

1964

## Mark and the Maybe Men

J. Pilaar

*Western Michigan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope>



Part of the Creative Writing Commons

### Recommended Citation

Pilaar, J. (1964) "Mark and the Maybe Men," *Calliope (1954-2001)*: Vol. 11 , Article 16.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol11/iss1/16>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the English at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Calliope (1954-2001) by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).

# Mark and the Maybe Men

J. PILAAR

The once renowned Latin Scholar, Mark Joyly McCoy, who had turned to newer languages and even future languages with the teaching of the Caterpillar, was deadly bored. He had taken a week or two and devoted himself to reading the bulk of popular science, even including his friend Prof. Mobius A. Fizzle's work: *Problems of Non-Orbital Rocketry* (known among scientists under the title: *What Goes Up, Too Often Comes Down*; the cubes even went as far as to shorten the title to *Bang!*, but that is neither up nor down). All in vain. The Caterpillar and Mark were in Furthest Blank, a typical meeting place for thinkers, and it was here that Mark expressed himself, "I just can't get that interested in the moon, Mars, Venus, and such simply solar beginnings; ah, for the Centauris, Eridani, or far flaming Sirius! After all, living in Lunaray Metropolis, one grows accustomed to the unusual and weary of these duller aspects of Sol Center." He took a large swig of hooch-plus!, his own invention for the relief of such moments, with the incidental benefit of conferring immortality upon those able to *not* use it while drag racing to Pluto. Somehow, paradise still seemed far away.

The Caterpillar drew himself to full height and leaned upon the massive darkly carved chair which he never sat in, this being for visitors which Mark had never seen. "The Three may help," he said . . . "there is the saying:

God for the poet, Drummer for the Free,  
The ones who like the games of thought  
Will often speak with me."

The five legs on the dark throne beat out a pattern, a bar or two or three of Sousa's *El Capitan* crashed, and the Drummer appeared with a clap of his huge bat wings which he carefully folded against his back as he stood looking mournfully at the Summoners.

Far away a Joy was played on the oldest of lutes, and as the high notes of the syrinx laughed in syncopation with the Drummer, from the shadows God came, walking to a dance tune with cloven hooves clicking on the marble. On the chair of Memory he sat, the

Caterpillar at left, the Drummer to right, and listened for a moment to the past and dreams and might-have beens of Mark. "There was that phrase of the Maybe Men which haunts my mind," he said, "Quilting the Qald of threedee and endee to Vazee where seekers shall find."

God it was, the oldest of folk-singers, who remembered the stanza as thus:

"The Maybe Men in Terra time  
Built starships when allowed,  
And sailed dark seas to Vazee  
Amid the middle-flash."

The Three said as one: "Change . . ."

Lunaray Metropolis (that proud city which had once been better known as Moonshine Corner) dissolved after a sudden starflash where it seemed an almost final paradise. Questions broke on the shore of ignorance, and fear fled the sun of doubt; empires marched and went mad as phantasms, the marble hall where Mark and the Three stood seemed to shake and yet grow dusty. The shaking might have been laughter, but Mark was thinking of other things. The Three said, "Here are two to companion," and from the undusted shadows stepped the Spectator and Sir Simon (as Simon Sanka was known after his analysis of the Purple Dragon of Treeness). Suddenly Change slowed to notice, and the phantasms were real and the Hall of the Three not only unreal but indiscernible.

A city in brown and silver was before them, and a sign proclaimed its name to be Laris Vorna. The ship which towered beyond was clearly a starship, its name in space-dark on the pale gold hull being *Draken Sul Vorna*, and 'dragon soul forty-nine' they thought to be a not unfitting name for such splendor.

On a flashing sambur, one of the Maybe Men dashed to their side and dismounted, "I am Makin Alniss, and my companion is of the name Lovely Logic," he introduced himself and sambur. The sambur bowed while playing in the rainbows which gleamed about the Spectator of late. They took the way to Laris Vorna by the tangled path, the obstacles which the sambur had jumped providing an occasional interest to the conversing walkers. Sir Simon asked about the starship's destinations and the lore of its building.

"It was Raelix Navorna who brought us to the high dream of quilting the qald," said Makin, "there are the five Raelines who take interest in the pattern-play of legendry: Vorna, Twlsavor, Vornar, Satwlvor, and Navorna, but it was Navorna who took the greatest interest in the old dream of Vazee, where all knowledge is to be found, and only the questions need be asked."

"Have they figured out the best questions to ask?" said the irrepressible Spectator.

Makin Alniss looked at him curiously. "That should be obvious," he said with puzzlement. "Even the rats in the walls would know." "Oh," said the Spectator. "It just escaped me for a moment."

In Laris Vorna, when they arrived, the rats were exceedingly busy. Their small shining metallic shapes were scurrying not only the walls but virtually everywhere, at the taskings set by old command and new need. Groups of the Maybe Men dressed in brown, green, and gold were walking about or riding the samburs at a happy pace. The companions from an older age of Sol Center entered the tallest of the city towers, which stood silver in a most unusual garden. Plants and flowing water and quiet pools were to be found throughout the city of Laris Vorna.

Here Raelix Navorna came forth to meet them, the three metallic tentacles at his sides making a gesture of welcome. Softly they were invited to dinner, and their immediate acceptance bespoke the hunger which world-wandering can give any dreamer. The Raeline calmed them with jokes and limericks; one which struck memory was one about Friendly Fawk the Fifth, (there never was a fourth), Director of Dorgle Destruction—who gave a simple course Designed to Discourage Berwocky; the Berwock was too cocky . . . But it came to a Total Myth. Mark told him some of the doings of Paul Friendly Fawk, later called Fawk Fifth the Frabjious, who kept subtracting the first word from his name and adding another to the end, usually because the first name fell into disrepute (there was too much spelling of Paul as pall, to suit Friendly Fawk V, and it used to be a method to promotion from positions as sub-director of sub-dorgle sub-destruction, if a name was found which the Big Boss of D3 would accept).

The talk turned to legends of Vazee, and all the talk which the Three of the marble Hall had spread before they went somewhere else . . . they had gone to Vazee themselves, some said, but it was unsure.

Then they went star-voyaging, and Raelix Navorna was Everwatch-Master:

"The rats in the walls guide the bat through the bramble,  
And scramble to red when the cat's in the halls."

From threedee to endee they quilted the qald, and the old song echoed:

"By a knight of ghosts and shadows  
I summoned am to tourney  
Ten leagues beyond the wide world's end,  
Methinks it is no journey."

They have not come back yet.

