

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Shipping Clerk, by Joseph Samachson

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Shipping Clerk

Author: Joseph Samachson
Illustrator: Ed Emshwiller

Release date: December 30, 2015 [EBook #50796]

Language: English

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

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SHIPPING CLERK ***



Shipping Clerk

By WILLIAM MORRISON

**[Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from
Galaxy Science Fiction June 1952.
Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that
the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]**

***If Ollie knew the work he was doing, he would
have resigned—if resigning were possible!***

If there had ever been a time when Ollie Keith hadn't been hungry, it was so far in the past that he couldn't remember it. He was hungry now as he walked through the alley, his eyes shifting lusterlessly from one heap of rubbish to the next. He was hungry through and through, all one hundred and forty pounds of him, the flesh distributed so gauntly over his tall frame that in spots it seemed about to wear through, as his clothes had. That it hadn't done so in forty-two years sometimes struck Ollie as in the nature of a miracle.

He worked for a junk collector and he was unsuccessful in his present job, as he had been at everything else. Ollie had followed the first part of the rags-to-riches formula with classic exactness. He had been born to rags, and then, as if that hadn't been enough, his parents had died, and he had been left an orphan. He should have gone to the big city, found a job in the rich merchant's counting house, and saved the pretty daughter, acquiring her and her fortune in the process.

It hadn't worked out that way. In the orphanage where he had spent so many unhappy years, both his food and his education had been skimped. He had later been hired out to a farmer, but he hadn't been strong enough for farm labor, and he had been sent back.

His life since then had followed an unhappy pattern. Lacking strength and skill, he had been unable to find and hold a good job. Without a good job, he had been unable to pay for the food and medical care, and for the training he would have needed to acquire strength and skill. Once, in the search for food and training, he had offered himself to the Army, but the doctors who examined him had quickly turned thumbs down, and the Army had rejected him with contempt. They wanted better human material than that.

How he had managed to survive at all to the present was another miracle. By this time, of course, he knew, as the radio comic put it, that he wasn't long for this world. And to make the passage to another world even easier, he had taken to drink. Rot gut stilled the pangs of hunger even more effectively than inadequate food did. And it gave him the first moments of happiness, spurious though they were, that he could remember.

Now, as he sought through the heaps of rubbish for usable rags or redeemable milk bottles, his eyes lighted on something unexpected. Right at the edge of the curb lay a small nut, species indeterminate. If he had his usual luck, it would turn out to be withered inside, but at least he could hope for the best.

He picked up the nut, banged it futilely against the ground, and then looked around for a rock with which to crack it. None was in sight. Rather fearfully, he put it in his mouth and tried to crack it between his teeth. His teeth were in as poor condition as the rest of him, and the chances were that they would crack before the nut did.

The nut slipped and Ollie gurgled, threw his hands into the air and almost choked. Then he got it out of his windpipe and, a second later, breathed easily. The nut was in his stomach, still uncracked. And Ollie, it seemed to him, was hungrier than ever.

The alley was a failure. His life had been a progression from rags to rags, and these last rags were inferior to the first. There were no milk bottles, there was no junk worth salvaging.

At the end of the alley was a barber shop, and here Ollie had a great and unexpected stroke of luck. He found a bottle. The bottle was no container for milk and it wasn't empty. It was standing on a small table near an open window in the rear of the barber shop. Ollie found that he could get it by simply stretching out his long, gaunt arm for it, without climbing in through the window at all.

He took a long swig, and then another. The liquor tasted far better than anything he had ever bought.

When he returned the bottle to its place, it was empty.

Strangely enough, despite its excellent quality, or perhaps, he thought, *because* of it, the whiskey failed to have its usual effect on him. It left him completely sober and clear-eyed, but hungrier than ever.

In his desperation, Ollie did something that he seldom dared to do. He went into a restaurant, not too good a restaurant or he would never have been allowed to take a seat, and ordered a meal he couldn't pay for.

He knew what would happen, of course, after he had eaten. He would put on an act about having lost his money, but that wouldn't fool the manager for more than one second. If the man was feeling good and needed help, he'd let Ollie work the price out washing dishes. If he was a little

grumpy and had all the dishwashers he needed, he'd have them boot the tar out of Ollie and then turn him over to the police.

The soup was thick and tasty, although tasty in a way that no gourmet would have appreciated. The mess was food, however, and Ollie gulped it down gratefully. But it did nothing to satisfy his hunger. Likewise, the stew had every possible leftover thrown into it, and none of it gave Ollie any feeling of satisfaction. Even the dessert and the muddy coffee left him as empty as before.

The waiter had been in the back room with the cook. Now Ollie saw him signal to the manager, and watched the manager hasten back. He closed his eyes. They were onto him; there was no doubt about it. For a moment he considered trying to get out of the front door before they closed in, but there was another waiter present, keeping an eye on the patrons, and he knew that he would never make it. He took a deep breath and waited for the roof to fall in on him.

He heard the manager's foot-steps and opened his eyes. The manager said, "Uh—look, bud, about that meal you ate—"

"Not bad," observed Ollie brightly.

"Glad you liked it."

He noticed little beads of sweat on the manager's forehead, and wondered what had put them there. He said, "Only trouble is, it ain't fillin'. I'm just as hungry as I was before."

"It didn't fill you up, huh? That's too bad. I'll tell you what I'll do. Rather than see you go away dissatisfied, I won't charge you for the meal. Not a cent."

Ollie blinked. This made no sense whatever. All the same, if not for the gnawing in his stomach, he would have picked himself up and run. As it was, he said, "Thanks. Guess in that case I'll have another order of stew. Maybe this time it'll stick to my ribs."

"Not the stew," replied the manager nervously. "You had the last that was left. Try the roast beef."

"Hmm, that's more than I was gonna spend."

"No charge," said the manager. "For you, no charge at all."

"Then gimme a double order. I feel starved."

The double order went down the hatch, yet Ollie felt just as empty as ever. But he was afraid to press his luck too far, and after he had downed one more dessert—also without charge—he reluctantly picked himself up and walked out. He was too hungry to spend any more time wondering why he had got a free meal.

In the back room of the restaurant, the manager sank weakly into a chair. "I was afraid he was going to insist on paying for it. Then we'd really have been on a spot."

"Guess he was too glad to get it for free," the cook said.

"Well, if anything happens to him now, it'll happen away from here."

"Suppose they take a look at what's in his stomach."

"He still won't be able to sue us. What did you do with the rest of that stew?"

"It's in the garbage."

"Cover it up. We don't want dead cats and dogs all over the place. And next time you reach for the salt, make sure there isn't an insect powder label on it."

"It was an accident; it could happen to anybody," said the cook philosophically. "You know, maybe we shouldn't have let that guy go away. Maybe we ought to have sent him to a doctor."

"And pay his bills? Don't be a sap. From now on, he's on his own. Whatever happens to him, we don't know anything about it. We never saw him before."

The only thing that was happening to Ollie was that he was getting hungrier and hungrier. He had, in fact, never before been so ravenous. He felt as if he hadn't eaten in years.

He had met with two strokes of luck—the accessible bottle and the incredibly generous manager. They had left him just as hungry and thirsty as before. Now he encountered a third gift of fortune. On the plate glass window of a restaurant was the flamboyant announcement: eating contest tonight at monte's restaurant! For the Championship of the World! Entries Being Taken now! No Charge if you Eat Enough for at Least Three People.

Ollie's face brightened. The way he felt, he could have eaten enough for a hundred. The fact that the contestants, as he saw upon reading further, would be limited to hard-boiled eggs made no difference to him. For once he would have a chance to eat everything he could get down his yawning gullet.

That night it was clear that neither the judges nor the audience thought much of Ollie as an eater. Hungry he undoubtedly was, but it was obvious that his stomach had shrunk from years of disuse, and besides, he didn't have the build of a born eater. He was long and skinny, whereas the other contestants seemed almost as broad and wide as they were tall. In gaining weight, as in so many other things, the motto seemed to be that those who already had would get more. Ollie

had too little to start with.

In order to keep the contest from developing an anticlimax, they started with Ollie, believing that he would be lucky if he ate ten eggs.

Ollie was so ravenous that he found it difficult to control himself, and he made a bad impression by gulping the first egg as fast as he could. A real eater would have let the egg slide down rapidly yet gently, without making an obvious effort. This uncontrolled, amateur speed, thought the judges, could only lead to a stomachache.

Ollie devoured the second egg, the third, the fourth, and the rest of his allotted ten. At that point, one of the judges asked, "How do you feel?"

"Hungry."

"Stomach hurt?"

"Only from hunger. It feels like it got nothin' in it. Somehow, them eggs don't fill me up."

Somebody in the audience laughed. The judges exchanged glances and ordered more eggs brought on. From the crowd of watchers, cries of encouragement came to Ollie. At this stage, there was still nobody who thought that he had a chance.

Ollie proceeded to go through twenty eggs, forty, sixty, a hundred. By that time, the judges and the crowd were in a state of unprecedented excitement.

Again a judge demanded, "How do you feel?"

"Still hungry. They don't fill me up at all."

"But those are large eggs. Do you know how much a hundred of them weigh? Over fifteen pounds!"

"I don't care how much they weigh. I'm still hungry."

"Do you mind if we weigh you?"

"So long as you don't stop givin' me eggs, okay."

They brought out a scale and Ollie stepped on it. He weighed one hundred and thirty-nine pounds, on the nose.

Then he started eating eggs again. At the end of his second hundred, they weighed him once more. Ollie weighed one hundred thirty-eight and three-quarters.

The judges stared at each other and then at Ollie. For a moment the entire audience sat in awed silence, as if watching a miracle. Then the mood of awe passed.

One of the judges said wisely, "He palms them and slips them to a confederate."

"Out here on the stage?" demanded another judge. "Where's his confederate? Besides, you can see for yourself that he eats them. You can watch them going down his throat."

"But that's impossible. If they really went down his throat, he'd gain weight."

"I don't know how he does it," admitted the other. "But he does."

"The man is a freak. Let's get some doctors over here."

Ollie ate another hundred and forty-three eggs, and then had to stop because the restaurant ran out of them. The other contestants never even had a chance to get started.

When the doctor came and they told him the story, his first impulse seemed to be to grin. He knew a practical joke when he heard one. But they put Ollie on the scales—by this time he weighed only a hundred thirty-eight and a quarter pounds—and fed him a two pound loaf of bread. Then they weighed him again.

He was an even one hundred and thirty-eight.

"At this rate, he'll starve to death," said the doctor, who opened his little black bag and proceeded to give Ollie a thorough examination.

Ollie was very unhappy about it because it interfered with his eating, and he felt more hungry than ever. But they promised to feed him afterward and, more or less unwillingly, he submitted.

"Bad teeth, enlarged heart, lesion on each lung, flat feet, hernia, displaced vertebrae—you name it and he has it," said the doctor. "Where the devil did he come from?"

Ollie was working on an order of roast beef and was too busy to reply.

Somebody said, "He's a rag-picker. I've seen him around."

"When did he start this eating spree?"

With stuffed mouth, Ollie mumbled, "Today."

"Today, eh? What happened today that makes you able to eat so much?"

"I just feel hungry."

"I can see that. Look, how about going over to the hospital so we can really examine you?"

"No, sir," said Ollie. "You ain't pokin' no needles into me."

"No needles," agreed the doctor hastily. If there was no other way to get blood samples, they could always drug him with morphine and he'd never know what had happened. "We'll just look at you. And we'll feed you all you can eat."

"All I can eat? It's a deal!"

The humor was crude, but it put the point across—the photographer assigned to the contest had snapped a picture of Ollie in the middle of gulping two eggs. One was traveling down his gullet, causing a lump in his throat, and the other was being stuffed into his mouth at the same time. The caption writer had entitled the shot: the man who broke the icebox at monte's, and the column alongside was headed, Eats Three Hundred and Forty-three Eggs. "I'm Hungry!" He Says. Zolto put the paper down. "This is the one," he said to his wife. "There can be no doubt that this person has found it."

"I knew it was no longer in the alley," said Pojim. Ordinarily a comely female, she was now deep in thought, and succeeded in looking beautiful and pensive at the same time. "How are we to get it back without exciting unwelcome attention?"

"Frankly," said Zolto, "I don't know. But we'd better think of a way. He must have mistaken it for a nut and swallowed it. Undoubtedly the hospital attendants will take X-rays of him and discover it."

"They won't know what it is."

"They will operate to remove it, and then they will find out."

Pojim nodded. "What I don't understand," she said, "is why it had this effect. When we lost it, it was locked."

"He must have opened it by accident. Some of these creatures, I have noticed, have a habit of trying to crack nuts with their teeth. He must have bitten on the proper switch."

"The one for inanimate matter? I think, Zolto, that you're right. The stomach contents are collapsed and passed into our universe through the transfer. But the stomach itself, being part of a living creature, cannot pass through the same switch. And the poor creature continually loses weight because of metabolism. Especially, of course, when he eats."

"Poor creature, you call him? You're too soft-hearted, Pojim. What do you think we'll be if we don't get the transfer back?"

He hunched up his shoulders and laughed.

Pojim said, "Control yourself, Zolto. When you laugh, you don't look human, and you certainly don't sound it."

"What difference does it make? We're alone."

"You can never tell when we'll be overheard."

"Don't change the subject. What are we supposed to do about the transfer?"

"We'll think of a way," said Pojim, but he could see she was worried.

In the hospital, they had put Ollie into a bed. They had wanted a nurse to bathe him, but he had objected violently to this indignity, and finally they had sent in a male orderly to do the job. Now, bathed, shaven and wearing a silly little nightgown that made him ashamed to look at himself, he was lying in bed, slowly starving to death.

A dozen empty plates, the remains of assorted specialties of the hospital, filled with vitamins and other good things, lay around him. Everything had tasted fine while going down, but nothing seemed to have stuck to him.

All he could do was brood about the puzzled and anxious looks on the doctors' faces when they examined him.

The attack came without warning. One moment Ollie was lying there unhappily, suffering hunger pangs, and the next moment somebody had punched him in the stomach. The shock made him start and then look down. But there was nobody near him. The doctors had left him alone while they looked up articles in textbooks and argued with each other.

He felt another punch, and then another and another. He yelled in fright and pain.

After five minutes, a nurse looked in and asked casually, "Did you call?"

"My stomach!" groaned Ollie. "Somebody's hittin' me in my stomach!"

"It's a tummyache," she said with a cheerful smile. "It should teach you not to wolf your food."

Then she caught a glimpse of his stomach, from which Ollie, in his agony, had cast off the sheet, and she gulped. It was swollen like a watermelon—or, rather, like a watermelon with great warts. Lumps stuck out all over it.

She rushed out, calling, "Doctor Manson! Doctor Manson!"

When she returned with two doctors, Ollie was in such acute misery that he didn't even notice them. One doctor said, "Well, I'll be damned!" and began tapping the swollen stomach.

The other doctor demanded, "When did this happen?"

"Right now, I guess," replied the nurse. "Just a few minutes ago his stomach was as flat as the way it was when you saw it."

"We'd better give him a shot of morphine to put him out of his pain," said the first doctor, "and then we'll X-ray him."

Ollie was in a semi-coma as they lifted him off his bed and wheeled him into the X-ray room. He didn't hear a word of the ensuing discussion about the photographs, although the doctors talked freely in front of him—freely and profanely.

It was Dr. Manson who demanded, "What in God's name are those things, anyway?"

"They look like pineapples and grapefruit," replied the bewildered X-ray specialist.

"Square-edged pineapples? Grapefruit with one end pointed?"

"I didn't say that's what they are," returned the other defensively. "I said that's what they look like. The grapefruit could be eggplant," he added in confusion.

"Eggplant, my foot. How the devil did they get into his stomach, anyway? He's been eating like a pig, but even a pig couldn't have gotten those things down its throat."

"Wake him up and ask him."

"He doesn't know any more than we do," said the nurse. "He told me that it felt as if somebody was hitting him in the stomach. That's all he'd be able to tell us."

"He's got the damnedest stomach I ever heard of," marveled Dr. Manson. "Let's open it up and take a look at it from the inside."

"We'll have to get his consent," said the specialist nervously. "I know it would be interesting, but we can't cut into him unless he's willing."

"It would be for his own good. We'd get that unsliced fruit salad out of him." Dr. Manson stared at the X-ray plates again. "Pineapples, grapefruit, something that looks like a banana with a small bush on top. Assorted large round objects. And what looks like a nut. A small nut."

If Ollie had been aware, he might have told Dr. Manson that the nut was the kernel of the trouble. As it was, all he could do was groan.

"He's coming to," said the nurse.

"Good," asserted Dr. Manson. "Get a release, Nurse, and the minute he's capable of following directions, have him sign it."

In the corridor outside, two white-clad interns stopped at the door of Ollie's room and listened. They could not properly have been described as man and woman, but at any rate one was male and the other female. If you didn't look at them too closely, they seemed to be human, which, of course, was what they wanted you to think.

"Just as I said," observed Zolto. "They intend to operate. And their attention has already been drawn to the nut."

"We can stop them by violence, if necessary. But I abhor violence."

"I know, dear," Zolto said thoughtfully. "What has happened is clear enough. He kept sending all that food through, and our people analyzed it and discovered what it was. They must have been surprised to discover no message from us, but after a while they arrived at the conclusion that we needed some of our own food and they sent it to us. It's a good thing that they didn't send more of it at one time."

"The poor man must be in agony as it is."

"Never mind the poor man. Think of our own situation."

"But don't you see, Zolto? His digestive juices can't dissolve such unfamiliar chemical constituents, and his stomach must be greatly irritated."

She broke off for a moment as the nurse came past them, giving them only a casual glance. The X-ray specialist followed shortly, his face reflecting the bewilderment he felt as a result of studying the plate he was holding.

"That leaves only Dr. Manson with him," said Zolto. "Pojim, I have a plan. Do you have any of those pandigestive tablets with you?"

"I always carry them. I never know when in this world I'll run into something my stomach can't handle."

"Fine." Zolto stepped back from the doorway, cleared his throat, and began to yell, "Calling Dr. Manson! Dr. Manson, report to surgery!"

"You've been seeing too many of their movies," said Pojim.

But Zolto's trick worked. They heard Dr. Manson mutter, "Damn!" and saw him rush into the corridor. He passed them without even noticing that they were there.

"We have him to ourselves," said Zolto. "Quick, the tablets."

They stepped into the room, where Zolto passed a small inhalator back and forth under Ollie's nose. Ollie jerked away from it, and his eyes opened.

"Take this," said Pojim, with a persuasive smile. "It will ease your pain." And she put two tablets into Ollie's surprised mouth.

Automatically, Ollie swallowed and the tablets sped down to meet the collection in his stomach. Pojim gave him another smile, and then she and Zolto were out of the room.

To Ollie, things seemed to be happening in more and more bewildering fashion. No sooner had these strange doctors left than Dr. Manson came rushing back, cursing, in a way that would have shocked Hippocrates, the unknown idiot who had summoned him to surgery. Then the nurse came in, with a paper. Ollie gathered that he was being asked to sign something.

He shook his head vigorously. "Not me. I don't sign *nothin'*, sister."

"It's a matter of life and death. Your own life and death. We have to get those things out of your stomach."

"No, sir, you're not cuttin' me open."

Dr. Manson gritted his teeth in frustration. "You don't feel so much pain now because of the morphine I gave you. But it's going to wear off in a few minutes and then you'll be in agony again. You'll have to let us operate."

"No, sir," repeated Ollie stubbornly. "You're not cuttin' me open."

And then he almost leaped from his bed. His already distended stomach seemed to swell outward, and before the astonished eyes of doctor and nurse, a strange new bump appeared.

"Help!" yelled Ollie.

"That's exactly what we're trying to do," said Dr. Manson angrily. "Only you won't let us. Now sign that paper, man, and stop your nonsense."

Ollie groaned and signed. The next moment he was being rushed into the operating room.

The morphine was wearing off rapidly, and he lay, still groaning, on the table. From the ceiling, bright lights beat down upon him. Near his head the anesthetist stood with his cone of sleep poised in readiness. At one side a happy Dr. Manson was slipping rubber gloves on his antiseptic hands, while the attentive nurses and assistants waited.



Two interns were standing near the doorway. One of them, Zolto, said softly, "We may have to

use violence after all. They must not find it."

"I should have given him a third tablet," said Pojim, the other intern, regretfully. "Who would have suspected that the action would be so slow?"

They fell silent. Zolto slipped a hand into his pocket and grasped the weapon, the one he had hoped he wouldn't have to use.

Dr. Manson nodded curtly and said, "Anesthetic."

And then, as the anesthetist bent forward, it happened. Ollie's uncovered stomach, lying there in wait for the knife, seemed to heave and boil. Ollie shrieked and, as the assembled medicos watched in dazed fascination, the knobs and bumps smoothed out. The whole stomach began to shrink, like a cake falling in when some one has slammed the oven door. The pandigestive tablets had finally acted.

Ollie sat up. He forgot that he was wearing the skimpy and shameless nightgown, forgot, too, that he had a roomful of spectators. He pushed away the anesthetist who tried to stop him.

"I feel fine," he said.

"Lie down," ordered Dr. Manson sternly. "We're going to operate and find out what's wrong with you."

"You're not cuttin' into me," said Ollie. He swung his feet to the floor and stood up. "There ain't nothin' wrong with me. I feel wonderful. For the first time in my life I ain't hungry, and I'm spoilin' for trouble. Don't nobody try to stop me."

He started to march across the floor, pushing his way through the protesting doctors.

"This way," said one of the interns near the door. "We'll get your clothes." Ollie looked at her in suspicion, but she went on, "Remember? I'm the one who gave you the tablets to make the pain go away."

"They sure worked," said Ollie happily, and allowed himself to be led along.

He heard the uproar behind him, but he paid no attention. Whatever they wanted, he was getting out of here, fast. There might have been trouble, but at a critical point the public address system swung into operation, thanks to the foresight of his intern friends, who had rigged up a special portable attachment to the microphone. It started calling Dr. Manson, calling Dr. Kolanyi, calling Dr. Pumber, and all the others.

In the confusion, Ollie escaped and found himself, for the first time in his life, a passenger in a taxicab. With him were the two friendly interns, no longer in white.

"Just in case any more of those lumps appear in your stomach," said the female, "you'd better take another couple of tablets."

She was so persuasive that Ollie put up only token resistance. The tablets went down his stomach, and then he settled back to enjoy the cab ride. It was only later that he wondered where they were taking him. By that time, he was too sleepy to wonder very much.

With the aid of the first two tablets, he had digested the equivalent of a tremendous meal. The blood coursed merrily in his veins and arteries, and he had a warm sensation of well-being.

As the taxi sped along, his eyes closed.

"You transmitted the message in one of the latter tablets?" asked Zolto in their native tongue.

"I have explained all that has happened," replied his wife. "They will stop sending food and wait for other directives."

"Good. Now we'll have to get the transfer out of him as soon as possible. We ourselves can operate and he will never be the wiser."

"I wonder," said Pojim. "Once we have the transfer, it will only be a nuisance to us. We'll have to guard it carefully and be in continual fear of losing it. Perhaps it would be more sensible to leave it inside him."

"Inside him? Pojim, my sweet, have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Not at all. It is easier to guard a man than a tiny object. I took a look at one of the X-ray plates, and it is clear that the transfer switch has adhered to his stomach. It will remain there indefinitely. Suppose we focus a transpositor on that stomach of his. Then, as the objects we want arrive from our own universe in their collapsed condition, we can transpose them into our laboratory, enlarge them, and send them off to Aldebaran, where they are needed."

"But suppose that he and that stomach of his move around!"

"He will stay in one place if we treat him well. Don't you see, Zolto? He is a creature who has always lacked food. We shall supply him such food as his own kind have never dreamed of, complete with pandigestion fluid. At the same time, we shall set him to doing light work in order to keep him busy. Much of his task will involve studying and improving himself. And at night we shall receive the things we need from our own universe."

"And when we have enough to supply the colony on Aldebaran II?"

"Then it will be time enough to remove the transfer switch."

Zolto laughed. It was a laugh that would have been curiously out of place in a human being, and if the taxi driver hadn't been so busy steering his way through traffic, he would have turned around to look. Pojim sensed the danger, and held up a warning finger.

Zolto subsided. "You have remarkable ideas, my wife. Still, I see no reason why this should not work. Let us try it."

Ollie awoke to a new life. He was feeling better than he had ever felt in his entire miserable existence. The two interns who had come along with him had been transformed magically into a kindly lady and gentleman, who wished to hire him to do easy work at an excellent salary. Ollie let himself be hired.

He had his choice of things to eat now, but, strangely enough, he no longer had his old hunger. It was as if he were being fed from some hidden source, and he ate, one might almost have said, for the looks of it. The little he did consume, however, seemed to go a long way.

He gained weight, his muscles hardened, his old teeth fell out and new ones appeared. He himself was astonished at this latter phenomenon, but after his previous experience at the hospital, he kept his astonishment to himself. The spots on his lungs disappeared, his spine straightened. After a time he reached a weight of a hundred and ninety pounds, and his eyes were bright and clear. At night he slept the sleep of the just—or the drugged.

At first he was happy. But after several months, there came a feeling of boredom. He sought out Mr. and Mrs. Zolto, and said, "I'm sorry, I can't stay here any longer."

"Why?" asked the lady.

"There's no room here, ma'am, for advancement," he said, almost apologetically. "I've been studyin' and I got ideas about things I can do. All sorts of ideas."

Pojim and Zolto, who had planted the ideas, nodded solemnly.

Pojim said, "We're glad to hear that, Ollie. The fact is that we ourselves had decided to move to—to a warmer climate, some distance away from here. We were wondering how you'd get along without us."

"Don't you worry about me. I'll do fine."

"Well, that's splendid. But it would be convenient to us if you could wait till tomorrow. We'd like to give you something to remember us by."

"I'll be glad to wait, ma'am."

That night Ollie had a strange nightmare. He dreamed that he was on the operating table again, and that the doctors and nurses were once more closing in on him. He opened his mouth to scream, but no sound came out. And then the two interns were there, once more wearing their uniforms.

The female said, "It's all right. It's perfectly all right. We're just removing the transfer switch. In the morning you won't even remember what happened."

And, in fact, in the morning he didn't. He had only a vague feeling that something *had* happened.

They shook hands with him and they gave him a very fine letter of reference, in case he tried to get another job, and Mrs. Zolto presented him with an envelope in which there were several bills whose size later made his eyes almost pop out of his head.

He walked down the street as if it belonged to him, or were going to. Gone was the slouch, gone the blariness of the eyes, gone the hangdog look.

Gone was all memory of the dismal past.

And then Ollie had a strange feeling. At first it seemed so peculiar that he couldn't figure out what it was. It started in his stomach, which seemed to turn over and almost tie itself into a knot. He felt a twinge of pain and winced almost perceptibly.

It took him several minutes to realize what it was.

For the first time in months, he was hungry.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SHIPPING CLERK ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if

you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States

without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation’s business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation’s website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support

and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.