes very tall, figure would suddenly fly onto the path of some luckless student meandering across the shadowy corners and lonely lanes of campus after nightfall. The punster, arrayed in a lurid devil-mask - sometimes moss-green, other times a solemn gray, steeped with sharp, straight horns and adorned with lifelessly blank, protuberating eyes over a priggish and quiet smirk in the middle of a long, jagged beard - would then belch forth a rude cacophony of inurbane laughter, bounce upon his long feet erratically, and frighten the daylights (or nightdark) out of his clueless prey. The figure then receded back into shadow, often as quickly as he suddenly materialized from that very darkness.

Interestingly or not, an inordinate number of incident reports regarding the lurking misfit border the realm of perfect fantasy or, more cynically, on utter nonsense. One psychology student reported seeing the night-devil literally bound from the Science & Engineering Tower like a vile mountain-goat, landing painlessly before the student and nearly bowling him over head over heels. Another spoke of having been singed by the ruffian's phosphorus-blue “fire-breath” (actual phrase used), and one even declared of being despoiled of his scarf by the impish goblin. The scarf was located the next morning in the cryptic Saints & Sinners fountain that incongruously adorns the university mall.

Worried that the dangers of over-active, runaway elucidations would “only serve to disrupt the academic fabric of the campus community”, additional security was installed and a stern, discomfiting notice from the Office of the Dean of Students discouraging “horseplay, pranks, and general effrontery” was posted on the hallway bulletin boards of just about every campus building. The reprobates seemed to have been efficiently deterred, as nothing further of note happened.

PART II - The Hill House Incident

It was not until the year following that impertinent innuendos regarding the hellish scamp was resurrected to a fervent life and energy. A pair of freshman girls were assaulted inside their Hill House residence in an appalling episode that would speedily collar the attention of the Oakland County Sheriff's office and Auburn Hills police department in abeyance to the responding campus patrol.

They had been studying together, crunching mystifying integers and tiredly pursuing labyrinthine proofs in their small single-window, twin-bed apartment. One of them offered to fetch a midnight snack from Oakland Center to recoup their diminishing wakefulness. The girl strolled unhurriedly on her errand after giving her roommate a routine reminder to lock the door behind her, passing over the Bridge, treading mercurially past Wilson Hall's dark, cheerless windows, crossing over Wilson Blvd. to the Center. She did not encounter a single soul during her journey nor observe any passing vehicle. Nothing out of the ordinary. The night was silent and tedious.

A torpid, bleary-eyed cashier completed the girl's order and she turned back toward Hill House, toward her lingering mountain of textbooks and what increasingly looked to be a sleepless night full of bedeviling numbers.

She was immediately affronted by a “very tall, skinny man with horns on his head and bulging eyes” who had seemingly sprung “out of thin air” as she rounded the second-floor landing. The diabolical vision began to guffaw manically, an unearthly and shrieking howl that drilled straight to the core of the girl's vanishing composure.

A pair of icy hands kept the terrified girl from taking flight upstairs by grabbing a handful of her long hair and wrenching her head back. He threw her painfully to the floor. The fiend then stooped over her and a wide, empty grin unfurled, dramatically playing over the face of her demonic saboteur. He then began to playfully slap the

girl's cheeks in succession, all the while babbling and shrieking and hopping and rocking on his heels, a nightmarish and metal-sounding tap-dance. The girl soon lost her bearings and slipped away to blackness.

Investigators later learned her roommate had received a similar fright inside their dorm-room prior to the stairwell attack. Shortly after the other had left on her errand, she was thrown from her reverie by a very loud, very impatient hammering at the door. The girl called out her friend's name but a scratchy, high-pitched voice responded back:

"It's the police, missy. Open up! Open up!"

She opened the door. Wide, soulless eyes stared back at her with a malevolence that promised nightmare memories under sharply-protruding horns. A grim smile showed at the corners of that ghastly, obscene mouth. The assailant proceeded to dance about the room, laughing, flailing his arms wildly through the air, uttering hollow, guttural noises and tearing the bed sheets and wallpaper to ribbons with his stony claws. His eyes rolled upwards and spun round and round sickeningly.

She was later discovered curled in a corner underneath the table the pair had been studying at, crying bitterly and pulling at her hair which she clenched in her fists.

Fingers pointed scandalously to the custodian, who was interviewed more pressingly and accusingly than the others inside Hill House. And when the custodian could not be persuaded to reconsider his version, the empathy the girls were previously given by the responding officers was suddenly changed to suspicious doubt. The whole ordeal had an idling semblance of typical collegiate sportiveness due to the "creative nature" of the girls' statements. They were bored, lusting after a diversion from the callous monotony of their studies, so they put on a grand hoax, mixing in haunting details to further its potential notoriety. Wanton boredom inspires many strange and recalcitrant ideas in young people.

An Oakland Post reporter attempted an ill-fated article on the "unembellished facts" surrounding the heinous Hill House assault, but was sourly warned away by the dean's office for fear of inspiring a rambunctious trend of what was called "an inappropriate personification perpetrated for a very serious criminal act of intimidation and menace." The only published report of the incident was relegated fruitlessly to the police beat portion of the Oakland Post newspaper where absolutely no reference to the curious "facts" of the case was provided whatsoever:

Two freshman students were assaulted last Thursday night in their Hill House dormitory by an unknown man. The complainants had been studying when they were accosted by a stranger at their door wearing a Halloween devil-mask.

The assailant began to harass the girls and cause extensive damage to the room and the students' personal effects before exiting the building.

Auburn Hills and Oakland University police were notified, as well as deputies from an Oakland County Sheriff sub-station.

The responding officers interviewed several students and staff and searched for the assailant, but were unable to locate him.

The students refused medical attention and appeared to be uninjured.

The requisite copycat crimes followed quickly in the wake of the assault, but the police efficiently shut down any further insurrections long before they could take fruit. The school sent out more of its grave declarations, stating rigidly that any student caught “perpetrating acts of intimidation against fellow students, staff and/or faculty will be summarily expelled from the university without prejudice.”

One of the unfortunate victims of this admonition was an English major who had innocently composed a little ditty that gave the progressively infamous scofflaw his name:

“No corner which to hide,
when the daylight long has died,
he croaked, cackled, and cried,
sinister Madcap Clyde!”

PART III - Only Fools Get Caught Up in Such Nonsense

“The university is a graveyard, you know. Full of horses and God knows what else,” one athletic field landscapist with diseased fingernails told me. “I get weird feelings here all the time. It used to scare me, but I’ve gotten used to it. It’s mostly the feeling of a presence, like someone is there but you can’t see them. It gets awfully eerie here at night.”

Streetlamps, whole lines of them, plunging into darkness suddenly and unexpectedly. A beastly lowing like a distant train calling mournfully, then a soft cackle that is neither near nor far off, portending some hidden malignancy. These are further examples of the strange things that happen on the grounds of Oakland University.

“I’ve heard the laughing,” one electrical engineering student told me matter-of-factly. “Sometimes it’s far away; sometimes it’s like right next to you. I hate this place at night.”

A former Elliott maintenance staffer who shrugged his large shoulders and said ‘anyway’ after every utterance told me languidly that Clyde was neither phantom nor goblin, but just “some asshole scaring the bejeezus out of a couple defenseless girls, anyway.”

But he was polite about it, as polite as he was willing to be. He remembered the tasteless fliers he had to remove hastily from the hallways, bathrooms, and stairwells, the ones that promised some midnight ritual to summon Clyde in his witching-hour or “something like that, anyway”.

“Drugs, booze, and girls sounded more like it, anyway” the man grumbled as an afterthought, sarcastic. “Kid stuff.” He then grew quiet, reflecting on his last comment. He sighed ruefully and cracked open a beer.

“Aren’t you going to offer any?” I asked.

“I only got one left,” he said, then promptly showed me out the door.

In 1991, late autumn, two male students were steaming through a drowsy daybreak jog along a forest trail near the Meadowbrook Estate when a “green beanstalk of a man” sprung theatrically out of the close, damp gloom that hung formlessly under the trees. His features were for an instant revealed in the burnishing dawn, that of a “kind of devil”; horned, with large marble eyes popping ghoulishly from an inhumanly narrow head. The malcontent dashed freakishly quick over the trail “like a deer”, bounding noiselessly into the clinging fog. The haunting flash of the apparition’s visage burned memorably into the two men’s minds.

Not long after, another student was wending round the curving hillside before Pawley Hall when he caught a faraway glimpse of a “very tall stick figure-looking thing” prowling among a plat of murmuring cattails off of Pioneer Drive. The likeness of sharp horns that caught the cold moonlight made the man at first assume it was a roving deer. But when the figure stood to full height, craning his thin head mechanically atop a skeletal neck, surveying cat-like the dusk-shadow around him, the student knew the image was something disturbing, unearthly. This was either the spring or summer of 1999, he said.

“When I saw it wasn’t an animal, I got a bad chill straight up my spine. It’s not an experience that affects me in any profound way, I don’t lose sleep from it, but I’ll catch myself thinking about what I saw from time to time,” the English major told me without humor; serious, reflective, preferring not to dwell too long, shed too much light on his shock.

“You better be telling me the truth,” I said just as seriously. “I don’t have time for nonsense.” This was another trick of mine – forced affirmation.

“I’m not lying to you and, quite frankly, I’m offended that you think I am,” he said crudely before ending the conversation.

Neither he nor the two joggers before him consider themselves to be firm believers of preternatural entities or manifestations, but all three admit without hesitation the glaring anomaly of their experiences. The humanoid mold, the gazelle-like horns, and particularly the heightly stature of the disturbing image were all undeniably part of the same aberration.

None of them reported their sightings for fear of being unacknowledged and ridiculed, however.

“But whatever it was, it was there,” one of the joggers added with finality.

Many similar sightings of a malformed nocturnal buck made its rounds, but nothing comes close to the following report. A patrolling campus constable was taking advantage of a cool spring evening by walking his beat around Meadowbrook Estate when he observed something he claims he will never forget no matter how hard he tries to repress the foul memory:

“I was walking uphill along Golf View Lane, in the direction of the Dodge House. It was cold but really bright because of the moon. I didn’t even need to use my flashlight. About near the cabin (Danny’s Cabin), I saw someone out some ways on the golf course, somewhere on the fairway, I think. I watched him for a moment, wondering what he could be up to, seeing what he was doing. No one was supposed to be out there at night. Something about him kind of told me to be a little more careful. He was tall, but extremely thin. Like a skeleton. He reminded me of a puppet in a way – you know, like the wooden ones on strings? I don’t know. Do you know what I’m talking about?”

“Yes,” I answered. “I’m familiar with puppets.”

“Anyway,” he continued, “I probably watched this thing for a couple minutes. I was getting a little freaked out, so I grabbed my flashlight and shone it out there. And its eyes. They caught the light and just shone. I mean, it was like a pair of headlights shining back at me, that’s how bright they were. I was frozen.

Well, that’s what happened. I couldn’t move. I just stood there watching this thing look at me with those fiery

eyes and suddenly it just bounced off. Huge strides, like twenty-yard leaps right across the fairway and into the trees. It was the most amazing thing I've ever seen and I'll never forget it. No, it wasn't an animal. It wasn't a deer. I hunt deer. I know what they look like. I know how they move. This was something else completely."

I scoffed. "That's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard."

The officer, still very much solid and authoritative, peered at me under dark brows with grave offense. His jaw set and his lips became a flat line. He brought a hand down over his face and sighed. I knew he had been telling me the truth then.

"Get the hell out of here," he said without emotion. I left, feeling very much satisfied.

I asked an administrative secretary at the Center for Student Activities - a bent, middle-aged woman wearing a baggy timber wolf sweatshirt furred with dog dander - for her attitudes on Madcap Clyde. She narrowed her eyes at me apprehensively, searching my face for some hidden element of scandal.

"Who?" she barked. Unconvincingly, I thought. She turned in her chair toward an open office behind her.

"Madcap Clyde," I said plainly. I handed her a photocopy of the Hill House article from the Oakland Post, pulled from a wrinkled, coffee-stained folder obese with hundreds of scraps, clippings, memos, missives, commentaries and agendas that threatened to burst from out of my arm in a vapid rain of confetti. The woman glanced at the folder bemusedly for a moment before perusing the paper which she did so by darting her eyes quickly across the article. Then she practically threw it back at me as if I had just tried appraising fool's gold at a pretentious jeweler's market.

"Oh, right. Him." Feigned indifference - the only defense these hesitant subjects seemed to possess. Plaintive, but she remembered.

"Why do you think no one's familiar with his stories anymore?" I asked nonchalantly, sinking my teeth into the interview before she could have a chance to arrange a hasty escape. She turned in her chair again toward the office then slowly turned back.

"Because it would only serve to disrupt the academic fabric of the campus community," she said impatiently, a statement that sounded acutely familiar to me. "Only fools get caught up in such nonsense. Now I must get back to work, young man."

"But-"

"Yes." Not a question. Angry now. But I had my answer already. I looked at her, smiled, turned my back pointedly, and walked away without saying another word.

My information was correct. I was relieved. The secretary is a long-ago graduate of the university's business school, and her brief statements to the campus police in 1984 about her unusual disturbance near Pavilion Road implied Clyde-esque qualities. The officers had closed the case by insisting it was a deer, warning the girl to drive more cautiously next time. Years of repression and old age had comfortably forced her to disavow the mystical pretenses of her experience.

But apparently only fools get caught up in such nonsense.

PART IV - The Hunt for Clyde

The dark, forested regions of Oakland University after sundown is a troubling, misty backdrop conducive to revenant schemes and dark enigmas whispered out of covert, ethereal mouths across the campus' gray swards and sloping hillocks. The 1500-acres of rolling land is home to many wayward spirits, searching mournfully for some impossible respite, some unachievable end. It is the nature of all old places, particularly here in this historic corner of country which has been tread by thousands of cracked feet traversing the landscape; Indians and white merchants and hunters, some bringing with them goodwill, others violent death, all of them now phantoms.

But I saw more couples coupling in secret rendezvous underneath old maples and battered picnic benches during my stakeouts than I did anything remotely indicating the presence of Madcap Clyde. Often times, I would fall asleep or get so bored I felt like I had transcended some parabola while perched up in those trees like a freakish owl with arms. The tediousness was sometimes so astute I would slip into some conscious dream.

I could often feel something roguish working through me on these lonely vigils when I sat rigidly in the bough of some ancient oak watching the deer graze beneath my feet, totally heedless to my presence. I would entertain the rascally notion of jumping out of the tree and terrorizing the dumb deer into a mad stampede down Meadowbrook Road. What a sight that would be; deer bellowing and screaming wildly down the lane, chaos and drumming hooves and cars careening off the street. What madness that would be. It was vain not to acknowledge that prickling inclination, that consuming desire or temptation to suddenly fly out of the tree and startle the wits out of some inattentive, overconfident wayfarer passing by. It often felt like it was in some way the natural thing to do. Boredom indeed inspires many uncouth ideas.

But the last night I tried to lay my eyes on Madcap Clyde was one of a silent, enveloping terror that very likely eclipsed the old devil himself.

I hid myself between the John Dodge House and the Meadowbrook Pro Shop, choosing this location mainly in deference to the startling account given by the campus police officer. I secretly hoped that Clyde harbored some strange inclination, some attachment to the surrounding golf course that yawned imperceptibly to the flickering white stars above. I was armed with only my trusty camera loose of a few unimportant parts, a digital voice-recorder, and a pint of cheap, offensive Canadian whiskey.

The Dodge House with its bone-white siding and cake-layers stared at me suspiciously from its hilltop, its black windows seeking an explanation or perhaps a toll for my intrusion. I knew of the house's Stygian reputation well enough; the many tales of slamming doors, the heavy footfalls of booted feet, and the whirrings and pings of office equipment suddenly brought to life by invisible hands. I made a considerable effort to keep my eyes off of the windows of the old farmhouse, lest I should behold the grave silhouette of the solemn ghosts who dwelt there, imploring me to make contact, to exonerate them somehow from their eternal custody here on this earth.

It did not help that less than a mile away was the pitiable Honeymoon Manor of the famously ill-fated Danny Dodge, tragic son to the auto-tycoon, crowned ruefully atop the hill that swings dangerously down Adams Road and across into the former estate. It is not a happy home even now nearly a century after the 21-year-old became a victim of his own bloody curiosity, washed out into tempestuous Lake Huron en route to a hospital after a failed experiment with ancient dynamite. All this a mere thirteen days after his disfavored marriage to a backwoods daughter of a country tugboat captain.

The image of his corpse, bloated and grimed, bobbing, twirling, and dipping lifelessly in the water, nothing but a rotted, sodden meal for screeching gulls, recycled itself endlessly through my mind as I sat there against the bole

of a large oak tree. I had heard about that house, too; of the malign presence that dwells there, how frightened kitchen staff of bygone days had fled from the home after a night of horror, or had barricaded themselves in the bathroom, waiting inexhaustibly in the bathtub for the kitchen pots and pans to stop banging, or for the doors to cease its repeated slamming, or possibly for the disembodied voice to stop echoing angrily from the void.

In front of me a quarter of a mile off was the celebrated Meadowbrook Hall, home to the resident phantom that all old mansions own. And directly beneath me, spread out across the university's wide meadows and convulsing moraines, could be faintly heard the distant rumblings of a hundred skeletal horses, Matilda's beloved thoroughbreds, endlessly galloping in place toward their animal purgatory.

I was in the center of a very awesome and very terrible nexus of coalescing wraiths circling around me. I looked up at the moon, lost now behind a single patch of cloud, black with ice. The silver gleam around me dimmed to a flattening, lifeless gray, the exact color of a tombstone. The wind died and the white noise that seemed to emit from the moon, my only company, was instantly doused into a startling silence. The world around me felt closed in, and I soon began to feel like I was suffocating, drowning, an overwhelming desire to run and to run as fast as I could.

Was this some kind of demented signal, some coffin-call of eviction? The oppression around me, stifling and thick, became unbearable.

My God, I thought anxiously to myself. What am I doing here? Do I really want to see this villain? Does anyone want really want to? What am I doing here?

Madness, madness, madness!

I got up and started tramping in a heady daze across the soft, spongy green, instantly feeling better now knowing that I was leaving the darkness behind, knowing that a bright room and warm bed lay in front. I now understood why the university hierarchies had done what it could to discourage knowledge of Madcap Clyde, the realization and sense of it biting coldly into my thoughts.

Clyde was a serious villain to human rationality and composure, a formidable instigator and agitator, an evil prankster and fiend. He may have been only a story to most, but he was still a real danger in the grand scheme of things.

But as I walked down Golf Lane, something or another, a remnant of the grave perhaps or even a simple deception of the moon, decided to take one last parting shot at me. The oppression returned tenfold and squeezed my mind together like an imploding star. The terror closing in so opaque I felt on the verge of tears. Somewhere a screech owl called haggardly and an angry, chill wind suddenly blasted from the north, rattling old trees that groaned mournfully, buffeting against my jacket, pulling me back toward the course, toward the John Dodge House and the tunneled blackness around it.

I covered the three-hundred yards back to my car in a little less than twenty seconds.

PART V - Cast Bronze Epiphanies

The riddle of Clyde is certainly a perplexing one. It is an irksome quandary not bereft of its fair apportionment of mysticism and fable. The rogue was never accused of any great bodily harm, with the exception of some rollicking spanks across frightened faces, but the fear he has inspired in the elite few who had the disastrous privilege of confronting him far outweighs any physical hurt. It stands that if the fixture of Clyde is unfamiliar to the general campus community, then that whatever it was these attestants saw must have been, in some fashion, real. After

all, most of them had never heard of Madcap Clyde prior to their experiences.

I was walking purposefully toward Kresge not long after the misadventure at Meadowbrook to complete a research assignment that had been put off far too long in favor of more trivial disciplines. Approaching the courtyard that stretches cleanly and outwardly from the mall toward University Drive and Squirrel Road, I cast a haughty, disinterested glance at the frozen statuary that ring the Saints and Sinners fountain in front of the library. They glowed surrealistically now in the westering sun's winter shade of amber and mauve.

An audible gasp escaped me. I suddenly felt weak and feeble, as if my energy had literally been sapped from my body by some evil contrivance. A wave of shock worked through me in numbing droves.

There he was. There he was in all his fiendish eminence, staring down at me sanguinely from his perch atop a spiked metal orb, the seventh figure in the seemingly pious, yet subtly comic, congregation of rustic cast bronze long corroded to an aquamarine, corralled all together in this icy tub. Horned, thin, eyes bugged and perfectly round, frighteningly tall and gray under the faltering sun. There he was.

Yes. Yes! Of course! Of course! Clyde, you magnificent bastard. I cursed myself fluidly for my ignorance.

Madness!

"What's wrong with you?" a passing girl asked condescendingly, noting my unbridled excitement.

"Mind your own business," I said.

My freshman orientation tour came back to me clearly from a distant memory. The fountain was a non-commissioned undertaking by renowned sculptor Marshall Fredericks who chiseled away at this side-project in his studio over a course of decades whenever he was not working on other high-priority consignments. It was not the craftsman's overall desire to create a religious piece despite the religious undertones given prolifically to each figure in this miscellaneous convocation, but I calmly yet carefully remembered that the sculptures had been ceremoniously installed in its present position sometime in 1976. That being the year of the first infraction committed by Clyde when he stubbornly jumped in front of a defenseless girl simply trying to go home to bed.

Did the statue aptly named "The Evil Influence" inspire some ill brand of mischief in the mind of some prankish student, inspiring him to don a fearsome mask and bamboozle the unguarded campus populace? Or did the statue verily come to life after night had fallen, as it was falling now, seeking the safe liberation of cold shadows in which to lie in wait for his blundering victims to pass? Or was there a malevolent specter that dwelled inside the weathered copper shell of the sculpture that whirled like a gust to his appropriate station, only to return before daybreak, seeking the sanctuary that only the damned are given inside this wry and whimsical form? And if that was the case, who exactly was Marshall Fredericks?

I circled the fountain, working clockwise from one end to the other, watching the Evil Influence carefully for any indication of some concealed sorcery. As I rounded the north-side apex of the elliptical fountain, where the sculpture stands solitary looking into the northern darkness ahead, I felt a tingling realization that the statue was watching me with a kind of disdainful amusement. The long, narrow head appeared out of the corner of my eye to actually swivel gratingly on its thin, fragile neck, following me, a scrutinizing illusion watching me as one who shares an uncomfortable secret.

Madness!

What was the the motive behind Clyde's nocturnal roaming? Was he being mindlessly rebuffed by everyone day

in and day out? Did he feel disrespected, unappreciated? Was his presence of no importance to anyone? Was he tired of being leashed to an eternal destiny of singular repose atop a cold ball of metal that froze in the winter and was consistently soaked by the issuing spouts during the warm months? Was he lonely, craving attention, finding it in the form of frightful ambush?

Was he punishing us?

A knowing smirk, self-contented and vain, seemed almost to curl across the Clyde's face as I considered these unsavory questions and the enchanted forgetfulness that prevented me from realizing this connection until now.

Madness!

Epilogue

Not too long ago, within the last couple months at least, I received a message from a very popular and respected professor, whose department and name I will keep anonymous. The content of the brief soliloquy was a narration regarding a very unorthodox episode he had directly experienced. He began the message by apologizing profusely for not having contacted me sooner, but immediately delved into his colorful anecdote, but not before warning me that he could not provide too many details due to the severity of his fright. He cautioned me that his "old heart would not be able to handle anymore dark memories".

The professor was leaving Dodge Hall – therefore you may safely conclude he taught some brand of science – one winter night after grading essays, leaving the remainder of his drudgery to the mercy of his research assistant. Cutting diagonally across the mall from the University Drive/Meadowbrook Road roundabout toward O'Dowd Hall where he was parked, he glanced toward Kresge. The library's windows were bright and inviting, but no one appeared to be around.

The professor was suddenly overcome by a gloomy melancholy, suddenly feeling like he was all alone in the world, as if he were the lone survivor of some cataclysmic ruination. A streetlamp directly above him flickered weakly and went out. He looked uneasily around him, hoping for some passing body, anybody, to keep a safe proximity to for the simple sake of company.

"I looked toward the library. You might think this is crazy, but I swear with every fiber of my being that I am not just losing it in my old age. What I saw was real. What I saw was that familiar fountain in front of the library, and I could see the statues clearly against the lights, but there was a break in the pattern. Kind of a void. I focused my attention and counted the figures.

"Six. Only six statues. There are seven, are there not? Well, not right now.

"Where the evil one is supposed to be, the one with the horns, there was nothing. It was as if he had simply stepped down from his pole and walked off into the night."

Madness. Madness. Madness.