

MY GRANDFATHER AND MARK TWAIN By Paul Laffoley , 2010

Ever since I could remember , my father, Paul Laffoley, Sr. [1898-1963] was always comparing me with his father and not in a positive light. He considered my grandfather Edmond Laffoley [1875-1937] to be a genius in terms of his many talents. He was at once an architect , a self-taught concert level violinist who conducted his own orchestra, a graphic designer , and a self-styled philosopher. In that last respect he specialized in lengthy screeds of religious free-thinking which he delivered at "The Ford Hall Forum", which at his time was held at the Faneuil Hall in downtown Boston ."The Hall" was known from its beginning in 1742 as "The Cradle Of Liberty" for the American Colonists. The Russian writer Ayn Rand [1905-1982] , defender of Atheistic Capitalism and "Masculine Individualism", who left her homeland when she was eleven for Chicago to avoid the impending collectivism of The Bolsheviks, would in later life come to praise "The Forum" for its absolute lack of bias, and therefore it became the only public court she would address. My grandfather concurred, only decades earlier. But my father's real objection to his father was his utter lack of family responsibility combined with an unrelenting wanderlust.

My father often told a story of how his father would con the entire family. While talking to a child or an adult, my grandfather would stand up in mid-sentence asked to be excused and say he was going to "John Houly's" [ a local pub] to get a grilled cheese and tomato sandwich on rye with a side order of dill pickles . He would ,of course, as a model of politeness, take orders from everyone in the room. Also adding he might run into John himself and have a pint and a chat. "So if I am a little late do not be upset. He would then leave and not return , perhaps , for a year or two. No trace of him could be found. In those days it was easy to disappear. Cleaning out a few bank accounts ahead of time, on the day of the "departure", he made sure not to leave any hints. No objects were brought with him except the clothes he put on that morning, which included his favorite black fedora and black cape. While away from the family home he would resist the temptation to write letters, to make telephone calls, or send telegrams. After awhile family members would become wise to him when he wanted to leave, so he had to re -strategize his escapes by hiding money and clothes with trusted neighborhood friends. Finally he simply do not give a damn what was said to them and just left, knowing they would not call the police .

My grandfather was in essence the classic Sagittarius, in body, mind and soul. Those who knew him often said he was out looking for his "lost love" , therefore, never actually seemed married.

His wife, Mary Dougherty [ 1882-1944] my paternal grandmother, quite a number of years younger than her husband, had four unmarried older sisters who spent most of their waking hours sitting in her parlor singing at the top of their lungs to the fashionable tunes that Mary could play on the piano. The four sisters also constantly complained why their youngest sister got married before them. Well one of them did get "in a family way" but died of "The French Disease" while her "husband" ran off to sea.

Mary , a Capricorn born on Christmas Day, was very earth bound, but never the less was an excellent trance -medium. Of the fourteen children my grandparents produced, only seven reached maturity . Mary would often know the exact moment when one would be killed and where. "Alice , number 5, just got killed by a street car at the crossing of Dorchester Avenue and Gallivan Boulevard 4: 13 this afternoon" and she would cry out "The horse went out of control" . And she would invariably be correct.

My father inherited her mediumistic powers, a fact which annoyed my grandfather to a great degree. It seems he could not abide the talents of others, whether natural or self-developed.

On Thursday, May 24, 1883, my grandfather, then eight years old began his public life when his father Philip Laffoley [1848-1890] took him to New York City to witness the gala opening of The Brooklyn Bridge. They left in the afternoon in order to avoid the crowds gathered at each end of the new bridge at 2:00 P.M. Had they started earlier in the morning they might have run into Mark Twain. But that meeting had to wait until the mid-1890's. ( It has always amazed me that people who are fated to meet will resonate They left in the afternoon in order to avoid the crowds gathered at each end of the new bridge at 2:00 P.M. Had they started earlier in the morning they might have run into Mark Twain. But that meeting had to wait for my grandfather until the mid-1890's.

They boarded The New York Express at The South Station, after having ridden the length of Dorchester Avenue all the way from Savin Hill Avenue through most of South Boston, across The Fort Point Channel to Summer Street by horse drawn trolley. They boarded "The One O'Clock Train". The conductor told my great-grandfather that he and the boy would arrive in New York City by 6:30 P.M. The ride was uneventful for the father, since he had been to New York many times before. To his son ,however, the ride was to be the most exhilarating event of his young life. With his nose to the train window , he observed every tree and building en route, noticing the visual effects that different layers of the landscape would make as they moved in relation to each other.

The train approached the outskirts of Manhattan, passing through White Plains, New Rochelle, The Bronx, then along Bruckner Boulevard until it made a sharp left turn East of 125<sup>th</sup> Street, diving beneath the glitter and swank of Park Avenue by means of a tunnel. Finally the train headed to the convergence of the tracks from all over the nation toward a huge barn-like structure at Madison Square, located at East 23<sup>rd</sup> street, Fifth Avenue and Broadway. By 1913, Grand Central Station was moved uptown to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Park Avenue. The Station itself , designed by Reed, Stem, Warren and Wetmore (1903-1913) was the major influence on the Italian Futurist architect Antonio Sant' Elia [1888-1916].

When they got off "The Twentieth Century Limited", they had to head south on Broadway. My grandfather, knowing their destination, insisted on taking an expensive Hansom Cab. They were on the way to meet Uncle Ralph, who lived next to the Manhattan entrance to the new bridge. "Ralph must be an important man", thought my grandfather, "or else why would he be so well placed". Suddenly, Edmond, remembered a family quip about Ralph, "One must never worry about spending money in New York City". "Trying to save money in Manhattan is like keeping Winter Snow Balls for the Summer". At eight years old, that was quite a maxim to behold, worthy of the Great Mark Twain himself.

They exited the cab on Broadway and strolled behind the City Hall Building to get a better view of The Manhattan Entrance to the Bridge. Next they walked toward Beckman Street by way of Centre Street right passed "The New York Tribune Building". Turning left onto Beckman Street until they reached their next left on Front Street, suddenly they were confronted with the most ramshackled houses my grandfather ever had the misfortune to see. Also the stench at the street level was almost unbearable. That was because they were right near the famous "Fulton Fish Market". My grandfather looked up at his father and asked "Why does Uncle Ralph have to live here? I thought he is important. Did he do something wrong?" My great-grandfather looked down lovingly but amused at the naiveté of his offspring. He explained that of his five brothers, "your uncles, Ralph was the only one who became a harpooner on a whaling ship, whose port of call was New Bedford Massachusetts. He grew to love the sea and managed to avoid becoming seasick, and to love the stink of rotting fish, and staying drunk all the time, thus avoiding thinking for himself and ever getting married."

But after he retired from The Merchant Marines, he moved out of 271 Savin Hill Avenue, your grandmother's house in 1870, and headed directly for New York City to see if he could work as a rigger on The Brooklyn Bridge. Because of his incessant drinking, he was not afraid to ride "the boatswain chair" high above The East River, between Manhattan and Brooklyn Heights. They started him off helping to attach wire rope suspenders from the main 16" cables that supported the Bridge. "Oh", my grandfather said with a bemused sigh as he realized that were many things he had to learn about the adult world.

As they arrived a 37 Front Street, my grandfather grew excited again about his trip to New York. He was about to meet a strange member of his family he had never seen before. The main door to this five story walkup was almost at the center between Spruce and Beckman Street.

As father and son approached the vestibule of this simple wooden row house, painted barn red, they stopped at the front steps for a minute so that the father could take out a small brush in order to spruce up his silk top hat and the velvet collar of his Chesterfield coat. He then adjusted his black bowtie, and motioned to his son to bend down to clean his father's shoes with his own handkerchief. The father thought to himself while he was being attended to : "I am a professional cabinet maker and a luthier of violins and other stringed instruments which I sell to members of The Boston Symphony Orchestra. I do not want to be associated with the common workmen I see around me. And besides my son is beginning to play the violin by himself, and he plays by ear !".

When his sartorial splendor was restored, my great-grandfather knocked on the front door with the gold lion's head of his black lacquered walking stick. He did that several times before a response came.

When it did come the door was opened by a middle-aged lady they assumed to be the concierge. She was wearing a simple flowered print house dress with a number of food stains accompanied by the faint odor of urine. When spoken to directly she pretended to speak no English. At first they thought she might be Jewish because of her jet black helmet shaped hair do. but when they saw the Crucifix hanging around her swarthy neck, they assumed she was Sicilian. Her entire appearance was of a baroque bowling ball with jiggly appendages extending in all directions . When she was handed a quick note upon which was written the two words "Ralph Laffoley" , she began by eyeing the two strangers with suspicion. To her they looked as if they were from a much higher class than those who usually came to the door, or who wanted to see Ralph.

She answered their inquiry not in words , but in an elaborate system of hand gestures, which led my great-grandfather to believe she was deaf. But then she gave them a very nasty "fig". She exposed the tip of her thumb between the first and second finger. Next she released her digits one by one until all five were upright. Then she pulled back three fingers and her thumb to her palm leaving the middle finger pointing straight up. Both father and son were confused. Did she mean to indicate that Ralph was up on fifth level, or were they just recipients of an even more vulgar " Italian Salute".

Responding to the former imperative , they both began to trudge up the rickety wooden stairs composed of straight runs and winders at the quarter turns instead of the instead of landings. My grandfather (the future architect) noticed that the risers and the treads were not even, apparently to accommodate slightly different floor heights, and the saving of space in the apartments, but not lawsuits.

Finally they reached the fifth floor corridor. Down at the opposite end of the hall , they found Ralph's room, number 13. The door knocker was a large yachtsman's anchor composed of a single tooth of an orca, the first killer whale he ever harpooned. With the addition of the appropriate scrimshaw noting the date , the time ,the latitude and longitude of the kill, the anchor displayed in larger letters the name of Ralph's ship : "The Blue Water" out of New Bedford , Massachusetts.

Not wishing to harm his brother's "masterpiece" Philip banged on his door with his cane. He had to do that several times before it was answered. "Doesn't anyone answer their door in New York" said my grandfather. But the door slowly opened as a single bloodshot eye surveyed the intruders. Then it opened wide with a wild and joyous abandon as a tall ,gaunt, balding , well-tanned man near the same age as my great-grandfather [which was 35] pulled the two travelers inside. A fast few words were spoken.

"Ralphie".

"Phil". " And this must be little "Eddie" I have heard so much about "

"What grade are you in ?"

" I am in the third grade Uncle Ralph".

"Do you go to Boston Latin ?"

" No. Not yet . I am only eight , I will have to wait until I am twelve years old".

"Oh don't be so formal to a fare-thee-well. By twelve I had stopped school and become a cabin boy on a whaler ", Ralph said with pride.

Just then a half-dressed young woman stepped out of a side door and whined : "When are you gonna p...".

"Shut up ,Pearl, and serve me and me mates some grog and slumgullion." Ralph was trying to sound very authentically seafaring.

Next came an awkward moment of silence, which was broken by my grandfather who asked : "Are you my Aunt Pearl ? You look prettier than my teacher ,Miss Purdy." She moved close to "Eddie" and spoke in his ear in sotto voce, "Listen kiddo, I ain't your aunt. As a matter of fact I wasn't 'posed to be here this late. Do you think you can get your stinking uncle to pay the extra fifty bucks he owes me ?"

My grandfather did notice a rather pungent odor surrounding his uncle. Later on going home his father said Uncle Ralph only took three baths a year as a result of a habit he learned at sea. There was one bath when he left port, a second occurred when the ship reached its mid-way point on the journey, and the final bath celebrated the return to port. Ralph always claimed that the salt spray from the sea water kept him reasonably clean the rest of the time.

Right now the group had other fish to fry. Before Pearl was kicked out by Ralph, she delivered a piece of advice that was very strange to my grandfather.

“If in about 20 years you run across a girl who looks like me ...run, do not walk away and never turn back.”

Then Ralph quickly stuffed some cash between the exposed separation of Pearl’s breasts and kicked her out the door. All of a sudden Philip and Ralph began to laugh out loud for about ten minutes. And my grandfather looked up at them in a most puzzled way about what had just transpired.

Ralph started looking around as he gathered up a few essentials, as if he were about to ship out. He picked up his homemade piss pot, some snacks and bottles of beer ( Pabst Blue Ribbon ,of course) , enough pillows and blankets for three, five large candles, a load of fireworks, and a log book to record the evening’s events . All this was stuffed into a burlap gunnysack. Into his own belt he inserted his own derringer (just in case) , and finally a spyglass. Then Ralph headed up a ladder to the roof. The other two quickly followed. Up on the roof they could see that the sun was beginning to set , making dramatic shadows with the new bridge. A little later pedestrians that had gathered on the walkways of the bridge began to shout in unison : “The Bridge, The Bridge. The eighth wonder of the world !!”

It was now approaching 7 o’clock as the stars began to appear. The world of Ralph’s roof became a magical land for “Eddie”. Although the roof was essentially flat, Ralph had covered it in structures which together resembled the top deck of a Mississippi river boat. Ralph was a fan of Mark Twain. He outfitted the deck with a wheelhouse, a large chimney enclosing all the fireplace flues directing all the exhaust fumes into one massive column of smoke. The final touch was to add all the nautical and signal flags he could which began to flutter in the evening breeze. Ralph wanted to make sure no one could accuse him of being associated with the poetry of Emily Dickinson ( born December 10, 1830 and who was now at the height of her career ) the “Belle of Amherst Massachusetts”. Both Twain and Dickinson were contemporaries, and each on the other side of the coin. They both were of the sign Sagittarius. Twain traveled the world. Dickinson stayed in her room in Amherst. Twain kept up with the future by his close friendship with Nikola Tesla. Dickinson tried to make the future come true by means of her poetry.

The deck surface was planked with thickly varnished cypress boards. “Eddie” ran to the “wheelhouse” and began to “steer” the building, just as the bands on board the excursion steamers on the East River began to play. He could hear the tunes such as “Beautiful Dreamer”, “Oh Susanna”, and “Jeanie With The Light Brown Hair” all by Stephen Foster.

Also featured were songs by John Philip Sousa ("The March King"). For the celebration he wrote two new works : "Mother Goose" and "The Pet Of The Petticoats".

One of the pass around posters for the event showed two giant working women, each one standing behind the Manhattan and Brooklyn towers shaking hands across the length of the Bridge.

Just then fireworks started while Philip and "Eddie" laid on their blankets. Ralph took out the beer and apportioned the bottles according to the assumed thirst of the drinker. Little "Eddie " got one beer and a small portion of applejack that Ralph made last Winter. Philip got five beers and a large applejack , Ralph, of course, gave himself the largest applejack and twelve bottles of beer. Philip complained that "Eddie" too young to drink. Ralph countered that in Paris boys learn to drink at six, leaving "Eddie" two years behind. Philip glared at Ralph , but let "Eddie" have his first drink.

It became dark and balmy. The moon was full and seemed to float between the main pylons of the bridge. Ralph now set out his pièce de résistance. It was not food, but memorabilia. In truth the objects were only a few a few days old. To the awaiting eyes of Philip and "Eddie", using candlelight, Ralph presented first the cover of "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper", for the week ending May 26 , 18823 , which showed a portrait of Washington A. Roebling (1837-1926). He had taken over as the Chief Engineer of the Bridge after the death of his father John Roebling (1806-1869). In the picture Washington stood immobile looking out of his window at 110 Columbia Street in Brooklyn at the almost complete Bridge. He was totally paralyzed from the bends , overwork and anxiety. His wife Emily was truly the one in charge of finishing the Bridge. Next Ralph presented what he considered as his most personal souvenir of the Bridge ceremonies. He said he obtained this formal invitation to the Bridge the day before from someone he knew at The Tribune Building. The trustees of the New York and Brooklyn Bridge provided lots of blank invitations designed by Tiffany to be left in various places around Manhattan and the surrounding boroughs . The size was an unfolded folio printed on one side only, leaving plenty of room for autographs and notes of the day's activities. "Eddie" first looked at the beautiful engraving of the expanse of the Bridge. On the left was the insignia of Manhattan, to the right, Brooklyn. In the sky clouds formed another horizon and the lightly scribed words : " FINIS CORONAT OPUS".

"What does that mean, father ?" asked "Eddie", looking up at Philip. "I will start you off in Latin. It means "The End Crowns The Work". "Hmm, I was going to guess something like that , or "The End Justifies The Means". "Eddie" said ominously. "I think I am going to like studying Latin".

Even though Ralph was by now completely sozzled, he became coherent enough to issue a vague command to "Eddie". "Look on the other side of the folio". Then Ralph promptly fell to the roof deck, asleep.

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“Eddie” did his uncle’s bidding with obvious relish. On the other side of the folio he saw names and titles of people , some rubber stamped , some in pen. He saw “Chester A. Arthur “, president of The United States , the mayor of New York City, Franklin Edson, the mayor of Brooklyn , Seth Low, and the French actress Sarah Bernhardt. Emily Roebling signed for her husband Washington. There were other names that “Eddie” did not know such as Mme. Blavatsky, who noted that “...after leaving Ceylon and heading for London, I just wanted to see what my adopted country was up to...”.

To “Eddie” the most important autograph was from the famous writer Mark Twain. This year in school he had read “The Celebrated Jumping Frog Of Calaveras County”, and “The Adventures Of Tom Sawyer”. The quotation next to the autograph was what made it so important to Uncle Ralph. He must have gone up to see Mark Twain and offered him a drink of rotgut whiskey with a pledge that he would “go on the wagon” just to get his attention . Then Twain wrote a caustic remark to Ralph. “Taking the pledge will not make bad liquor good, but it will improve it “. The “K” in Twain’s signature looked like a sickle and the “T” was two inches long and written well above the vertical bar of the letter.

By now the festivities were over. The candles burned down to their nubs and finally went out. The two adults were asleep and snoring. This was “Eddie’s” chance to filch the invitation without interruption or notice. He placed the invitation inside a small carpet bag which he brought to carry souvenirs of the trip. He then placed the bag under his pillow and went to sleep. The next morning “Eddie” woke up first and was very cold. Ralph’s thin blankets did not help much. He nudged his father out of a deep sleep.

“Can we go now ? My teacher said I have to make up some homework on Saturday and also practice my violin”. You’re right of course, but let’s be quiet about our departure”.

Hardly making a sound, the two descended the ladder to the main room of the apartment, picking up their belongings as they tiptoed out the door and along the hallway. When they reached the top of the stairs they noticed a huddled figure halfway down the stairwell leaning against the wall. It was Pearl. She turned with surprise as the father and son passed by. She asked “Is himself up yet ?”

They answered in the negative, to which she responded, “Good, I’ll wake him up”.

They were outside heading back to Broadway down Dover Street in order to avoid the stink of the Fulton Street fish market, when “Eddie” directed a puzzled look toward his father. “Father, why did Pearl stay in the hall stairs all night even after Uncle Ralph kicked her out ?” “You ask strange questions for such a little fellow, but since you did, my answer is that Pearl believes Ralph actually loves her”. “Does he”? “I don’t know , but I suspect he does, although he would never admit it”. “Why not ?”, pressed “Eddie”.

“I suppose it’s his way of avoiding marriage”. “ Then why would she stay with him ?”

“I suppose women just know the men who really love them”.



On the train ride back to Boston my grandfather could not figure his Uncle Ralph out because he seemed totally happy in the midst of a drab and wretched life. Now he was back home and in his normal world. My grandfather late that night looked through his poke for the invitation he had stolen. Then with a quill pen, a bottle of India ink and his best penmanship [which was considerable] he wrote "Edmund Philip Laffoley" at the bottom of the folio. He thought to add "Esquire" as he had been told his family came from earls and duchesses. He then placed the invitation back in the bag and fell asleep as he hoped he would awaken in the future.

And my grandfather did just that. He was now 23 and he had married a young girl of 16, in order that he could start having children right away without interference from her mother or her family. Their first child was my father. Then came 13 more with some time intervals between each birth. But as I said only half of the brood survived . In this way he planned his life so he had a home to return to, but no opposition to his heart's desires, whatever they might be. He was now a man of "the gay nineties", filled with elaborateness, weariness, and artificiality. Since he was seven years older than his wife, who was the proverbial "girl-next-door", he watched her grow up without competition from other male eyes. Her interest in my grandfather was what every female Capricorn who has Venus conjunct with her Sun sign wants. If they marry young, they seek older more mature partners. And my grandfather looked much older than his chronological age. Although not openly demonstrative, Capricorns are, however, loyal and steadfast in marriage, with a touch of snobbishness. While reserved in public, Capricorns tend to be very sensual in private, as she was. My grandfather's attraction to my grandmother was her willingness to stay at home and keep house while he went out gallivanting around the world by himself looking for new knowledge and opportunities without any guilt or strings attached.

It seems, however, both my grandparents were victims of the work of the English Romantic Poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge [1772-1834]. Edmond saw Mary as "the vampire who haunts men's dreams" . This was from "The Vision of the Ancient Mariner seeking Heaven's mother send us grace". What was revealed was :

"Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her locks were yellow as gold:  
Her skin was as white as leprosy,  
The night-mare life-in-death was she  
Who thicks man's blood with cold".

And from Coleridge's "A vision in a dream: A fragment [1816] , "The story of Kubla Khan", Mary became "...Beneath a waning Moon [that] was haunted by [a] woman wailing for her demon-lover!", and hearing that "... all should cry, Beware!, Beware! [of]

His flashing eyes, his floating hair! , [and]  
Weave a circle round him thrice, [like an occult chant]  
And close your eyes with Holy Dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the Milk of Paradise."

They would often use ,together, the substance of choice of Coleridge. I refer, of course, to “Boston Opium”. It was used originally to help stop dental pains. But Coleridge became addicted to it and so did my grandparents because in their time you could buy it over the counter. And also they liked the fact of the name itself. “Boston Opium” is a type of laudanum plus a tincture of sulfuric acid added.

My grandparents officially began courting when Mary was 13 and still going to “Girl’s Latin School” ( the female counterpart of “Boston Latin School” for boys which was founded one year earlier than Harvard University.)

My grandfather spent one year at Harvard and left saying :”I am too old for school anymore”. He was 19 years of age but looked and acted 35,much like Mozart did. In fact he was then becoming the image of the German actor Max Schreck who played “Count Orlock” in the movie : “Nosferatu : Eine Symphonie Des Grauens”. It was filmed in 1922, and directed by F.W. Murnau. He saw the movie by himself when he was 47 in New York City. People in the audience at a 42<sup>nd</sup> Street theatre off “Times Square” believed they had seen an actual vampire. Edmond was so thin he looked emaciated in his body, and that topped with a “rat’s head” and a long pointed nose, skin pure white and bulging red-rimmed eyes [from drinking very heavily from 13 on up plus taking “Boston Opium” ]. He weighed 137 pounds, and was six feet, three inches tall and was completely bald with the exception of a jet black hair fringe and a few strands for a comb over.

But beyond that he was impeccably dressed each day in the same black “Edwardian Suit” with a black bowtie and a white boiled shirt (which he changed every day, much to the delight of my grandmother). He would often describe his attire as providing enough attitude to be ready for any spasmodic opportunity. The finish for him was to wear his round spectacles of thick black steel frames and temples, and this was 21 years before the architect “Le Corbusier”[1887-1965] did the same thing.

By this time he had control of his own orchestra and played first violin by ear. He was never able to read music and , therefore, acted as the conductor of his ensemble. They used to practice in Jordan Hall at The New England Conservatory of Music.

At this point in his life my grandfather was ready to expand his activities. He always wanted to be an architect and he thought he had the talent to do it. But he did not want to go to school for it. He heard from a friend, one Igor Zelliott, on how to accomplish his desire. Igor ,who worked for the Boston firm of Shepley , Bulfinch, and Richardson which was founded by the famous architect H.H. Richardson [1838-1886] in 1874 when he was 36, said to Edmond that he should go to New York City for six months and work for McKim , Mead and White (founded in 1879) , the most prestigious architectural firm in The United States.

“According to The Boston Society of Architects one must not only work for six months for a registered architect, but the person desiring registration must obtain a letter on the business stationery from that said architect, stating that the candidate for registration has successfully completed no less than six months of productive activity in the aforementioned firm. And this letter must signed by [1] the registered architect, [2] the candidate, and counter-signed by [3] the secretary of The B.S.A., whom now is Père André and sent to The Hotel Thorndike at the end of Church Street overlooking the Boylston Street side of The Public Gardens. Along with the letter a certified check in the amount of Ten Dollars cash must drawn on a bank of established reputation. We suggest Brown Brothers Harriman and Company located at 40 Water Street, Boston.”

Edmond looked very puzzled at Igor. “Why are you confusing me ? We are school chums from B.L.S. Why can’t I work for “Shepley , Bulfinch ?” “ That’s just it. I know you too well. First , you don’t plan to stay here. I know this. You want to be out on your own as soon as possible. This place will destroy you”. “Well what do you suggest ?” asked Edmond. “You’re an idea man, and I’m a technician, practically a journeyman engineer. Someday we should form our own office and do jobs that others see no future in, but could have some interesting implications. For instance the other day I overheard someone in the office talking about The Schrafft’s Candy and Chocolate Company in Sullivan Square, Charlestown . It seems a person named Frank Shattuck wants to buy the company and add restaurants . This will not be for a few years yet. But I am sure you could come up with new ideas for Shattuck.” “ You are not as stupid as I thought you were in school”, added Edmond. “What do you suggest as my next step ?” “Well,” Igor, insisted ,“You should go to “The Thursday Night Soirées held at the corner of Fairfield street and Commonwealth Avenue on the South side of the avenue. It is a large Gothic Stone Castle that has been skinned with exterior stucco”. Igor noted. “Oh, I think I saw that place once”, responded Edmond , “I heard it is owned by a wealthy bachelor whose only form of entertainment is to see what happens when people from various professions are thrown together. The rules are simple” ,added Igor, “You do not have know anyone in the beginning, but you can not get in if you arrive after 7:30 P.M. in the evening. At first you go to separate sections of the house in order to find members of your profession. At 8:00 P.M. sharp the chef comes out and rings the dinner bell. As you enter the dinning hall you receive a number that indicates your order of arrival on the premises. Then everyone enters the huge dinning and finds a seat. If the seats are all filled you may use the same number next week. Since there are 100 seats available in a large square with 25 seats on a side with a huge platform in the center to allow the staff to serve the food as it goes up and down from the kitchen one floor below. But I still do not understand how the seat numbering works, although I have been assured that it does.

As the meal progresses each person in turn must stand up and introduce him or herself and state one problem that they are working on to receive advice, and above all you must be truthful and accurate about the details".

The first week that Edmond obtained a seat at the table he explained his dilemma and sat down waiting for a response. At first there was dead silence for about 5 minutes. Edmond looked very embarrassed. Finally a man as tall as Edmond arose to the sounds of hushed aspirations. It was Robert Swain Peabody [1845-1917], the prime architect of "Peabody and Stearns", the most famous architectural firm of Boston at that time. (Their office was at 45 Bromfield Street, one of Boston's original streets). He got up and spoke briefly to my grandfather "Young man you realize no architectural office in Boston will hire you if you plan to stay only 6 months. That does not exhibit much commitment or dedication to our profession. But I do have a suggestion for you. Go to New York City and be interviewed by Stanford White [1853-1906] of "McKim, Mead, and White", the most prestigious architectural firm in the world. Now to my mind White is truly crazy and a known womanizer".(Peabody said with a smile to the rest of the guests). "Oh, by the way, what is your name, so that I can write you a short letter of introduction". "It is Edmond Laffoley". Then Peabody asked if I knew someone named Ralph Laffoley? "Yes I do", was Edmond's answer. "He is my uncle. Why do you ask?" He was a childhood friend of mine where I was born in New Bedford Massachusetts. We were 12 and 13 getting into all kinds of trouble like "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn" before the stories were actually written by Twain. Ralph ran away from home in Boston and came down to the docks in New Bedford and hung around the whaler called "The Blue Water" because it resembled "The Pequod" from the book "Moby - Dick". I played "Ishmael", and Ralph played "Queequeg". For about 6 months we bummed around the docks after I got out of school for the day. Soon I began to skip school. That's when my parents began to figure out what was going on. They also discovered Ralph sleeping in our basement on cold nights. That was it. After that I was forbidden from seeing him again. But I did help him one last time. The night before "The Blue Water" set sail for "Cape Horn", I pretended to smuggle myself on board and made such a clatter that all the guards came running to catch me while Ralph used a boat davit to swing on board and enter the quarter deck, and down the "booby hatch" just in front of the "mizzen mast" to the safety of the unused steerage hold. I, of course, was thrown off and was never seen again by the crew, now being back in bed in the big house on the hill, where I lay awake all night wondering what happened to my adventurous friend. What did happen to Ralph, Mr. Laffoley?" "Well, Mr. Peabody my uncle became an excellent harpooner, and when he retired from the merchant marines he went back to Boston to live with my grandmother until she died then he got a job working as a rigger on "The Brooklyn Bridge". "Who is to say which of us has had the happier life?", added Peabody.

“Now do not forget this note of introduction I wrote for you, and good luck.” Taking the note my grandfather waved goodbye to everyone at the table . The next day he entered the same train to New York City he boarded when he was 8 years old,12 years before. Only now he was completely alone. His father had died, and Mary did not want to go anyway.

Arriving at Grand Central Station, Edmond saw at East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Broadway that some improvements had been made , but like Pope Julius II discovering the slow progress of Michelangelo and his crew , who were commissioned to paint The Sistine Chapel, He cried out blindly, “When will you make an end ?” But since he was almost at White’s Office in Madison Square Gardens, he thought it best to focus on his business at hand.

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Before Edmond could knock on the door, it opened and out stepped Ralph. He had waiting in the foyer for "Little Eddie" to show up . When Ralph saw how much Edmond had grown and matured he decided to call him "Ed". But when Ralph welcomed "Ed" by throwing his arms around him , "Ed" stepped back in total revulsion. "Uncle Ralph , you must take a bath before I can live with you. Only a skunk or a dead fish could stand you at this point". "Strange ,that is what I heard from "Nora the Pussycat". She is a friend of Pearl. I met her on the corner of Nassau and Fulton Streets at a women's only gym. Nora said she and Pearl would go here to get a wash and a steam bath, and she does not want to see you again under any circumstances . It seems she answered an ad to take care of an old Wall Street coot who had just lost his wife. At first she thought it would be just light housekeeping , but one day he asked her to help him into the bathtub. While she was washing him, she started washing his private parts and the inevitable occurred. After that he started calling her his Pearl from Pearl Street because he rented her an apartment there." "Well that's it uncle Ralph, I'm going to take you to Gold's Gym near here to get you a real Turkish Bath . That way the attendants will be able to remove the layers of scum that you have built up. Oh, and I forgot to tell you White did hire me, so I will be living with you for six months. Right now can you get another set of " fresh clothes" in a bag and we will go to the Gym, and tomorrow there are a few things I have to buy and where can I keep this parrot until we get back?". Ralph disappeared with the bird and hurried back to Edmond's side , and they walked into the night.

When they reached the Gym , Edmond stayed in the lobby reading a book he brought knowing he was going to be there for quite awhile. Suddenly four men in white suits showed up and pulled Ralph behind a privacy screen, ripped off all his clothes and covered his body with "Fuller's Earth" which immediately adsorbed a lot of his body odor.

Next Edmond heard Ralph start to scream as they moved him deeper into the bowels of the building. Ralph's sounds were accompanied by the laughter of those who had already been through the mill. Edmond thought that it must be true that the real difference between the urbane and the rustic is soap. Without soap cities could never have formed. Two and a half hours later when Ralph was released from what ever happened to him, he looked ten years younger and at last he smelled like a human being again. They removed every hair from his body starting with his head including his hair fringe, his eyebrows, his mustache, his ear hair, his arm pits, his body hair, his pubic hair, and gave him a rub-down with a combination of lye ,menthol and naphthol soaps. Then Ralph said that he received a series of steam baths of increasing temperature and sprayed with ice cold salt water and fresh water. Finally he was sprayed with nitrous oxide to kill the pain of what was done to him. They told him he might have to come back for a second treatment to get all the eggs of the types of body lice he had picked up, and be sure to burn his bed clothes. When he woke up the next day he had forgotten all his troubles.

Edmond got up early and made a list of the materials he needed to build his roof house and make it weather tight for the Winter months to come. Ralph suggested that they go to the Fulton Fish Market a borrow a push cart so they could go directly to Canal Street to find every thing "Ed" wanted. When they got to The Market, Ralph was not recognized at first especially by the women who thought he might be Ralph's son, but from the intimate knowledge he had of them they soon became convinced of his identity. Workmen who could smell him from 20 feet away now passed right by him without a glimmer of recognition in their eyes. He went up to his boss to get an empty push cart who called him into question in front of a nearby cop. Ralph explained that Edmond , his nephew, was just hired by the architect Stanford White and needed to make some small repairs to his " apartment." Mister DiGivanni was so pleased with the change in Ralph plus the knowledge that his relative was about to work for a famous architect that he not only loaned Ralph the cart but added some wood working tools in a carpet bag. Soon the pair were off on Fulton Street and taking a right up Broadway to Canal Street. They took a right and headed to Chinatown end of Canal. They stopped for a minute in front of the "Wong Fu" lantern shop , and started to talk out loud about finding a stove , and this was near a sidewalk puppeteer who was standing on a large ornately carved stool. Around his body was a flat black velvet drape that reached his feet. Where his head should be was a temple and stage painted in black, red ,and white in which little figures were moving like a "Punch and Judy" show. All the dialogue was spoken in Beijing Mandarin. Suddenly form behind the curtain came the words in hushed tones : You Lookee for "Frankrin Stove". We gotum . You pay me 10 dorrah . A hand reached through curtain to take the money. Edmond pressed a ten dollar bill in the grasping fingers. Next they heard "Go quick before copper come back" , as two coolies loaded the stove on their cart.

As they moved down the street , now loaded up , Edmond and Ralph stopped the cart by the curb and started laughing out loud as they both realized they just bought a “hot stove”. Realizing they now had everything they needed for construction they hurried back to Front Street. Ralph went right up to the roof and motioned to Edmond to go to Water Street behind their building. Ralph who had lots of block and tackle set ups left over from when he worked on The Brooklyn Bridge dropped a towing line to the street. He figured the landlady Mrs. Conti would not realize what was going on because she did not when he was building structures on the roof before. Edmond connected the stove and the bag of tools to the lowered ropes. While Ralph hoisted up the equipment, Edmond brought the cart back to the Fish Market, then ran back to 37 Front Street where Ralph was waiting. They got up to roof without being spotted by Mrs. “C”. Ralph could never quite figure where she was in the building at any one time. There was , however, enough scrap wood laying around to finish the little house . Ralph thought it better not to change things so much that “She” would notice. Edmond asked where “ Mary the Parrot” was ?” “She’s in my bathroom” said Ralph as Edmond entered the privy and found a total mess. “Apparently she does not like to be left alone”, thought Edmond. Bird feces and the portion of Sunflower Seeds left were scattered everywhere. “Where can I buy Sunflower seeds around here or at “The Five Points” uncle Ralph ?” There are some variety stores nearby came the answer. But now get up here so we get this framed in before dark”. Edmond patted the parrot on the head and gave her a kiss. The largest existing structure had to be insulated, and window areas covered in mosquito nets until they could be measured for glazing, plus citronella candles distributed about. It was now Thursday night and they had three days to finish before Monday. Edmond spent the rest of the evening cleaning the bathroom , feeding and watering “Mary”, and making a roost for her to get used to. Then set out bed clothes on the floor of the parlor. But first he put a string around “Mary’s” foot and attached it to the perch upright, lay down and went to sleep. Ralph was already asleep.

Upon waking up Edmond realized how he could repay his uncle’s kindness. Since he was the first up he decided to make breakfast , and later all other meals when he could. First he put rags around his neck and shoulders and placed “Mary” on the rags while he worked. If she pecked at his bald head , he would give her a little whack with a wooden spoon until she learned to stop. He found some eggs that were not rotten, a can of corned beef hash, some stale bread, and an unknown brand of coffee. He sniffed it and thought it might be Turkish. His uncle’s stove used wood scraps but was not a “Franklin”, but it did the job. He found two small pans, lit stove and the coddle eggs in water, and started the kettle for coffee. By now the sounds and smells especially of the hash woke Ralph up . He came running into the kitchen in his underwear and said “What the hell are you doing? And why is that parrot on your shoulders?” Edmond suspected that his uncle had run-ins with pets aboard whalers.

PART THREE

Entering the building which looked almost like a classic Venetian Palace , locked in not by water, but by gardens, Edmond approached the first person he saw leaving. He thought to himself : “This is the most spectacular interior space I have ever seen, and she is not bad herself “. The last part of his sentence became louder and louder the nearer he got to the young lady who resembled “The Gibson Girl Poster” . Edmond continued his conversation with a question. “How do I get to Stanford White’s office ?” Being a veteran of “the flirt” she blocked his initial serve by answering not in words , but by pointing with her right index finger toward the rear of the building and then upward like a gesture from a “Leonardo Painting”. Next Edmond, ignoring her attitude, asked her name directly. “Evelyn Nesbit”, she said. “Well Miss Nesbit, do you think Mister White is up there now ?” Her answer was an undisguised double entendre, “That old geezer is always “up” there”. Realizing he was not responding to her flippant remark and therefore was not like the rest of the “drafting board moles” who work here, who are easily controlled by a few words and coquettish glances. She moved away from him in utter defeat , that day

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Since he had not yet seen his uncle , he decided to take a different route to Front Street. He went straight down Fifth Avenue to Washington Square Park, next to West Broadway, across West Houston Street all the way down to the corner of Reade Street , where he was told there was a pet store that sold parrots for urban environments because they tend to stay on their perches all day. He bought a young female, all green with red eyes and a yellow beak, and seemed to have a good disposition. "I think I will call her Mary." He asked the proprietor if she knew any languages . "No, she's a verbal virgin". Well I have known many of those. I will , however ,teach her Sicilian Italian."

It was getting late so Edmond wanted to hurry to see his uncle who written that he was quite eager to meet him again since Philip had died and Pearl had run off with some "Wall Street Geezer". He ran down Reade Street until he reached Centre Street , then took a right behind City Hall where Park Row joins Frankfort Street almost under the Brooklyn Bridge and took a right on Front Street until he arrived at number 37.

Before Edmond could knock on the door, it opened and out stepped Ralph. He had waiting in the foyer for "Little Eddie" to show up . When Ralph saw how much Edmond had grown and matured he decided to call him "Ed". But when Ralph welcomed "Ed" by throwing his arms around him , "Ed" stepped back in total revulsion. "Uncle Ralph , you must take a bath before I can live with you. Only a skunk or a dead fish could stand you at this point". "Strange ,that is what I heard from "Nora the Pussycat". She is a friend of Pearl. I met her on the corner of Nassau and Fulton Streets at a women's only gym. Nora said she and Pearl would go here to get a wash and a steam bath, and she does not want to see you again under any circumstances . It seems she answered an ad to take care of an old Wall Street coot who had just lost his wife. At first she thought it would be just light housekeeping , but one day he asked her to help him into the bathtub. While she was washing him, she started washing his private parts and the inevitable occurred. After that he started calling her his Pearl from Pearl Street because he rented her an apartment there." "Well that's it uncle Ralph, I'm going to take you to Gold's Gym near here to get you a real Turkish Bath . That way the attendants will be able to remove the layers of scum that you have built up. Oh, and I forgot to tell you White did hire me, so I will be living with you for six months. Right now can you get another set of " fresh clothes" in a bag and we will go to the Gym, and tomorrow there are a few things I have to buy and where can I keep this parrot until we get back?". Ralph disappeared with the bird and hurried back to Edmond's side , and they walked into the night.

When they reached the Gym , Edmond stayed in the lobby reading a book he brought knowing he was going to be there for quite awhile. Suddenly four men in white suits showed up and pulled Ralph behind a privacy screen, ripped off all his clothes and covered his body with "Fuller's Earth" which immediately adsorbed a lot of his body odor.



Next Edmond heard Ralph start to scream as they moved him deeper into the bowels of the building. Ralph's sounds were accompanied by the laughter of those who had already been through the mill. Edmond thought that it must be true that the real difference between the urbane and the rustic is soap. Without soap cities could never have formed. Two and a half hours later when Ralph was released from what ever happened to him, he looked ten years younger and at last he smelled like a human being again. They removed every hair from his body starting with his head including his hair fringe, his eyebrows, his mustache, his ear hair, his arm pits, his body hair, his pubic hair, and gave him a rub-down with a combination of lye ,menthol and naphthol soaps. Then Ralph said that he received a series of steam baths of increasing temperature and sprayed with ice cold salt water and fresh water. Finally he was sprayed with nitrous oxide to kill the pain of what was done to him. They told him he might have to come back for a second treatment to get all the eggs of the types of body lice he had picked up, and be sure to burn his bed clothes. When he woke up the next day he had forgotten all his troubles.

Edmond got up early and made a list of the materials he needed to build his roof house and make it weather tight for the Winter months to come. Ralph suggested that they go to the Fulton Fish Market a borrow a push cart so they could go directly to Canal Street to find every thing "Ed" wanted. When they got to The Market, Ralph was not recognized at first especially by the women who thought he might be Ralph's son, but from the intimate knowledge he had of them they soon became convinced of his identity. Workmen who could smell him from 20 feet away now passed right by him without a glimmer of recognition in their eyes. He went up to his boss to get an empty push cart who called him into question in front of a nearby cop. Ralph explained that Edmond , his nephew, was just hired by the architect Stanford White and needed to make some small repairs to his " apartment." Mister DiGivanni was so pleased with the change in Ralph plus the knowledge that his relative was about to work for a famous architect that he not only loaned Ralph the cart but added some wood working tools in a carpet bag. Soon the pair were off on Fulton Street and taking a right up Broadway to Canal Street. They took a right and headed to Chinatown end of Canal. They stopped for a minute in front of the "Wong Fu" lantern shop , and started to talk out loud about finding a stove , and this was near a sidewalk puppeteer who was standing on a large ornately carved stool. Around his body was a flat black velvet drape that reached his feet. Where his head should be was a temple and stage painted in black, red ,and white in which little figures were moving like a "Punch and Judy" show. All the dialogue was spoken in Beijing Mandarin. Suddenly form behind the curtain came the words in hushed tones : You Lookee for "Frankrin Stove". We gotum . You pay me 10 dorrah . A hand reached through curtain to take the money. Edmond pressed a ten dollar bill in the grasping fingers. Next they heard "Go quick before copper come back" , as two coolies loaded the stove on their cart.

As they moved down the street , now loaded up , Edmond and Ralph stopped the cart by the curb and started laughing out loud as they both realized they just bought a "hot stove". Realizing they now had everything they needed for construction they hurried back to Front Street. Ralph went right up to the roof and motioned to Edmond to go to Water Street behind their building. Ralph who had lots of block and tackle set ups left over from when he worked on The Brooklyn Bridge dropped a towing line to the street. He figured the landlady Mrs. Conti would not realize what was going on because she did not when he was building structures on the roof before. Edmond connected the stove and the bag of tools to the lowered ropes. While Ralph hoisted up the equipment, Edmond brought the cart back to the Fish Market, then ran back to 37 Front Street where Ralph was waiting. They got up to roof without being spotted by Mrs. "C". Ralph could never quite figure where she was in the building at any one time. There was , however, enough scrap wood laying around to finish the little house . Ralph thought it better not to change things so much that "She" would notice. Edmond asked where " Mary the Parrot" was ?" "She's in my bathroom" said Ralph as Edmond entered the privy and found a total mess. "Apparently she does not like to be left alone", thought Edmond. Bird feces and the portion of Sunflower Seeds left were scattered everywhere. "Where can I buy Sunflower seeds around here or at "The Five Points" uncle Ralph ?" There are some variety stores nearby came the answer. But now get up here so we get this framed in before dark". Edmond patted the parrot on the head and gave her a kiss. The largest existing structure had to be insulated, and window areas covered in mosquito nets until they could be measured for glazing, plus citronella candles distributed about. It was now Thursday night and they had three days to finish before Monday. Edmond spent the rest of the evening cleaning the bathroom , feeding and watering "Mary", and making a roost for her to get used to. Then set out bed clothes on the floor of the parlor. But first he put a string around "Mary's" foot and attached it to the perch upright, lay down and went to sleep. Ralph was already asleep.

Upon waking up Edmond realized how he could repay his uncle's kindness. Since he was the first up he decided to make breakfast , and later all other meals when he could. First he put rags around his neck and shoulders and placed "Mary" on the rags while he worked. If she pecked at his bald head , he would give her a little whack with a wooden spoon until she learned to stop. He found some eggs that were not rotten, a can of corned beef hash, some stale bread, and an unknown brand of coffee. He sniffed it and thought it might be Turkish. His uncle's stove used wood scraps but was not a "Franklin", but it did the job. He found two small pans, lit stove and the coddle eggs in water, and started the kettle for coffee. By now the sounds and smells especially of the hash woke Ralph up . He came running into the kitchen in his underwear and said "What the hell are you doing? And why is that parrot on your shoulders?" Edmond suspected that his uncle had run-ins with pets aboard whalers.

“And why are you up so early. It’s 5:30 AM. I don’t get up until Noon” . Edmond realized that his uncle was starting a row with him, something he did not want to have happen. He knew that his uncle was a fire-ball Aries, but a stupid one, and he was disturbing his uncle’s world. So Edmond put the parrot in the half finished roof house and went down the fire escape in the back of the building to the street and went around by himself to find the remaining materials he needed. He also brought a long rope with an iron hook on the end. That way he could come back to the roof without coming in the front door, or disturbing his uncle. If he asked for front door keys to the building or Ralph’s apartment he knew there would be trouble. So by Sunday night Edmond had his roof world almost finished. He did , however , come down the roof hatch to get his clothes and bedroll up on the roof. Until he got his stove to work he would get something to eat and have coffee and cigarettes while he was going to work. He kept his bicycle behind the trash barrel shed in the alley. For the bathroom facilities , he thought he would have to wait until he got to work. But riding along the Bowery he noticed a store that catered to street bums in which he found large capacity male urinals and chamber pots made of thin steel. With these he could come down the roof hatch in the middle of the night and empty them into Ralph’s toilet. But Edmond’s final problem was how could he get running water up there, and it was getting late and dark so he set his alarm clock for 6:00PM and fell fast asleep.

The wake up call for Edmond on Monday morning was by “Mary the Parrot” trying to pull clumps of hair out of his hair fringe , apparently to find something to eat . All the sunflower seeds were gone. He used the new facilities he bought and put heavy boards over them so that the bird would not knock them over while he was away. It was 5:47 A.M. when he went down the fire escape. He used his formal clothes because he was going to meet Nikola Tesla or that is what he thought. When he neared Union Square East Edmond spotted a coffee shop that offered “home made donuts”. He pulled up and parked his bike at a lamp-post and went in. He ordered 3 cups of black coffee and two fresh donuts. The coffee was hot and refreshing so that he could stay sharp until Noon. But the donuts were beyond belief. First , they were plain , second , they were flat not like the round tubes of commercial donuts , and third, they were right out of deep fat fryer. Fourth they were being served by the best looking girl he had seen so far in New York City . “Who made these delicious donuts ?”, he asked her. “I did “ was her answer. “What is the name of this place ?” “ It is called “The Delicious Donut Deli”. “What do you serve here ?” “Like it says on the sign outside :”We serve European Espresso and Delicious Donuts”,” Wha’sammata can’t chyou read? “ Ignoring that , Edmond continued to probe. “What is your name ?” “ And what is the name of your hair style ?” “Esther and its not a hair style. It just the way my mother cut my hair in Poland since I was eight years old”.

Edmond was stunned at her appearance. Esther was the complete inverse of Mary. They both had large bright blue eyes, but Esther looked like the shadow of Mary. Where Mary had long Strawberry Blond curls cascading like a river down her back, Esther had jet black hair severely cut with bangs in the front and the sides like part of a helmet. Mary was very aware of her hair, she wore it as a French bouffant. Esther was totally unaware of her appearance like a baby. But they both had Yin Sanpaku eyes, which meant to my grandfather women capable of true love.

Esther went in to the back and Edmond heard her talking to her father in Polish that there was some customer who was making her feel funny. The father came rushing out and told Edmond to get out right now, "My daughter is spoken for, and you are not even Jewish". Edmond knew that he lied and responded that he came in for a dozen donuts and that was all. The father handed him a previous filled bag and asked for a dollar fifty. "Now do not come back".

That curious intermezzo almost caused Edmond to be late his first day. He hunted around for someone who could tell him where his drafting board was to be. Coming toward him was a person who seemed like himself only about 25 years older. "Good morning, I am the principal of this firm, Charles Follen McKim. And you are Edmond Laffoley I presume.?" He was dressed impeccably in an Edwardian suit with a high collar and all. "Yes I am", Edmond said very politely. "I see you are also in an Edwardian suit", said McKim. "Yes I am", again Edmond said very politely. "Well I found mine last year at Henry Huntsman and Sons, No 11 Savile Row in London" offered McKim. "Well I found mine about 5 years ago under a pile of other clothes at William Filene's and Sons Company at the corner of Franklin and Washington Streets in Boston", responded Edmond. "I have heard of that store", said McKim. "What have you in that paper bag?" "Polish donuts", came the answer. "If you keep eating those as did H.H. Richardson, you will gain 200 pounds as did he." "Well, what I eat is coffee and Cubeb cigarettes", said Edmond. "The reason I came to see you is to inform you that you will be working with me today on the planning of The New York Pennsylvania Railroad Station to be finished some time in the next 15 years. "Stanny" told me you are to go with him to meet Nikola Tesla and his assistant Kolman Czito tomorrow and perhaps Mark Twain".

"Tomorrow could not come fast enough when he could meet some "real" people", he thought. "Stanny" was a inveterate philanderer, and Charles was like his late father, a pompous snob. Edmond was told that the conceptual maquette was to be the Thermae of Caracalla in Rome. It was a monstrous building 1150 feet to the outside world in both directions, and the enclosure of the tepidarium, calidarium, frigidarium, and the apodyteria measured 750 feet by 380 feet. It had an Xystus or public park with trees. It was the ancient version of a contemporary "shopping mall" plus community centers and a place for controlled bathing.

Edmond thought that this is what the train station should become , an entry point to New York City where people could remove themselves of the stink and moral filth of the rest of the World before entering the glittering Metropolis that is Manhattan. Such an utopian vision of New York City was not in minds of the rest of the office , even though they claimed it was.

On the way home Edmond picked up the biggest wash tub he could find on Canal Street, plus some small pots a pans so he could set up a bath for himself for his meeting with Tesla and Twain. He was going plead with his uncle to let him have some water. When he finally dragged all his new equipment up onto the roof, it made such a racket, he felt sure that he would get caught this time . And Edmond was right. Standing next to the roof hatch was his uncle. Edmond's face dropped in shame , but in his uncle's left hand was the end of a hose with a controllable spigot. "I thought you are going to need this", said Ralph, "The other end is attached to my laundry faucet on the cold water pipe. That way the "old lady" won't catch on to the use of extra water." "Thank you so much uncle Ralph for all your help. And thought I could set up some planting boxes for vegetables with the "grey water", and make a bird bath for "Mary".

"By the way since I have not talked to you for a while, how is the new job going ?" "It seems to be going well. Tomorrow I get to meet Nikola Tesla and Mark twain.

Edmond started the fire in his Franklin Stove and filled up the wash tub for his stand up bath. On the stove were two pans with water brewing. One for tepid water and one for boiling. Removing his clothes , the parrot went straight for the top of his bald head. He now realized that "Mary" was not trying to eat what was left of his hair. She was just being affectionate and seeking attention from him. So he reached up and held her body and gently brought it down so that his lips met the top of her head and he kissed her, and then he placed her on her perch so the her claw feet could get a good grip. And then finally he finished his "Beethovenesque Bath", while musing over the fact that humans no very little about how the other creatures that live with us on earth express their emotions . After the bath Edmond began to lie down, but was asleep before he hit the mattress, and with no dreaming.

When he arose it was 6:00 A.M. sharp. He carefully shaved, brushed his teeth three times. Next he dressed using a boiled white shirt his human wife Mary provided and packed for Edmond. He also donned a black bow tie. No formal breakfast, just two cubebs and a cup of coffee between , and by 7:30 A.M. he was ready to go. He kissed his bird wife on the top of the head for luck and descended the fire escape, mounted the bike and headed for Madison Square Park as fast as he could pedal. He got to his office at exactly 8:00 A.M. , thinking he was the first one there. Again he was wrong. He fell into a doze on his drafting board but was awakened by the tips of Stanford's long mustache which tickled the back of his neck as usual.

Edmond went spastic when tickled. But Stanford loved to do it, probably because it satisfied his need to infantilize and feminize his prey. Undoubtedly it was the motivation of his continuous womanizing, a situation he never outgrew. Edmond knew this from other bullies he encountered in childhood. His stratagem was to defeat the enemy by chaos and confusion. Fighting someone in a specific set of circumstances works if you know your opponent well and the rules of conduct are obvious to all. But dirty street fighting demands the complete power of the imagination for swift retaliation. Edmond remembered a move he made on an upperclassman at "Boston Latin". Many times at lunch this particular person would often snatch pieces of food off the plates of his fellow students as he passed by to his seat, and he always did this to Edmond, who this time he was ready for him. "Charles, look up." When the other boy did that, he saw Edmond's unblinking steel blue eyes like the eyes of a viper about to strike. And that is exactly what Edmond did. Under the table he held his fork in such a position that when it was brought swiftly above the table, he was able to drive it right through the flesh and bone of the offending hand as the fork penetrated the soft pine wood of the crude dining table. But that was not all. Charles had a moment of confusion. He did not know which to do, use his uninjured hand to remove the fork, or smash Edmond in the face, for his "barbaric blasphemy" against the class system protocol. It was at that instant that the pain became the most intense for Charles, and it was also at that moment when Edmond grabbed Charles' other hand with his now free hands and bent the fingers back with all his might until the bones broke. He then pounded the freshly injured hand so hard that Charles began to scream like the stuck pig that he was. Next Edmond took the fork out of Charles' ham hand and sent it skidding to the end of the table where another boy wiped off the blood and put the fork back in the wash bucket. Finally Edmond took Charles' bleeding hand and rammed so hard at his nose that it broke and bled mixing his blood with Charles'. Edmond started screaming himself complaining as loud as he could "Why is everybody always picking on me". Charles who was at full boil suddenly realized that the heat had been turned up on him as the senior masters and even the headmaster came running over to what was up.

This all happened within seconds, and those that actually saw the unfolding of events were all on Edmond's side. Charles was not well liked by his fellow students or the faculty members. Charles swore that later he would break every bone in this "walking skeleton's body". "And I will bet you could. You must out weigh him by at least 150 pounds." "But you are not going to anything of the kind" said Mr. Jenny, the headmaster. "What you are going to be is expelled". Suddenly Edmond knew he was lethal and the reason why his English teacher Mr. Sawyer asked him to do a combined book report on "Tom Brown's Schooldays" by Thomas Hughes and "Thus Spake Zarathustra: a Book for All and None" by an unknown German philosopher named Friedrich Nietzsche.

When the reverie ended Edmond stepped behind Stanford and instead of attempting to tickle his neck, he simply gripped the ends of "Stanny's mustache" and tried to pull the hairs out of the flesh of his upper lip, while saying with his teeth clenched and in a low voice "If you ever try to molest me that way again I will pull the skin of your face right off your head." Right then others started to come in to office and broke up what looked to them like the beginning of a fight to the death [ something that Stanford seemed to attract]. But Stanford had the last word. "Do not worry about me anymore. I know that I possess the will to annoy. But now go away . You are fired ! You insane person." Edmond left without a word of good-bye or a backward glance.

He ran out of the front entrance, taking nothing with him except his electric blue bicycle upon which he headed directly South toward Washington Square Park. His destination was the laboratory of Nikola Tesla located at 33-35 South Fifth Avenue right in back of The Washington Square Arch, designed by Stanford in 1889. Since he left Madison Square Gardens around 9:00 AM in the morning, Edmond had at least 2 and ½ hours to kill before he went into the laboratory. He then thought he should arrive no later than 10:45 AM. , so that he would be ahead of Stanford who made the appointment for 11:30 AM. If he did not arrive before Stanford, there would be no telling what he might say about what was going on.

So he found an empty bench in the park, bought a bag of peanuts and began to feed the pigeons that gathered . He fell asleep but did not realize it until a "cop" tapped him on the head with his club. "You can't sleep here, you will have to move along, or go over to the Bowery near the "Five Points" to a mission". But he continued, "I don't think they will take you in , you dressed up in an Edwardian suit and all." "Thank you officer , I'm late for an appointment. I guess I fell asleep because I had an exhausting fight with my boss when I got to work this morning". "Do I detect a Boston accent ?. Do you mind if I ask you if ask where you are from ?" "I have a large white house in Roxbury in the Savin Hill area of Boston". "Glory Be, my sainted grandmother still lives in the area, Romsey Street right off "Dot. Ave." Do you k now it?" "Of course , I used to play near the train tracks there as a kid. Well I suppose I'd better get going. It's right behind "The Arch". I work for the architect who designed it, Stanford White."

"I don't believe it. Wait 'till I tell the Mrs. that I met a young architect who works for that rich "Son-of -a- B" architect we keep reading about in "The New York American" and "The Police Gazette". I hope you're not imitating him?" "I don't think so." "Well goodbye now".

Edmond brought his bicycle in the doorway and tied it to the largest newel he could find before he started trudging up the staircase to the sixth floor. When he arrived he was winded and he thought maybe all the smoking he does is not so good. At the top of the landing was a fellow actually taller and thinner than he was. In his left hand he was holding what Edmond thought was a candle in a spherical holder. It turned out not to be when he handed the object to Edmond. "You're Edmond, correct ?" "Yes", was the answer.

"But what is this that I am holding?" asked Edmond. At that moment another man appeared at the doorway. He said Edmond was holding a light bulb that did not need any electrical connections or visible power source. "How can this be ? questioned Edmond as wide-eyed as a baby. "It would take a while to answer." "Are you both from the future, or stage magicians, perhaps from another planet ?" Edmond exhausted his immediate explanations. "Am I possibly still asleep on the park bench to which I came to an hour ago, and this is all a dream to avoid a confrontation with Stanford White ?" "I don't think so", said the second man , lighting a sizable cigar. "Stanny" sent down a runner with your personal notebook and the news that he could not be at this meeting because his "adoring" wife Bessie gave him a surprise visit".

Suddenly Edmond realized what was going on. Stanford did not want him to leave before he had a chance to torture him in as many ways as possible. So he had to find an excellent reason to leave as quickly as possible. Tesla asked " Do you know who were talking to just now ?" "You" was the answer. "No, it was the famous writer Mark Twain". Then Edmond asked Twain ( just to test his loyalty to Tesla), "Name the greatest of all the inventors ?" Twain replied without a moment's hesitation, "Accident". And then all three began to laugh together in gusto. Tesla and Twain each took an arm of Edmond and pulled him over the threshold while saying "Welcome to "The Museum of The Future".