

"So your marriage to him was a happy ending to a long romance?"

"No. I didn't even know he knew I was alive. I used to think he was nice, but he never paid any attention to me until after Father died.

"One day he came through Ilium. I was sitting around that big old house, thinking my life was over . . ." She spoke of the awful days and weeks that followed her father's death. "Just me and little Newt in that big old house. Frank had disappeared, and the ghosts were making ten times as much noise as Newt and I were. I'd given my whole life to taking care of Father, driving him to and from work, bundling him up when it was cold, unbundling him when it was hot, making him eat, paying his bills. Suddenly, there wasn't anything for me to do. I'd never had any close friends, didn't have a soul to turn to but Newt.

"And then," she continued, "there was a knock on the door-- and there stood Harrison Connors. He was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. He came in, and we talked about Father's last days and about old times in general."

Angela almost cried now.

"Two weeks later, we were married."

Communists, Nazis, Royalists, Parachutists, and Draft Dodgers 54

Returning to my own seat in the plane, feeling far shabbier for having lost Mona Aamons Monzano to Frank, I resumed my reading of Philip Castle's manuscript.

I looked up Monzano, Mona Aamons in the index, and was told by the index to see Aamons, Mona.

So I saw Aamons, Mona, and found almost as many page references as I'd found after the name of "Papa" Monzano himself.

And after Aamons, Mona came Aamons, Nestor. So I turned to the few pages that had to do with Nestor, and learned that he was Mona's father, a native Finn, an architect.

Nestor Aamons was captured by the Russians, then liberated by the Germans during the Second World War. He was not returned home by his liberators, but was forced to serve in a Wehrmacht engineer unit that was sent to fight the Yugoslav partisans. He

was captured by Chetniks, royalist Serbian partisans, and then by Communist partisans who attacked the Chetniks. He was liberated by Italian parachutists who surprised the Communists, and he was shipped to Italy.

The Italians put him to work designing fortifications for Sicily. He stole a fishing boat in Sicily, and reached neutral Portugal.

While there, he met an American draft dodger named Julian Castle.

Castle, upon learning that Aamons was an architect, invited him to come with him to the island of San Lorenzo and to design for him a hospital to be called the House of Hope and Mercy in the Jungle.

Aamons accepted. He designed the hospital, married a native woman named Celia, fathered a perfect daughter, and died.

Never Index Your Own Book 55

As for the life of Aamons, Mona, the index itself gave a jangling, surrealist picture of the many conflicting forces that had been brought to bear on her and of her dismayed reactions to them.

"Aamons, Mona:" the index said, "adopted by Monzano in order to boost Monzano's popularity, 194-199, 216a.; childhood in compound of House of Hope and Mercy, 63-81; childhood romance with P. Castle, 72f; death of father, 89ff; death of mother, 92f; embarrassed by role as national erotic symbol, 80, 95f, 166n., 209, 247n., 400-406, 566n., 678; engaged to P. Castle, 193; essential naïveté, 67-71, 80, 95f, 116a., 209, 274n., 400-406, 566a., 678; lives with Bokonon, 92-98, 196-197; poems about, 2n., 26, 114, 119, 311, 316, 477n., 501, 507, 555n., 689, 718ff, 799ff, 800n., 841, 846ff, 908n., 971, 974; poems by, 89, 92, 193; returns to Monzano, 199; returns to Bokonon, 197; runs away from Bokonon, 199; runs away from Moazano, 197; tries to make self ugly in order to stop being erotic symbol to islanders, 89, 95f, 116n., 209, 247n., 400-406, 566n., 678; tutored by Bokonon, 63-80; writes letter to United Nations, 200; xylophone virtuoso, 71."

I showed this index entry to the Mintons, asking them if they didn't think it was an enchanting biography in itself, a biography of a reluctant goddess of love. I got an unexpectedly expert answer, as one does in life sometimes. It appeared that Claire Minton, in her time, had been a professional indexer. I had never heard of such a profession before.

She told me that she had put her husband through college years before with her earnings as an indexer, that the earnings had been good, and that few people could index well.

She said that indexing was a thing that only the most amateurish author undertook to do for his own book. I asked her what she thought of Philip Castle's job.

"Flattering to the author, insulting to the reader," she said. "In a hyphenated word," she observed, with the shrewd amiability of an expert, " '_self-indulgent_.' I'm always embarrassed when I see an index an author has made of his own work."

"Embarrassed?"

"It's a revealing thing, an author's index of his own work," she informed me. "It's a shameless exhibition--to the trained eye."

"She can read character from an index," said her husband.

"Oh?" I said. "What can you tell about Philip Castle?"

She smiled faintly. "Things I'd better not tell strangers."

"Sorry."

"He's obviously in love with this Mona Aamons Monzano," she said.

"That's true of every man in San Lorenzo I gather."

"He has mixed feelings about his father," she said.

"That's true of every man on earth." I egged her on gently.

"He's insecure."

"What mortal isn't?" I demanded. I didn't know it then, but that was a very Bokononist thing to demand.

"He'll never marry her."

"Why not?"

"I've said all I'm going to say," she said.

"I'm gratified to meet an indexer who respects the privacy of others."

"Never index your own book," she stated.

A duprass, Bokonon tells us, is a valuable instrument for gaining and developing, in the privacy of an interminable love affair, insights that are queer but true. The Mintons' cunning exploration of indexes was surely a case in point. A duprass, Bokonon tells us, is also a sweetly conceited establishment. The Mintons' establishment was no exception.

Sometime later, Ambassador Minton and I met in the aisle of the airplane, away from his wife, and he showed that it was

important to him that I respect what his wife could find out from indexes.

"You know why Castle will never marry the girl, even though he loves her, even though she loves him, even though they grew up together?" he whispered.

"No, sir, I don't."

"Because he's a homosexual," whispered Minton. "She can tell that from an index, too."

A Self-supporting Squirrel Cage 56

When Lionel Boyd Johnson and Corporal Earl McCabe were washed up naked onto the shore of San Lorenzo, I read, they were greeted by persons far worse off than they. The people of San Lorenzo had nothing but diseases, which they were at a loss to treat or even name. By contrast, Johnson and McCabe had the glittering treasures of literacy, ambition, curiosity, gall, irreverence, health, humor, and considerable information about the outside world.

From the "Calypsos" again:

Oh, a very sorry people, yes,
Did I find here.
Oh, they had no music,
And they had no beer.
And, oh, everywhere
Where they tried to perch
Belonged to Castle Sugar, Incorporated,
Or the Catholic church.

This statement of the property situation in San Lorenzo in 1922 is entirely accurate, according to Philip Castle. Castle Sugar was founded, as it happened, by Philip Castle's great-grandfather. In 1922, it owned every piece of arable land on the island.

"Castle Sugar's San Lorenzo operations," wrote young Castle, "never showed a profit. But, by paying laborers nothing for their