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Title: Something Will Turn Up

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Release date: January 7, 2008 [eBook #24189]

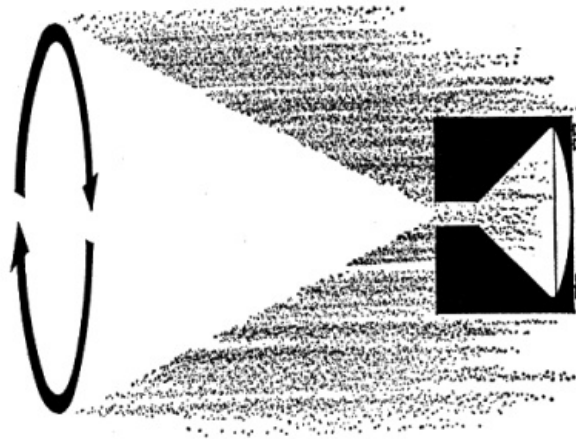
Language: English

Credits: Produced by Greg Weeks, Geetu Melwani and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

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Something Will Turn Up

Err ... maybe it had to do with this being a non-Parity universe, perhaps?
Some things can't be simply inverted, after all....

by

David Mason

Illustrated by Brotman

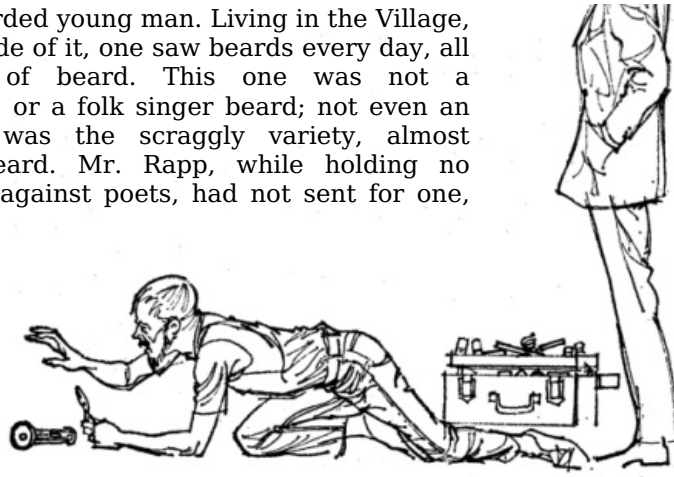
"You, Mr. Rapp?"

Stanley Rapp blinked, considering the matter. He always thought over everything very carefully. Of course, some questions were easier to answer than others. This one, for instance. He had very few doubts about his name.

"Uh," Stanley Rapp said. "Yes. Yes."



He stared at the bearded young man. Living in the Village, even on the better side of it, one saw beards every day, all shapes and sizes of beard. This one was not a psychoanalyst beard, or a folk singer beard; not even an actor beard. This was the scraggly variety, almost certainly a poet beard. Mr. Rapp, while holding no particular prejudice against poets, had not sent for one, he was sure of that.



Then he noticed the toolbox in the bearded young man's hand, lettered large LIGHTNING SERVICE, TV, HI-FI.

"Oh," Stanley said, nodding. "You're the man to fix the TV set."

"You know it, Dad," the young man said, coming in. He shut the door behind him, and stared around the apartment. "What a wild pad. Where the idiot box, hey?"

The pleasantly furnished, neat little apartment was not what Mr. Rapp had ever thought of as a "wild pad." But the Village had odd standards, Mr. Rapp knew. Chacun a son gout, he had said, on moving into the apartment ten years ago. Not aloud, of course, because he had only taken one year of French, and would never have trusted his accent. But chacun a son gout, anyway.

"The television set," Mr. Rapp said, translating. "Oh, yes." He went to the closet door and opened it. Reaching inside, he brought out an imposingly large TV set, mounted on a wheeled table. The bearded repairman whistled.

"In the closet," the repairman said, admiringly. "Crazy. You go in there to watch it, or you let it talk to itself?"

"Oh. Well, I don't exactly watch it at all," Mr. Rapp said, a little sadly. "I mean, I can't. That's why I called you."

"Lightning's here, have no fear," the bearded one said, approaching the set with a professional air. "Like, in the closet, hey." He bent over the set, appraisingly. "I thought you were a square, Pops, but I can see you're.... Hey, this is like too much. Man, I don't want to pry, but why is this box upside down?"

"I wish I knew," Mr. Rapp said. He sat down, and leaned back, sighing. This was going to be difficult, he knew. He had already had to explain it to the last three repairmen, and he was getting tired of explaining. Although he thought, somehow, that this young man might understand it a little more quickly than the others had.

"I've had a couple of other repairmen look it over," Mr. Rapp told the bearded one. "They ... well, they gave up."

"Dilettantes," commented the beard.

"Oh, no," Mr. Rapp said. "One of them was from the company that made it. But they couldn't do anything."

"Let's try it," the repairman said, plugging the cord into a wall socket. He returned to the set, and switched it on, without changing its upside down position. The big screen lit almost at once; a pained face appeared, with a large silhouetted hammer striking the image's forehead in a rhythmic beat.

"... Immediate relief from headache," a bland voice said, as the pictured face broke into a broad smile. The repairman shuddered, and turned down the sound, staring at the image with widened eyes as he did so.

"Dad, I don't want to bug you," the repairman said, his eyes still on the screen, "only, look. The set is upside down, right?"

"Right," said Mr. Rapp.

"Only the picture—" the repairman paused, trying to find the right phrase. "I mean, the picture's flipped. Like, it's wrong side up, too. Only, right side up, now."

"Exactly," said Mr. Rapp. "You see, that's the trouble. I put the set upside down because of that."

"Cool," the repairman said, watching the picture. "I mean, so why worry? You got a picture, right? You want me to turn the picture around? I can do that with a little fiddling around inside the set ... uh-oh. Dad, something's happening."

The repairman bent closer, staring at the picture. It was now showing a busty young woman singer, her mouth opened, but silent, since the sound was turned down. She was slowly rotating as Rapp and the bearded repairman watched, turning until her face, still mouthing silent song, hung upside down on the screen.

"It always does that," Rapp said. "No matter which way I put the set, the picture's always upside down."

"No, man," the repairman said, pleadingly. "Look, I took a course. I mean, the best school, you dig? It don't work that way. It just can't."

"It does, though," Rapp pointed out. "And that's what the other repair people said, too. They took it out, and brought it back, and it still did it. Not when they had it in their shops, but the minute it came back here, the picture went upside down again."

"Wow," the repairman said, backing slowly away from the set, but watching it with the tense gaze of a man who expected trouble. After a minute he moved toward it again, and took hold of the cabinet sides, lifting.

"I don't want to put you down, Pops," he said, grunting. "Only, I got to see this. Over she goes." He set it down again, right side up. The picture, still the singer's face, remained in a relatively upright position for another moment, and then slowly rolled over, upside down again.

"You see," Mr. Rapp said, shrugging. "I guess I'll have to buy another set. Except I'd hate to have it happen again, and this one did cost quite a lot."

"You couldn't trade it in, either," the repairman agreed. "Not to me, anyway." Suddenly he snapped his fingers. "Hey now. Sideways?"

"You mean on its side?"

"Just for kicks..." the repairman gripped the set again. "On the side..." He set the cabinet down, on one side, and stepped back, to regard the picture again.

Slowly, the picture turned once more, and once again, relative to the usual directions of up and down, the picture was stubbornly, completely inverted.

"It's onto that, too," the repairman said, gloomily. He sat down on the floor, and assumed a kind of Yoga posture, peering between his legs. "You could try it this way, Pops."

"I'm pretty stiff," Mr. Rapp told him, shaking his head.

"Yeah," the repairman said, reinverting himself. For a long while he sat, pulling his beard thoughtfully, a look of deep thought on his face. The reversed singer faded out, to give place to an earnestly grinning announcer who pointed emphatically to a large, upside down sign bearing the name of a product.

"Watching it this way could get to be a fad," the repairman said, at last, almost inaudibly. He fell silent again, and Mr. Rapp, sadly, began to realize that even this bearded and confident young man had apparently been stopped, like the others.

"The way I look at it, like, there's a place where science hangs up," the bearded one spoke, finally.

"Like, I don't want to put down my old Guru at the Second Avenue School of Electronics," he added, solemnly. "But you got to admit that there are things not dreamed of in your philosophy, Horatio. You dig?"

"My name isn't Horatio," Mr. Rapp objected.

"I was quoting," the repairman told him. "I mean, this is a thing like, outside material means. Supernatural, sort of. Did you cross up any witches lately, Pops?"

"Oh, dear," Mr. Rapp said sadly. He shook his head. "No, I haven't ... er, offended any witches. Not that I know of." He regarded the inverted picture for a moment. Then, as the repairman's words began to sink in, Mr. Rapp looked at him apprehensively.

"Witches?" Mr. Rapp asked. "But ... I mean, that's all superstition, isn't it? And anyway ... well, television sets!"

"They used to dry up cows, but who keeps cows?" the bearded one said ominously. "Why not television sets? Like, I happen to be personally acquainted with several witches and like that. The Village is full of them. However—" He rose, and stalked toward the set, his eyes glittering in a peculiar way. "You're a lucky one, Daddyo. Back in my square days, I did some reading up on the hookups between poetry and magic. Now, I'm a poet. Therefore, and to wit, I'm also a magician. On this hangup, I'm going to try magic. Electronics won't work, that's for sure."

"But..." Mr. Rapp was not quite sure why he disapproved, but he did. On the other hand, the

repairman appeared to be very definitely sure of what he was doing, as he peered into the back of the television set.

"Have you ever tried ... ah, this method before?"

"Never ran into any hexed TV sets before," the repairman said, straightening up. "Don't worry, though. I got the touch, like with poetry. Same thing, in fact. All magic spells rhyme, see? Well, I used to rhyme, back before I really started swinging. Anybody can rhyme. And the rest is just instinct."

He had been scribbling something on a notepad, as he spoke. Now he bent down, to take another look at the back of the set, and nodded with an air of assurance.

"The tube layout," the repairman told Mr. Rapp, exhibiting his notebook. "That, and Ohm's Law, and a couple of Hindu bits I picked up listening to the UN on the radio ... makes a first-class spell."

Mr. Rapp backed away, nervously. "Look, if it's all the same to you...."

"Don't flip." The repairman consulted his notebook, and moved to stand in front of the screen. The picture showed a smiling newscaster, pointing to a map which indicated something ominous.

"Cool, man," the repairman said. "Here we go." He lifted his hands in an ecclesiastical gesture, and his voice became a deep boom.

"6SN7, 6ac5, six and seven millivolts are running down the line, E equals R times A, that's the way it goes, go round the other way, Subhas Chandra BOSE!"

Afterward, Mr. Rapp was never quite sure exactly what happened. He had an impression of a flash of light, and an odd, indefinite sound rather like the dropping of a cosmic garbage can lid. But possibly neither the light nor the sound actually happened; at any rate, there were no complaints from the neighbors later on. However, the lighted screen was certainly doing something.

"Crazy!" the repairman said, in awed tones.

Mr. Rapp, his view partly blocked by the repairman, could not see exactly what was happening on the screen. However, he caught a brief glimpse of the newscaster's face. It was right side up, but no longer smiling. Instead, the pictured face wore a look of profound alarm, and the newsman was apparently leaning far forward, his face almost out of focus because of its nearness to the lens. Just for a moment, Mr. Rapp could have sworn he saw a chair floating *up*, past the agonized expression on the screen.

Then the screen went gray, and a panel of lettering appeared, shaking slightly.

OUR PICTURE HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY INTERRUPTED. NORMAL SERVICE WILL BE RESTORED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. PLEASE STAND BY.

"I was going to give you a bill," the repairman said. "Only maybe we better just charge it up to customer relations."

The letters remained steady on the screen, and Mr. Rapp studied them. They were right side up.

"You fixed it," Mr. Rapp said, a little uncertainly. "I mean, it's working. I ought to pay...."

"I goofed," the repairman said. He picked up his tools, and moved toward the door. "Like, I won't mention it to anybody if you won't. But I goofed, all right. Didn't you see the picture?"

"But whatever you did ... it worked," Mr. Rapp said. "The picture's right side up."

"I know," the repairman said. "Only somewhere ... there's a studio that's upside down. I just goofed, Pops, that's all."

He closed the door behind him, leaving Mr. Rapp still staring at the immobile, right-side-up message on the glowing screen.

The End.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SOMETHING WILL TURN UP ***

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