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THE GREEN SHIRT.

THE ACROSTOLIUM.

The Red Man had painted his breast; he fearsomely decorated his countenance; he suspended the **teeth** and **bones** of **fierce** and **clever animals** about his neck, he soulfully **chanted magical incantations**, propitiating and **invoking mysterious** and **phenomenal powers**; all to become invincible, to ward off the projectiles of his enemies, especially those of the Paleface with his glistening and barking longirons. If the Paleface's aim, through the vicissitudes and anomalies of poor manufacture, poor marksmanship, or windage, had wandered amiss of its targeted breasts, small pox provided antidote to such failed trajectories. Buffalo Bill handed Sitting Bull complimentary copies of the **Declaration of Independence** and the **King James Version**, while one of his own kind shot him in the back of the head. Some Script!! The Heathen and the Savage DO NOT BELONG.

I cannot remember whether it was before or after the biochemist had travelled to Chicago for the excision of a portion of his cancerous bowel, that someone had scavenged the **Ancient Greek Coin** from his laboratory drawer. The **coin** had failed to remain secure in its silver-tonged halo, emulating some berry held in suspension awaiting some bird's beak, attached with a silver chain to the key ring. He had removed the whole key ring apparatus, leaving it behind, intending to have the **coin** remounted for a second time by the same professor who had taught JEWELRY on campus. Whether it all happened because the **coin** had become dislodged from its holder remains open to conjecture. In the end he had become separated from its 'charms'. When he returned from Chicago, upon discovering the missing **coin**, he sensed he was doomed.

The Papal Bull dethroned **St. Christopher**. Tough Shit!, Ye Of Little Faith!

Father, perhaps in keeping with the spirit of some Baudelairesk contemplations, had nestled a human skull amongst his drawing pens.

Still another had eaten of strong **condiment** with his chowder, nullifying the properties of the lodestone. When the yacht had struck the reef during the twilight hour in calm clear weather, they had conjectured the craft imperatively had first struck a whale, or had suffered a hit and run collision with yet

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another craft. They maintained he was an experienced, meticulous CAPTAIN; he would never knowingly partake of garlic or run aground. The Talismanic HERO had failed; he had driven hard upon the rocks. If you cannot trust a HERO, whom can you trust? Subsequent to recovering the bodies from the scene of the 'tragedy', they waived a coroner's inquest, perhaps afraid they might detect some affectation of the HERO'S disease (bad breath?). Alas!, was he just a myth, a house of cards, a spinner of yarns and tales?

Pachena* sailed forth boldly now, Sans figurehead upon her prow; She, her helmsman and crew, Dallying, Dazzled upon the ocean blue.

Though threadbare and minus one of its pockets which had finally been removed with one last firm rent, having long flopped loosely and uselessly attached, only to be sewn anew upon another blouse of a bluer hue, I still possess my Green Shirt. Ever since becoming aware of its powers, I have been reluctant to venture to sea without it on board, although I do not always wear it upon my person.

In the past, when sheathed in this selfsame shirt while engaged as laborer in that horrible concrete Institution, I was unaware of any specific mystical properties emanating from its tangible aspect. As a matter of fact, regardless of which ever apparel I was obliged to don in order to accommodate the social conventions, keep warm, and conceal my imperfections, none did anything (of which I was aware) to affect my station in life. Perhaps, however, the acquisition of the Green Shirt may have signaled the end of my incarceration in pursuit of an elusive, decadent materialism, the shirt notwithstanding.



I cannot recall the exact occasion when I began to become attuned to its talismanic properties, its ability to bring order and calm to the Universe, and exercise its control over Destiny.

** A Perry-designed 51 ft. cold-moulded sloop, built to Floyd's, that struck Perez Rocks in clear calm weather, and sank with all hands.*

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However, donning the **Green** Shirt became a ritualized event, akin to attiring oneself in certain vestments before the recitation of a High Mass and the deliverance of the Eucharist (Ah!, the envy of **St. Christopher**).

In order to partake of the Sacrament of Fear, The **Green** Shirt became the Rock from which Moses divined and quarried the Truth of Our Ways. I had properly prepared myself to conduct my affairs upon the sea. IF I had only known the true reality, my skills and my wiles (otherwise thought of as seamanship) had become secondary to the mystical interventions of the **Green** Shirt, which smote the Man-Eating Monsters, as Moses was purported to have parted the Red Sea Waters.

Surely I o'erstep the boundaries of your credulity, that this one existential dolt would have you believe he worships a **rag** he would put upon his back, equating it with the aegis of Moses. No less do we discover, acclaiming again and again, a **Robe** into which the **stained visage of Jesus** buried its agony. No, I do not ask you to touch upon this cotton/polyester pastel **greenish** rag, intended somewhat to simulate corduroy, that has carried me hither and yon through nature's Sturm and Drang. Not such, at least, as to blaspheme the coarse fabric that concealed and couched momentarily His suffering; Oh!, so driven by his great grandiose compulsion to save mankind from the jaws of the Man-Eating Monsters.

Is it less credible to bestow DELOS as proper appellation upon a radar reflector? Is one to impute the precise meaning 'he cannot die', merely by instituting a legislative fiat: ONE CANNOT DIE ON DELOS; or does DELOS signify nothing more than nothing? We carry **DELOS** on board. In the 'Olden Days' it was believed one sought favor with the sea gods or to ward off evil. Sea lore would have it a ship needed find her own way across the waters, and could only do so if she had **eyes**. **Figureheads** upon prows appeared in the form of **Holy Birds**, the heads of horses, **boars, lions, leopards** and **tigers**; **dolphins, bulls, dragons**, even **swans** and **antelopes**; and **centurions**; **salamanders, unicorns, Neptune driving sea-horses**, even **Kings** and **statesmen**; **group figures** depicting **Fame, Victory, and Glory**, Yes!, and the **Trinity**; one ship sported the **guillotine** as her figurehead; and finally the **barebreasted woman**, for the naked woman was believed to calm the stormy seas. Today we are so blasé and self-assured; scant craft as much as grace their bow with an extra **eye** or **propitiatory bosom**.

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The sirens wailed; the HERO was tied to the mast, his ears deafened to the sound of the breakers; his eyes shielded from scintillating forms shimmering through gossamer allures. She struck the reef; all hands perished. Garlic, Lodestones; Whales, Collisions; An Unlucky Break? 'Fraid not, fellas. Do not condemn a man for one mistake; but at least admit the error, although a Hero. Or is All Vanity? I too have run aground, heeding not caution, when I might not have yielded to weariness, or not attempted to circumvent what was truly necessary: not exercising my best judgment at all times. We were more fortunate; our fellow man came to our rescue; or was it once again some other controlling force at work? Before the **Green** Shirt, like B.C.

Was it the First Mate who noticed the emanations from the **Green** Shirt? I cannot recall. During the first passage around Cape Caution, skill and wile would not be enough. Courage and incautiousness, Yes! Surely, doubtful seamanship would allow one to ride the outflow of Slingsby Channel into the ocean - without recourse. To throw oneself incautiously into the unknown without possible retreat cannot argue for the sagacity of the Captain of Atavist. Ah!, what combination of

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signs and events conspired to permit safe passage? Had Fortune bent its will?

The Sailing Directions had cautioned against riding a strong ebb, especially in a small craft, in any but fine weather, for it was difficult to turn or slow in the Outer Narrows. At Alert Bay Low Tide occurred at 0740 that morning with slack water occurring at Nakwakto Rapids 2 hours and 20 minutes later; slack at the Outer Narrows respectively occurring 10 minutes before slack at Nakwakto Rapids. Our calculations thus projected the slack at the Outer Narrows to begin at 0950. We would be exiting Slingsby Channel at the end of a 12.1 ft tidal ebb. At maximum current during such a tidal change one would estimate the current at 8 to 9 knots near the Narrows. We departed Treadwell Harbor at 0850 (according to the First Mate's log), spoke to Ursa Major, a Fisheries' vessel waiting for the current at Nakwakto Rapids to slacken, and were reassured that we would not have any difficulties, that we had a good sea vessel, and that it was not dangerous. The distance between Treadwell Harbor and the Outer Narrows, including our brief sidetrip to speak to Ursa Major could not have exceeded 5.5 nautical miles. The previous day we had turned back after leaving Skull Cove and encountering short steep swells. The weather forecast for this day was more of the same, with variable winds, the swells having lessened. The forecast for the following day was upwards of 25 knot winds from the Northwest, which promised to markedly increase the swells. Ursa Major had informed us that a good deal of the Fishing Fleet was heading northward from Port Hardy that morning. Although overcast, and although some moderate swell from the Northwest had persisted, it appeared that conditions were as good as they might be for a while. The First Mate had written in her log 'We were prepared - sort of' She had taken her Bonine, but as yet was unaware of the powers vested in the **Green** Shirt. We had proceeded slowly enough down Slingsby Channel, hoping thus to arrive at a time near enough the 0950 hour not to be seriously affected one way or another by an early arrival. However, somewhere our calculations failed us; perhaps a faster passage down Slingsby than we had accounted. How else explain the speed with which we transited, beginning at the Narrows onward, to Lascelles Point, which we traversed more rapidly than our calculated hull speed of 6 to 6.25 knots. Obviously we had arrived in advance of the slack which purportedly lasts for approximately 15 minutes. The throttle had been returned to near idle with the log reading a mere knot, while the shore was flying by. We had been too amazed to note the time. If any

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adversity had been experienced, we would have been committed to suffer through it. Treadwell Harbor to Jones Cove charts at approximately 22.5 nautical miles, giving Cape Caution and Iron Rocks a wide berth. The log covering this distance gave a reading of 23 nautical miles. If indeed we had been travelling with an outgoing current, it was not reflected in the log, unless adverse currents about the Cape itself cancelled the assumed gain.

IF there had been a rough sea; IF we had lost control of our vessel, only to be placed at the mercy of forces we would be powerless to affect; IF we had been lost at sea only to have our remains wash ashore, or various items inscribed with our vessel's signature appearing as flotsam, what might have been the speculations as to our likely encounter? Not a whale, or a collision at sea - but Inexperience!! Not a Tragedy - but Foolhardiness.

As we later learned the **Green** Shirt was in Chambers. Was it really true we were thus protected?

Was I wearing the **Green** Shirt that day I foolishly, on a lark, decided to enter Porlier Pass during a strong flood, to head across the Strait of Georgia, into a gawd-awful southeasterly slop that found us gaining Smuggler Cove some 6 hours later. Not to mention the standing waves (tidal rips) over the shoals at the entrance to the Strait, as the roaring flood met the southeasterly flow; virtually a wall of water 6 to 7 feet in height that Atavist was obliged to transit like a bucking bronco, making awful sounds (creaking grunts) as its two riders hung onto any hang-onto-ables. The hatches were open, life jackets stowed below. It was a long afternoon necessitating a reach, under jib, which fortunately we had been flying as we had entered Porlier. Finally, in the vicinity of Barfleur Passage we were able to head northwestward for the downward leg along the, hah!, Sunshine Coast, with Atavist attaining speeds upwards of 9 knots in following seas, barely under control. Welcome Pass seemed to encourage the waves to swell with pride as they rolled underneath the hull, threatening to breach the gunwales at the stern quarters.

Was it the **Green** Shirt? Or was it the **Canadian Dime** stamped with a two-masted schooner resting at the base of Atavist's Mainmast sequestered atop the mast-step? Perhaps it was the **polished oval of red rock** that lie in a hollow alongside the mizzen mast, or perhaps the **white rock** or the **black rock** underneath the stove. Yes, a veritable clutter of **lucky charms** has invaded and inhabited Atavist at various times, and still does; The ditty box, no less full than Pandora's, is amply stocked with **Kabala** and '**fee-faw-fum**'.

Lucky Charms, the proverbial **Rabbit's Foot** (or **Shrunken**

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Head), **se'm cum ele'm**, Lucky **'whatever it was'** when something pleasant unexpectedly happened, or when we survived a 'near miss'. Something **tangible**, unlike prayer. Something that simply has been around for a while; 'Leave a sleeping dog lie'. **Something to influence or control, cajole, persuade the unseen, that which lives in the shadows or darkness; black cats, Beware of Thirteens, Man-Eating Monsters, The Terrible Mother, and Aye!, Death Him(?)self; or Fate; or 'Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men (and women)?** One of our Modern Day Heroes, and Men of Action, bore up under **GOTT MIT UNS**, and the charms of a **champagne cork**. **Life is a Halloween full of witches, goblins, proglies and ghosts. Life is a navigation through hazards, pitfalls, rocks and reefs; floods and storms; and duress. Our pitiful bodies become fraught with anxiety and fear, the next moment looming as the antithesis to life** - How shall we fare? Courage!!

Armageddon! Rapture! Afterlife!

In Money We Trust!

The transepts of the Firmament do not quite encompass our idiosyncracies.

Would you rather not suffer the perils of the sea?

Reason and Logic are purported to guide us in our actions, and in the development of our civilization. Whereas these have failed us, other intermediaries have arisen to salvage what remains. Perhaps on the open sea, one seems more fairly treated, only in that he learns to live without expectations.

The **Green** Shirt symbolizes my ignorance, my lack of Faith in myself, and my compelling need to continue despite these shortcomings.

For Centuries man guided his craft by indulging the forces that remained concealed from his vision and from his power to affect them. Am I one thus to contravene such magical intervention? You may register disbelief as I persist in ascribing enchantments to The **Green** Shirt that has guided our helm, and has brought us safely home.

When one accounts the number of well-founded ships of today that find their way to Davy Jones' Locker, perhaps it would not be considered an unseemly sorcery to resurrect *The Acrostolium*.

The Edmund Fitzgerald was a plainship with a naked bow, vulnerable to the turpitude of Lake Superior. Perhaps she was not a well-founded ship; perhaps she had become o'erstressed with her years of service; perhaps she hogged on the back of a bucking Gitchee Gumees.

Perhaps her naked bow affronted and invited the tempest.

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