

# CON

by Ambrose Fierce

## The Legend of Egon Pardenhasseler, Part III

When Egon Pardenhasseler got back home, panting, he lurched over to his *Random House* and knew positively that he had forgotten half the words and smirking allusions he had wanted to look up, and, in the following hour of feverish recollection, he forgot all of them. He threw open references at random, seeking some clue to the lost ciphers, but slammed his thick books again when he realized that instead he was on the brink of learning something *new*, something he would have to chain in his memory by force of increasingly flaccid will, something he knew would elude him, in time, certainly, inevitably. The truth came to him that he could remember anything unless he particularly wanted to. He sobbed.

Each day brought him new knowledge of his ignorances. No matter how quickly he drove home after conversations with students and colleagues he would forget most of what he had forgotten. Occasionally he was able to scribble the once-known word on a scrap of paper, but this was risky and suspicious: he might just as well come right out and ask, just break into the discussion, twitch the veil cloaking his immense ignorance, and *inquire*.

And clearly, that was right out of the question.

"Dr. Pardenhasseler," one of his students would say, "can you tell me..." And usually Egon couldn't and would have to temporize.

"Say, Egon," one of his colleagues would say, "what do you know about..." And often it was very little, and that little, garbled. He would marshal his reply, survey his facts and their ordering, and spot huge gaps. His replies were necessarily vague and noncommittal, to avoid making an outright *mistake*.

The ogre visited him nearly every night. When his friends and students were not unwittingly torturing him with questions, his ogre had him on the rack of things once known.

"I don't know!" Egon wailed, quailing back from the beast.

"Know your own name?" the thing shrieked in demonic fury.

Every time the ogre lunged, Egon woke; every time, however, the terrible teeth came closer to his throat, around which the sodden sheets were becoming knotted more tightly every morning. Egon could no longer simply get out of bed; he had first to fight free of his wildly snarled bedding. This could take half an hour.

He gulped tranquilizers during the day, and swilled coffee at night to keep him awake as long as possible. He interlarded his meal schedule with a succession of huge snacks, tall drinks, and meth-amphetamine tablets. He dozed during talks in the common room and in the faculty club, exhausted from the night before whether he had slept or

not. His eyes were badly bloodshot and had below them big pouches of purplish-grey. He trembled. He was not well. His heavy head nodded, and he would catch the witching echo of something familiar, but only the echo.

"Prithee, why so pale and wan, Egon?" His chairman swam before him, in duplicate, triplicate, now coalesced and clearly defined, now a blurred swarm. "Egon? Eh? Glutting your sorrow on a rose? Eh? Take a rest, kid. You look moribund."

"Egon did. Once home, he gave his dictionary a wistful glance but did not look up *floribunda*; he knew it was something repellent.

He lay in bed all week, not really sleeping and not thoroughly awake. He managed to keep the ogre at bay and drifted, quietly, in the ambient feeling of having forgotten. When he remembered to, he worried about keeping up in his field, about patching up the gaps in his eroding memory, and so forth. If he tried to remember things he simply could not; if he let himself drift mindlessly along, then a carnival of words appeared, answers to questions unasked and responses to situations unconforted: *tabid* swam up to him, as *gig geotic*, *szygy*, *tachycardia*, *fermy*, *palindrome*

and *ctenizid*. Strange animals loped across his brain — big glyptodons, megatheria, rock hyraxes, dikdiks, pangolins, sassabies, and kudus. All manner of words percolated up from his subconscious like skeletons bubbling to the surface of the LaBrea tar pits — words which, in certain previous situations, he would have plunged his arm to the shoulder in hot tar to retrieve. Of course, these words, his tools, his very *life*, would sink from sight again when next he needed them. "*Floscular*," he whispered, blinking tears from his mild eyes.

Full Professor Grade II with three books and seventeen published articles to his credit Gordon Ortolan was planning a Hallowe'en party. Egon debated attending it. He could hardly cart his entire reference library around with him but anything short of that would leave him dumb. God damn. His quirk of memory had changed him into a sort of marginal librarian, the legwork between whimsical question and imperative answer. The fact remained, however, that he might as well be dead if he continued to brood in bed, steeping himself in vague forgetfulness.

In the costume shop he assessed clowns and pirates, fuzzy beasts and ballerinas, eighteenth century dandies and cavemen, witches and warlocks and fanged horrors which turned his guts to ice, gorillas, Hare Kirshna-ites, and so forth, but he saw nothing he especially liked until the man brought out a super-fop, a bright and blazing Mexican — to be precise, Zapata.

To Be Continued ...

## Vigilantes needed for night watch

A campus night watch squad is being formed to patrol the U of A and prevent sexual assault. The group is being set up under the auspices of the university's Sexual Assault Committee.

The force is to be made up of students patrolling campus in pairs of two, one male and one female, with walkie talkies, flashlights and distinctive arm-bands. The committee hopes they will discourage vandalism and other petty crime, as well as fulfill their stated task.

The groups is expected to be in operation within 10 to 14 days. Students will be hired on a part-time basis of one to three nights a week.

Contact university personnel immediately if interested.

## Bishops University Scholarship Exchange Program

- an english liberal arts university in lennoxville, quebec
  - scholarship includes remission of tuition and fees at bishops
- qualifications:
- must have completed one year of a 3 or 4 year degree
  - must return to u of a for final year
  - be a full time undergraduate student
  - a canadian student or landed immigrant

applications are available - the student awards office, 219 CAB.

application deadline - March 1, 1977

for more information contact the student awards office or the student union vice-pres. academic at 432-4236 or in room 259D of SUB.



STUDENTS' UNION  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

## HOUSING REGISTRY DIRECTOR

Wanted

**Duties** - To co-ordinate, manage and publicize the Students' Union Housing Registry.

**Salary** - Part-time for April and May. \$750/month for June, July, August and September.

**Qualifications** - Experience in administration and public relations preferred.

For more information contact Eileen Gillese, Vice-President, Finance and Administration, Room 259 SUB. Phone 432-4236.

Applications available from Receptionist, General Office, Room 256, Students' Union Building.



STUDENTS' UNION  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

## CKSR DIRECTOR



required

**Duties** - Responsible for the complete functioning of the CKSR Radio Station including programming, equipment and budgeting.

**Honorarium** - \$200/month.

**Qualifications** - Experience in radio/television and management.

For more information contact Jan Grude, Vice-President, Services, Room 259, SUB. Phone 432-4236.

Applications available from Receptionist, General Office, Room 256, Students' Union Building.



STUDENTS' UNION  
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## CHIEF RETURNING OFFICER

Wanted

**Duties** - Responsible for the organization and operation of all Students' Union Elections and referenda.

**Salary** - Approximately \$5.00/hour to a maximum of \$1,000 per year.

**Qualifications** - Ability to organize and co-ordinate people and materials. Must be available on a part-time basis throughout the year, especially January and February.

For more information contact Eileen Gillese, Vice-President, Finance and Administration, Room 259 SUB. Phone 432-4236.

Applications available from Receptionist, General Office, Room 256, Students' Union Building.