

A TALL TALE

By D. A. Long

Bill Taylor sat on the front step of his suburban Toronto home, gazing up into the delightfully clear blue spring sky, feeling the early May sun warm his face and body.

He toyed with the idea of pulling a lawn chair out into the sun and bringing his books and notes out with him. It was downright annoying that his philosophy exam had to come the next day, when he had no desire to study anything now except the backs of his eyelids.

The rest of his family was away at church, he should have gone too, but he had rationalized his absence by arguing that he was going to do some hard studying.

But the books could wait a couple of minutes!

He opened his eyes at the sound of someone clearing their throat.

"Young man, uh, excuse me, but I was wondering if I might talk with you a minute?"

The elderly lady that stood before him was dressed in rather sombre clothes and holding open a magazine (newspaper?) with a picture of a faded rose at the top of the page.

"I was wondering," she continued, "if you knew that a very interesting scientific discovery had been made to the effect that rose petals contain quite a large amount of protein and are quite edible? As a matter of fact, this article contains quite a bit of information about other plants and plant parts being edible and good for you." She backed up the last statement by practically thrusting the page into his face.

"Uh, that's very interesting, but..." Bill managed to blurt before he was carried away into further pages of insight by his visitor.

"Yes, God has given us many things that we have not yet learned about, not only in the material but the spiritual sense..."

"Here it comes!" thought Bill... and there are many articles in this magazine that would be of great benefit to each one of us. Yes, there is a great wealth of information here and I'm sure that you would be most willing to spend 10 cents in order to find out about it, wouldn't you?"

Bill reached into his pocket for the dime, thinking only of the sun that was going to waste while he, out of politeness, was forced to listen to her. But the dime had only crossed part of the space between the two of them when an idea occurred to him.

"Mam, I'm certainly glad that you came along just now." The coin he placed in her outstretched palm. "I'm suffering from a very contagious disease that destroys the body gradually. I'm but a shell of my former self (how corny can I get?) I must get as much protein into me as possible to stave off the disease for just a little while longer!"

The little old lady shrank back involuntarily, but immediately caught herself and placed a hand, trembling slightly, on his shoulder.

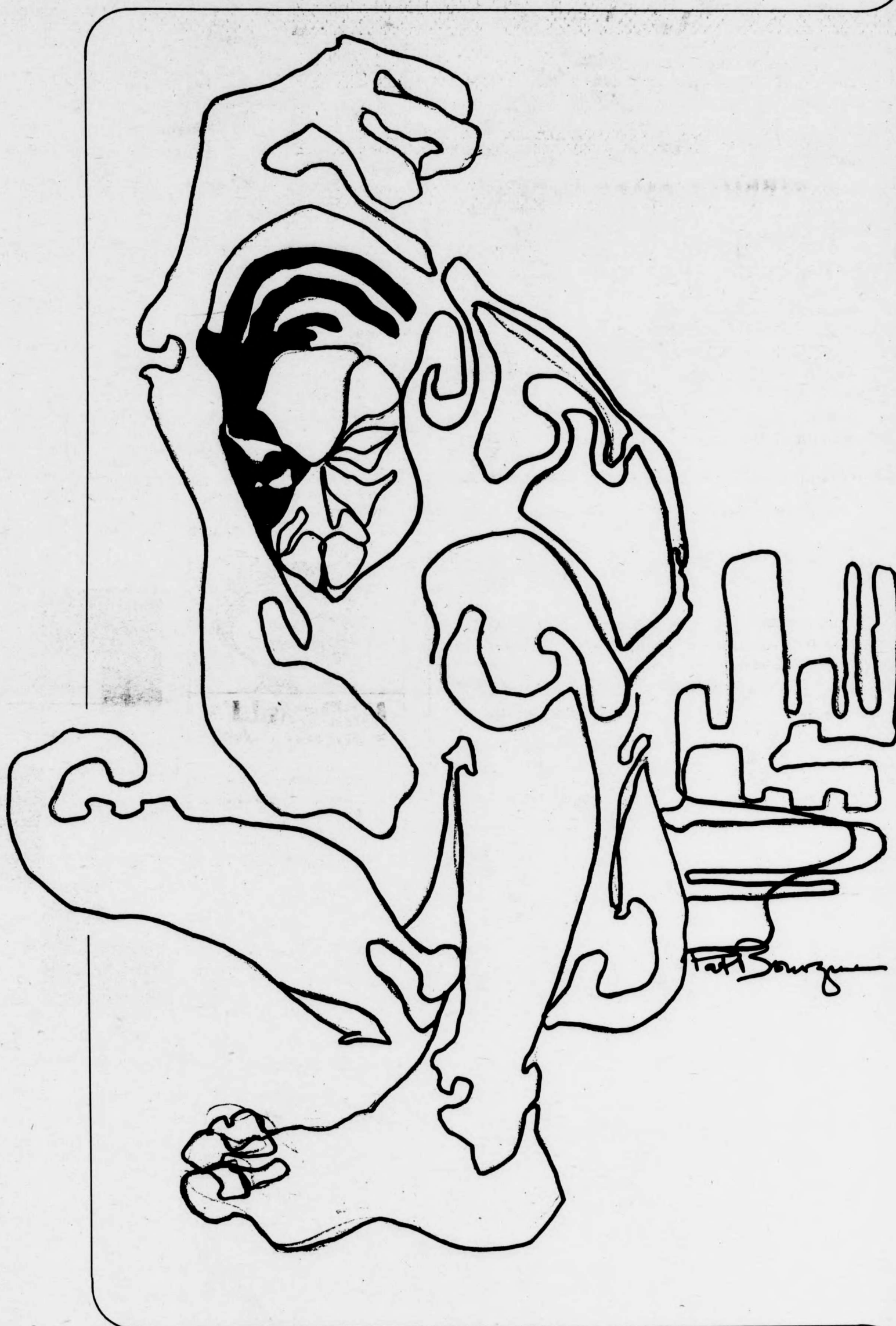
"Believe in God, young man, and your ills will be cured."

"Oh Mam, I believe, I really do believe," he said, sinking to his knees before her, his eyes looking up into hers and his clasped hands upraised.

"Rise up and praise the Lord. Pray that your supplication will be heard."

"Oh he must be listening, I can feel my body growing inside me, I can feel my strength returning..." he said as he got to his feet and squared his shoulders.

Inwardly chuckling to himself, Bill watched her sink to her knees.



...only she was still standing... she was shrinking!

"What the hell!" he blurted as he turned his head back towards the house, only to find that it was the eavestrough that he was looking at—and touching with his nose. Broke the trough, too!

As a piece of it clattered to the sidewalk, he turned the other way, reached out, and caught the top of the 18-foot high pine tree on his lawn as it whizzed toward the ground.

A scream from far below turned his attention to the rather tiny

figure that raced into the street, bringing at least two cars to screeching... dinky toys?

"What in the name of God is going on", he half mumbled to himself. There wasn't anyone else to listen to him at that height.

Far below, as the Taylor house was being smashed by Bill's ever-growing feet, of the thunder-like rumble that was Bill's mumble, only the word God was heard, the rest being drowned out by the crashing and groaning of a collapsed house, caved-in street, and spouting sewer system.

* * *
Aerial photographs that were taken of the destroyed city showed graphic evidence of the great quake that resulted from whatever act of providence made the colossal body of Bill Taylor fall, dead, into the city. Maybe he wasn't dead when he fell, but the great fire that erupted after his fall would probably have finished him off anyway. Nobody really wanted to find out, not after seeing pictures of the gigantic figures etched into the forehead of the body—GOD IS NOT DEAD!