I

Out of the shuttered and scabrous North West, from the laboratories of Ironiq, Acme Division (of course), comes Bean-Man and his sidekick Baz, a metasyntactic variable[1] made flesh, sort-of. Both had emerged, unplanned, from the fabricators where a passing bird, carrying a feather, had turned the serendipity dial up to eleven. They had immediately made their excuses and left, heading South South South.

Behind Bean-Man trails the suggestion, the merest and mildest bouquet (as one would say) of tomato ketchup. So that, if he passed, someone might say, 'has someone spilt ketchup here?'. Being Bean-Man is not easy, he is somewhat amorphous, lacks a useful level of rigidity and sheds a bean or two here and there. As many blasphemous constructed creatures before him, he is half-finished since his (at one or two removes, at least) creators are also all too human, imperfect beings. Indeed, he is the product of a manufactory of which the oversight could, generously be described as somewhat less than very slightly nugatory.

But what, you ask, of Baz, his sidekick? Let's see. Ironiq is aptly named, for Baz with his (as yet) immaterial companions Foo and Bar are programming variables that traditionally should have been birthed and weaned before him. Foo, Bar and then Baz, everyone knows that, don't they? Also, as such, it (for it is not a he or a she) is formless or, better, Protean. Baz can be a scalar, a matrix, a tensor, an irrational number or something that may just contain the literal 'Fuck!'. So its size and shape are in the tradition of H. P. Lovecraft, formless and colourless though somehow present, also.

But there is tragedy here, since the fabricators have played a cruel trick on Baz and given it Love, mainly as a breadth first heuristic, aggressively pruning search algo. The object of Love is, of course, (look on my works you pizza-eaters, mangeurs de pizza, mes semblables, mes freres) Titi, a French metasyntactic variable and occasional value store of Toto (MOVE TOTO TO TITI, Oh COBOL how we miss you in all your glorious divisions, please Grace[2] (haha) us with your presence again soon).

So, in some respects, this is a sad and unrequited tale, as they are. However, our two chums are moving steadily South towards the conurbations rather than North towards the ice-flows upon which, in another similar tales, they would howl and freeze. So, perhaps there is hope.

II

Back in Ironiq, things are fraught. The crow lies dead in between the control surfaces of the fabricators. The feather blew away, some time ago. The dials marked Serendipity, Size, Material, Modular (a big hipster word for symmetry and translation relations) and Gift-Bag are turned back down. Everything hums, an electric cathedral.

In front of all this are two youngish men with lumberjack shirts and well groomed beards impregnated with essential oils (question for the reader, why are some oils essential?). One is called Quentin and the other, his brother, is called Tara-Something, since his mother had a very short attention span, a modern mum.
'I did not,' says Quentin.
'Oh yes you did,' says Tara-Something.
'Besides, that is the Eternity Bird lying there'.
'I did not'
'Well, something did'.

---

1   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metasyntactic_variable
2   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Hopper

They calm down, somewhat and examine the rolls of paper spread along the pristine floor.

'Wow,' says Tara-Something.
'That is beyond weird,' says Quentin, 'but also rather cool'. He fluffs reflectively at his beard and looks around for a micro-brewery or, at least, a vanity mirror.
'You realise we're going to have to tell them?'
'And we're going to have to look for our new friends and' he pauses here and twirls a non-imaginary neo-Victorian moustache, '*put them back*'.
'In spite of autonomy, ethics, volition etc.?'
'We, or rather Ironiq, own them, they are things. Albeit rather lively things'.

The metaphorical sky darkens, an invisible organist plinks a minor and a couple of rather unattractive extended diminisheds.

III

As above, so below[3]. Or rather, as one brother, so the other. So it will not come as a surprise that Bean-Man was programmed for something-like-love, **as well**. However species boundaries must be respected, even if the species are invented. So, Dear Reader, you needn't hold your breath any longer, for Bean-Man is in 'love' with Sausage-Lady.

I know, I know, you may hold up your hands in horror oh you of these bourgeois and highly normative sexual and aesthetic frameworks. But, in a nice summer dress and a spot of lippy Sausage-Lady is a fine figure of a woman. Any Bean person would be very glad to make her his own, though her Sausageism would tend to militate for some independence. A couple of nights on the gatt per month with the other Sausage girls, at the very least and her own bank account. Bean-Man does not necessarily know all this, but stacked in the neurones of Beantuition (TM and intellectual property reserved by Ironiq), stimulated by oxycitin analogues, there it was. Bean-Man loves Sausage-Lady, kiss, kiss.

His companion, Baz, infected with the virtual bad habits of eons of programmers, ventured a comment.
'You know, Bean-Man, that *Bean-Man loves Sausage-Lady* does not imply *Sausage-Lady loves Bean-Man*. It's not that kind of predicate[4], that is the logic of the thing'.
A couple of smallish, tear-shaped beans dripped from Bean-Man's reddish eyes. Then, he turned and said, 'Of course, that will apply to TITI and your good self, as well'.
'I know,' said Baz, very sadly, 'I know'.

IV

Alas! I am sorry for this Alas!, Dear Reader, put it down to too much Nietzsche on an empty stomach. However, Alas! The world is full of more trouble than we know, perhaps than we *can* know know, though I hope not.

For Sausage-Lady, who was hiding out in the conurbations amongst the flesh-people, the unsynthesised, ridiculous squishy pinkies, where everyone is much the same had fallen in love with (wait for it, I said wait) the Egg-Man. Cou-cu-ca-chou, you might well say, thus revealing your advanced age and somewhat doubtful taste in music. But Bean-Man, heading South, looking for the love of his life is already betrayed. Hence, Alas!

---

3   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald_Tablet
4   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-order_logic

You may also, at this stage wish to make cruel jokes with a theme of Eggs, Beans and Sausage, but I pray you, do not. Do not go there. Because the world itself may be preparing to. Alas!

V

Meanwhile, back at Ironiq, the boys are in trouble, anyway. They are explaining themselves to their bosses and sinking deeper. Close up, with tracking[5], let's see.

'It's not my fault', said Tara-Something and for emphasis, 'Ce n'est pas de ma faute'. There was a little burbling at the other end.
'What?', said Quentin.
'Wait', said Tara-Something, 'They're talking to their bosses in Tokyo, I think. They are saying something about cleaning. Why are they thinking about that? No, it's not cleaning, it's cleaning up. Ah, either we clean up or they clean us up, not good choices'.

Yep, they're in trouble. However, although they are a little self-obsessed, stupid and beardy, at least Tara-Something has read a little Robert Sheckley[6] (q you really must v, you must). So.

'So', said Tara-Something, 'what we need is a specific predator, or, in our case, two specific predators, one for Bean-Man and one for Baz. So the question is, what predates each of them?'

Quentin, thought for a moment, or, at least, gave a good impression of doing so.
'Ah,' he said 'a big can. Bean-Man would see it and feel the urge to jump in it. Then we would reseal the lid. Job done.'
'No,' said Tara-Something, after a moment 'because we'd have to chase along. Unless we made Can-Man, the man who can. But, in that case, he might be distracted by peas, spam and (pace Fray Bentos) meat pie. Can-Man is too generic, too super-set-y. But you're going in the right direction'.
'Ah,' he continued, 'how about toast? Bean-Man would see the toast and jump on it.'
'But cheese would also jump on it, as would marmalade, cod-roe and eggs and other toast-philic items. Beside, we need to work with existing, ontological promiscuity has betrayed us.'

'Also' said Quentin, 'these solutions preserve Bean-Man. The bosses said clean-up. I'm not sure that they want to preserve. I know, we need Breakfast-Geezer, he will clean this up, real good, as they say'.

'But,' said Tara-Something, 'he's a monster of minimal ratiocination and unbridled appetite. There is no reasoning with him'.
'Them or us' said Quentin.

VI

And so, within the gloomy, Gothic confines of the Acme division of Ironiq, they descend to a dank, dark and seldom visited level. There, in a side room, there is a sepulchre with a transparent hood, the kind of thing used in the tombs of dead megalomaniacs. As they approach they can hear snuffling, snoring and belching noises. Cries of 'Bucket, quick, too late' too.

They advance somewhat cautiously closer and make a preliinary inspection. The figure is, in many ways, unprepossessing, short and bollard-like, dressed in a pair of cargo pants, a t-shirt that is

---

5   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Brunner_(author)
6   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Sheckley

stained with flecks of yellow and red and a hi-viz that has seen much, much better days. There is a red face and a bulging belly that reaches almost to the top of the transparent lid.

'OK', says Quentin, and spins some dials on the side of the sepulchre, 'Let's not even think about this, otherwise we won't do it'.

Tara-Something is caught in an abstraction of thundering Biblical prose and flying bullets, the ripples of Nominative Determinism. Let's note that he and Quentin are Eliots, so he could be T-S Eliot as opposed to T.S. Eliot in which case he might dream of the Four Quartets. But I digress.

The lid clicks open and the man, for it is (just about) a man, opens his slitty and puffy eyes and looks around. He shakes his head, as if to clear it from some unappealing dream.
'Bucket' he says.
'We are sorry to wake you', begins Quention
'Food, then bucket' he says.
You may be thinking, Dear Reader, that he is not far from Mr. Creosote? You would be right. Breakfast-Geezer's DNA was partly modeled from the (unpublished) book of the film. Monuments and documents, as Foucault might say. And Professor B.[7] worries about AI and paperclips. There is worse, so much worse. There is a (pregnant, if I were a more cliché ridden storyteller) pause.
'What do you pinkies want?' he asks.

'We'd like you to look for someone' says Quention, rather bravely, 'a nice snack at the end of it for you too'. Before he remembers the food and bucket, they show him the print out from the Genesis of Bean-Man or G. B-M as they now call it. Acronyms sooth the heart of the wounded hipster.

VII

But what of Sausage-Lady and Egg-Man, I hear you ask? Alas (no, no, we cannot go through **that** again) they are not doing so well.

Egg-Man lives in an upstairs room with a broken window, above a yard. In the yard, there is a) dust b) a very fierce dog called Zarathustra c) a dingy called Anne. Anne is propped up with bits of wood and has not seen any water for decades. Zarathustra hates all boats, they are the wrong shape and imbued with a timid slave-morality[8], so he barks at Anne, daring her to float away. The dust forms little whirlwinds in the corners of the yard, Zarathustra barks at those too.

Egg-Man has a headache or, at least, a yolk ache from all the barking. He has fallen low, consuming ketchup and worse, the hard stuff, brown sauce. His, previously pristine, white of pristine white speckled with red, brown and grease. He has found a working Dansette in a skip somewhere and it plays 'When You're Down and Out' (Davy Graham, perhaps bootlegged in Les Cousins in the late sixties? Not Clapton) on repeat. He has fallen low.

In his fancy, he is an artist now and paints smeary pictures on pieces of wood from the yard. The portray, himself and Zarathustra in a re-equipped and splendiferous Anne, sailing away to Egginton. He is the captain and Zarathustra is the bosun with a nice hat, with holes to accommodate his ears.

Sausage-Lady, of whom more later, visits him but does not like to stay, because he is so depressed, the room is depressed and the yard is depressing. Also, she suspects, from the wolf-like slavering and baying that Zarathustra may have an unhealthy (for her) relationship to anything or anyone of Sausagey aspect.

---

7   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Bostrom
8   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master%E2%80%93slave_morality

Here she is, she peers over his shoulder at his latest painting.

'Very nice,' she says, damning with faint praise. 'But cannot I come on this journey too? With a saucy sailors hat saying 'Kiss Me' (she flutters her sausagey eyelids here) and perhaps a complete sailor's outfit like a Japanese schoolgirl?' Hoping, at least, this last, mild perversity will stimulate his comatose libido.

'Alas,' said Egg-Man, 'this is a journey to Egglington and a Sausage, even one so fine as you, would not be welcome'.

'What about the damn dog then?' She muttered, under her breath. 'Never mind my Egg-Man, just say the words that will always melt my would-be heart'.

'Cou-cu-ca-chou,' he breathes, despondently.

'You are the Egg-Man,' she says with a sad and loving smile. A single tear drips down onto the painting, ruining the badge on Zarathustra's nautical cap. So it now says B SUN. Night falls on the yard, Zarathustra barks at Anne.