

THE KING OF SILVER LAKE

(Written April 3, 1943)

July 3, 1943

written by  
John B. Vacker  
Carpenter, Michigan

# THE KING OF SILVER LAKE

by Robert Weaver

Old Dan McGinnis celebrated his seventy-third birthday by walking into the iron-mining town of Hematite from his camp up at remote Silver Lake. One of Makela the Finn's logging trucks picked ~~him up~~ <sup>the old trappers</sup> near the bridge over Barnhardt Creek, so he got into town just at the dusk of a beautiful May evening. This gave him several additional hours to celebrate undisturbed before the party of Chicago fishermen he was to guide would arrive on the Upper Michigan Special.

Following the instructions in a letter from one of the city anglers, <sup>Dr. George,</sup> old Dan went to await their arrival <sup>did not go to his usual haunts, but</sup> at the Cliff Dwellers Inn. This little red brick colonial hotel looked rather incongruous in the afterglow, pitched on a glacial side hill of one of upper Michigan's most boisterous iron-mining towns. <sup>The picture of entering it ~~did~~ did little to</sup> Old Dan ~~did not~~ <sup>say</sup> relieve the impression.

Dan's letter didn't ~~state~~ <sup>neglected to state that</sup> that he had to wait in the hotel bar, but it ~~didn't say~~ <sup>For</sup> he shouldn't, either -- which probably wouldn't have made any difference, anyway. <sup>always</sup> But old Dan had a fine instinct for the best place to wait. He immediately discovered the glittering new neon and chromium bar, where he eased his packsack under an unemployed pin-ball machine and, eyebrows and weedy moustache bobbing in synchronized anticipation, loudly ordered a double shot of pile run whiskey.

"~~What do you want for a wash?~~" asked <sup>chipper</sup> the young bartender, just fresh from Duluth, superciliously <sup>eyed</sup> eyeing Dan's aromatic red hunting jumper and <sup>heavy</sup> <sup>"highwater"</sup> wool stag pants and rubber "gold seal" boots. "What do you want for a wash?" he asked.

"Gin!" Dan shot back, and the cocktail-hour stragglers giggled and roared and carelessly flung down their dry Martinis. Spring was in the air.

At midnight old Dan took his packsack and his newly-acquired seventy-three years out for a little air. And to meet his Chicago fishermen. In the meantime he had achieved a state of glorious plasterhood, sometimes known as drunk to <sup>advanced</sup> students of semantics. But he did not get to meet the train. The un-met Chicago fishermen arrived at the hotel just in time to find old Dan all tangled up in the <sup>hotels'</sup> new rock garden, where he had <sup>meagly</sup> wandered, and from which the wiry little Cornish gardener, a mere lad of seventy, was vainly trying to dislodge him.

"'Ere, damme, man, you're a tramplin' all hover my crocus 'n' tulip beds, you are. Com aout of there!" Cooky the gardener shrilled.

"Is zat so, me lad. An' me preferin' peonies -- whersh the bloody peonies?" Dan answered, charging like a bewildered gnu into a trellis of sweet peas, through it, thence over the steep edge of the rock garden, thence to the sidewalk below, where he and his packsack lay with a ~~quiet~~ <sup>quiet</sup> dignity befitting their years -- quite sodden and quite still.

"Oo, oo, oo -- 'e 'urted my flowers, 'e did," wailed old Cooky, doing a skinny dance of anger at midnight, in the Spring.

The <sup>next morning the</sup> little old <sup>rented</sup> Ford and trailer rumbled its <sup>Space</sup> ~~disturb~~ thunder over the loose planking of the bridge at Barnhardt Creek, noisily puffing and dragging its four Chicago fishermen and old Dan up to Silver Lake -- together with the mountain <sup>city</sup> of fishing tackle on the trailer behind. <sup>Abercrombie & Fitch were on the anchors.</sup> Old Dan sat wedged in the back seat, quietly sipping his stained moustache, occasionally gingerly feeling his side, tapping the armor of <sup>Dr. George's</sup> adhesive tape around his five freshly-cracked ribs.

"How do you ~~now~~ <sup>now</sup> feel, Dan?" asked Raymond, the driver, one of the Chicago ~~lawyer~~ fishermen.

Dan removed his cap and thoughtfully massaged his bald head. The question deserved sober deliberation. His little gray eyes twinkled. "Me, I feel like another drink." He sat up, suddenly all pert and bright. "It ain't rationed yet, is it?" he added <sup>There was no answer.</sup> hopefully. "Them bloody Japs," he mumbled, swearing quietly to himself.

At the top of the long <sup>muddy</sup> pull out of the Barnhardt valley before the winding, two-rut road began its long descent into the drainage area of the Big Dead River, Raymond stopped the car. He looked at his watch. <sup>It was still forenoon.</sup>

"Give him a drink, <sup>Doc,</sup> Carl," Raymond said, <sup>with a little sigh.</sup>

<sup>Dr. George</sup> Carl <sup>too,</sup> sighed and passed back a quart of whiskey. "Skoal!" Dan said, expertly flipping up his moustache with one hand, raising the bottle with the other. He played a long, sustained trumpet note on the bottle -- 'ah' -- and ran his tongue over his moustache, then quickly pulled <sup>out each</sup> the ends <sup>live</sup> of each moustache ~~out~~ with his free hand, rubbing his hand on his jumper sleeve.

"You boys havin' a snort <sup>too?"</sup> he said, conscience-stricken at last. All of them shook their heads no.

"Dan," Raymond said wearily, like a teacher to a slow but lovable pupil, "we came North over four hundred miles to get some of those big rainbow <sup>trout</sup> we've been hearing about -- and we're <sup>in</sup> training for that. Fishing before drinking, see."

"Sure, sure -- sure thing," Dan agreed. "Jes' thought you might, lads. Mind if I have a wee drop more?"

"And it would be kind of nice, Dan," <sup>being our guide and all,</sup> <sup>Carl</sup> George -- the big fellow -- added wistfully, "if you'd stay sober long enough -- just long enough to kind of show us the river -- --"

But Dan's bald head had sagged to his chest in noisy lip-putting slumber as the Ford threaded its way through the endless spruce cuttings of Makela the Finn. Gradually the descent became steeper, the fishermen passed the last of the cuttings and in the distance loomed the silent,

glacier-scarred mountains of the Silver Lake range, their ~~tall~~ <sup>tall and</sup> Norway pines still in the ~~dim~~ <sup>clear</sup> May sunshine.

Dan woke up for another drink as they clattered over the rushing black waters of Mulligan Creek, just above where it joined the Big Dead. "In ~~an~~ <sup>less'n</sup> hour we'll be there, lads," he <sup>quietly</sup> said, and went <sup>back</sup> to sleep. The <sup>little</sup> Ford <sup>snorted up</sup> climbed the steep sand hill out of the Mulligan valley, there was a brief glimpse of the gleaming rocky waters of the Big Dead, and two miles north stretched a <sup>broad</sup> ~~wide~~ plateau, the stumps of the once mighty white pine rising out of the sage and huckleberry bushes, giving ~~it~~ <sup>the</sup> <sup>impression of</sup> the aspect of a great, unkempt burial ground.

In the distance rose the hardwood-clad hills of Silver Lake, those ancient hills which <sup>over</sup> curiously disappeared as ~~one~~ <sup>they</sup> jolted through them, and left only the tall old hardwood, past its prime, its casualties jumbled everywhere. <sup>reaching high overhead, all</sup> Old Dan dwelt in the home of the seven dwarfs. <sup>In the vaulted cool shadows, patches of rotten snow still lay</sup>

After endless jolting through this cathedral of gloom the gloom abruptly opened up into a clearing of log barns and a log house, ~~the home of old Dan McGinnis, the king of Silver Lake.~~

Literally lapping at the base logs of one little house, set apart from the rest, were the placid waters of Silver Lake, heaving so gently their false promise of security. <sup>All this was</sup> ~~the home of old Dan McGinnis, the King of Silver Lake.~~

"Here we are, lads," Dan said, leaping nimbly from the car, taking a little quick dog trot around the car to limber up his bones, including <sup>his</sup> ~~the~~ five cracked ribs.

Dan <sup>tried</sup> to beguile the fishermen into a card game <sup>with</sup> benefit of bottle -- "you got all week to fish" -- but with a fanatical gleam in their eyes they <sup>at once</sup> began tearing at mounds of ~~waders~~ <sup>long drawers</sup> and aluminum rod cases. They were going fishing ~~at once~~.

2.

Dan's camp stood in a <sup>forest</sup> clearing at the extreme south end of Silver Lake, just where the Lake poured out into a rocky chute of a rapids and thence into the churning pool that was the very top of the Big Dead River. The waters of the Big Dead thence pried and searched their way through miles of winding valley, over fallen logs, tumbled rocks and boulders, <sup>and</sup> washed out beaver dams, <sup>growing leagues on its way, at lengths</sup> ~~until~~ in far away Iron Bay, the county seat, it <sup>finally</sup> added its mite to that cruellest of inland seas, Lake Superior.

After a quick lunch, during ~~which~~ <sup>most of</sup> the city fishermen got into their uniforms and argued whether or not to start fishing dry or wet fly, it was decided to start wet from the pool and work down river. <sup>Then there was the endless business of dressing their tapered fly lines, Dan was able to</sup> As they ~~left~~ the camp to walk over to the pool, Raymond asked Dan if he was going to fish. <sup>industriously plucking</sup> Dan was sitting on the saw buck, <sup>pulling a hair from his nose.</sup>

~~secretly~~ <sup>secretly</sup> sipped three drinks during these <sup>mighty</sup> preparations. <sup>At lengths they were ready to leave</sup>

"Sure, sure, lads. I'll fish a bit after you get started. 'Member, I'm the guide -- pay-in' gents first."

"But where's your rod?" <sup>your waders and all?</sup> This from Carl.

Dan walked <sup>over</sup> to the side of the camp and took <sup>down</sup> a battered fly rod <sup>all set up,</sup> which was resting on two <sup>nails</sup> under the eave. Each joint was a mass of adhesive tape, like Dan's ribs, the cracked old line ~~was~~ <sup>threaded, and</sup> already ~~set up,~~ on the business end of which was tied a scant two feet of frayed gut leader, all kind of spiralled and curled, like a pig's tail or <sup>a tired</sup> an unemployed bedspring. On the end of this <sup>chunk of</sup> leader was tied a sort of super fly that <sup>was faintly reminiscent of</sup> looked all the world like an old feather duster, the hook itself protruding from the underbrush like half of a rusty ice tong.

<sup>Q</sup> "Won this in a raffle <sup>surrounding</sup> over thirty years ago," Dan said, <sup>fly 'm' all,</sup> proudly fondling the Chicago fishermen looked at each other in great wonderment. They were too enchanted for words. Led by Dan, their expert guide, who fished without waders or landing net, they

trudged <sup>along the trail</sup> over to the Big Dead pool. ~~Ambercrombie & Fitch was on the march.~~ <sup>with signposts, to the pool.</sup> "That's it," Dan said, pointing down, "That's where you start." <sup>his little game</sup> The guide was beginning

<sup>to feel his responsibilities.</sup> A faint hint of morning mist still lingered over the pool, which restlessly churned in the <sup>deep shadows,</sup> half-dark, hissing and boiling like some giant witch's cauldron.

The four Chicago fishermen looked like a quartet of frantic deep-sea divers as they rapidly clambered down the rocky bank to the pool, clad in their manifold waders, jackets, bibs, landing nets, dangling scissors, gadgets and goggles, all the while delicately holding their glistening fly rods like four fairy godfathers at a convention of wand wavers. Old Dan sat on a rock above

them, in the warm sun, leisurely gnawing on a chew of plug, <sup>Ambercrombie & Fitch was on the march.</sup> scratching his head, occasionally <sup>elaborate</sup> feeling his ribs. Raymond was the first to complete the long ritual of selecting and tying <sup>a</sup> his fly on his long tapered leader. With the expertness of the complete angler he made a few false casts, feeding out line, and finally <sup>placed</sup> ~~landed~~ a beautiful thistle cast into the <sup>new</sup> heart of the pool. There was a silvery flash, the line was taut for an instant, then went limp.

"Whoopee!" shouted Raymond. "Cleaned out on my first cast! Whoopee!"

Dan sat quietly spitting tobacco juice ~~out~~ a young grasshopper as the Chicago fishermen got underway. Two of them took fair brook trout on their first few casts. But as Dan watched them fish out of the pool and round the first bend out of sight, no more big rainbow struck.

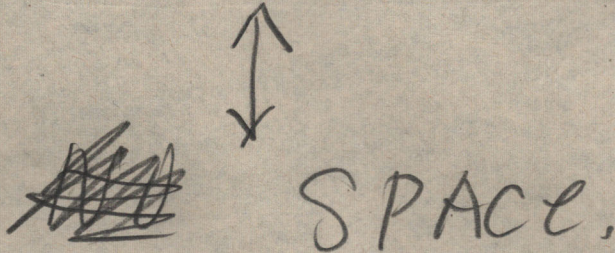
"Too damn much equipment," Dan observed out loud, <sup>to the warm pool, as the fishermen</sup> as they got out of sight. He rose, sighted, spat, and washed out a colony of ants. ~~Then~~ <sup>and</sup> shifting his cud he reached in his jumper and fished out a quart of Chicago whiskey, played a long trumpet solo to the sun, <sup>and</sup> hid the bottle under a young spruce, <sup>then he</sup> and leisurely took himself and his rod down the steep bank to the pool.

He sat on the bank and watched the pool, <sup>working his end.</sup> He soaked the leader in the water at his feet, <sup>slowly</sup> feeding out <sup>his cracked old fly</sup> line.

There were no fish rising. <sup>Over his shoulder</sup> Dan sighted the sun. It was about to disappear behind a <sup>fleecy</sup> light cloud. He reached in his jumper and pulled out a crust of bread. Breaking off a piece, he <sup>slate</sup> tossed it into the pool. There was a quick, silvery flash, Dan casually flipped his bed-spring fly into the pool at this spot and -- clap! -- was on to a beauty. He dropped his rod, pulled in the fish hand over hand, unhooked him, broke his neck, and dropped him into the game bag of his jumper. <sup>Again he cast his bread upon the waters. And not in vain.</sup> He had three rainbow, all over two pounds, before the sun came from behind the cloud.

"Guess I'll have me a little drink and meander downstream," Dan said. "Guess the big ones ain't here today." <sup>Yup, yup, yup.</sup> "Guess I'll have <sup>me</sup> another drink -- mebbe two."

~~Meanwhile~~

 **SPACE.**

Meanwhile the city fishermen worked downstream fishing with the earnest precision and <sup>grace</sup> beauty of finished experts. They'd waited all winter for this moment. The firm gravelled bottom, rarely over waist-deep, made ideal wading. The air sang and whined with the whish of their long, <sup>beautiful</sup> careful casts. Not a single pocket or riffle did they miss. Once the short fat one, Hank, perhaps the loveliest fisherman of the lot, got a rise from a big one but missed the strike. They took several more decent brook trout and quite a few youngsters, all of which they carefully returned <sup>to the water.</sup> For they were after the big rainbow. But the big rainbow were not after them.

A half mile or so below the pool they had a smoke and held a council. Hank and <sup>big</sup> Carl decided to shore walk downstream a mile and work back, fishing dry. Raymond and <sup>Dr.</sup> ~~big~~ George continued to work carefully down the broad river, fishing every possible place that could hide a trout, continually changing flies, now tying on this <sup>imported impala</sup> ~~impala~~ tail creation of <sup>Dr.</sup> George's, then perhaps a little polar bear number of Hank's. Finally they rounded a broad bend and could see the other two working up toward them. Still the big rainbow continued to thumb their noses at their best offerings.

The four met again on a little gravel-bar island in midstream, under the shade of a great leaning spruce which stood <sup>swaying precariously</sup> on the undercut south bank. They were all a little downcast.

Carl said, "If it weren't for those two big rises we had, I'd say there weren't any rainbow in this damn river."

"Maybe we had better fish up <sup>stream</sup> and try the pool again," Raymond ventured, remembering his first big strike.

<sup>Dr. George</sup> Hank thought old Dan might be able to show them a <sup>woods</sup> shortcut <sup>to</sup> farther downstream. "If he's still sober enough to walk, that is. I wonder what the old goat is up to now ---"

The answer came abruptly. "Hallo-o-o," they heard, and all looked upstream just as old Dan rounded the far bend, in the middle of the river, leaping through the water as though he had sat on a porcupine, his old fly rod bent double before him, like a graduation hoop, <sup>Dan was</sup> being towed, hauled and tugged by the grandpa of all rainbows, whose <sup>dorsal fin and</sup> snout with its feather duster fly occasionally <sup>showed</sup> above water, <sup>about twenty feet ahead of Dan's</sup> like a spaniel retrieving a bird, ~~twenty feet ahead of Dan.~~

Down, down came this thrashing, splashing, ~~drugged and pole-axed~~ <sup>drugged and pole-axed</sup> apparition toward the transfixed Chicago fishermen, standing there <sup>on</sup> their gravel bar. Dan looked as though he had

been tied to a runaway bloodhound. "Loo'gout -- loo'gout!" Dan shouted, but the fishermen couldn't move. "I knowed it -- I knowed he was in here. Loo'gout, here I come!" he shrilled.

Dan's leader broke -- spung -- just as the huge fish, in the blind fury of his run, charged up onto the gravel-bar, clear out of the water, and lay at the Chicago fishermen's feet, puffing like the winner of a fat man's race, old Dan tight on his tail.

"Grab 'im!" Dan cackled with cold horror, but the Chicago fishermen were beyond all movement, <sup>dove?</sup> as the giant fish made a mighty flop just as shouting old Dan dived through the air, <sup>with the greatest of ease,</sup> making the best flying tackle this side of the Big Ten, landing on top of grandpa -- "whoosh!" -- where <sup>the two of them lay, both</sup> ~~both~~ lay, out like a light.

It took three drinks from Dr. George's flask to bring old Dan around. "Where am I at?" he said, slowly sitting up. <sup>first aid</sup> ~~He~~ <sup>clutched</sup> his side -- the other side, <sup>the game bag of his jumper had come open, scattering rainbow trout everywhere.</sup> "Oo -- oo -- gimme a'nother swaller of that there -- I can't breathe without'n I have another swaller."

Dr. George <sup>carefully</sup> gently fed old Dan another drink. <sup>He spoke softly.</sup> "I guess, Dan -- I guess maybe you cracked four or five more ribs on the other side." Dan sat <sup>up</sup> on the gravel-bar, <sup>blinking his eyes, gulping, looking at all the fish lying around him.</sup> looking at his big fish <sup>which</sup> lay there glistening in the light like a big <sup>wet</sup> silver fox, <sup>stones dead.</sup> Then he looked up at the four Chicago fishermen. He smiled at them, and <sup>shook</sup> winked.

"It kinda looks, lads, like pretty soon the ol' man is gonna run out a ribs. It kinda looks like mebber we ought to go back to camp and kinda celebrate like. What do you say, lads?" <sup>Of the four Chicago fishermen looked at each other and nodded, grinning sheepishly.</sup> Without another word the four Chicago fishermen gently gathered up Dan and his four <sup>trout slowly</sup> rainbows and splashed upstream in the waning sunlight.

Old Dan, <sup>full of the whiskey</sup> thinking of the evening ahead, managed to ~~whisper~~ <sup>old.</sup> sing a little song, of the king of Silver Lake.

"Oh when I'm dead 'n' in my grave,  
No more whiskey will I crave,  
On my tombstone let this be wrote,  
Ten thousand quarts run down his throat!"

E N D



Finnish  
April 3, 1943

Written by:  
John D. Voelker  
Ishpeming, Michigan

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by Robert Traver

Old Dan McGinnis celebrated his seventy-third birthday by walking into the iron-mining town of Hematite from his camp up at remote Silver Lake. One of Makela the Finn's logging trucks picked up the old trapper near the bridge over Barnhardt Creek, so he got into town just at the dusk of a beautiful May evening. This gave him several additional hours to celebrate undisturbed before the party of Chicago fishermen he was to guide would arrive on the Upper Michigan Special.

Following the instructions in a letter from Dr. George, one of the city anglers, old Dan did not go to his usual haunts, but went to await their arrival in the rarified atmosphere of the new Cliff Dwellers Inn. This little red brick colonial hotel looked rather incongruous in the afterglow, pitched on a glacial side hill of one of upper Michigan's most boisterous iron-mining towns. The picture of old Dan entering it did little to relieve the impression.

Dan's letter didn't say that he had to wait in the hotel bar, but it neglected to state that he shouldn't, either -- which probably wouldn't have made any difference, anyway. For old Dan always had a fine instinct for the best place to wait. He immediately discovered the glittering new neon and chromium bar, where he eased his packsack under an unemployed pin-ball machine and, eyebrows and weedy moustache bobbing in synchronized anticipation, loudly ordered a double shot of pile run whiskey.

The chipper young bartender, just fresh from Duluth, superciliously eyed Dan's aromatic red hunting jumper and heavy wool "high water" stag pants and rubber boots. "What do you want for a wash?" he asked.

"Gin!" Dan shot back, and the cocktail-hour stragglers giggled and roared and carelessly flung down their dry Martinis. Spring was in the air.

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all tangled up in the hotel's new rock garden, where he had vaguely wandered, and from which the wiry little Cornish gardener, a mere lad of seventy, was vainly trying to dislodge him.

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"Oo, oo, oo -- 'e 'urted my flowers, 'e did," wailed old Cooky, doing a skinny dance of anger at midnight in the Spring.

The next morning the little old rented Ford and trailer rumbled its thunder over the loose planking of the bridge at Barnhardt Creek, noisily puffing and dragging its four Chicago fishermen and old Dan up to Silver Lake -- together with the mountain of city fishing tackle on the trailer behind. Old Dan sat wedged in the back seat, quietly sipping his stained moustache, occasionally gingerly feeling his side, tapping the armor of Dr. George's adhesive tape around his five freshly-cracked ribs.

"How do you feel now, Dan?" asked Raymond, the driver, one of the Chicago fishermen.

Dan removed his cap and thoughtfully massaged his bald head. The question deserved sober deliberation. His little gray eyes twinkled. "Me, I feel like another drink." He sat up, suddenly all pert and bright. "It ain't rationed yet, is it?" he added hopefully. There was no answer. "Them bloody Japs," he mumbled, swearing quietly to himself.

At the top of the long muddy pull out of the Barnhardt valley before the winding, two-rut road began its long descent into the drainage area of the Big Dead River, Raymond stopped the car. He looked at his watch. It was still forenoon.

"Give him a drink, Doc," Raymond said, with a little sigh.

Dr. George sighed, too, and passed back a quart of whiskey. "Skool!" Dan said, expertly flipping up his moustache with one hand, raising the bottle with the other. He played a long, sustained trumpet note on the bottle -- 'ah' -- and ran his tongue over his moustache, then quickly pulled out each end of his moustache with his free hand, rubbing his hand on his jumper sleeve.

*Meat was the word for Dan.*  
"You boys havin' a snort, too?" he said, conscience-stricken at last.

All of them shook their heads no.

"Dan," Raymond said wearily, like a teacher to a slow but lovable pupil, "we came North over four hundred miles to get some of those big rainbow trout we've been hearing about -- and we're in training for that. Fishing before drinking, see."

"Sure, sure -- sure thing," Dan agreed. "Jes' thought you might, lads. Mind if I have a wee drop more?"

"And it would be kind of nice, Dan, being our guide and all," Carl -- the big fellow -- added wistfully, "if you'd stay sober long enough -- just long enough to kind of show us the river -- --"

But Dan's bald head had sagged to his chest in noisy lip-putting slumber as the Ford threaded its way through the endless spruce cuttings of Makela the Finn. Gradually the descent became steeper, the fishermen passed the last of the cuttings and in the distance loomed the silent, glacier-scarred mountains of the Silver Lake range, their Norway pines tall and still in the clear May sunshine.

Dan woke up for another drink as they clattered over the rushing black waters of Mulligan Creek, just above where it joined the Big Dead. "In less'n an hour we'll be there, lads," he quietly said, and went back to sleep. The little Ford snorted up the steep sand hill out of the Mulligan valley, there was a brief glimpse of the gleaming rocky waters of the Big Dead, and two miles north stretched a broad plateau, the stumps of the once mighty white pine rising out of the sage and huckleberry bushes, giving the immense plain the aspect of a great, unkempt burial ground.

In the distance rose the hardwood-clad hills of Silver Lake, those ancient hills which soon curiously disappeared as they jolted through them, and

left only the tall old hardwood, reaching high overhead, all past its prime, its casualties jumbled everywhere. In the vaulted cool shadows patches of rotten snow still lay melting. Old Dan dwelt in the home of the seven dwarfs.

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After a quick lunch, during which the city fishermen got into their uniforms and argued whether or not to start fishing dry or wet fly, it was decided to start wet from the pool and work down river. Then there was the endless business of dressing their tapered fly lines. Dan was able to secretly spear three drinks during these mighty preparations. At length they were ready to leave the camp to walk over to the pool. Raymond asked Dan if he was going to

fish. Dan was sitting on the sawbuck industriously plucking a hair from his nose.

"Sure, sure, lads. I'll fish a bit after you get started. 'Member, I'm the guide -- payin' gents first."

"But where's your rod? -- your waders and all?" This from Carl.

Dan walked over to the side of the camp and took down a battered fly rod, all set up, which was resting on two rusty nails in the logs under the eave. Each joint was a mass of adhesive tape, like Dan's ribs, the cracked old line already threaded, and on the business end of which was tied a scant two feet of frayed gut leader, all kind of spiralled and curled, like a pig's tail or a tired bedspring. On the end of this chunk of leader was tied a sort of super fly that was faintly reminescent of an old feather duster, the mighty hook itself protruding from the surrounding underbrush like half of a rusty ice tong.

"Won this in a raffle over thirty years ago -- fly 'n' all," Dan said, proudly fondling his little gem.

The Chicago fishermen looked at each other in great wonderment. They were too enchanted for words. Led by Dan, their expert guide, who fished without waders or landing net, they trudged along the trail to the Big Dead pool.

"That's it," Dan said, with dignity, pointing down to the pool. "That's where you start." Their guide was beginning to feel his responsibilities.

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fish. Dan was sitting on the sawbuck industriously plucking a hair from his nose.

"Sure, sure, lads. I'll fish a bit after you get started. 'Member, I'm the guide -- payin' gents first."

"But where's your rod? -- your waders and all?" This from Carl.

Dan walked over to the side of the camp and took down a battered fly rod, all set up, which was resting on two rusty nails in the logs under the eave. Each joint was a mass of adhesive tape, like Dan's ribs, the cracked old line already threaded, and on the business end of which was tied a scant two feet of frayed gut leader, all kind of spiralled and curled, like a pig's tail or a tired bedspring. On the end of this chunk of leader was tied a sort of super fly that was faintly reminiscent of an old feather duster, the mighty hook itself protruding from the surrounding underbrush like half of a rusty ice tong.

"Won this in a raffle over thirty years ago -- fly 'n' all," Dan said, proudly fondling his little gem.

The Chicago fishermen looked at each other in great wonderment. They were too enchanted for words. Led by Dan, their expert guide, who fished without waders or landing net, they trudged along the trail to the Big Dead pool.

"That's it," Dan said, with dignity, pointing down to the pool. "That's where you start." Their guide was beginning to feel his responsibilities.

A faint hint of morning mist still lingered over the pool, which restlessly churned in the deep shadows, hissing and boiling like some giant witch's cauldron.

The four Chicago fishermen looked like a quartet of frantic deep-sea divers as they rapidly clambered down the rocky bank to the pool, clad in their manifold waders, jackets, bibs, landing nets, dangling scissors, gadgets and goggles, all the while delicately holding their glistening fly rods like four fairy godfathers at a convention of wand-wavers. Ambercrombie & Fitch was on the march. Old Dan sat on a rock above them, in the warm sun, leisurely gnawing on a chew of plug, scratching his head, occasionally tenderly feeling his ribs.

Raymond was the first to complete the elaborate ritual of selecting and tying a fly on his long tapered leader. With the expertness of the complete angler he made a few false casts, feeding out line, and finally placed a beautiful thistle cast into the very heart of the pool. There was a silvery flash, the line was taut for an instant, then went limp.

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fish. Dan was sitting on the sawbuck industriously plucking a hair from his nose.

"Sure, sure, lads. I'll fish a bit after you get started. 'Member, I'm the guide -- payin' gents first."

"But where's your rod? -- your waders and all?" This from Carl.

Dan walked over to the side of the camp and took down a battered fly rod, all set up, which was resting on two rusty nails in the logs under the eave. Each joint was a mass of adhesive tape, like Dan's ribs, the cracked old line already threaded, and on the business end of which was tied a scant two feet of frayed gut leader, all kind of spiralled and curled, like a pig's tail or a tired bedspring. On the end of this chunk of leader was tied a sort of super fly that was faintly reminiscent of an old feather duster, the mighty hook itself protruding from the surrounding underbrush like half of a rusty ice tong.

"Won this in a raffle over thirty years ago -- fly 'n' all," Dan said, proudly fondling his little gem.

The Chicago fishermen looked at each other in great wonderment. They were too enchanted for words. Led by Dan, their expert guide, who fished without waders or landing net, they trudged along the trail to the Big Dead pool.

"That's it," Dan said, with dignity, pointing down to the pool. "That's where you start." Their guide was beginning to feel his responsibilities.

A faint hint of morning mist still lingered over the pool, which restlessly churned in the deep shadows, hissing and boiling like some giant witch's cauldron.

The four Chicago fishermen looked like a quartet of frantic deep-sea divers as they rapidly clambered down the rocky bank to the pool, clad in their manifold waders, jackets, bibs, landing nets, dangling scissors, gadgets and goggles, all the while delicately holding their glistening fly rods like four fairy godfathers at a convention of wand wavers. Abercrombie & Fitch was on the march. Old Dan sat on a rock above them, in the warm sun, leisurely gnawing on a chew of plug, scratching his head, occasionally tenderly feeling his ribs.

Raymond was the first to complete the elaborate ritual of selecting and tying a fly on his long tapered leader. With the expertness of the complete angler he made a few false casts, feeding out line, and finally placed a beautiful thistle cast into the very heart of the pool. There was a silvery flash, the line was taut for an instant, then went limp.

"Whoopee!" shouted Raymond. "Cleaned out on my first cast! Whoopee!"

Dan sat quietly spitting tobacco juice at a young grasshopper as the Chicago fishermen got underway. Two of them took fair brook trout on their first few casts. But as Dan watched them fish out of the pool and round the first bend out of sight, no more big rainbow struck.

"Too damn much equipment," Dan observed out loud to the roaring pool, as the fishermen got out of sight. He rose, sighted, spat, and washed out a colony of ants. Shifting his cud he reached in his jumper and fished out a quart of Chicago whiskey, played a long solo to the sun, and hid the bottle under a young spruce. Then he leisurely took himself and his rod down the steep bank to the pool. He sat on the bank and watched the pool, working his cud. He soaked the leader in the water at his feet, slowly feeding out his cracked old fly line.

There were no fish rising. Over his shoulder Dan sighted the sun. It was about to disappear behind a fleecy cloud. He reached in his jumper and pulled out a crust of bread. Breaking off a piece, he tossed it into the pool. There was a quick, silvery flash, Dan casually flipped his bed-spring fly into the pool at this spot and -- clap! -- was on to a beauty. He dropped his rod, pulled in the fish hand over hand, unhooked him, broke his neck, and dropped him into the game bag of his jumper. Again he cast his bread upon the waters. And again not in vain. He had three rainbow, all over two pounds, before the sun came from behind the cloud.

"Guess I'll have me a little drink and meander downstream," Dan said. "Guess the big ones ain't here today. Yup, yup, yup. Guess I'll have me another drink -- mebbe two."



\* \* \*

Meanwhile the city fishermen worked downstream fishing with the ~~earnest~~<sup>easy</sup> precision and grace of finished experts. They'd waited all winter for this moment. The firm gravelled bottom, rarely over waist-deep, made ideal wading. The air sang and whined with the whish of their long, beautiful casts. Not a single pocket or riffle did they miss. Once the short fat one, Hank, perhaps the loveliest fisherman of the lot, got a rise from a big one but missed the strike. They took several more decent brook trout and quite a few youngsters, all of which they carefully returned to the water. For they were after the big rainbow. But the big rainbow were not after them.

A half mile or so below the pool they had a smoke and held a council. Hank and big Carl decided to shore-walk downstream a mile and work back, fishing dry. Raymond and Dr. George continued to work carefully down the broad river, fishing every possible place that could hide a trout, continually changing flies, now tying on this imported impala tail creation of Dr. George's, then perhaps a little polar bear number of Hank's. Finally they rounded a broad bend and could see the other two working up toward them. Still the big rainbow continued to thumb their noses at their best offerings.

The four met again on a little gravel-bar island in midstream, under the shade of a great leaning spruce which stood swaying precariously on the undercut south bank. They were all a little downcast.

Carl said, "If it weren't for those two big rises we had, I'd say there weren't any rainbow in this damn river."

"Maybe we had better fish upstream and try the pool again," Raymond ventured, remembering his first big strike.

Dr. George thought old Dan might be able to show them a woods shortcut to farther downstream. "If he's still sober enough to walk, that is. I wonder what the old goat is up to now -- --"

The answer came abruptly. "Hallo-o-o," they heard, and all looked upstream just as old Dan rounded the far bend, in the middle of the river, leaping through the water as though he had sat on a porcupine, his old fly rod bent double before him, like a graduation hoop. Dan was being towed, hauled and

tugged by the grandpa of all rainbows, whose dorsal fin and snout with its feather duster fly occasionally showed above water about twenty feet ahead of Dan, like a spaniel retrieving a bird.

Down, down came this threshing, splashing apparition toward the transfixed Chicago fishermen, standing there drugged and pole-axed on their gravel bar. Dan, his skinny shanks working like pistons, looked as though he had been tied to a runaway bloodhound. "Loo'gout -- loo'gout!" Dan shouted, but the fishermen couldn't move. "I knowed it -- I knowed he was in here. Loo'gout -- here I come!" he shrilled.

Dan's leader broke -- spung -- just as the huge fish, in the blind fury of his run, charged up onto the gravel bar, clear out of the water, and lay at the Chicago fishermen's feet, puffing like the winner of a fat man's race, old Dan tight on his tail.

"Grab 'im!" Dan cackled with cold horror, but the Chicago fishermen were beyond all movement. The giant fish made a mighty flop just as shouting old Dan dived through the air, with the greatest of ease, making the best flying tackle this side of the Big Ten, landing on top of Grampaw -- "whoosh!" -- where the two of them lay, both out like a light.

It took three drinks from Dr. George's first aid flask to bring old Dan around. "Where am I at?" he said, slowly sitting up. The game bag of his jumper had come open, scattering rainbow trout everywhere. Dan clutched his side -- the other side. "Oo -- oo -- gimme a'nother swaller of that there -- I can't breathe without'n I have a'nother swaller."

Dr. George carefully fed old Dan another drink. He spoke softly. "I guess, Dan -- I guess maybe you cracked four or five more ribs on the other side."

Dan sat up on the gravel bar, blinking his eyes, gulping, looking at all the fish lying around him. But mostly he looked at his big fish which lay there glistening in the light like a big wet silver fox -- stone dead. Then he looked up at the four Chicago fishermen. He smiled at them, and slowly winked.

"It kinda looks, lads, like pretty soon the ol' man is gonna run out a ribs. Yup, yup, yup. It kinda looks like mebbe we ought to go back to camp and kinda celebrate like. What do you say, lads?"

The four Chicago fishermen looked at each other and nodded, grinning sheepishly. Without a word they gently gathered up Dan and his rainbow trout -- including Grampaw -- and slowly splashed upstream in the waning sunlight. Old Dan, full of the visions of the evening ahead, managed to sing a little song. One of the little old ditties of the King of Silver Lake.

"Oh, when I'm dead 'n' in my grave,  
No more whiskey will I crave,  
On my tombstone let this be wrote,  
'Ten thousand quarts run down his throat!'"

SUGGESTED CHANGES TO SCRIPT OF  
"KING OF SILVER LAKE"

- 1: Page 3 -- Add on to end of first paragraph: "Neat was the word for Danny."
- 2: Middle of page 4 -- "aluminum" misspelled.
- 3: Page 8, 2nd paragraph -- Add: "his spindly shanks working like pistons," so that the sentence reads, "Dan, his spindly shanks working like pistons, looked as though he had been tied to a runaway bloodhound."
- 4: Page 8, 4th paragraph -- Change "grandpa" to "Grampaw," so that it reads, "..... landing on top of Grampaw."
- 5: Page 8, 5th paragraph -- Put an apostrophe in "another" in last line of paragraph, so that it reads, "a'nother swaller."
- 6: Page 9, 3rd line from top -- Change "kina" to "kinda."
- 7: Page 9, 2nd line of 2nd paragraph -- Strike the word "four" and in third line add the words " -- including Grampaw -- " so that the revised sentence reads as follows: "Without a word they gently gathered up Dan and his rainbow trout -- including Grampaw -- and slowly splashed upstream in the waning sunlight."
- 8: Page 9, last sentence before the verse -- Capitalize the "k" in "King of Silver Lake."

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Suggestions

Strike "four" rainbow, P. 9

Fix "another" P. 8

Capitalize "King" at end P. 9.

Including  
"Gumpaw" = P. 9

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"Aluminum" P. 4

kinda P. P. 9.