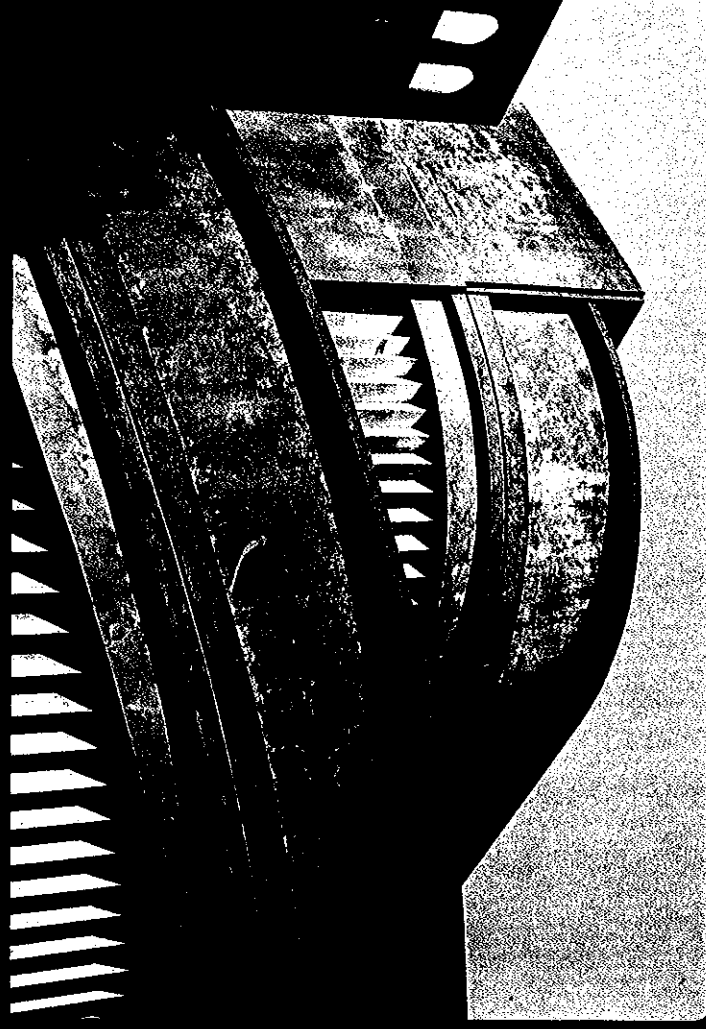


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SORTS OF SORCERY

by Christopher Buck

The first time we met, I was struck by his underworld-like and somewhat villainish appearance. But the mercy and kindness in his eyes struck a balance with his darker side, building a mystery that I wanted to explore.

Probing that strange balance between villainy and kindness, I asked Sa'at about his involvement with magic.

"In magic," glowered Sa'at, "you must assume everyone is your enemy."

"Why?" I asked. A thin grin caused his dark eyes to sparkle.

"It's a lonely, cold place," he told me, "for no one is your friend when everyone is a tool for your purpose. It develops utter paranoia."

"How so?"

"It's like this country worrying about attack. Gloom in yesterday's Herald, where the printing of a threat itself becomes a self-fulfilled prophecy. After a long time under that pressure, there's no other place to go."

"Well, suppose you knew someone was casting a spell over you. What should you do?"

"Chris," Sa'at replied, "there's only one absolute protection against any form of attack: happiness and contentment. Yet there are weapons. Suppose a magician moves into town and opens a bookstore. His rival owns a health food store. A feud ensues; sort of a struggle for supremacy."

"To the death?"

"It depends," Sa'at offered, exhaling smoke and a sudden sternness from a spent and withered cigarette.

"Let's say one of the magicians casts a spell — one intent on destroying a business or injuring a person. Now, the other magician, in protection, could just not care. This robs the spell of its force and true source of energy.

"But if both were fighting, like one conjuring an amulet for the other to break his leg and the other person picks up on it, the defense would be to discover the method of that spell and to simply turn it back on the attacker, so that its force of destruction flows back to the first person. This is the Law of Muhammad, where he is commanded by Gabriel to retaliate only in the manner by which his people are attacked. This is a natural law of alchemy, which knows the pitfall of vengeance."

"Well, I've been taught that concept all my life," I said, "yet I've not quite understood why."

Sa'at's eyes darted up through the ceiling, as if summoning a response. They lowered slowly, until I saw them charged with a distant sorrow.

"You must recognize this precaution: anything done from revenge admits of defeat and all the power you put in for revenge comes from death. Besides, it leaves you open; you never want to be on the negative side."

I was afraid, for Sa'at brought up voodoo to prove this truth. My spine stiffened.

"For instance, voodoo psychology never works on a person who knows nothing of the curse. The only

workable force of magic on another person is suggestion.

"Illusional magic is but a mirror of real magic, which exerts its influence through creating so potent a fear in the victim that through dread alone is disaster wrought. This is why the doll is always sent to its victim."

A pause dropped like a spider into the room. I fidgeted around with my papers, pretending they were important documents. They crackled like fire.

"But could suggestion extend beyond the conscious knowledge of the person cursed?" I asked.

Sa'at seemed pleased. A mischievous cunning animated his face.

"If a person uses a formula which causes something to vibrate, this audio-talisman could set off a series of triggers."

"You've lost me, Sa'at."

"Well, do you recall an electronic device recently invented to ward off mosquitoes?"

"Sure, with a miracle tomato-slicer."

"Right! Now, this instrument emits a pitch which causes certain parts of the mosquito's body to vibrate so violently it dares not penetrate the field of sound. A magician, if expert enough in the application of this principle, could very well construct an audio-talisman for a multitude of purposes. It might, for example, consist of a bell which, when rung, would cause a glass to shatter, the acid which it contains to spill and start a fire to burn down a victim's house. That bell is set to respond to one and one thing only: the victim's voice."

"It all sounds quite exotic, Sa'at. But how in blazes do you plant the talisman?"

"I know of magicians who can render a person dizzy, temporarily blind or totally deaf through the use of sound. If you want to break into a person's house while he or she is asleep, all you need to do is to set up, through striking a nearly inaudible frequency, a ringing sound in the victim's ears. But obviously, to accomplish this you must have a great deal of knowledge about this person. To an accomplished magician, any information you have about a person is usable."

Sa'at detected a troubled expression in my eyes.

"Chris, there are ways of confronting this — like intense concentration on your part can block quite well. When dealing with a more powerful personality, you must try to distract. Yet, an odd thing in magic is this: one of the best forms of protection is to know what your opponents believe, in order to pierce through to their suggestion."

"For instance, should your enemy be convinced that a stick of witch hazel crossed with ivory on one end and silver on the butt end with copper or silver wire running through the core conveys great power as a wand, then you respond in those terms. However subtle your counter-suggestions may be, they must communicate immediately and thoroughly in the most understood and appreciated symbols."

"What is the most vicious form of magic," I ventured. Sa'at peered back wildly, as if angered by the question,

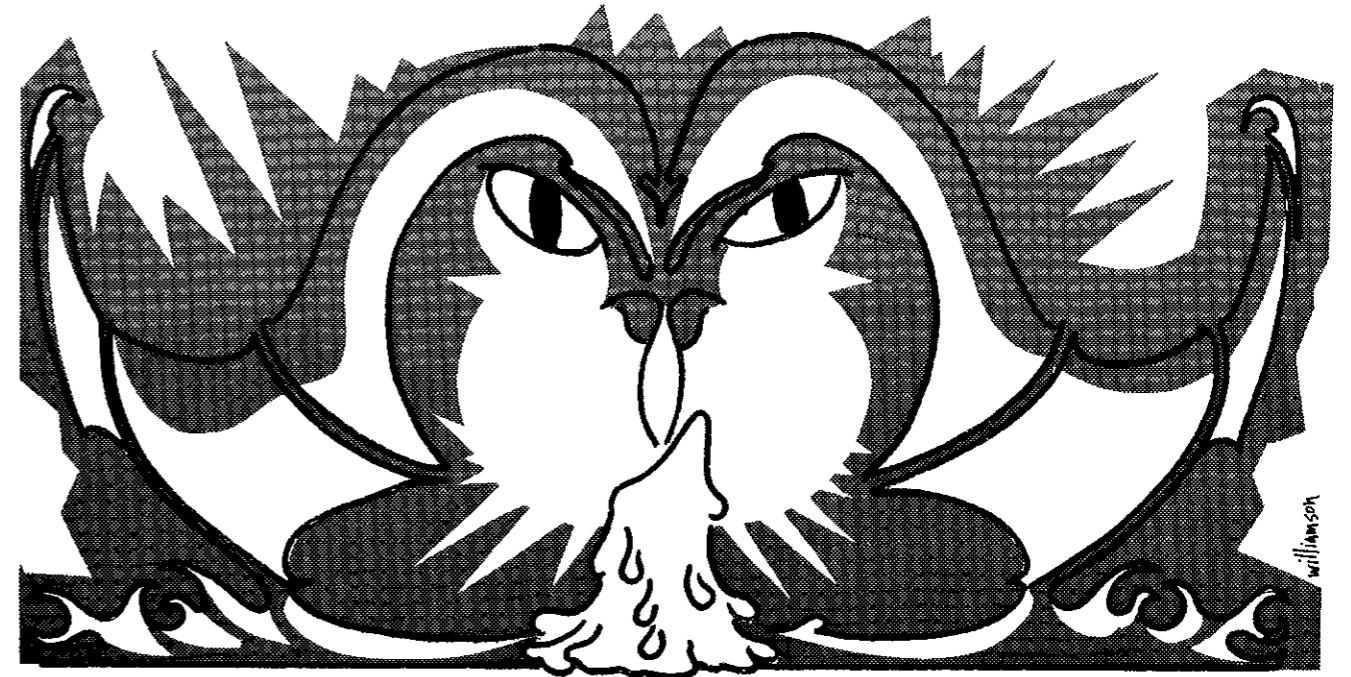
though I later understood his fierceness was for another reason.

"The most severe magic is the magic of the goats. It is the most perverse form of the various occult sciences and is very common in the U.S. and Canada today. (If you print this, you'll be in trouble.)

Numerous societies flourish, but the OTO (Order of the Templars of the Orient) is one of the worst, along with orders associated with the Ritual of the Golden Dawn. These rituals consist of various child and animal sacrifices for the purpose of receiving power from the goat."

"And who is the goat?"

"The goat is the symbol of Satan, represented by both inner and outer masters."



"Tell me then, Sa'at — how is the sacrifice of a child meant to release power?"

A look of revulsion rippled across his face.

"If you are an adept, your master will display a desire, offering you a gift of knowledge which, of course, you must earn. After you perform three ninth-degree sexual rituals, with one child sacrifice after that of an animal, you are promised the powers of 418 of the most exalted masters. It's an absurd, but beautiful, point about magical orders: should you succeed in pleasing your master, you may be granted esoteric knowledge. For what you really want is power and knowledge is power."

"Most people learn magic to overcome others and that's their downfall. The master knows this all too well, at least as far as his adepts are concerned. In order to safeguard his own position, therefore, the master rewards you with letters and letters only — never a complete word. But the adept doesn't know this and that's how the Ninth Degree of the Ancient Masonic Order functions."

"Why does a master then surround himself with adepts?"

"Because the master does much better when he is charged with their accumulative energy. All he has to do is to plant desire within them and he sustains, or rather gorges, himself on the power generated by their ambition and activity."

"Is there any such thing, then, as good magic?"

"Creation is the noblest of magic," Sa'at answered. "Understand that magic itself is not satanic, only those who practice it are or are not. The association of 'black magic' with diabolical motives, for example, is basically fallacious, insofar as the original term is concerned. 'Black magic' originally denoted that school of magic practiced in a region of Egypt where the soil was black. That's all. But when the science of nature is applied by an individual who is at heart an animal, then magic becomes satanic."

My curiosity, at last, drove me to a final question. "Sa'at what would you describe as the most potent source of magic as far as incantations go?"

He became very calm as a certain dignity, which seemed to transform him, betrayed an unmistakable

reverence toward what I sought. Again, that inexpressible kindness returned to his eyes, animating his entire being.

"As far as the language of incantation is concerned, in the age of medieval alchemy, it was Arabic. The word 'alchemy' itself comes from Arabic. The principle involved is that the tongue of the prophet for any given age is endowed with tremendous power. I would encourage you to study Persian."

"Everything we do is magic. The person who is a true magus is simply aware of that, and that he is in control of his own destiny. When he tries to exert control over the lives of others he becomes satanic. Now, I would be quite willing to challenge any magician in the world openly, for you know no magician can ever truly harm you."

Sa'at had studied in the "Goat-Hunter's School of Knowledge" while in San Francisco, where he made his rather lush living as a pool shark. The school basically taught, according to Sa'at, self-preservation. Perhaps that experience gave rise to this insight, one of the last that Sa'at shared that afternoon.

With a mischievous glint in his kindly, cunning eyes, Sa'at craned his head toward me.

"Conjuring up is good . . ." A spark of kindness left his eyes, and he stopped smiling. "Provided what you conjure up doesn't eat you."