

1-15-1987

Mohawk

Charles Rampp

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rampp, Charles (1987) "*Mohawk*," *The Mythic Circle*: Vol. 1987 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle/vol1987/iss1/8>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the Mythopoeic Society at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Mythic Circle by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.

To join the Mythopoeic Society go to:
<http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm>



Mythcon 51: A VIRTUAL “HALFLING” MYTHCON

July 31 - August 1, 2021 (Saturday and Sunday)

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-51.htm>



Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>

comprising a jeweled spectrum; a bewildering conflux of gilded objets, trinkets and curiosities; at least five swords forged over sorcerers' flames and bedizened to the hilt; three alembics brimming with peach-flavored Elixir of Youth and two rare phials of tears, each certified as having been shed by his majesty's own tax collectors.

By now the king's royal wrath was beginning to get the better of him . . .

Just as the sun was bidding farewell to the final day, however, a breathless and disheveled youth burst into the throne room demanding an audience with the princess. Only in her fair countenance, the gasping suitor swore, could the most precious thing in the realm be revealed. Bored and wearied by the competition, the king consented, summoning his daughter by royal page.

The moment she appeared -- long before anyone could stop him -- the now miraculously refreshed paramour took the princess in his arms, tilted her backwards and made intimate, feverish contact with her exalted but wholly uninitiated lips.

"How dare you, knave! What is the meaning of this villainy?" the king thundered, but no one else in the chamber made a sound. For there, fired by the crimson arc of the sun's decline, anyone -- even a king -- could see the princess's blush softening into rose-colored ecstasy. A radiant smile slipped across her face and stayed there.

"I have brought you Love's First Kiss, Highness," the last contestant announced, boldly adding, "'Tis by far the most precious thing in your kingdom . . . or in anyone else's!"

The young swain's pluck, his exquisite cheek persuaded the king to make him his son-in-law in a trice. By sovereign decree.

But even more wondrous and unheard of, even more utterly fantastic is . . .

that as far as anyone knows . . . the princess continues to smile radiantly . . .

MOHAWK

by
Charles Rapp

"You could do me an even greater favor," the Indian said, between puffs on the borrowed pipe.

Karl slowly tightened the reel on the old casting rod, its tip upraised in a forked stick propped with small stones. Catfish hunting here on the river, he had expected a very quiet evening. He eased back more comfortably onto the old boat cushion. "Tell me about it," he said.

"After I finish this pipeful. Haven't had a good smoke in a couple of hundred years." The loin cloth with its front and back panels didn't look like it had been bought in a store. Sturdy was a good word to describe the young man, who looked like an Indian, said he was an Indian, and was wading in the river when first sighted by Karl.

He had gathered some bait, and on this third night of return home . . . with a week to go until that last year of college began, he had hugged his mother and told her was going fishing a couple of nights. He and his Dad, who was dead now for five years, had enjoyed the old Mohawk River together in many ways, many times. "Catfish-hunting," Dad had called it . . . the evening tight-line fishing along the stream, looking for the deep holes where the big cats were. Tomorrow, he would start out a little earlier, turn over rocks in the shallower places, get some helgramites and try for one of the channel cats. There was mystery in the appearance of this companion of his, and even more in his manner. Too long in the Rhineland, Karl thought. A year at Frankfurt and many other places -- and he had to admit that he was more than a little homesick for it. Philosophy for credit and learning, and then travelling, the legends, the stories, the places for learning and growth. But this is no Rhine maiden!

Who was he? Probably another college boy, home for a time, and playing at being mysterious. He looked out over the river, his river, he thought . . . growing up on the farm split by the river into two farms; it had always been there . . . he was glad, too, to be home.

"Where did you say this tobacco was from?" the question brought him back to reality or whatever this was.

"Virginia. It's Half and Half . . . all I ever smoked." The two lines were unchanged, neither slackening or jerking, so he cleaned the bowl of his corncob with a ten penny nail he always carried, and filled it. Always a good thing to have two corncobs in your pocket; when one got to biting a little, switch to the other. And you never could tell when a mysterious Indian would come along and ask for the loan of one of them.

"Vir...ginn...ah..." The stranger sighed. "People used to get it from there, but it's a long walk."

Karl lit his pipe, one match, even though there was a little breeze. He inhaled gently and let the smoke trickle out.

"You don't . . . don't thank the Spirit . . . the Grandfathers?"

"That's a Plains Indian ceremony . . . Black Elk."



"We did it, too." The words were a little stiff . . . cool.

"I never read any anthropologist who said so," Karl was thinking of getting the conversation around to the realities of the present.

"Try a rather thorough genocidal and in a few generations you Whiteys might not have enough TV sets left for the next wise men to study." He had relaxed into his formerly calm speech.

"What's the other favor you'd like?"

"You'll think you've gone crazy, but I'm going to ask you anyway."

"One of us might be crazy," Karl answered, ". . . I'm not so sure . . ." The line on one of the reels jerked hard, then again, and the rod slipped forward, knocking over the stones. He simply reeled for a moment, there was not much weight there; he was hoping the fish would throw the hook. But it didn't . . . He picked it up by the lighter underbelly, the fins carefully between his fingers on one side, and the thumb and finger on the other . . . the hook detached easily and he slipped it back into the water.

"That was nice," the Indian said. "Now what you can do is clean out that little stream bed over there . . . see where the creek comes in . . . just below the shadow of that tree." The almost full moon was providing a steady, soft light. "Follow it up, just a little way, and it ends in what used to be a spring. Then clean out the spring . . . it really won't be very difficult."

"Why?" asked Karl, enjoying the soft singing of the reel as he cast out far toward the other bank.

"A friend of mine lives there," the answer was gentle and quiet. "At least she will be a friend after you clean out the water course. She's been hidden under there for years."

"Now what?" he thought. "Continue to humor him . . . maybe he's escaped from some mental hospital . . . but there's none around here . . ."

"I know you like this river . . . it's important to you," he sat up, bent forward, his hands folded across his knees.

"Crazy, isn't it, my friend . . . I was thinking about doing that anyway, paper cups and beer cans . . . Our farm's up a little further, it's quite clear up there."

"I know."

"You never told me your name yet."

"Mohawk," he said simply. "I am the Mohawk . . . at least to you."

"Come on . . ." Karl found himself staring into the dark face. "You expect me to believe that?"

"I . . . am . . . here . . ." he spread his arms wide, and slowly stood, pointing with both hands, fingers together, both up and down the stream.

"You're crazy . . . you seem like a smart fellow . . . got quite a touch of wisdom about you . . . now knock off the charade, come back here in the daylight tomorrow and we'll clean out the stream and the spring, and maybe some more."

Turning his back, the Indian walked a few steps away, then slowly turned half around, facing the river. "I'm crazy? You've been with some wise men lately, by another river. Want to have a serious discussion about the transcendency of the Ding an sich? I would take the Kantian approach that it indeed does possess reality independent of any subjectivities of your mind or mine or any others."

"A Kantian Indian?"

"I know what you know . . . in a sense, you have created this part of me." He walked very quietly into the water; it reached his ankles, then his knees. "I will leave quietly so as not to disturb your fishing. But I'll probably see you again." He kept on walking, then reaching deeper water, struck out swimming down stream with an almost splashless stroke.

"I'll be here about eight in the morning . . . come back and work," he called, but the swimmer did not hesitate and, strongly, steadily, he swam on and soon was out of sight around the curve of the river.

But the next morning, Karl was back with a couple of garbage sacks, a shovel, and a pick. At the left edge of the little stream, on dry rocks, lay a small, broken piece of an arrowhead. It was wet and a few dark drops were plain on the grey, flat, dry rocks between it and the stream.

He thought about it only for a moment, then went to work. There really wasn't much to do . . . after picking up the trash, filling a bag and a half, the stream bed was overgrown with weeds, but he could follow the water back clearly. After digging a little, he was almost satisfied. It had been a good spring, but the digging muddied it a lot.

Early that evening he was back again, carrying an "idiot stick" along with his fishing gear. He whacked away at the weeds, and cleared the little stream bed somewhat, and noticed that the spring was now much clearer. Remembering the half arrowhead in his pocket, on an impulse, he took it out and placed it on a flat rock near the trickle of water.

"Strange," he thought. "A crazy fellow . . . some student, having some kind of prank . . . I guess he got me pretty well . . . Okay, score one for the Indians; they didn't win too many."

The sun was setting rapidly and, taking off his shoes but putting on an old pair of canvas ones, he waded out, turning over rocks. "He must have been crazy . . . you could step on glass and end the fishing for the night . . ." he thought. "Wouldn't want to do too much of that barefoot bit."

"How!" said a deep, resonant voice.

He half turned. "The joker's back again," he thought. Without looking up, he continued to turn stones. "How -- nothing . . . I know how, I cleaned it out. Where were you? A better question would be 'why?'"

"Me Indian . . . supposed to talk like that."

"Indians don't have a sense of humor, Tonto," he said. Now he looked up and his visitor of last night was standing, waist-deep in the river. "Try it in German."

"There aren't any German Indians." Karl continued to turn the rocks and came up with nothing. "Looking for thousand-legged catfish bait? On out a little."

Sure enough, here was one, then another; the next rock revealed three more . . . soon he had all he could use. "Thanks, Chief."

"Thank you, white man. Friend. And Hulda-ma-nee-tur-ah-pla liked the little arrow head . . . what you did with it. Thanks."

"How could you know about that?" he thought; but said, "Come on up . . . I bought you a new corn cob . . . have a smoke . . ." He held out the store-bought two-dollar "bargain."

"Toss it to me . . . Thanks again. Can't.

Have a date tonight." He caught the pipe and tucked it down under the water, apparently in his breech-clout.

"It'll get wet!"

"I'll ding its sich if it does."

"Who'd Hulda- whatever?"

"My wife now, the one I told you about.

She says thanks, too. But she's kind of shy. She's here now, hiding in the bushes . . . close your eyes so she can join me here."

'Might as well go along with it,' but Karl cheated a little and through the almost closed lids he saw dimly the running form of a naked woman, black hair, very long, reaching below her waist, then he squeezed his eyes tightly.

He heard splashing and a low, firm woman's laugh. More splashing and Mohawk's voice called, "Okay, now open your eyes."

He looked out and there were two heads showing, out in the deep water. An arm waved. "Thank you, Karl." A woman's voice.

'Might as well go along with the joke. Some people will really play an all-out game of trying to fool you. Wonder if there's any motivation besides a hoax?' He couldn't think of any.

"You peeked a little, didn't you? It's all right, I would have done the same." The voice was animated, happy, friendly. The woman laughed lightly, ducked her head and began to swim downstream.

His "friend" continued to tread water for a moment. "That was a spring that meant a lot to the people who used to live here, for many reasons I don't really care to tell you about. My wife and I have to meet someone tonight . . . she wants to talk with you. Full moon tomorrow night . . . be here."

"Your wife?" Karl shouted as the swimmer moved downstream rapidly. "You move fast."

The swimmer paused, the woman had almost reached the bend of the river but was still dimly in view. He cupped his hands, "Why not, I only waited a hundred and thirty years." And he followed in her wake, gaining rapidly with every stroke.

"Wonder what he's going to smoke in that pipe?" Karl said half aloud. "I've got to joke about it, or take it seriously . . . can't there be a third way?" he asked himself. But he didn't see any. Hallucinations are not like this, he told himself firmly. 'You've never had any mental troubles. Neither have you had much success at poetry. Not even very interesting dreams.'

He interrupted his thinking to haul in, over its strong protest, a fine big blue catfish, slim, streamlined . . . and just after hooking it, the fish had leaped like a bass, "standing on its tail" and then diving deep. His wirecutters snipped the big hook, and he backed out the broken piece . . . the upper lip was hardly damaged. But when he released it, it lay for several minutes in shallow enough water he could see it, half bent in a rainbow shape, then slowly moving away into the deeper water.

One had done that when he fished with Dad. He was only ten or so . . . and it seemed as exciting as then . . . this time tonight. He and his Dad had been really close . . . if there had ever been psychic "events" or strange things . . . it would have been there, he reasoned.

There had only been one dream. He dreamed that he had died . . . it was now about three or four years ago. And gone to heaven, he guessed. He was running through open fields, high, rather sparse grass to run through, lovely hills around, streams a stile or two to climb across; he ran for hours, days, years . . . it was beautiful . . . and

then he thought "Where's Dad?" And there he was, standing under a tree loaded with ripe pears. A friendly crowd of people had gathered some distance away. "We're going to make a farm here . . . putting up the barn first," Dad said in a perfectly normal voice. "Want to help?" And he did, and started to, but woke up immediately.

But that wasn't like this. He was wide-awake, still half-thinking it might be a hoax . . . but by whom or why, he had no idea. The third approach . . . that might be . . . Then he had another strike, but lost the fish immediately.

Does the mind construct, form, piece together . . . create reality outside itself? Of what raw material? To make stories, books, philosophies that had never been . . . The analogy was there with the raw materials of the world: stones were made into sarsens, pyramids, temples, paving stones, bridges, that never were before. Out of the raw materials of myth, legend, thought, hope, wish-fulfillment -- to create something that was yourself and yet not . . . like in a dream, which was made from the mind, not coming from somewhere else.

But suppose there was a "somewhere else?" Or "someone else" . . . or openings or cracks through which . . . or even suppose that there were other minds, beings, bodies, entities that lived differently than on carbon and oxygen . . . perhaps on sunlight and electrical energy or mysterious gravity?

There were no Indians the next night. He had brought his fishing rods, but they lay untouched. He had watched the placid water's surface, unmoving. There had been a few bugs . . . and once an owl had drifted down over the stream, directly in front of him before he saw it . . . so quiet it seemed to make the night even quieter, absorbing silence.

But it was gone. He heard the call of a killdeer from the fields behind him, on top of the banks. Unmistakeable. But he'd never heard it at night. Wonder if the owl had got a chick? Unlikely, very unlikely. What did the Europeans call them? Lapwings . . .

She came from behind him somewhere when the moon was fully risen . . . its light marking a path on the water. "May I join you, Karl?" A firm voice, a no-nonsense voice. British, but with more than a touch of Irish lilt. "I thought you might walk down the path of the moon on the water," he said lightly. "I left the cushion for you." He had placed it beside him. "You are welcome . . . Brunhilde."

"I am not Brunhilde." A lovely hand with long fingers almost touched his shoulder. "Your arm, Sir, that I may sit down." Her arm was covered with a rather long sleeve, ending in a frilly cuff half way to the elbow. She sat down easily, black shoes extended, a wide, very full skirt, and looking upward, more lace and frills, a white dress with tiny red roses, very long, perhaps seventeenth century . . . red hair, pulled severely back along the sides of her face, and perched on top of her head, a tiny, cup-cake-like white cap of frills and lace. The oval face was perfect as a pearl, but a tiny cloud of freckles moved as she smiled, half hidden in the second dimple.

"Since it is you that have created me, in this form at least . . . you should supply the name also."

"Eve . . ." he said softly ". . . or Lilith." She shook her head slightly, her nostrils seemed to widen ever so slightly.

"Then Bridget will do," he said evenly.



"Yes," she said. "Very nicely." She clasped her fingers in her lap, then opened her hands, smoothed the skirt.

"You didn't ride the horse . . . the white one with the silver bells."

"Not likely . . . not while wearing this . . ." Again she smoothed the skirt, and her right hand gestured from shoulder to knee with simple grace. "Do I look properly like the Bell of the Erie Canal? Do you like my dress?"

"Your taste is perfect."

"You can easily change it to whatever you like," she said, and that smile was back.

"Of course," he replied. And suddenly the dress was gone and she was sitting beside him in a wisp of white lace panties -- a scrap of a bra, but she barely had time to say "Oh!" and the dress was just as before.

Her lips were still in the round "o" as he said gently, "You have freckles on your knees."

"Yes." Her full lips thinned noticeably.

"Perhaps I'll change you into a slimy black salamander and let a fish eat you . . . slowly."

"I think not," he replied.

"It's a new experience to me . . . to live subject to others . . . or to not exist in your terms at all."

"You will always be the Queen."

"Strong, graceful-hearted men, wise and yet kindly . . . but with a will as strong as mine have been very rare."

"But they have been . . . and they will be . . . and one is," he replied. "A very grateful, honored one."

"It is new each time," she mused, fingers on her cheek now, forefinger just below her lower lip. "The springs do it . . . remember

the old times . . . Hera, Aphrodite, bathing in the special waters each year, renewing their virginity . . . a new beginning . . . total newness . . . rebirth."

"Let's try again on the clothes," he said, and looked away, then back. Blue jeans, a white sleeveless blouse, and canvas shoes . . . and she looked down and around, and felt the denim material.

"Interesting," she said.

"Now, you'll need a second name . . . something British . . . something royal . . . my university friend from Britain, who is doing post-doctorate work in the States this year . . ."

"Not Windsor . . . they're really late-comers . . . Idris . . . that will do nicely." She wet her lips. "Is my doctorate in astronomy?"

"I believe it's in ancient Celtic literature," Karl answered. "Now let's go meet my mother."

"Of course," her hand was warm in his as he helped her to her feet.

"Am I bound for nine years and a day?" she asked. "I really wouldn't mind at all."

"Nine minutes, nine hours, nine days or perhaps you would even like to remain with us." It was hard to keep his composure. In the flat shoes she was just a touch taller than he, the beauty was becoming more than he could master in cool, rational style.

She linked her arm in his. "I just might, at that." She leaned toward him, and her lips brushed his cheek, once, lightly, and drew back. "Will you . . . promise . . . to make life . . . interesting?"

"Let there be no doubt," he laughed gently, warmly. "Life is yours. Life is for us."