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## *The Good Folk*

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## EDITORIAL

Here we are, puffing right along, at Issue #3; learning as we go. One of the important things we learned is that the myth of infallibility on the part of editors is just that -- myth. For instance, I forgot to give Christine Lowentrout, my co-editor and good friend, credit for art on the cover of Issue #2. I also included in our first LOC column a letter not intended for publication, causing the second run of copies to be a 'Revised Edition' -- and then I still forgot to credit Christine for the cover! Brain dead in Altadena; report at 11:00.

Those of you who are fussy nitpickers will notice that although the cover reads "Summer 1987" we are now living in Fall of 1987. This is because the issue is LATE. It is late because we both have lives that contain elements other than Mythic Circle; Christine had to prepare to teach French at a private school and I had a concert and a band to rehearse. Our apologies to you folk who will read and write like crazy, trying to get your LOCs in before our November 15th (Fall Issue) deadline.

Regarding letters of comment, we love getting them and printing them and making weird little asides in response to them, but sometimes it's difficult to tell what is intended For Our Eyes Only (Sheena

Easton swells up in the background score) and what is intended for publication. The error last issue was a result of assumptions made from different starting positions and we'd like to not make that same mistake again (we like to make new and different mistakes whenever possible); THEREFORE, we ask you to make it easy on us: we will assume letters to either or both editors mailed to the P.O. Box in Altadena are intended for publication EXCEPT if you specify otherwise. You can make our lives exciting by alternating paragraphs, one for us and one for Mythic Circle -- just indicate the private paragraphs with DNQ (Do Not Quote) or some other recognizable warning (skull and crossbones?). We've been trying to query whenever we thought there was any uncertainty but the difficulties of mail, telephones, and deadlines conspire against even the best of intentions.

You will also note, if you're attentive, that there a couple of poems written by yours truly stuck in the middle of our poetry section. Christine and I decided that, what the heck, even if we are the editors, we can still contribute. The time you need to worry is when every third piece is by one of us...

Lynn Maudlin &  
Christine Lowentrout



## THE GOOD FOLK

by  
Paul J. Connelly

The sound exploded from the kitchen, such a cacophony of noise that I thought at first a car must have crashed into our house from the road on that side. Either that or the William's kid was home from college. Frankie really loved to crank up his stereo.

I leaped from the chair I usually sat in while reading, and made my way through the house. The lingering aroma of new wood entered my lungs, buoying me up. The sight of walls, ceilings, and floors recently painted greeted my eyes. And immaculate cleanliness lay everywhere.

We'd moved in just under a month ago. Our first house. We had previously rented after growing out of the apartment

stage, but though the last house had been quite nice, we'd started doing better, what with Molly landing a teaching position at the local college, and had finally decided it was time to own our home. A new home. And it was such a fine feeling. No more hand-me-downs. We had both fallen in love with the place on first sight.

A baker's dozen worth of pots and pans sprawled across the linoleum, doubtless just the first of many such gravity induced attacks upon its surface. Oh well, nothing lasts forever. Still, what had caused it? Molly wouldn't be home for another hour, visiting her mother, and I doubted that any thief would be so careless but who knows?

With that in mind I cautiously searched the rest of the house, room by room. Not only wasn't there anyone to be found, but neither was there anything missing. And the house remained locked, both front door and back, as did all of the windows. So what, I wondered, could have removed the pots and pans from the cupboard beneath the sink and spilled them across the floor?

For a moment I toyed with the idea Molly might be playing one of her practical jokes but a quick phone call to her mother's put that idea to rest. Molly had answered, readily accepting my explanation for the call: that I had misled her, and she promised not to be away much longer. So who had done it then? How had those pots and pans escaped their confinement to end up quite noisily on the kitchen floor?

I had no idea and, though I tried to come up with an answer, I soon resigned myself to the great likelihood that I would not discover one, at least not right away. And with that I returned to the living room and my reading.

Several days later there was a second disturbance. This one also took place in the kitchen. Molly's kitchen. God how she loved that kitchen. "Enough room for everything," she had said on first seeing it. Although her first love was art -- she taught a course in Modern Art History -- she enjoyed cooking as well, taking pride in a well prepared meal, and had always longed for her own kitchen.

It had been early morning, before we had risen, when a tapping as if on a window had come to us. Rushing somewhat once I had awakened, for the tapping was rather loud and sounded urgent, I went downstairs. Following the direction of the the sound, I entered the kitchen. And just like that the tapping stopped. Going over to the windows, I looked out, but there was nothing to be seen. For a moment I debated whether or not I should go outside, but figuring that whoever it was would most likely be gone by the time I got there, I decided against it. If it had really been important, wouldn't they have stayed after all and continued to tap until I had gotten there?

And so I went back upstairs, meeting Molly on her way down.

"Who was it, dear?" she asked, wiping the sleep out of her eyes with one hand.

"Kids, I guess," I said. "Playing some kind of prank."

"This early?" she said, a hint of worry about her now.

"Yeah, I know. Maybe it was the mailman then," I said, trying to erase that worry before it had time to really manifest itself. But in any case I did not believe it to be worth any concern on either of our parts.

"This early?" she repeated.

"I'm sure it was nothing, honey," I said then, meaning it fully. "Hey, since we're both up anyway, why don't I make us breakfast? You name it."

And with that it was forgotten.

Until the next disturbance.

This time it was the sink acting up. First there was no water when the taps were turned on. Then, while neither of us were near the sink, the water came on full blast, first cold then hot. When I checked underneath I couldn't find anything wrong. The plumber couldn't find anything either, though he was happy enough to take what I'm told is his usual fee. I'd hate to see what he considered more than usual. After he left, the sink, as if on cue, erupted full force.

The lights were next, off and on, for two days straight.



Then the stove began to light itself, all four burners, again and again.

Of course by then Molly was well aware of the odd goings-on. For the next few days we just kind of waited, wondering what would happen next. When the ceiling plaster began to fall, in dangerously large pieces, we considered, for the first time, selling the place. We would have, too, if we hadn't crossed paths with a rather remarkable fellow. That is, had he not sought us out, for one day there came a knocking at the front door.

"Yes, may I help you?" I said, answering the door.

He stood a little taller than myself, which put him at about five-seven, his hair was dark, curly and a little on the long side and I would have guessed his age to have been about forty.

"Well, I think you have that backwards, sir," he answered with a friendly smile. "It is I who was wondering if I might help you."

"Excuse me?" I asked in my most polite manner, afraid that he might be some sort of kook but wanting to give him a chance to explain himself.

"Who is it, dear?" Molly called from behind, having just come into the room.



"McManus, Tom McManus, Ma'am," the stranger answered before I'd had a chance to say anything.

"Well, Mr. McManus," I said, "what can we do for you?"

"As you wish, sir," he replied, smiling again. "It's about your, er, your problem," he said, the smile fading.

"What problem?" I asked, not knowing what he was talking about.

"It has started, hasn't it?" he asked, suddenly appearing puzzled, as if he might be mistaken but didn't think it likely. "The troubles?" he went on. "Strange things happening, weird noises, lights going off and on, things perhaps getting worse?"

Then it hit me. But how could he have known? How could anyone have known, unless he had somehow been responsible? There was only one way to find out, I decided.

And so it was a short time later that Molly and I were in our living room entertaining a man we had only met moments before.

"Pardon me," I said as Molly brought in coffee and tea, "But I have to ask right off how you know anything at all concerning our, all right, our problem? As far as I know there's no way that I am aware of that should enable anyone besides myself and Molly to know of its existence. Unless it's ESP. Could you clue us in?"

"Yes, of course, he said, accepting a cup of tea from Molly. "Thank you, my dear. I'm third generation Irish. Born and raised back east in a medium-sized town in central New Jersey by the name of Piscataway. It's an Indian name, which is kind of ironic in a way. Anyhow, I was taught a little about their ways by my grandfather while I was still a child and, like many things we learn or experience at such an early age, especially anything out of the ordinary, it's more or less stayed with me. Mind you, I don't remember everything, but I do recall enough to know that you do have a problem."

"Whose ways?" Molly asked, handing me a cup of coffee and then sitting down next to me.

"Well ... " he stared then stopped, and I half-expected to see him look about the room, at the windows, doors, and all to be sure he wasn't being overheard. Instead he merely hesitated a moment before continuing as if having decided that he should go on. "The good folk," he said then and smiled, in apparent anticipation of our reaction.

"Who?" I asked this time.

"The good folk. The fairy folk," he said and then erupted in laughter before either Molly or I had a chance to respond. "Yes that's what I said and that's exactly what I meant: the fairy folk. Quite naturally you think I'm cracked," he went on rapidly. "But whatever you think of me, that's not going to help you solve what's ailing this house. Sure you can sell it, but whoever buys it is going to have the same problem as you, only worse, as they grow more impatient."

"They' being the fairy folk?" I asked, looking over at Molly for her reaction which, surprisingly, was straight-faced. She couldn't be taking him seriously, could she?

"Yes, that's right," McManus went on. "They're a funny bunch. Don't take to any of us getting in their way."

"Excuse me," I said, turning back. "Getting in their way?"

"Well that's what you did," he said, sitting up and placing his empty tea cup on the coffee table before him. "By moving into this house."

"I don't understand," I said in understatement.

"Well, of course you had no way of knowing," McManus said consolingly. "Most people wouldn't. The only reason I know is because my grandfather taught me."

"I would say that you're losing me, but I've been lost from the first, I'm afraid," I gushed then, truthfully.

"I'm sorry. I'm not very good at explaining things," he said. "Let me try to do a little better. I do get somewhat nervous talking about them because, of course, no one believes in them. The fairy folk, I mean. Now although there has been a great deal written about them through the ages, and many tales passed down from generation to generation, only a little of all that is true. However, all that needs to be said about them here is that they are indeed real, although scarce. And they are more scarce here on the west coast than they are elsewhere. Mainly that has to do with the west coast being further from Europe, their homeland, than the rest of the country. You see, they came with the immigrants. They remained concentrated in the east however for various reasons, the main one being that they ran up against resistance not all that different from that which the immigrants met up with. The culture native to North America, you see, had their own equivalent of the good folk, and with the home court advantage, let us say, these 'natives' were stronger than the good folk and thus forced them to take up stakes in the east where their own numbers were less. In time, though, some slipped by as the native culture grew weaker as it was overwhelmed by that of the immigrants. Today there are small pockets of the good folk scattered across the whole of North America.

"The only other thing you need to know about them is that they have their paths. They are simply that, their paths, their trails, the ways they prefer to travel. To the unformed they are difficult to spot, but once you know what to look for ... " He broke off here and looked for a moment as if he were reminiscing.

"That was one of the things my grandfather showed me," he said then, continuing, "how to look for their trails. I've never actually seen any of the good folk but I know the signs to look for in order to determine if they are around. Any empty lot might hold such a byway, though it wouldn't look like one to us. A very slight bending of the grass, a strip of it, the bottom of a wire fence bent upward just a trace. These and any number of other normally unnoticed 'signs' can betray their presence.

"Anyhow," he went on, "the lot this house was built on had one of their paths, a popular one by the used look of it. Had and still has."

"And you're saying that this is the reason why our kitchen has become a setting straight out of the Twilight Zone?" Molly interrupted.

"Yes, but I wasn't aware that it was just your kitchen. I should have looked closer before, and then as they began construction, but in any case you are actually rather fortunate."

"Fortunate?" I broke in now. "How do you mean?"

"Well, the house could have had its center built over the path in which case it would eventually have had to come completely down."

"Oh, but we're, eh, fortunate. We just get to lose our kitchen," Molly said, and I could see the anger in her eyes. She really did love that kitchen.

"Less than that I would guess," McManus said, getting up and moving in the direction of the kitchen, with Molly and

myself right behind him. Turning to one corner, he looked back to the nearest window, and walking over to the window stuck his head out and remained in that position for a good two or three minutes.

"Yes," he said then, pulling his head back in. "I was right. It shouldn't be too bad at all."

"What shouldn't be too bad?" I asked, my patience about run out.

"Forgive me," he said, turning to both of us. "I really have to try to explain things better. This corner of your house was built over the path and I believe if it were removed, to about here," he traced a line with his foot along the linoleum, "your problem would be solved."

"Are you serious?" I asked. "You really expect us to cut off a corner of our house because of this story of yours?"

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you," McManus said then, backing up towards the front door. "It's true, of course, for all you know I could be just another crazy running around without very much working right upstairs, or some kind of prankster. On the other hand, do you have any other explanation for what has taken place in your kitchen? Or, for that matter, how I could have known anything at all concerning this problem of yours?"

"Oh, I don't know," I said after a moment, realizing that I was grasping at straws, trying to fight what seemed a very crazy notion, but with nothing to attack it. "So what do you want to do, Molly?" I asked, having no answers myself.

"Would it really be such a terribly insane thing, to cut out this corner?" she asked. "You know how much we both really love the house. Shouldn't we try whatever it takes to keep it?"

She was right. I would like to know that we had done everything we could to keep the place, even something a bit crazy no matter what the chances might be of its succeeding. It was after all, the first place we'd owned, not rented, but owned. "If that's what you want Molly. But," I added, "what if the troubles continue?"

"Oh but they won't," McManus said, and went on before I could answer. "But to ease your mind, and because it was my idea, I will, if I am wrong, come up with the money it cost to have both the corner cut off and then put back on. You

see, I really do know what I am talking about."

And so, although I swore to myself it was crazy, I agreed.

The outfit that had built the house was only too happy for more business. And despite the expected few odd stares, they quickly got to work and did, I feel, a quite fair job. Indeed, looking at the house now, one would never think that the corner had been eliminated after the house had been completed. On Molly's suggestion we had them put in a window there and, all in all, it came off rather well, I think. The result was that the house had acquired one of those distinctive features more common on older buildings. Yes, it was expensive, but in the end we very happily turned down McManus's offer, or rather, he was never in the position of having to make good on his offer, for sure enough, the trouble stopped as soon as the construction work did.

For myself, I will never tell another living soul the real reason for the missing corner. I can barely bring myself to believe it yet. As for the cause of all our trouble, I will only say that whatever was behind it has gone now. Never, oh never, will I be able to accept the idea of the existence of the good folk, of fairies. McManus, in the meantime, has become a close friend to both Molly and myself. On his frequent visits he will converse on practically any subject but likes most of all to tell about his grandfather and the good folk. And it isn't at all unusual for him, during the course of one of his visits, to take several trips into the kitchen where he will peer out that new window where the corner used to be, especially at night.

I have never seen them myself of course, nor to tell the truth, their path, though McManus is always only too happy to point it out. I have noticed, however, that the garden on the side of the house near the kitchen has grown beyond all our expectations, and that the rose bushes we planted along the front of the house, except for the path area, tend to blossom weeks earlier than the rest of the roses in town. I wouldn't suggest that there was any connection, of course; suffice it to say that everyone seems quite happy now with the way things have turned out.

## ARCHIE'S GAME

by  
Peter Dean

I often wonder if one of the requirements to be a grandfather is to be a good storyteller. If so, I had a perfect grandfather--he told great stories.

Evenings at my grandparents' always ended with three generations of family soaking up the New England evening from the back porch. It was such a peaceful moment. Satiated with Grandma's fine dinner, everyone was content to idly dream and listen to the

noises of the neighborhood. The adults soon drifted into light conversation while my brother and I preferred to scan the small, wooded area behind the house, searching for squirrels and rabbits and other wild creatures. Grandpa remained aloof, resting silently in his chair and watching his grandchildren watching the woods.

"Come here, boys," he eventually called to us. "I have another story for you." Even