

LLSTER DEL RET

The Pipes of Pan

"Beyond the woods on either side were kept fields and fertile farm land, but here the undergrowth ran down to the dirt road and hid the small plot of tilled ground, already overrun with weeds. Behind that, concealed by thicker scrub timber lay a rude log house. Only the trees around, that had sheltered it from the heavy winds, had kept it from crumbling long before.

Pan recognized the lazy retreat to nature that had replaced his strong worship of old. He moved carefully through the tangled growth that made way for him, his cloven hoofs clicking sharply on the stones. It was a thin and saddened god that approached the house and gazed in through a hole that served as a window.

Inside, Frank Emmet lay on a rude pallet on the floor, a bag of his possessions beside him. Across from him was a stone fireplace, and between the two, nothing. A weak hand moved listlessly, brushing aside the vermin that knew his sickness; perhaps they sensed that the man was dying, and their time was short. He gave up and reached for a broken crock that contained water, but the effort was too great.

"Pan!" The man's voice reached out, and the god stepped away from the window and through the warped doorway. He moved to the pallet and leaned over his follower. The man looked up.

"Pan!" Emmet's words were startled, but there was a reverent note in his labored voice, though another might have mistaken the god for a devil. The tangled locks of Pan's head were separated by two goat horns and the thin sharp face ended in a ragged beard that seemed the worse for the weather. Then the neck led down to a bronzed torso that might have graced Hercules, only to end in the hips and legs of a goat, covered with shaggy hair. Horror and comedy mingled grotesquely, except for the eyes, which were deep and old, filled now with pity.

Pan nodded. "You've been calling me, Frank Emmet, and it's a poor god that wouldn't answer the appeal of his last worshiper. All the others of your kind have deserted me for newer gods, and only you are left, now."

It was true enough. Over the years, Pan had seen his followers fall off and dwindle until his great body grew lean and his lordly capering among the hills became a slow march toward extinction. Now even this man was dying. He lifted the tired head and held the crock of water to Emmet's mouth.

"Thanks!" The man mulled it over slowly. "So when I'm gone, there's no others. If I'd 'a' known, Pan, I might have raised up kids to honor your name, but I thought there were others. Am I—"

"Dying," the god answered. The blunt truth was easier than half-believed lies.

"Then take me outside, where the sun can shine on me."

Pan nodded and lifted him easily, bearing him out as gently as a mother might her child, but a spasm of pain shot over the man's face as Pan laid him down. The time was almost up, the god knew. From a pocket in his tattered loincloth he drew out a small syrinx, or pipe of seven reeds, and blew softly across it. A bird heard the low murmuring melody and improvised a harmony, while a cricket marked time in slow chirps.

Emmet's face relaxed slowly and one of his hands came out to lie on the hairy thigh. "Thanks, Pan. You've always been a good god to me, and I'm hoping you'll have good 1—" The voice trailed away and disappeared into the melody of the syrinx. Pan rose slowly, drawing a last lingering note from it, dropped the arm over the still chest and closed the eyes. Nearby was a rusty spade, and the earth was soft and moist.

Pan's great shoulders drooped as he wiped the last of the earth from his hands. Experimentally, he chirped at the cricket, but there was no response, and he knew that the law governing all gods still applied. When the last of their worshipers were gone, they either died or were forced to eke out their living in the world of men by some human activity. Now there would be hunger to satisfy, and in satisfying it, other needs of a life among men would present themselves.

Apollo was gone, long since, choosing in his pride to die, and the other gods had followed slowly, some choosing work, some death. But they had at least the advantage of human forms, while he knew himself for a monster his own mother had fled from. But then, the modern clothes were more concealing than the ancient ones.

Inside the house he found Emmet's other clothes, more or less presentable, and a hunting knife and soap. Men were partial to their own appearance, and horns were a stigma among them. Reluctantly, he brought the knife up against the base of one, cutting through it. Pain lanced through him at first, but enough of his godhead remained to make the stumps heal over almost instantly. Then the other one, followed by the long locks of his hair. He combed it out and hacked it into such form as he could.

As the beard came away he muttered ungodly phrases at the knife that took off skin with the hair. But even to his own eyes, the smooth-shaven face was less forbidding. The lips, as revealed, were firm and straight, and the chin was good, though a mark of different color showed where the beard had been.

He fingered his tail thoughtfully, touching it with the blade of the knife, then let it go; clothes could hide it, and Pan had no love for the barren spine that men regarded as a mark of superiority. The tail must stay. Shoes were another problem, but he solved it by carving wooden feet to fit them, and making holes for his hoofs. By lacing them on firmly, he found half an hour's practice enough to

teach him to walk. The underclothes, that scratched against the hair on his thighs and itched savagely,

were another factor he had no love for, but time might improve that.

Hobbling about in the rough walk his strange legs necessitated, he came on a few pieces of silver in another broken crock and pocketed them. From the scraps of conversation he had heard, work was hard enough for men to find, and he might need this small sum before he found occupation. Already hunger was creeping over him, or he guessed it was hunger. At least the vacuum in his stomach was as abhorrent to him as to nature. Heretofore, he had supped lightly on milk and honey as the moon suited him, but this was a man-sized craving.

Well, if work he must, work he would. The others had come to it, such as still lived. Ishtar, or Aphrodite, was working somewhere in the East as a nursemaid, though her old taste for men still cost her jobs as fast as she gained them. Pan's father, Hermes, had been working as ^Postal Telegraph boy the last he'd seen of him. Even Zeus, proudest of all, wa? doing an electrician's work somewhere, leaving only Ares still thriving in full god-head. What his own talents might be, time alone would tell, but the rippling muscles of his body must be put to some good usage. (

Satisfied that there was no more he\could do, he trotted out and plowed his way through the underbrush that failed to make way for him as it should have. He jingled the money in one pocket thoughtfully as he hit the road, then drew out the syrinx and began a reedy tune of defiance on it. Work there must be, and he'd find it.

It was less than half an hour later, but the god's feet were already aching in the tight boxes he had made for them, and his legs threatened to buckle under the effort it took to ape man's walk. He moved past the ugly square house and toward the barn where the farmer was unhitching his team.

"Handout or work?" The man's voice was anything but enthusiastic.

"I'm looking for work."

"Uh-huh. Well, you do look strong enough. Living near the city the way I do, I get a lot of fellows in here, figuring they can always work in the country. But their arms wouldn't make toothpicks for a jaybird. Know anything about farming?"

"Something." It was more in Demeter's line, but he knew something about everything that grew. "I'm not asking more than room and board and a little on the side."

The farmer's eyes were appraising. "You do look as if you'd seen fresh air, at that. And you're homely enough to be honest. Grab a-holt here, and we'll talk it over. I don't rightly need a man, but—Hey! Whoa, there!"

Pan cursed silently. His god-head was still clinging to him, and the horses sensed the urge to wildness that was so intimately a part of him. As his hands fell on the tugs, they reared and bucked, lunging against their collars. He caught at the lines to steady them, but they flattened back their ears and

whinnied wildly. That was enough; Pan moved back and let the farmer quiet them.

"Afraid I can't use you." The words were slow and decisive. "I use a right

smart amount of horseflesh here, and some people just don't have the knack with them; animals are funny that way—temperamental, you might call it. Easy, there, Nelly. Tried any other places?"

"All the other farms along the road; they're not hiring hands."

"Hm-m-m. Wouldn't be, of course. Bunch of city men. Think they can come out and live in the country and do a little farming on the side. If I had the money, I'd sell out and move somewhere where people knew what the earth was made for. You won't find any work around here." He slapped a horse on the withers and watched as it stretched out and rolled in the short grass. "Stay for lunch?"

"No." He wasn't hungry enough to need food yet, and the delay might cost him a job elsewhere. "Any sheepherding done around here?" As the god of the shepherds, it should come natural to him, and it was work that would be more pleasant than the tight closeness of the city.

"Not around here. Out West they have, but the Mexicans do all that. If you're a sheep man, though, that's why the horses didn't take to you; they hate the smell of sheep."

Again the limitations of a human life imposed themselves; instead of transporting himself to the sheepherding country in a night, he'd have to walk there slowly, or ride. "How much would it cost to go out West?"

"Blamed if I know. Seventy dollars, maybe more."

So that was out. It would have to be the city, after all, where the fetid stench of close-packed humans tainted the air, and their meaningless yammering beat incessantly in one's ears. "I guess I'll have to go on into town," he said ruefully.

"Might be best. Nowadays, the country ain't what it used to be. Every fool that fails in town thinks he can fall back on the country, and every boy we have that amounts to anything goes to the city. Machinery's cutting down the number of men we need, and prices are shot haywire, even when a mortgage doesn't eat up all we make. You traveling on Shank's Mare?"

Pan nodded, and the other studied him again. "Uh-huh. Well, down the road a piece you'll see a brick house set away back from the road. Go in there and tell Hank Sherman I said you was a friend of mine. He's going into the city, and you might as well ride. Better hurry, though."

Pan made his thanks hastily, and left. If memory served him right, the friendliness of the farmer was the last he'd see. In the cities, even in the old days, men were too busy with their own importance and superiority to bother with others. But beggars made ill choosers.

The god clumped down the hot sidewalk, avoiding the press of the one o'clock rush, and surveyed the signs thoughtfully. Food should come first, he guessed, but the prices were discouraging. One read:

BUSINESS MAN'S LUNCH Blue plate special, 750

He cut away from the large street into an older part of the city, and found that the prices dropped steadily. Finally a sign that suited his pocketbook came into

view, and he turned in, picking the only vacant booth. Now he was thankful for the time he'd believed wasted in studying men's ways.

The menu meant little to him. He studied it carefully, and decided that the safest course was to order one of their combinations. Fish—no, that was food for Poseidon. But the lamb plate looked better, and the price fell within his means. "Lamb," he ordered.

The waitress shifted her eyes from the man behind the counter and wrote it down in the manner of all waitresses who expect no tip from the customer. "Coffeetearmilk?" she asked. "Rollerwhiterrye?"

"Eh? Oh, milk and roll." Pan had a word for her type in several languages, and was tempted to use it. As a god—but he wasn't a god now, and men no longer respected their gods, anyway. The cashier eyed his clothes thoughtfully until he moved in irritation, jingling the few coins in his pocket. Then she went back to her tickets, flipping gum from one tooth to another in an abstract manner.

The food, when it came, was—S: soggy-looking mess, to him, but that was true of all human food, and he supposed it was good enough. At least the plate was better filled than those he had seen through the windows of the more expensive places, and Pan's appetite was immense. He stuffed half a roll in his mouth and chewed on it quickly.

Not bad; in fact, he might grow to like this business of eating. His stomach quieted down and made itself at home, while another half bun followed the first. As he started to pick up the cut of meat and swallow it, he caught the eyes of another diner, and rumbled unhappily. Should he know the sissies nipped off shavings with their knives and minced the food down? But he put the meat back on the plate and fell to as they did. It was best to ape them.

"Mind if I sit here, old-timer?" Pan looked up at a clean-cut young man. "The other booths are filled, you know."

Where the man sat was no business of his. The seat opposite him was vacant, and he motioned to it. "I didn't buy it, and your face isn't misshapen. Sit down."

The other grinned good-naturedly and inspected the menu. "Lamb any good?"

"Seems all right." He was no judge of food, naturally, but it wasn't burned, and he had seen no dirt on it. At least his stomach was satisfied. He cleaned the last of the gravy from his plate with a bun and transferred it to his mouth. "At least, it partly fills a man."

"O.K., lamb it is." This time the waitress showed more interest, and even brought water, a thing she'd neglected before. "Make it lamb, sugar. And a beer. How about you, stranger?"

"Eh?" Unless he was mistaken, that was an invitation, and a welcome one. It was long years since he'd had a chance to sample even the anemic brew of the modern world, but that had been none of his choosing.

"Have a beer?"

"Why not?" As an after-thought, he added an ungodlike thanks. The man was likable, he decided, though friendship among city men was not what he had expected. "You wouldn't know about work in this city, would you—uh?"

"Bob Bailey."

"Men call me Pan—or Faunus, sometimes."

"Pan Faunus, eh? Tried the want ads yet, or the employment agencies?" Bailey pulled a folded paper from his pocket and handed it over. "There might be a job in the back there. What kind of work?"

"Whatever I can do." He began at the bottom and skimmed up the list from xylophone players to bartenders. "But nothing they have here. I'm supposed to be good at herding and playing the syrinx, but that's about all."

"Syrinx?" He inspected the instrument Pan held out, and amusement danced in his eyes. "Oh, that. Afraid it wouldn't do, Mr. Faunus. You don't happen to play the clarinet?"

"Never tried it."

"Then you don't. I'm looking for someone who does, right now, for my band— Bob Bailey's Barnstormers. Ever heard of it? Well, you're not the only one. Since we lost the best daradest clarinetist in the business, we've slipped plenty. Playing the third-rate spots now with the substitute we had to hire. Corny? Wheoo! He used to be on the Lady Lee Lullaby hour, and never got over it."

"Why not get a good one then?" The talk made little sense to the god, but the solution seemed obvious.

"Where? We get plenty of applicants—there's an ad in there now. But they'd either soothe the jitterbugs to sleep or rattle the strings off the dog house. Not a good clear tone in the bunch. All the good guys are signed up, or starting their own outfits."

They finished the beers and Pan counted out the amount marked on his ticket, estimating the length of time what was left would last; two days maybe, by going half hungry. He grunted. "Where are these employment agencies you mentioned?"

"One just down the street. It's a United States' employment center, and won't try to rob you. Good luck, Faunus."

"And to you. My thanks for the beer." Then they separated, and Pan headed down the street toward the mecca of the jobless. The ads had all called for training of some sort, but there must be other work in this town that needed no previous experience. Perhaps meeting two friendly men in one day was a good omen. He hoped so.

The girl at the desk, when he finally found the right division, looked as bored as had the waitress. Looking over the collection of people waiting, Pan felt she had more reason. There were the coarsened red faces of professional sots, the lack-luster stares of men whose intelligence ranked slightly below the apes, and the dreary faces of people who struggle futilely for a life that brings nothing but death to break its monotony.

But there were others there who looked efficient and purposeful, and these were the ones Pan feared. They had at least some training, some experience, and their appearance was better than his. Surely the preference would go to them, and even as a minority, there were still many of that type there.

He studied the applicants and strained his ears to familiarize himself with the questions asked, holding down his impatience as best he could. But the machine

ground slowly on. and his lime finally came, just as (he hot fetid air was becoming unbearable. "Your name," said the girl studying him impersonally.

"Pan—Pan Faunus."

Many strange names had passed over the desk to her, and her expression remained the same. "Middle name?"

"Uh . . . Sylvanus." The Romans had done him a good turn in doubling up on their names for him though he preferred the Greek.

"Address?"

For a moment, that stumped him. Thence gave the address of the restaurant, figuring that he might be able to arrange with the cashier to accept any mail that came there; he'd heard another man talking or that scheme while he waited, and it was as good as any. 1

"Age?"

"Seven thou— Ulp! Forty-five." Since a pack of lies were needed of him, they might as well be good ones. "Born June 5, 1894."

There were more questions, and at some of his answers the girl looked up sharply, but his wits had always been good, and he passed the test with some fair success. Then came what he had been dreading.

"Experience and type of work?"

"General work in the country," he decided. "No trade, and I can't give references, since my former foil— employer is dead."

"Social Security Number?"

"Eh?" He had been hearing that asked of the applicants, but it still meant nothing to him. "I don't have one."

"Sorry." She nodded. "Naturally you wouldn't, as a farmhand. You'll have to have a card, though. Get that as soon as you find work."

Finally it was done, and he was sent into a cubbyhole where a man asked more questions and made marks on a piece of paper. Some of his answers were true; Hermes was his father, at least. Even that questioning came to a final end that left him sweating and cursing the underclothes that itched again in the hot room. The man leaned back and surveyed him.

"We haven't much of a job for you, Mr. Faunus. As a matter of fact, you'd probably do much better in the country where you came from. But"—he searched through his records—"this call just came in for an office boy, and they want someone of your age, for some reason. It pays only \$12.50 a week, but they didn't mention experience. Want to try it?"

Pan nodded emphatically and blessed the luck that had opened the job at precisely the right moment; he'd seen enough others turned away to know how small his chances were. He wasted no time in taking the little address slip and tracking the job to its lair.

Late afternoon found him less enthusiastic about the work. The air in the office was thick and stuffy, and there was an incessant thudding from the typewriters, jarring of the comptometer, and the general buzz that men think necessary to business. He leaned over on the table, taking some of the ache from his tired feet and cursing the endless piles of envelopes that needed sealing and stamping.

This was work for a fool or one of the machines men were so proud of. Pick up an envelope, draw one finger under the flap to lift it, roll the flap over the wet roller, and close it with the other hand as it came off. Lift, roll, seal, lift, roll, seal. No wonder men shut themselves in tight houses, away from the good,

clean winds and light of the sun; they were ashamed of what served for life among them, and with good reason.

But if it had to be done, he was willing to try. At first, the exultation of getting the work had served to keep his mind from it. Lying and deceit were not his specialty, and only a driving urge to adapt himself had made him use them to the extent that had been necessary. Now the men had put him on work that shriveled the mind, and did the muscles no good.

The old office boy came up to inspect his work, and Pan understood, looking at him, why the manager no longer wanted boys. The kid didn't know as yet that his job was being taken over, but thought he was in line for promotion, and was cocky enough for two. He seized the envelope rudely and ran it over the roller with a flourish.

"Awful dumb help they're sending out these days," he told the air. "Now I told you these had to go out tonight, and I find you loafing. Keep moving. You don't catch me laying down on the job. Ain't you never had work before?"

Pan looked at him, a side-long glance that choked off the kid's words, and fell to on the envelopes again. The air was getting the best of him. His head felt numb and thick, and his whole body was logy and dull. With what was supposed to be a chummy air, the boy sat his overgrown body on the desk and opened up his reservoir of personal anecdotes.

"Boy, you should 'a' been with me last night. Good-looking babes— Hm-m-m! Maybe they didn't like me, too. One little baby'd seen me work on the football team last year, and that didn't do me any harm. Best high school team in the State we had. You like football, guy?"

Pan's lips twitched. "No!" He redid an envelope that hadn't been properly wetted and reviewed the reasons for not committing mayhem on the boy. They were good reasons, but their value was depreciating with the passage of time in the stinking office, and with each new visit from the boy. The direct bluntness he longed to use came out a little in his voice, and the kid bounced off the table, scowling.

"O.K., don't let it get you. Hey, whatda you think stamps are? Don't tear them that way. Some of you hicks are ignorant enough to eat them."

The god caught himself on the table again, throbbing pains running through his head. There was a conference around the manager's desk and cigar smoke was being added to the thickness of the room. He groped out behind him for a stool, and eased himself down on it. Something sharp cut into him, and brought him up with a wild bellow!

The boy giggled. "Dawgonne, I didn't think you'd fall for it. Oldest trick there is, and you still sat right down on that tack. Boy, you should 'a' seen yourself."

Pan wasn't seeing himself, but he was seeing red. Homeric Greek is probably the most expressive of all languages, and his command of it included a good deal

Homer had forgotten to mention. With a sharp leap, his head came down and his body jerked forward. He missed the horns, now, but his hard skull on the boy's midsection served well enough.

Sudden confusion ran through the office, and the manager rose quickly from his chair and headed toward the scene. Pan's senses were returning and he knew it was time to leave. The back door opened on an alley and he didn't wait to ask for directions.

The outer air removed the last traces of his temper and sobered him down, but there was no regret in his mind. What was done was done, and there was no room in his philosophy for regrets. Of course, word of it would get back to the employment agency, and he'd have no more jobs from them, but he wanted no more of such jobs. Maybe Apollo had the right idea in dying.

He made a slow meal in the restaurant, noting that Bailey was not there. He'd liked that young man. With a rush of extravagance, he bought a beer for himself and hung around, half waiting in hopes of Bailey's appearance and half planning for tomorrow; but nothing came of his plans.

Finally he got up and moved out into a little park across from the restaurant, just as darkness began to replace the twilight. Sleeping accommodations were the least of his worries. He found a large bush which concealed his body, and lay down on the ground under it. Sleep came quickly.

When he awoke, he found himself better for the sleep, though the same wasn't true of his clothes. He located his shoes and clamped his hoofs into them again, muttering dark thoughts about cobblers in general. If this kept up, he'd get bog spavins yet.

He made his way across to the restaurant again, where the waitress who was on at that hour regarded him with less approval than the other had. Out of the great pity of her heart, her actions said, she'd condescend to serve him, but she'd be the last to object to his disappearance. The sweet bun he got must have been well chosen for dryness.

"Hello there, old-timer." Bob Bailey's easy voice broke in on his gloom as the young man sat down opposite him. His eyes studied the god's clothes, and he nodded faintly to himself, but made no comment. "Have any luck yesterday?"

"Some, if you'd call it that." Pan related his fortunes shortly. Bailey grinned faintly.

"The trouble with you," Bailey said around a mouthful of eggs, "is that you're a man; employers don't want that. They want machines with self-starters and a high regard for so-called business ideals. Takes several years to inculcate a man with the proper reverence for all forms of knuckling under. You're supposed to lie down and take it, no matter how little you like it."

"Even empty fools who hold themselves better than gods?"

"That or worse; I know something about it myself. Stood all I could of a two-bit, white-collar job before I organized the Barnstormers."

Pan considered the prospect, and wondered how long it would take him to starve. "Slavery isn't what I'm looking for. Find your musician?"

"Not a chance. When they've got rhythm, they don't bother learning to play; and most of them don't have it. Smoke?"

Pan took the cigarette doubtfully, and mimicked the other's actions. He'd seen men smoking for centuries now, but the urge to try it had never come to him. He coughed over the first puff, letting out a bleat that startled the couple in the next booth, then set about mastering this smoke-sucking. Once the harsh sting of the tobacco was gone, there was something oddly soothing about it, and his vigorous good health threw off any toxic effect it might have had.

Bob finished his breakfast, and picked up the checks. "On me, Faunus," he said. "The shows should open in a few minutes. Want to take one in?"

Pan shook his head vigorously. The close-packed throng of humans in a dark theater was not his idea of a soothing atmosphere. "I'm going over to the park again. Maybe in the outdoor air, I can find some idea."

"O.K., we'll make it a twosome, if it's all right with you. Time to kill is about the only thing I have now." As he paid the checks, Pan noticed that the man's pocketbook was anything but overflowing, and guessed that one of Bailey's difficulties was inability to pay for a first-class musician.

They found a bench in the shade and sat down together, each thinking of his own troubles and mulling over the other's. It was the best way in the world of feeling miserable. Above them in a tree, a bird settled down to a high, bubbling little song and a squirrel came over to them with the faint hopes of peanuts clearly in its mind.

Pan clucked at it, making clicking sounds that brought its beady little eyes up at him quickly. It was a fat well-fed squirrel that had domesticated man nicely for its purposes, and there was no fear about it. When even the animals had learned to live with man and like it, surely a god could do as well.

He tapped his thighs slowly and felt the syrx under his hand. The squirrel regarded him carefully as he drew it out, saw there was no bag of peanuts there, and started to withdraw. The first low notes blown from the reeds called it back, and it sat down on its tail, paws to its mouth in a rapt attitude that aped a critic listening to Bach.

Pan took courage, and the old bluff laughter fell from his lips. He lifted the syrx again and began a

wild quick air on the spur of the moment, letting the music roam through the notes as it would. There was no set tempo, but his feet tapped lightly on the graveled path, and the bird fell in step.

Bailey looked up quickly, his fingers twitching at the irregular rhythm. There was a wildness to it, a primitiveness that barely escaped savagery, and groped out toward man's first awareness of the fierce wild joy of living. Now the notes formed into a regular cadence that could be followed, and Bailey whistled an impromptu harmony. The squirrel swayed lightly from side to side, twitching his tail.

"Jitterbug, isn't he?" Bob asked, as Pan paused. "I've never seen music hit an animal that way before. Where'd you learn the piece?"

"Learn it?" Pan shook his head. "Music isn't learned—it's something that comes from inside."

"You mean you made that up as you went along? Whew! But you can play a regular tune, can't you?" \

"I never tried." \

"Uh. Well, here's one." He pursed his lips and began whistling one of the swingy popular things his orchestra played at, but never hit. Pan listened to it carefully, only half sure he liked it, then put the syrx to his lips, beat his foot for time, and repeated it. But there were minor variations that somehow lifted it and set the rhythm bouncing along, reaching out to the squirrel and making its tail twitch frenziedly.

Bailey slapped him on the back, grinning. "Old-timer," he chuckled, "you've got the corniest instrument there is, but you can roll it down the groove. I'd like to have the boys hear what a real hepeat can do to a piece."

Pan's face was blank, though the voice seemed approving. "Can't you speak English?"

"Sure. I'm telling you you're hot. Give the jitterbugs an earful of that and top-billing would follow after. Come on!"

Pan followed him, uncertain. "Where?"

"Over to the boys. If you can wrap your lips around a clarinet the way you do that thing, our worries are over. And I'm betting you can."

It was their last night's engagement at the Grotto a month later, and Pan stood up, roaring out the doggerel words in a deep rich basso that caught and lifted the song. Strictly speaking, his voice was a little too true for swing, but the boisterous jaganism in it was like a beat note from a tuba, something that refused to permit feet to be still. Then it ended, and the usual clamor followed. His singing was a recent experiment, but it went over.

Bob shook hands with himself and grinned. "Great, Pan! You're hot tonight." [Tien he stepped to the microphone. "And now, for our last number, folks, I'd like to present a new tune for the first time ever played. It's called 'The Gods Got Rhythm,' and we think you'll like it. Words and music by Tin Pan Faunus, the idol of the Jitterbugs. O.K., Tin Pan, take it!"

Pan cuddled the clarinet in his mouth and watched the crowd stampede out onto the floor. Bob winked at him, and he opened up, watching the dancers. This was like the rest, a wild ecstasy that refused to let them stay still. Primitive, vital, every nerve alive to the music. Even the nymphs of old had danced less savagely to his piping.

One of the boys passed a note over to his knee, and he glanced at it as he played. "Boys, we're set. Peterson just gave Bob the signal, and that means three months at the Crystal Palace. Good-by blues."

Pan opened up, letting the other instruments idle in the background, and went in for a private jam session of his own. Out on the floor were his worshipers, every step an act of homage to him. Homage that paid dividends, and was as real in its way as the sacrifices of old; but that was a minor detail. Right now he was

It.

He lifted the instrument higher, drawing out the last wild ecstasy from it. Under his clothes, his tail twitched sharply, but the dancers couldn't see that, and wouldn't have cared if they had. Tin Pan Faunus, Idol of the Jitterbugs, was playing, and that was enough.