

Donkeys to Bald Pate

By SAMUEL MINES

Donkeys to Bald Pate

Professor Weedlemeyer sputtered in his eagerness, making large gestures with his hands.

"Of course!" he shouted, his accent becoming thicker with his excitement. "It is lunacy to think only man will increase in his intelligence! Animals will too—ya, und insects! It will be a fierce competition for the earth be—man and the animals!"

Jon Egan, science reporter and man of all work for the *Carolina Bugle*, yawned and searched vainly through littered pockets for a cigarette that wasn't there. He had heard all this before.

"Wish you'd do something about my dog Spurious," he muttered. "He is the dumbest—"

"Stop annoying me with that fool hound!" Professor Weedlemeyer said crossly. He lifted his voice in a bellow. "Myrtle! Myrtle—where is the beer?"

Jon Egan brightened. The swinging door to the kitchen was opened by a foot, and a tray with beer glasses and bottles came through, followed by Myrtle Weedlemeyer, the professor's daughter.

Draw no hasty conclusions from the unfortunate name, product of absent-minded and uneclectic parental haste. Myrtle Weedlemeyer was as beautiful as the sun. She was tall, with a magnificent lush body whose curves were a constant threat to the flimsy material seeking to restrain them.

She had gleaming black hair falling in smooth waves to a pair of wondrously formed shoulders. She had an oval face with skin as lambent as pearl and, as a final touch, a pair of huge, incredible blue eyes that were alight with internal fires.

She crossed the room, balancing the tray of drinks effortlessly, and the fluid motion of her body made Jon Egan's breath stop in his throat. As happened every time he saw this, he realized all over again that the reason he came out here was to see her, not to listen to the Professor's perpetual monolog on I.Q.

"... man of the future," Weedlemeyer was droning, "will undoubtedly a large, bulging crown have—hairless of course—and his jaws will shrink in proportion."

Myrtle sat down on the divan across from Egan, crossed sleekly rounded legs and turned the full voltage of her eyes on the newspaper man. He shuddered, downed half a glass of beer in a frenzied gulp that backfired and nearly choked him to death.

When he came out of the red fog of coughing, Myrtle sat beside him patting him on the back. The warmth of her closeness and the fragrant scent of her sent his blood pressure soaring.

"Let's go to the movies," he mumbled, catching her hand and getting up.

"Goody."

She snuggled against him. Professor Weedlemeyer regarded them sourly.

"I think I take back what I said about the intelligence of humans," he grumbled. "Movies—when science offers you the world! Bah, less intelligence than donkeys you have."

"You keep the science, daddy," Myrtle said generously. "I'll do better with what I have."

She turned her eyes on Egan again and the reporter, feeling his bones begin to soften like butter, agreed with no mental reservations.

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth is an ungrateful child!" Weedlemeyer groaned. "I tell you, I bet I could take a cat—a donkey—and make him smarter as you two!"

"Yeh? How?" Egan said.

"A nice question." Weedlemeyer's eyes went thoughtful. "Of course the brain is not so highly convoluted. In generations, of course—but there is no time." A new thought struck him. "Suppose an animal were suddenly to have the mind and the thoughts of a man. What would he do?"

"I am reminded of a story," Egan said, grinning. "A donkey was lost and nobody could find him. Then the village half-wit appeared, leading the beast."

"I know!" Weedlemeyer snapped. "You too could imagine yourself a donkey—without trouble. So to the movies go—donkeys!"

Giggling inanely, they pattered off.

In ten minutes Egan had forgotten the conversation. In two weeks it had faded, it seemed, forever from his consciousness. The

professor, of course, continued his interminable monologue on intelligence.

"... not only the learning ability," he would drone earnestly, pounding it home with a pudgy fist, "but sagacity—the ability to apply what is learned. How many absent-minded professors do you know who have memorized the encyclopedia, but who cannot fix a leaking hot water bottle? They lack sagacity—they cannot apply their learning!"

But Jon Egan was much too much taken up with the gorgeous Myrtle to be amused by Professor Weedlemeyer's mutterings. He was running a constant fever and his hard-shelled bachelordom was crumbling under the oxy-acetylene flame of her incredible feminine appeal.

As competition, of course, he had only the entire campus—the male portion of it—plus a goodly number of the younger faculty members. But with rare judgment, or the ability to spot a dying duck when she saw one, Myrtle seemed actually to favor him. Amazing girl!

She kissed him on the porch swing, she held his hand in the movies, she murmured low into his ear.

"I hate my name. Myrtle Weedlemeyer—ugh! Sounds like something you spray on lawns."

Jon Egan gulped. He plunged.

"Why don't you change it?" he trembled. "Myrtle Egan sounds pretty nice."

"*Darling!*" said Myrtle.

The kiss she gave him topped all known scorch records and reduced him to a throbbing cinder. So, engaged officially, they went hand in hand to seek Papa Weedlemeyer and break the news.

They found him peering myopically through a comparison microscope.

"So?" he grunted. "Am I supposed to be surprised? Any donkey could have seen it coming long ago. You will all the time fight and be perfectly happy and miserable. Now away go and talk your foolishness and let me work."

The roseate daze in which Myrtle and Egan were now enveloped left no room for curiosity about the nature of Professor Weedlemeyer's work. So it came to them with as much a shock as it did to anyone else when it finally happened.

They were returning from the movies, strolling hand in hand, this warm spring night. Jasmine and magnolia were in full, fragrant bloom and the night air was alive with romance. On a street corner a political meeting was in full progress. Senator Foghorn was running for re-election. The senator was speaking in a quiet voice which could not be heard for more than three miles.

"... to perpetuate our gr-r-e-a-a-t form of government and our gr-r-e-a-a-t Constitution, the most perfect political work ever handed down to mankind by Almighty God. Anybody who dares to change one word of that sacred document is a traitor to the ideals of our gr-r-e-a-a-t country, to our magnificent boys who fought and gave their lives and to the flower of our lovely womanhood, the wives and mothers and sisters of all of us...."

The senator could go on like this indefinitely, saying nothing with unsurpassed volume and untiring energy. Myrtle and Egan heard him as they left the movie house and his voice grew in volume as they drew closer to the street corner meeting.

"... democracy!" roared the senator. "The greatest gift ever handed down to mankind by Almighty God, that gives every man of us a fair and square chance at life, liberty and the pur-suit of happiness!"

He paused to take a breath and in that tiny moment of silence a new voice cut in.

"That's all right for you!" said the voice. "But what about us?"

Cut off in mid-breath, the senator's jowls remained adroop, his mouth open like a carp's. He caught his breath.

"Who said that?" he roared.

"I did," replied the voice.

"Come out here where I can see you!"

There was a rippling and a pushing in the crowd and a sudden frenzied blat of voices. Then a woman screamed shrilly and there was a hurried mass movement to get away from the focal point of the moment.

"What's going on there?" bellowed the senator. "I said, 'who said that?'"

"I did!" snapped the voice and the next moment a big gray mule reared out of the crowd and planted its front hoofs on the speaker's platform.

A gurgle died in the senator's throat. His eyes bulged out glassily.

"I've got 'em again," he muttered, passing a shaking hand before his eyes.

"No, you haven't," said the mule coldly. "And you haven't answered my question. Democracy is all right for you humans, but what about us mules? We do all the work and what do we get? Do we get a fair crack at that life, liberty and pursuit of happiness you like to talk about?"

Senator Foghorn fell backwards off the platform. The sheriff and the mayor, who had been retreating all the time the mule was speaking, scrambled hastily down and fled for their lives, abandoning their hapless political colleague. Women screamed wildly and there was a vast trampling of feet as the crowd left.

On the outskirts, Jon Egan pulled Myrtle hastily into a doorway to let the maddened throng stream fast. The girl had one palm clapped over luscious lips to keep the hysterical laughter bottled up.

"He's done it," she gurgled. "Papa's done it."

"I'm crazy," Egan whispered. "I've gone crazy and I'm seeing things."

"No, you're not, darling," Myrtle said prosaically. "I see it too, and I'm not crazy. It's poppa. He warned us and we wouldn't listen."

The mule was left alone on the deserted corner, except for the recumbent, blimp-like figure of the senator. The animal took its feet down from the platform, moved around it to look at the prone politician. As the animal's investigating nose snuffed at the senator's face, he came to life with a jerk, loosed an unsenatorial

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

