

Cloudy in the South---

The sombre, dread tones of the Junior Warden's voice sound the death knell to years of hopes, dreams and aspirations. With methodic, ritualistic precision the building of Hope collapses as the "Dark," "Black," follow through from the other two Principals.

Fifty strained faces of the members lean forward and scan the row of empty staves. An electric shock fills the air. Who did it? How many? Why? Had not the committee reports been favorable? Friends and well-wishers had spoken kind words about the candidate, and even gone so far as to read certificates of his innocence even in the insecurity of his early manhood.

The stage is somehow ghostly familiar to the same scene once before in this same hall, not too long ago. A nightmarish repetition of that same dread tone, "Cloudy . . ." History had been repeated. It was the same then, the committee reports all favorable, seven Masons had attested by signatures on his application to his fidelity and right to participation in the fraternal order, and three on the committee said the same.

The total then of masons favorably vouching for the candidate—seven and three, seven and three. A total of fourteen recommenders and six committee members staked their professions and reputations on his worth.

But wait, a vote again. That means only one bad, a possible error. Or does this voter think the other twenty men didn't know what they were doing? This time will tell if the Black Death was dropped by mistake. A few quick, earnest prayers go up, gnashing of teeth—march around. Perhaps it was an accident . . . Hope . . .

"Display the ballots!" Pause. "Cloudy . . ." Death! Finally and conclusively, buried in some oblivion of who knows what, and for what reasons? A family ashamed, confused, pitiful, and the reason unexplainable.

Will he come forward? Why hasn't he come forward? What does he know that twenty serious-minded men weren't able to find out in months of investigations? Couldn't he have made his thoughts known to the Worshipful Master? Perhaps it could have resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. These twenty men were confused and misled, is that it? Who know?

Who knows indeed? The Supreme Grand Master and the All-Seeing Eye weigh in the balance. Such is not for Earthly compromise. Let it be His mysterious prerogative then to judge, what was in the mind of this wielder of Black Death as his apron proudly flapped while he dealt the blow. May he be prepared to bare his soul at Another Lodge some day and explain his deed. LAH