

VU

laying its anathema on all moist things. Francis labored on in spite of the heat.

When the traveler had washed down the last of his sandy bread and cheese with a few squirts from his waterskin, he slipped feet into sandals, arose with a grunt, and hobbled through the ruins toward the site of the novice's labors. Noticing the old man's approach, Brother Francis scurried to a safe distance. Mockingly, the pilgrim brandished his spiked cudgel at him, but seemed more curious about the youth's masonry than he seemed eager for revenge. He paused to inspect the novice's burrow.

There, near the east boundary of the ruins, Brother Francis had dug a shallow trench, using a stick for a hoe and hands for a shovel. He had, on the first day of Lent, roofed it over with a heap of brush, and used the trench by night as refuge from the desert's wolves. But as the days of his fasting grew in number, his presence had increased his spoor in the vicinity until the nocturnal lupine prowlers seemed unduly attracted to the area of the ruins and even scratched around his brush heap when the fire was gone.

Francis had first attempted to discourage their nightly digging by increasing the thickness of the brush pile over his trench, and by surrounding it with a ring of stones set tightly in a furrow. But on the previous night, something had leaped to the top of his brush pile and howled while Francis lay shivering below, whereupon he had determined to fortify the burrow, and, using the first ring of stones as a foundation, had begun to build a wall. The wall tilted inward as it grew; but since the enclosure was roughly an oval in shape, the stones in each new layer crowded against adjacent stones to prevent an inward collapse. Brother Francis now hoped that by a careful selection of rocks and a certain amount of juggling, dirt-tamping, and pebble-wedging, he would be able to complete a dome. And, a single span of unbuttressed arch, somehow defying gravity, stood there over the burrow as a token of this ambition. Brother Francis yelped like a puppy when the pilgrim rapped curiously at this arch with his staff.

So curious for his abode, the novice had drawn nearer during the pilgrim's inspection. The pilgrim answered his yelp with a

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from his sleeve. The pilgrim had become fastening a band from the Archdeacon, for a moment, in the somewhat staid and of the novice.

The surprise took on the faces of Lockness and the other pilgrims produced no immediate supernatural results, but the result seemed to be a near *explosion*. The pilgrim-Belzebub failed to explode into sulphurous smoke, but he made gurgling sounds, turned a bright shade of red, and litged at Francis with a bloodcurdling yell. The novice kept tripping on the music as he fled from hailing of the pilgrim's soaked staff, and he escaped without a fall, only because the pilgrim had forgotten his sandals. The old man's limping gait became a happy hop. He scented suddenly a number of searching ticks under his bare soles. He stopped and became preoccupied. When Brother Francis advanced his shoulder, he gained the direct impression that the pilgrim retreat to the cool spot was being accomplished by the form of hopping along on the tip of the great toe.

Ashamed of the poor or worse, he lingered on his fingertips, and repining he heaved an exorcism, the novice took back to his self-appointed hours in the old man's, while the pilgrim cooled his feet and satisfied his wish by flinging occasional rock at the youth. Whenever the latter moved into view among the rubble mounds, when his thin and worn grey beard and hair more leints than stones, and nearly gnawed at his beard and cease when Francis ceased to charge.

The novice was wondering to and fro throughout the ruins, occasionally staggering toward a corner of his work with a rock, the size of his own great toe, in a painful embrace. The pilgrim watched him select a stone, estimate its dimensions in hand-spans, reject it and carefully select another to be piled free from the rock and the rubble, to be heaved by Francis and unobtrusively pass away. He stopped one stone after a few paces, suddenly sitting down. His hand between his feet in an apparent effort to avoid falling. After panting awhile, he arose in and finished by rolling the stone end-over-end toward its destination. He continued to act in this manner, no longer pausing to gaze at the pile of stones upon the paved land.



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