Some Publications of
Caleb Kriesberg

This website is intended mainly for my undergraduate composition students, who may be interested in some of my publications that are not readily available elsewhere on the Internet. Responses to this material may be sent to Englishingle@aol.com
(To see some of the variety of topics and nonfiction sources that the students may choose to write about, view the Course Related Page, http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/~psemple/lib/_en101_kriesberg.html)

“Stability for Colombia”
Background: Neither Colombians nor U.S. citizens I spoke with expressed much support for my proposal at the time of this letter’s publication. Over the next year, I had the opportunity to meet a former president of Peru, who explained that many countries in Latin America did not permit the immediate re-election of a president because of concern about corruption evolving in a governing administration. A year-and-a-half after this letter was published, Colombia changed its constitution in the direction I suggested. I hope the reform is beneficial.

“Evaluation in the U.S. General Services Administration”
New Directions in Program Evaluation, Fall 1992
Background: Evaluation assumes that people are not perfect, there may be ethical, legal, or organizational expectations, and we may not know how others view us or whether we have succeeded at a task. Evaluation can be stressful, as any student receiving grades may know. Evaluation in large organizations can be a multi-faceted enterprise. In the U.S. government, there may be multiple parties, such as clients and supervisors, having different needs and criteria. Finally, philosophies of evaluation can change.
"In a Dwarf’s Mind"
Adapted from Scholastic Scope Magazine, April 17, 1973

To teachers: Literature written by adults for children may be called “children’s literature”. But is there literature written by children for both other children and for adults? If so, this selection might best be appreciated as belonging to that genre. Maybe you could use the story in your classroom.

To students: I would encourage you to share your creative writing with an interested teacher – especially if there is a relevant assignment. Maybe the teacher could help you publish your writing.

To all readers: This short story or novella, originally titled “The Raven in a Dwarf,” was published, in condensed version in Scholastic Scope after winning its national competition when I was a teenager. The entire story appears, with permission of Scholastic Scope, for the first time on this website. For the impetus of bringing this narrative to original publication, I credit my ninth grade school teacher, Ms. Wilma Stiles. She used the magazine version as part of her class lessons for many years.

Some stories I had read at the time, that influenced my writing, were Hinton’s That Was Then, This Is Now, Jack London’s “Love of Life” and “To Build a Fire,” Poe’s “Cask of Amontillado,” Steinbeck’s “Red Pony,” and Tolkien’s Hobbit and Lord of the Rings. These stories have some typical male heroes and relatively few female characters. This was also a period when “magical realism” was popular. Marquez’s Hundred Years of Solitude, which I had not yet read, appeared a few years earlier.

Note: This story is rather long for the Internet, and if you do not like any of the above stories, or if you are not interested in dwarves, dungeons, and dangers, you probably would not like this story of mine, either!
Stability for Colombia

Having lived in Colombia, I read with interest the May 13 op-ed column “Colombia Off the Back Burner,” which spoke of “the state’s chronic weakness.”

For more than a century, the president of Colombia has been forbidden to seek an immediate second term; currently a president serves four years. This arrangement minimizes presidential accountability and may fuel the country’s tendency to polarize left and right, as extremists of both sides agitate to influence the country. In this month’s presidential election, for example, none of the candidates has been from the party of the outgoing president.

A constitutional change allowing reelection might not have an immediate effect in Colombia, but it could foster stability and a better connection between the government and the public. Many Colombians are marvelously supportive of friends and neighbors. One tragedy for any country, especially in civil war, is to have public apathy and a lack of civic involvement.

CALEB KRIESBERG
Over time, the General Services Administration evaluation functions have been decentralized throughout the management structure and have become more sharply focused on management issues, partly in response to cuts in budget and personnel.

Evaluation in the General Services Administration: Adapting for Greater Efficiency and Utility

Caleb Kriesberg

As the federal government’s primary manager of government property, the General Services Administration (GSA) is constantly concerned with the cost and quality of services rendered to the government.

Organization and Structure of Evaluation

The GSA is one of the federal government’s main business managers. It is organized into four services: Federal Supply, Federal Property Resources, Public Buildings, and Information Resources Management. Evaluation in the broadest sense is practiced by the managers in the services whenever they judge the suitability of a contract, the adequacy of a building, or the quality of equipment. But evaluation as program or mission assessment is centered in three of the agency’s offices outside the services: Office of the Inspector General, Office of Administration, and Office of the Chief Financial Officer.

The agency’s inspector general, like all inspectors general, is a member of the President’s Council on Integrity and Efficiency. The Office of the Inspector General manages the agency’s internal audit function and conducts both external and internal evaluation. There are regional inspectors general for auditing and for investigations located at each of GSA’s regional headquarters. The Office of Administration includes the largest number and greatest diversity of evaluation functions in GSA. The office is the GSA’s liaison for General Accounting Office (GAO) audits and is an important
reviewer of inspector general audits. It includes, in part, the Office of Management Controls and Evaluation, the Personnel Office, and the Office of Quality Management and Training. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer functions to ensure that proper financial controls are in place to achieve compliance with the congressionally mandated Chief Financial Officers Act of 1991. This act requires that financial monitoring and reporting systems be established and that regular reports be prepared to track agency handling of financial accounts.

Other areas of the agency also relate to or employ the evaluation function. The Office of Policy Analysis, at the direction of GSA's administrator, is not involved directly with program evaluation but deals with policy analysis and assessment, and with management reform and planning for the agency as a whole that reflect the result of the agency's evaluations. It also deals with policy issues at the agency level and among the agency, other agencies, and the executive branch in general. The Office of Ethics and Civil Rights can advise managers on ethics as it pertains to evaluation and the issues of fraud and abuse.


In the 1980s, due in part to the Reagan administration's interest in reducing the size of the federal government and to the federal government's attempt to reduce the federal deficit, the size and budget of GSA became smaller. From 1982 to 1991, the agency went from about thirty thousand to about twenty thousand employees. The GSA moved many of its evaluation functions through different offices and titles, in part in response to reduction in resources but also in response to changing views of evaluation and changing needs and interests of new managers. For example, in the 1980s, changes in the leadership of the agency immediately led to the replacement of one evaluation office with another. Much of this change is summarized in Table 11.1.

During the past decade, the agency added the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and the Office of Administration. It also established, and abolished, the Office of Oversight, the Office of Policy and Management Systems, and the Office of Management Services, all of which had evaluation functions (see Table 11.1). Over time, the main seat of the evaluation function came to be not an office by itself but rather a part of the Office of Administration: the Office of Management Controls and Evaluation.

**Facets of Evaluation in the GSA**

To many people in GSA, the main purpose of evaluation has changed from regulatory monitoring and enforcement to assistance, but the oversight function remains rigorous and widely practiced through the agency. Follow-

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Civil Service Commission (now Office of Personnel Management) directs agencies to evaluate their personnel</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>GSA Office of Personnel establishes branch of full-time personnel evaluators (this branch is later disbanded)</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>GSA establishes Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>Congress establishes Office of Inspector General</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>GSA abolishes Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>GSA establishes Office of Administration</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>GSA establishes Office of Policy and Management Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>GSA establishes Office of Oversight (for evaluation)</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>GSA transfers Office of Oversight to Office of Policy and Management Systems (gives that office evaluation function)</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Federal government in process of broad personnel and budget cuts</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>GSA abolishes Office of Policy and Management Systems (and with it the Office of Oversight)</td>
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<td>1987</td>
<td>GSA establishes Office of Audit Resolution and Internal Controls (for evaluation) in Office of Administration</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>GSA establishes Office of Management Services in Office of Administration</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>GSA abolishes Office of Audit Resolution and Internal Controls and transfers its functions to Office of Management Services</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Congress passes Chief Financial Officers Act</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>GSA abolishes Office of Management Services</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>GSA establishes Office of Management Controls and Evaluation (for evaluation) in Office of Administration</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Federal government directs agencies to have Total Quality Management training</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>GSA establishes Office of Quality Management Training in Office of Administration</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>GSA establishes Management Control and Oversight Council (a committee to provide leadership and oversight on GSA evaluation)</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>GSA establishes Office of the Chief Financial Officer</td>
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ing repeated reductions in resources, evaluation is now carried out mainly by individual programs, with program managers themselves deciding on and sometimes actually carrying out their own evaluations; and there is a general satisfaction with this approach. However, broader-scale evaluation is carried out in response to congressional statutory requirements. The range is from small-scale, episodic, specific studies conducted by program managers to large-scale, statutorily required, annual reports to Congress.

In the remainder of this chapter, I describe three congressionally mandated evaluation functions and one form of internally generated evaluation, customer feedback. I then describe GSA evaluation as it has developed in four units of the agency. Finally, I briefly consider trends in evaluation in GSA.

Kinds of Evaluation

In GSA, evaluation activity is generated in connection with the following kinds of functions: inspector general reviews, the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act, "Circular A-123" on review of internal control, "Circular A-127" on review of financial management systems, Total Quality Management, and customer feedback evaluation.

Inspector General Reviews. The GSA Office of Inspector General, established by public law in 1978, serves to combat potential fraud, corruption, and mismanagement. The Office of Audits in the Office of Inspector General prepares annual audit plans. Each year, the inspector general asks GSA commissioners to offer suggestions—candidate topics or programs—for the audit plan. The inspector general considers these suggestions together with those generated by his or her own staff and prepares a final audit plan. There are two types of inspector general audits at GSA: management or program audits, which are often called internal audits; and contract audits, which are often called external audits. External audits ask whether GSA is getting the best possible deals from vendors.

Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA). The FMFIA, mandated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1982, requires an agency to send an annual statement to Congress and the president. Basically, the statement must report on the problems facing the agency and what it is doing to correct them. OMB and GAO also see the statement.

This statement by an agency is required by OMB "Circular A-123: Review of Internal Control Systems," which includes an annual assurance statement process and a management control improvement program, the latter for detailed review. These items include vulnerability assessments and the search for material control weaknesses, serious flaws that program managers would want to find and report. Through them, program managers evaluate the potential weaknesses of their own program components. For example, in the Federal Supply Service of GSA, there is a personal property sales component, a utilization/donation component, and an excess property component. The last involves the way that the service manages donations of excess property to states and eligible donees.

Another OMB directive, "Circular A-127," requires a review of financial management systems and is a form of internal control review or evaluation that is financially oriented. It might be the basis for a review of the automatic data-processing system as it bears on financial matters. Data and information systems, as they relate to financial tracking and reporting, have been the target of several GAO audits of agency operations.

Total Quality Management. In 1990, the federal government encouraged all agencies to adopt Total Quality Management (TQM), a philosophy for enhancing quality, timeliness, and customer satisfaction. GSA responded by creating the Office of Quality Management and Training within the Office of Administration. This office promotes program leadership and training. In addition, every GSA service has at least one lead person overseeing TQM activities. This philosophy relates to evaluation because it involves judging how managers can perform their missions better, improve their processes, and better serve their clients, internally and externally.

Customer Feedback Evaluation. Customer feedback evaluation, or customer satisfaction assessment, is not required by either legislative statute or executive branch directive. It is something that goes on in different forms in each of the services, and in other areas of the agency, as a way that units determine how well they are accomplishing their respective service goals. For the Personnel Office, the customers are GSA's own employees. The office sends out questionnaires or surveys to learn about the timeliness of its hiring for different offices in the agency, and its performance in other aspects of its mission. For the services, the customers are individuals, agencies, and organizations in federal government service throughout the country.

The Federal Supply Service, for example, employs surveys, quality hotlines, user panels, computerized interagency communication (Multi-Use File for Interagency News), and visits from customer service directors to gauge the interests, preferences, and satisfaction of customers. The problem is challenging because GSA customers are so diverse. Who is the customer? Who uses the services? A fire ranger on a mountain in Montana or a whole naval shipyard may order supplies. Who is eventually using them? GSA is continually looking for better methods to conduct surveys to determine customer satisfaction for its services.

Examples of GSA Units Doing Evaluation

The types of evaluation being done by GSA units is illustrated by the work of the Office of the Inspector General, the Office of Management Controls and Evaluation, the Personnel Office, and the Management Control Oversight Council.
Office of Inspector General. Since its founding the GSA Office of Inspector General has gone through several changes, some due to budget and personnel cuts. There was a reduction in employees from 580 to 330 from 1982 to 1985, and Congress required an 8 percent across-the-board budget cut that affected the office. During this time, an acting inspector general was in place, and new agency managers were not familiar with the office's functions. The office responded to cuts in staffing and funding by emphasizing contract audits (audits of external contracts) as opposed to program audits (audits of internal programs). At that time, the ratio of contract audits to program audits was about 60 percent to 40 percent. Later, with the appointment of a permanent inspector general and restored funding and staffing levels, the ratio of contract to program audits stabilized at 50 percent each. In order to more sharply focus internal evaluation within the Office of the Inspector General, the office's internal evaluation function was made a part of the inspector general's immediate staff.

Office of Management Controls and Evaluation. The Office of Management Controls and Evaluation, in the Office of Administration, is the major administrative control function outside the Office of the Inspector General. It functions as the department's liaison to GAO. In this capacity, it coordinates GSA input to and comments on evaluations and studies of the agency by GAO. It also manages GSA compliance with FMFIA "Circular A-123." And it is a major partner with the inspector general in following up with program managers to correct problems identified in inspector general audits and reports. These functions were transferred to the Office of Administration after the evaluation function was abolished within GSA as a free-standing operation.

Personnel Office. The Personnel Office, also within the Office of Administration, must evaluate its personnel programs in compliance with the Federal Personnel Manual produced by the Office of Personnel Management. The Personnel Office checks, for example, to see if promotions are done appropriately, if positions are classified accurately, and if position descriptions are current. Before the 1980s, these reviews were frequently performed on-site. More recently, there have been fewer resources for on-site reviews by personnel specialists in the different regions. An automated personnel system has given the Personnel Office much valuable information; its statistics give valuable clues about what is happening in personnel procedures. Personnel sends out questionnaires, surveys, and emphasizes self-evaluation at the program level. The office has also found it valuable to focus priorities on a few programs, which are examined in depth rather than in terms of broad coverage.

Management Control Oversight Council. The GSA Management Control Oversight Council was established in 1990 to allow senior managers in GSA to provide leadership and policy oversight regarding the implementation of the FMFIA and OMB "Circular A-123." It reviews the agency's own annual management control plan, in which offices and regions prepare evaluations for GSA. The council consists of the deputy administrator, the associate administrator for administration, the associate administrator for acquisition policy, and the chief financial officer, with the inspector general as ex-officio adviser and the director of the Office of Management Controls and Evaluation as support staff. The council helps coordinate GSA’s diverse activities in evaluation.

Trends in Evaluation in GSA

There have been a variety of trends in evaluation at GSA over the past decade. Partly in response to budget and personnel cuts, GSA evaluators have been learning new strategies. Surveys and questionnaires have become increasingly important, as have computerized data and statistics. Self-evaluation at the program level has become more emphasized, as there are fewer personnel available to go to different regions or offices. At the same time, with fewer personnel, offices have been abolished or consolidated, the evaluation function has been focused in fewer locations organizationally, reviews by offices dealing with evaluation have been focused on particular programs, and an effort has been made to coordinate the diverse evaluation activities. GSA has thus far been able to avoid duplication by having reviews for one federal requirement also serve for another and by encouraging coordination and sharing of information among the different evaluation activities.

Caleb Kriesberg is an instructor at the Comprehensive Instructional Center, University of the District of Columbia, Washington, D.C.
It was hot in the mine, and the four Dwarves were grimy and sweating profusely, yet they continued to work. Out of the pitch darkness, the lantern shown brightly on Taurus, who was working unceasingly on the wall with his pick. He was trying to get the precious gems out of the wall, and his blows were swift and accurate, but the rock was too hard. This touched off his anger even more as his short, husky form put its full strength against the rock, but all that resulted was the quick red glow of sparks springing into the darkness.

When the three other Dwarves saw that Taurus’s full attention was centered on the rock in front of him, they knew there was no reason to continue with the useless work, and walked over to the large wooden cart that was resting on the tracks. Derrick put his hands on the rim and looked into the cart. There were stories that were told saying that The King had scores of huge chambers that were once continuously stuffed with dazzling jewels; and those carts were once overflowing with gems. But the cart looked empty. Derrick put his arm into it and felt a small piece of rock on the bottom. He took it out and looked at it closely. True, it was a gem, but a very small one. He dropped it back in the cart. It was the third they had found that day. He cursed softly, so as not to arouse Taurus’s attention. Pono went slowly over to the mule that pulled the cart and stroked its neck. It had stood there for hours without making a sound. It seemed more content than any of the Dwarves, though its life was certainly no better. Derrick leaned over, put his elbows on the rim of the cart, and propped up his head with the palms of his hands. He stared into the darkness.
“If we don’t find some pebbles pretty soon, my family’s bound to starve,” he said softly.

Thorrick got into the same position. After a pause he muttered, “It’s the same with me.”

Pono got into the same position, and all three Dwarves stood on one side of the cart, staring at Taurus as he worked, but not seeing him. Derrick said, less to himself than before, “I wonder if there actually were times when this cart was full of... gems.”

Again there was silence; then Thorrick said, “Probably not, those stories were probably made up by miners like us.” He smiled faintly. Then his smile vanished as he thought. “But, there... there must have been some time when there was plenty, right?” He looked at Derrick for the first time. “Otherwise they would have closed this mine long ago.”

“Sometimes I wish they had,” Derrick said softly.

Thorrick looked at him with a surprised expression. “Don’t say that,” he whispered, “you know the gods are always listening.”

“Oh, I know,” said Derrick louder in a wistful voice, “I didn’t mean it, but at least this misery would end.”

“Don’t ever say that again,” Thorrick said, as if reprimanding a child. “You know all your money comes from the mines.”

Derrick smiled as he thought to himself, “All my money.”

“Remember: Your gems are your life,” said Thorrick.

The silence was long then. After a while, Derrick smiled and said, “Thorrick, yesterday, we found no pebbles, right?” He continued without waiting for an answer. “But today, we found three. You know why we found more? Because we went farther out! Tomorrow...tomorrow we’ll go way far away from the others. If we have to walk three hours, we’ll walk three hours. Until we get to
a place where no one has dug for ages – and with one hit, jewels will pour out!”

Thorrick looked at Derrick. “You may be right, it might work that way.”

About this time, Taurus realized that there were no sounds of metal hitting rock behind him, so he wiped his brow with a brown rag from his back pocket and turned around. Then he stood, with a furious, opened mouthed expression on his face, as the two others continued to talk loudly. After a while, Derrick and Thorrick realized that there was no sound of metal hitting rock in front of them, and they looked up at Taurus. Pono nervously took his pick, backed away, then turned around and started hitting the wall weakly.

“Gods strike you!” Taurus roared. His words echoed through the passage, “Gods strike you! Strike you! Strike you!” Derrick swallowed. “Here I am, working my life out, and there you stand – gripin’! That’s the reason we haven’t been finding any pebbles right there. You’re gripin’ and makin’ me do all the work!”

“But Taurus,” Thorrick began, his voice sounding strangely quiet. “We have been working, and there aren’t any pebbles to be found. What’s the use of working ourselves silly?”

“What’s the use of gripin’! Now stop tweedlin’ and get to work!”

Derrick quickly turned around, picked up his pick, and resumed his work, muttering under his breath. After Taurus had stopped staring at Thorrick, Thorrick turned around slowly and reluctantly continued his work. They had used up all their explosives, and they hadn’t done much good. Only three small gems had been found near where Taurus was working. Taurus swung around and impatiently pounded a rain of swift, hard blows on the rock.
He was an expert with his pick, and finally the chips of rocks began to fly. “Thank the gods,” he mumbled. His triumph brought on new fury and the sharp pick swooped down on the rock repeatedly, but never once lost its accuracy. Pono, Thorrick, and Derrick were working, too, but getting nowhere fast. Suddenly, Taurus cried out, “Thank the gods!” and like toppling dominoes, first Pono, then Thorrick, then Derrick turned their heads to see what had brought on the rare enthusiastic remark. Taurus wiped his brow, then turned around and grinned at the three! “I’ve found a strain, fellows,” he said. “Look here.” He pointed to the stone. Derrick and Thorrick stared, and Pono gasped.

“Fate has been good to you,” whispered Thorrick.

“It sure has, it sure has,” Taurus agreed, stroking his thick black beard thoughtfully. There was a large cluster of slate green rock imbedded in the wall. Taurus stepped briskly in front of the Dwarves. “Step back, fellows!” he roared. “These are mine to dig out, all mine!” They could see him put all his strength into the work. His whole body, his arm muscles flexing, surged their power into the pick. After a few seconds he stopped and picked up the gems and put them in one hand. Then he stretched out his full hand towards the Dwarves without turning around. Pono and Thorrick quickly grabbed them. Derrick examined the gems over Thorrick’s shoulder. “Emeralds,” he whispered.

“Put ‘em in the cart,” Taurus commanded. The three obeyed. He raised his pick, but then stood frozen in that position. Then he slowly brought his pick down and leaned forward to get a closer look at the emeralds. A long soft whistle came from his lips. “Look at this beauty!”

Pono squinted his eyes. “Where?” he asked. Taurus put his finger in the middle of the cluster. “You...you, is...
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that...” Pono stammered, and was brushed aside impatiently by Thorrick. Thorrick gasped, then said, “Is that all one gem?” Taurus nodded. Much of the cluster was actually one huge emerald. “If you can get that out whole,” Thorrick said, “we’ll all be as rich as The King’s tax collector.”

Taurus wiped his brow, and for the first time, they could see he was unsure of himself. He turned to face the gem, his legs wide apart. He planted his feet firmly on the floor and he brought his pick high above his head. For a moment he stood motionless, silhouetted in that position of strength, and his enormous potential power could be plainly seen. Then he stepped back and started pounding against the wall. Blow after blow, without making much of a dent in the surrounding rock. Then he stopped hitting the right side and turned to the left. Again and again with rhythmic blows the pick hit the stone.

Suddenly, the long resounding bongs of a bell echoed through the mine. Taurus stopped to mop his brow and stare at the gem. A cheer was heard from far down the passage, and the mules began to pull the carts on the tracks. It was the end of the 14 hour work day. The mine came alive, and instead of the methodical hammering of picks, the shouting of Dwarves was heard. The group’s mule twitched its ears and looked around slowly at Taurus, then bowed its head again. Derrick and Pono stood rigidly and stared at Taurus. Thorrick looked down at his feet. Taurus lifted his pick and brought it down on the wall weakly. Gradually his power and momentum increased, but he still could not break away the rock under the gem. When he realized this, he brought his pick down for a moment. The echoes ceased, and all was completely quiet. There was no sound in the whole mine. Derrick spoke up quickly. “Taurus, I think we...should go back.” Taurus said nothing, and his back faced Derrick. The two others looked at Derrick in
surprise. “I’m really hungry, and besides, that was the bell, and they’ll be counting off groups now. If we hurry, we can be there in time.” He paused, “You know what they do. . .to guys that don’t follow the rules. No one’s gonna come way down here anyway, Taurus, and tomorrow, we’ll just. . .”

“We’ll never be able to find our way back again!” Taurus had swung around and was arguing desperately.

“Sure we will,” said Derrick softly. He thought for a moment. “The passages are. . .left. . .right. . .left.”

“Like hell they are! Anyway, the news will leak out, it always does, and guys will be flocking towards this gem!”

“Nobdoy’ll tell,” said Derrick, looking at Pono and Thorrick, “not if they want to get any money off of it.”

“Sure they will, this worm’ll tell the first guy he sees!” Taurus said, jerking a thumb at Pono.

“I will not!” Pono squealed.

“You will too and you know it so there’s no need to argue ‘bout it!” Taurus roared at Pono.

Pono backed away, and gaped open mouthed at Taurus in utter disbelief. Derrick was immediately reminded of the miner’s expression when they stabbed him. Taurus whirled around to face Derrick.

“When they see this beauty I’ve got, they’ll forget about rules, and probably get down on their knees more than anything else!”

“Wouldn’t that be something,” whispered Thorrick. “Them getting down on their knees before us.”

“Yeah,” said Taurus. “And don’t you think of going back alone. If you did, you’d never come back. We’re supposed to stick together, remember? Look, I’ve got to get this gem out.”
He turned around and started in on the wall again. The rock above the gem was softer, and large pieces fell off at fairly weak blows. “Here we go,” said Taurus enthusiastically. “I’ll get this out in a jiffy.” With one tremendous blow, the wall shook, and a large portion of the rock broke off, proving the gem to be even larger than first expected. With the second hit, rock and dust reigned down on the Dwarves, and a large crack fanned out from the ceiling. The mule looked up at the Dwarves in an irritated, superior manner. Derrick backed away in terror. “Now listen Taurus,” he said loudly, “which is more important - that gem or our lives?”

Taurus and Thorrick looked curiously at Derrick. “What do you mean?” asked Thorrick. “Your gems are your life.”

Taurus nodded, and once again turned to the rock. So quick was his downward stroke that it seemed to end before it began. And the instant the pick struck the wall, Derrick looked up at the ceiling and the crack opened up and the mine was filled with a deafening roar. Many things happened simultaneously in the following seconds. Rocks crashed down upon the four Dwarves and the mule. Derrick dropped his pick and dashed down the mine. Pono screamed with pain and fright, Thorrick dropped his pick also, seized Pono by the wrist, and followed after Derrick. Taurus, still standing by the gem, shielded his head with his pick and cried out triumphantly. And the mule brayed loudly and galloped off, in the opposite direction of the Dwarves.

After a long while, the mine stopped echoing, the rocks stopped falling, and the dust that had kept the Dwarves coughing
settled. All was deathly quiet, and completely dark. Derrick peered into the darkness, but could see nothing at all. He heard a scraping sound on the floor nearby. He stepped back with fright. Without knowing what was actually in front of him, he could imagine many things. Suddenly he heard a soft wavering voice call out “who–who’s that?” Despite the change in pitch, Derrick knew the voice to be Thorrick’s. Relieved to hear a familiar sound, he quickly stated his name and stumbled towards the sound’s origin. A hand reached out and, grasping Derrick’s wrist, pulled him to the floor. Derrick sat down and thought he could make out some shape next to him. He sighed and joked grimly, “You don’t happen to have any flint ‘n’ kindlin’ do you?”

“Nope. We sure are in a jam, aren’t we?”

“Where’s the rest of the guys – are we trapped?”

“I don’t know. Pono’s right here, I think he fainted.”

“Where?”

“Right here! Beside my leg!”

“Oh.” Derrick paused. “Where’s Taurus?”

“I don’t know! I thought you had him – I mean, I thought he got out – or. . .” There was silence.

“We’ve got to find him!” said Derrick urgently. He crawled forward, but then stopped. “Which way is which?”

Choking as he spoke, Thorrick said, “I don’t think there’s any question. . .about what happened.” Derrick gasped and sat still. Neither said anything for what seemed like a very long time. A groan broke the silence. “It’s Pono, he’s waking up,” said Thorrick quickly. Derrick went over to the two. Pono stirred, opened his eyes, and stared into the blackness. He cried out feebly. Thorrick gripped his shoulder. “It’s all right, it’s me, Thorrick.”
An awkward silence followed, then Derrick said, “Are we trapped?”

Thorrick looked up. “I don’t know, I guess we ought to find out.”

“Which way is which?” Derrick asked. There seemed to be some natural luminescence in the walls that gave off some feeble gleam.

“I – I. . .” Thorrick stopped to consider. “I think it’s that way.”

“Which way?”

“No, wait a second, we ran this way. . .Yeah, it’s that way.” Said Thorrick pointing.

“I think you’re right,” agreed Derrick. “Let’s see if there is a way out.”

The three crawled along the floor of the mine, inching forward slowly, without ever seeing any sign of the cave-in.

“Are you sure this is the right way?” Derrick asked critically as he stood up.

“Yeah, I’m fairly sure, we ran a long way, remember?”

“Oh, that’s right. Come on. We don’t need to crawl.”

The three stood up and walked slowly. Then Pono asked abruptly, “Where’s Taurus?”

Derrick muttered quickly, “We don’t know,” and walked on.

After a while, they saw a wall in front of them. “That must be it,” said Thorrick.

Thorrick and Derrick walked quickly over to the wall, and ran their hands all over it, then did the same kneeling. Then both stood again. Derrick sighed, and wiped his brow with the back of his hand. “It looks pretty solid to me,” he whispered.
After a silence, Thorrick muttered, “Then we are trapped. He...must have hit it with an awful lot of force...to send such rocks down.”

“You’re probably proud of him!” Derrick blurted out bitterly.

Thorrick stood opened mouthed in the darkness, with tears sliding gently down his cheeks.

“If we can’t get through, then the search party won’t be able to either.” Derrick quickly reasoned. “Oh, if only we had run in the other direction! We might have even been back in time for the roll call. The mule ran that way.”

“So what?” snapped Thorrick.

“I’m just saying that the mule got away and we didn’t. Now, we’re supposed to wait for the Search Party, but we may end up starving before they can find a passage that leads around the mine block and to us here. I think we ought to try to get back to a mine entrance.” Derrick paused for comments.

“O.K. with me,” said Pono softly, willing to let anyone else decide. Thorrick said nothing.

“Well then, let’s go,” said Derrick. “There must be some passage branching out of this one, ahead of us.”

The three Dwarves walked in silence, with their footsteps echoing in the black passage. They walked for a long time, and walked close together, shoulder to shoulder, so they wouldn’t lose each other. They walked with halting steps, for they had no idea what was all around them, and they were afraid. They could not tell how far they had walked. Sometimes it seemed to them that they were close enough to see the cave-in, if there was a lantern; other times they thought they must have walked miles.
After a while they grew more accustomed to the darkness. They still could not see far in front or back of them, but they could make out each other’s forms. In time, they thought less of each other, and no longer stayed together in a group. Each Dwarf walked alone. Some of the time, the Dwarves’ thoughts were similar. In all of their stomachs, the heavy knot of hunger grew and caused so much pain as to make them want to groan aloud. The heat made them weary, too. To keep his mind off his hunger, Derrick concentrated on how hot he was, until he tore off his shirt and flung it to the floor without slacking his pace. But this seemed to do nothing to cool his chest that was streaming with sweat.

They walked on and on in the darkness, and over an hour passed by. After a long while, their faltering, uneven steps became steady, but they still walked forward timidly, and their pace was very slow. Many times Thorrick wanted to stop walking, but he felt he couldn’t. It wasn’t that he was tired, but that it seemed exciting to stop walking, as if he could be doing something unthinkable, against the rules. He had a bit of a desire to do something that was against the rules. But he was also afraid to stop walking. He felt like he was one of the soldiers in a military parade he had once seen — one soldier among thousands marching, with their white and gold uniforms and their axes and shields sparkling — he just couldn’t stop. Or one sheep in a stampeding herd — he just couldn’t stop. Yet he did want to stop, and for a more logical reason, too — he didn’t think they were getting anywhere. He didn’t agree with Derrick’s idea of walking until they found a passage leading back to the entrance. So he began to think of a better idea.

And still they continued walking without pause. To Pono, it seemed incredible that they could be walking in this darkness,
without stopping or speaking once, hour after hour. He couldn’t believe that what was happening was not a dream, that they might be trapped in the passage, and might never see the outside again. He couldn’t believe that they might actually starve to death – to sit there, feeling the body waste away and the mind go numb, to sit there for weeks until they finally died. He groaned. And it was just as Derrick had said. If only they had gone the other way! If they had run back down the hall with the mule, they wouldn’t have been trapped and they might have made it to the roll call. They probably wouldn’t have made it in time, though, and they would have gotten a beating for that, and a beating for making that cave-in, but beatings didn’t seem so bad. He would gladly have taken beatings instead of being in this situation if he had a choice. It seemed foolish how they had dreaded so many things before. Beatings, lack of food, and hard work looked trivial in the face of possible death. And such happy possibilities! What if Taurus had gotten the gem out on the second hit, instead of the third, fatal one. Then they would all dash back to the entrance, and there the Work Masters would stand with their clubs and their hands on their hips and one might grin and say, “You’re late.” And Taurus would smile and say right back to him, “That’s right, we are.” Then the Work Master would stop grinning and say, “What for?” And Taurus would smile and answer, “Because we felt like it.” The Work Master would say coldly. “Get over here. I’m gonna give you thrashing you’ll never forget.” Taurus would step up quickly, and say, “Oh, before you work me over, you might want to see this,” and he would open his fist in front of the Work Master and show him an emerald that almost covered his palm. The eyes of the Work Master would open wide and he would stare greedily at the gem. Taurus would mumble, “We three could give you guys a bit of the money, in return for some favors.” The Work Master would look critically at Taurus
for a moment, and, with the miners and other Work Masters moving in curiously, reply, “What do you want?”

All this went on in Pono’s mind as he walked, and his imagination soared forward.

Derrick had a lucky feeling that they would find a passage leading back to an entrance. He was thinking about the beatings they would surely get for being late, and how he would cope with them.

Suddenly, Thorrick stopped and said, Derrick, I think we ought to head back.”

Derrick and Pono stopped walking and turned around to face Thorrick. Derrick had forgotten what they were doing, and it took him a while to remember where they were going and what Thorrick was talking about.

“I think we ought to head back,” Thorrick repeated.
Derrick finally answered, “What for?”

“Because if we don’t then we’ll probably get lost and starve,” Thorrick said without a pause.

The impact of the statement hit the two Dwarves, and for a while Derrick was silent. Then he said, “If we wait at the cave-in we’ll have just as much chance of starving.”

“No we won’t.” The other miners must have heard the falling rocks and would tell the Search Party about where we are and they could come and get us. Anyway, this passage is getting narrower and the ceiling’s getting lower. You can tell we’re gonna meet up to a dead end and then we’ll have to turn around anyway.”

It was clear that Thorrick had thought out his argument thoroughly, and knew exactly what to say, otherwise he wouldn’t have been able to reason that way at the spur of the moment.

Then Derrick said, “Listen, if there is a passage forking out of this one ahead, then we could find our way back before they
could get organized, and if there isn’t a passage up ahead, then we’re trapped here for good, and they can’t get us out, anyway.”

“Yes they can,” said Thorrick, destroying Derrick’s entire argument. “We won’t even need to look for another passage, and neither do they: they could explode the mine block and set us free.”

There was something in Derrick that loathed returning, no matter what the logic. He wanted to keep on walking until he reached whatever was at the end. “If it’s a beating you’re scared of, we’ll get one whether we return or not; we’re already late, and since we’ve gone this far anyway. . .”

“Oh, we haven’t gone very far at all. We might as well go back now, instead of later: we already know there’s a dead-end ahead. We’re supposed to wait for the Search Party to find us anyway, and we’ll be found faster, get our beatings over with, and we’ll have half as many as if we disobeyed two rules – not coming when the bell rang and not waiting for the Search Party to find us. I see no reason why we should walk on. What do you think, Pono?”


Derrick’s arm shot forward, seized Pono’s collar, and lifted him off his feet. “What do you mean, ‘O.K.’!” he hollered, and threw him to the floor. Then he stood, breathing hard, as Pono lay whimpering. Thorrick stood with an expression of surprise and triumph. Derrick had never acted so violently before, and wondered what had brought it on. He brought his hand slowly up to his forehead, and then he realized how mechanical this gesture was. He wasn’t sweating! Then he said slowly, emphasizing each word, “Wait a minute.” The two Dwarves stared at him. “Feel that cool air?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Thorrick said slowly, after a pause.
“That means there’s an opening to the outside somewhere ahead!” Derrick ran forward, stumbled, jumped to his feet again, and continued to run. Thorrick, after hesitating, walked quickly after Derrick. Pono rose to his feet whining, “Wait for me, fellows!” and stumbled into the darkness after the two other Dwarves.

The three Dwarves went through the mine, staggering like drunks, with Derrick in the lead. Thorrick jogged forward reluctantly, with Pono at his side. They tried to catch up with Derrick, who was far ahead. Thorrick still wanted to go back, but would not do so alone. He still did not agree with Derrick, even though it now seemed certain that there was a way out. He did not want to admit defeat and do what Derrick said. There was still a good chance that the hole to the outside was so small that none of them could fit through it. But there was one thing Derrick was right about, and that was that they had walked far. Or is seemed that they had walked far, for Thorrick was very tired. After a while, he no longer tried to catch up with Derrick, but dragged his feet as he walked mechanically. He began to think more indifferently. If it turned out that there wasn’t a way out, he would just sleep for a while, until maybe the next day, or the middle of the night, it was impossible to tell, and then head back. He could just see the Search Party explode the mine block, and find to their anger and dismay that they were not there waiting for them. But it was too late now, nothing could be done. He walked on and on and on until finally his mind was blank and he seemed to be in a trance.

Pono tried to keep up with Thorrick and gratefully slowed his pace when Thorrick did. He did not want to catch up with Derrick. He was afraid of him. He was frightened by everything
that had been happening. The cool air seemed ominous, and he
dreaded finding the source of it. He, even more than Thorrick,
wanted to turn back and would not do so alone. He needed to be
near another person, it reassured him. So he was torn between
deciding to go back, and to stay by Thorrick. A strange terror was
slowly mounting within him.

Derrick stumbled forward frantically. He had a mad desire
to reach the end of the passage. Something in the air lured him
forward, the same quality that repelled Pono and made Thorrick
doubtful. Derrick’s thoughts were not on beatings, gems, or rescue
—not on any part of his life in the mine. Thoughts such as those
were far gone. What was going on in his mind can hardly be
explained. He felt that the source of the cold air was the key to
some primeval aspirations that he had kept hidden, even from
himself, deep in his subconscious. These hopes suddenly came forth
in hardly more than an urge to reach the end, to track the cold air
down, and to find what he sought. An atavistic stirring was slowly
building within him.

The air became cooler yet, and Derrick was mesmerized, as a
toad by a lantern. It lead him onward, and finally the passage
narrowed, and he came to a dead end. The stream of air was sharp
and cold. Thorrick and Pono came up from behind, and stood aghast
as they stared at the wall of rock in front of them. But when the
cold air struck Derrick, he was suddenly seized with a frenzy. He
tore off his sweat-soaked, reeking clothes—his pants, socks, and
boots—and tossed them up in the air. The instant they hit the
ceiling, a whirring and squealing sound filled the passage. Scores
of bats swooped down upon them and up again, a thick cloud of them.
Pono crouched to the ground, his arms over his head, screaming with
fright. Thorrick and Derrick stood silently, oblivious to the din.
Thorrick, like a zombie, his mind still blank. Derrick, standing
naked, the cold air fiercely caressing him. His clothes lay on the floor beside him. They, along with the shirt farther back along the passage, were to become clues to the Search Party that was to come.

The whirring of wings slowly faded away into the darkness, and the Dwarves were silent and motionless for minutes – Pono crouched, the two others standing. Then Derrick suddenly moved forwards toward the wall, and felt its surface with his hands. He too realized, with a sense of tragic disbelief, that it was a dead end, and he wanted desperately to find the source of the air. He felt along the rough surface of the wall for an opening, but could find none. When he came to the corner, he suddenly felt a cold rush of air hit his body. He thrust his hand out, but could feel no rock. It was a hole. It was only about three feet wide and three feet high. Without hesitation, he poked his head into the hole. Cold air struck his face. He uttered a cry of ecstasy, but it became a frightening inhuman croak. He scrambled into the hole and started to crawl.

Thorrick had watched Derrick’s actions, and considered turning back. But he was too tired to walk all the way back, now that he had gone so far. Then he remembered the rule that had been worked into his mind: stick together in your group. It was clear he couldn’t change Derrick’s mind, and after all, the tunnel had to lead somewhere. Thorrick reluctantly kneeled down, wormed into the hole, and crawled after Derrick.

Pono was horrified at the thought of entering the hole, that tiny enclosed area, with nowhere to go but forward. Once he went in, he was committed. There would be no turning back. He wanted with all him might to turn around and dash all the way back to the cave-in, but he couldn’t bear being alone. He trembled in terror of his dilemma. Then he began to scream. “Don’t leave me
here alone! Don’t leave me here!” He lunged towards the hole, like a mouse entering a bee’s nest for the sake of honey, and scrambled in after the two other Dwarves.

The tunnel was very, very, long. The rock was rough, and the tunnel did not seem Dwarf-made. Only a madman would make such a tunnel anyway. Derrick crawled along eagerly, and seemed not to notice that the sharp rocks tore at his bare knees, leaving a trail of blood and flesh. He did notice however, as did the other Dwarves, how cold it was. It was no longer the heat that bothered them. Thorrick thought of nothing. What ordinarily might have been exciting to explore, was not for some reason quite the contrary. Pono tried desperately to keep close to Thorrick in front of him, but since it was very dark, and he couldn’t see far up ahead, he almost always felt frighteningly alone. He would often cry out pitifully “Wait! Stop!” But they did not hear him. They had forgotten him completely. Other times he would just moan feebly in the darkness, “Oooh! I’m hungry!” In the blackness, his imagination tortured him. He thought that at any moment a Goblin might appear in front of him. He remembered the night long ago when he and his brother were returning from the tavern at midnight and they had met up with two. Their eyes burned in the darkness, and they had hideous grins on their grotesque faces. They drew near, clutching long, thin blades. Pono fled screaming. The next morning, his brother’s body was found mutilated in the forest nearby. The nightmares he had had long ago returned to him, and he was in a constant state of terror. The tunnel at first had been fairly straight, but after a while, it turned and twisted frequently. Pono groveled forward faster when he heard the scuffling of the Dwarves as they rounded the corners. He thought
that when he got there, they would have disappeared. At other
times, he followed the curve hesitantly, thinking that a Troll
might await him as he rounded the bend.

There is not much more that can be said of their monotonous
journey. The time spent walking in the passage was nothing
compared with their crawling through the tunnel. They may have
crawled for more than a day without rest.

The tunnel didn’t go on forever though, and finally Derrick
reached the end. He knew the end was coming before he reached it,
for the tunnel grew lighter and lighter. He also knew, from the
cold, and the amount of light, that the tunnel led to some large
chamber. The first thing he noticed when he came to the end of the
tunnel was something different. Where the tunnel opened up into
the chamber, a thick layer of bones was strewn before him. They
were old and small, and there was a white dust around them. Many
of them had been broken, and there was no flesh on any of them. He
lifted his head to look further beyond, and saw that the carpet
continued on several yards. He couldn’t lift his head any further
to get a better view, or else he’d bump it on the rock above him.
So he crawled out of the tunnel, and into the bitter cold, and
stood up. Thick mist flowed from his mouth as he gasped at the
spectacle he saw. Before him, stretched an expanse of bones,
ending perhaps a half mile away at an obscure grey horizon. This
was no large chamber, but an immense underground cavern. Or was it
underground? Jagged cliffs rose from the floor of bones all around
him, but the mist kept him from seeing how far the cliffs reached,
or what lay beyond the horizon. Derrick stood for a long while,
forgetting the cold, and staring in awe at the cliffs and bones.
Thorrick and Pono came up behind him. They also gasped and stood
motionless. A deathly silence prevailed. As the three Dwarves stood, the cavern seemed to be covered with quiet. Nothing made a move, nothing made a sound. Then Derrick moved one foot, then the other, and he was walking again. He looked at the bones carefully as he walked. Thorrick followed, but this time Pono didn’t follow right away; he was still too amazed at what he saw. The bones crunched under Derrick’s bare feet and echoed softly in the cavern. Some jabbed into his flesh. He came upon part of a leg bone, white and new compared with the grey bones around it. He walked on. Most of the bones were small, or had decayed into many pieces. He came upon another white, recent, bone. He stared at it in horror. It was a human’s foot, with many of the toes still in place. He walked a little bit farther. He knelt down and picked up one of the small thin bones. It was unidentifiable, though it looked like it was from some small creature. He walked on slowly, one foot in front of the other. He stared at the bones below him as he walked. After a while, he saw a human skull a little ways in front of him. He saw something moving around inside of it, and he leaned forward and peered into the sightless sockets. There he saw a familiar sight. A huge rat, about a foot long, poked its whiskers out of the socket. Its nose twitched, and its eyes gleamed with an expression Deririck couldn’t understand. It squealed and ducked inside. He heard other squeals, grunts, and scufflings, then all was quiet from within. Derrick knelt down and looked through the sockets closely. He though he saw two rats. They were huddled next to a hole inside, and he could make out a third head poking out of the hole. They seemed to be waiting impatiently for something to happen. One of them opened its mouth and showed a set of strong, sharp incisors. Derrick backed away. He had never looked at rats so closely. Before, they had seemed to be dumb nuisances. Now they looked sly and strong. Their muscular
shoulders bulged, and sturdy legs supported their long, slim bodies. Derrick could see the potential speed and strength in their tense forms. The skull was like a fortress, with the eye sockets as portals for the guards, and the opened jaw with teeth as a sturdy front gate. It was held in place by many small sharp tones intertwined, some poking through holes gnawed under the ear, cheek, and chin. It would be as hard to dislodge as a nest from a maze of branches, and before one could get far, the rats would be upon one. The hole beneath the skull looked to be lined with some soft material, probably hair, so bones would not jut out of the passage sharply. Derrick continued to walk, slowly, for he was very tired. Behind him, Thorrick was also walking, and Pono was now walking also. They were still amazed at the sight: bones upon bones upon bones as far as the eye could see with jagged, seemingly infinite cliffs surrounding them. Derrick walked towards the indefinite horizon, his eyes straining. He passed another skull, and took two more steps.

Suddenly a piercing scream struck the Dwarves like lightening. Instantly Derrick’s head jerked upward towards the sound, but the mist prevented him from seeing its origin. Another screech followed, its echoes resounding off the walls. While the others stood frozen in terror, Derrick had swung around instinctively, and was dashing pell mell back towards the tunnel. He did not know what made the sounds anymore than did the other Dwarves, but somehow he knew that reaching the tunnel on time could mean the difference between life and death. Now the entire cavern was filled with the deafening cries and sounds: “Skreee! Skreee! Keyaw, Kraw-kah! Kraw, Keeyaw, Kah-Kah Kah! Kah-Kah! Kah-Kah! Kraw! Aiyee! Aiyee! Keeer. Keeer. Kaii! Kaii!”
Kreeer...Keeer. Sie! Sie! Kroa. Kroa. . . " Then Thorrick turned and fled also, but Derrick was far ahead. Shards of bone rammed into Derrick’s feet as he ran, but his eyes were fixed on the entrance to the tunnel. Other bones flew into the air behind as he sped. Pono only stood bent, his hands grasping the hair on this forehead, the noise drowning out his screams for help. Derrick’s body was weak, the pain would normally have been intense, yet he had never before run so fast. His life was all that mattered, his life. Thorrick was running behind Derrick. They both ignored Pono’s cries for help. Every man was for himself. It was then that Pono realized this for the first time. He stood up silently for a few seconds. No one was going to help him. If he wanted to survive, he’d have to fend for himself. He turned to flee, but he had discovered the important law too late. At that moment large shapes plunged through the mist and fell upon the Dwarves. Derrick dove for the tunnel, and was struck in midair. A sharp pain pierced his shoulder as he was lifted into the air. Thorrick was hit in the act of running towards safety. He was not scarred badly, for he was grabbed by the back of his shirt, and he hung thrashing as he rose into the air. Pono was hit forcefully on the neck and temples, and was stunned senseless.

At first Thorrick had no idea what was happening, nor what had caused what was happening. He shook and struggled, hoping his shirt would rip loose of the strong grasp, and he would fall safely to the ground. Soon, however, he passed through the grey mist and saw what his captors were. All around him, soaring and darting, screeching and crying, were birds. Many of them were huge, with wing spans of about 10 feet. The clamor and din they made put Thorrick’s head spinning. High above him, a dozen or so birds
floated gently and silently on the air, without moving a feather, sailing in slow, easy circles. Closer by him, and below him, birds whizzed in and out of the mist, with speed that made them but a split-second blur. From a distance, a couple was winging their way towards him, and he was helpless to protect himself. For the first time he looked up at his personal captor. It looked like an eagle, with bright glistening eyes and a sharp hooked beak. Its strong muscular wings beat steadily, as it strained to carry the Dwarf upward, higher and higher. Thorrick took all these sights in a few seconds, and meanwhile he was unconsciously struggling and thrashing about, hoping to escape from the talon’s grip. Suddenly he felt his shirt rip, and his body jerked down. He realized he was being held suspended by a small piece of his shirt, and that he was now hundreds of feet high in the air. He hung dangling for a moment, and then he frantically tried to hold on to the claws for security, but this movement put too much strain on the cloth. The shirt tore again, and Thorrick plummeted through the mist, in terror, the bones rushing towards him. Then, a giant condor snatched him from the air by the neck. Its talons sliced Thorrick’s juglar vein, and blood spurted out of his throat, coating him in red. The condor carried the limp body away swiftly, with the first eagle and a flock of ravens pursuing it. The condor then deposited the Dwarf on a rock ledge, and battled in the air with the eagle. After several minutes of gashing, slashing, striking, and dodging, the eagle fell mortally wounded through the mist to the ground. The condor dispersed the ravens from the prey it had stolen, and they flew off for the dying eagle. They found it on the ground, and they tormented it as it writhed in agony, and waited impatiently until it would cease all struggle, and the feast could begin.
Derrick was also intercepted by an eagle, but he wore no shirt, and the claws dug deep into his left shoulder. As the eagle rose, the weight of his body pulled on the bird’s grip, and the claws dug deeper into Derrick’s shoulder, until they reached the bone. Blood streamed down his arm and his back, tears poured from his eyes and sweat soaked his face. The pain was excruciating. The whole left side of his body from his neck to his waist felt paralyzed. As Derrick groaned, the eagle flew steadily upward, though the mist, into the air above. There Derrick saw, as Thorrick had, the multitude of birds all around him, screeching and croaking, swooping and soaring. He was too weak to understand much of what was happening, but it was an eagle that was carrying him towards a particular ledge of the cliff, and another eagle was winging steadily towards them. All soon became blurred before Derrick’s eyes, and as the eagle set him down upon the ledge, he fell unconscious. Then the two eagles fought each other. The battle was long and cruel. Many times the two broke apart, hovered in the air, and swooped back down to meet each other, talons first, wings stretched out, with terrible screams coming from their throats. Finally, the second eagle, the one that had followed Derrick’s captor, received a deep slash across its face. Its eye was sliced open, and the upper half of its beak torn asunder. It plummeted down through the mist to the floor below. The first eagle flew back wearily to where Derrick lay. It cocked its head to look at its prey. Then it bowed its head to begin the feast. Suddenly, and miraculously, fate willed a stone to crack loose from above. It whizzed down upon the eagle’s skull, and killed it instantly. At the same time, it knocked it off the ledge and sent it falling through the air, the third eagle to fall prey to the scavengers waiting below. Derrick lay unconscious, Pono had been killed instantly, but Thorrick suffered a slow and horrible death.
The two flocks of ravens were fighting over and tearing apart the first eagle that had fallen. A flock of crows had found the two other eagles. There was not nearly enough food for all, and it was the luckiest and the strongest that managed to secure a piece of meat in its beak and fly off with it. There was much squabbling, and many birds were chased away. Others were not lucky or strong enough to be able to escape the confusion, and became added food for the rest. In the case of the ravens, it was discovered that one carcass could not possibly feed two flocks, though their flocks were smaller than the crows’, and the second one that had arrived was finally beaten off. The ravens ran along the ground, beating their thick wings frantically, and then the whole flock lifted itself into the air, and winged its way towards the far side of the cavern, crying and croaking in bitter defeat. They landed on a ledge, obscured by the mist, and rested. A few remained at the ledge and waited. The rest soared through the air and called to each other. Twice they found Dwarves that would serve well as food, but both times they were guarded by a great bird that the ravens thought the flock had better not challenge. After a while, though, one of the scouts found a solitary Dwarf lying on a ledge, that looked easy for the flock to handle. It cried out, and soon the other Ravens, wherever they were, winged their way towards it. Then they soared silently about the body, watching it carefully. Then they landed one by one, on nearby rocks. Then they moved closer and closer, until they surrounded the Dwarf.

As if from far off, Derrick felt his body being pinched and jabbed. He lay there with his eyes closed for some time. At certain times, he would be pricked at sensitive gashes on his body,
and it would hurt, but still he lay there. As his senses slowly returned to him, it began to hurt more, and he heard sounds. He opened his eyes suddenly.

His sight was unfocused, and at first he saw only dark shapes, hopping to and fro all around him. He then heard the sounds they were making, and saw that they were Ravens. Their beaks were strong, thick, and hooked, and their feathers were jet black and glistening. Their eyes glistened with an unfathomable expression. It reminded him of something, but he couldn’t remember what. He heard them croaking excitedly to each other, and he saw them flap their wings, run up and jab him sharply with their beaks, and then retreat to a safe distance. Once a Raven ran up to him, and with a flap of wings and a hop, landed on his face. Its claws pressed down on his cheeks, and it lifted its head and cried. Derrick raised his right arm weakly, and the Raven flew into the air and landed back on the rock near the rest of the group.

They continued to pester him and would not go away. Derrick managed to push himself backwards and prop himself up against the stone cliff behind him. He sat facing them as they hobbled around. Often they would fly up and batter him with their wings, and Derrick had hardly strength to shield his face. For hours upon hours they continued to harass him. He tried to close his eyes but could not ignore the blows that were continuously being rained down on him. But his body could no longer stay awake, and finally, without realizing it, he fell asleep.

It was not a deep sleep, and Derrick soon awoke when he realized he was no longer being pricked. To his surprise, he found that there were no Ravens around him. They were all gone. As he sat staring, a gurgling sound came from within him, and he suddenly felt sick to his stomach. He quickly crawled across the ledge, and crouched at the very edge. He looked down at the mist far below
him that obscured his view of the bones, and shivered at the bitter cold. Thick mist flowed from his mouth as he gasped. He belched and then jerked his head down and vomited over the edge. The vomit sailed downward through the air and vanished through the mist. He thought he heard a faint splatter from far below. Suddenly he heard the call of a Raven and immediately looked up. Above him, he saw the heads of several Ravens looking down from other rock ledges. So they hadn’t gone for good. They were just waiting patiently, guarding their prey, before they attacked again.

Derrick was sure that the next attack would be made with even more force. He crawled back slowly to the wall. There, for the first time, he noticed a tiny trickle of water seeping from the rock. It seemed to start out of nowhere, and end just as abruptly. He pressed his lips against the rock, and tried to sip a bit of the water, to rid himself of the burning sensation he now had in his throat. He could get very little of the icy, sparkling water, though, which made it even more tantalizing. Then he sat with his back against the rock, closed his eyes, and thought fearfully about the Ravens. Eventually he fell asleep.

He did not have a chance to sleep much though, before he awoke again, suddenly this time, when he felt a sharp twinge of pain in his left shoulder. He looked up to find the huge black shape of a Raven pecking at the bloody scab that was forming. He lifted his other arm, and it flew back to the rest of the Ravens, crowding around him. Derrick stared at the Ravens anxiously, and the Ravens stared back at Derrick silently. A strange glint was in all of their eyes that Derrick could not understand. He was instantly reminded of the time when he was running through the passage towards the source of the cold air, and of the thoughts that ran through his mind at that time. He realized there was a direct correlation between the Raven’s eyes and his thoughts when
in the passage. Suddenly, one of the Ravens broke the silence with a cry, ran across the rock to Derrick and stabbed him in the shin with its beak. At this sudden action, the flock exploded. With croaks and kaws, the Ravens flew at Derrick. He pressed himself against the wall and crouched in fetal position, with his side facing the Ravens. Their onslaught had never been so furious. They did not retreat momentarily after each stab, but jabbed Derrick repeatedly. They no longer used their wings, only their beaks and claws. Their blows were concentrated mainly on previous wounds, and they ripped at gashes that were still fresh. Blood streamed down over Derrick’s body. Derrick rolled about on the rock, trying hopelessly to dodge or ward off the blows that were continuously being rained down on him, all the while screaming in pain. The nightmarish torture continued until Derrick fell unconscious once more.

Then the Ravens stopped what they were doing one by one, and walked around the Dwarf eyeing him critically. They then ran across the ledge, flapping their wings strenuously, and with a cry, took off into the air. They were confident that after waiting some more, they could return and the Dwarf would be dead. Or else they would attack on final time, for the Kill. From a distance, crouched against the wall, he seemed a mangled carcass.

Yet there was still life in him. After a while, Derrick awoke once again. He pushed his body up to a sitting position, and stared wearily across the chasm.

It was cold in the cavern, and Derrick was naked and shivering violently, yet he continued to live. The cold was
In a Dwarf’s Mind

C. Kriesberg

unbearable, even more so because he couldn’t pace back and forth. By gasping and chattering his teeth loudly, though, he became a bit warmer. Still, his toes felt numb and hard as rock, and his ears, nose, and cheeks felt like ice.

His hunger put a sharp pain in his stomach, and made him feel weak all over. The weariness from the hour upon hours of walking and crawling were upon him. Standing upright was almost impossible, and he didn’t feel like moving from where he sat. He sat stone still, as if he were part of the rock itself.

Pain was in every part of his body. He had every imaginable hurt or wound: his cut knees from crawling through the tunnel, the punctured soles of his feet from running upon sharp pieces of bones, his paralyzed arm from the eagle’s talons, and the scores of scars from the Raven’s beaks, plus sores and bruises from many events. His whole body racked with a pain he could not stifle. Some parts ached and throbbed, other parts experienced periodical sharp, piercing twinges; still others burned and stung constantly. He dared not glance at the state of his body; he knew it was in a pathetic condition. All these feelings combined to create a sickening and unbearable state of anguish.

At one point in his thinking, he realized the hopelessness of his situation. There he was, crouching on a tiny ledge of a vast cliff. All manner of physical torments were afflicting him, and his body was wasting away. He was starving to death, with no conceivable way of securing food, and a flock of Ravens was soon going to come to kill him. At the thought of death, tears welled in his eyes. For it was life, now more dearly than ever before, that he wanted to keep. It was the battle of continuing to live, with all the experiences and emotions that life held, versus death, with the end of everything, that he was fighting. He was
determined not to give in to death, no matter how vain his efforts seemed.

His thoughts then turned for some reason, ages and ages back it seemed, to his other life. He delved into his memory of the past, to his life in the mine. He distantly remembered the other Dwarves he had been with, and if he hadn’t been sure, he would have been positive it was all a dream. He recalled their words and actions with disgust, as if he were far above and superior to them now. He remembered he had had so many worries and discomforts, and they all seemed so unimportant now. He wondered how he could have been so concerned with such petty matters.

Getting to the mine on time, finding gems, avoiding beatings, and being able to buy enough food for his family’s desires all seemed thoughts of such little weight. At least they were all healthy and alive. He did not remember ever having appreciated that.

His entire former way of life seemed so nonsensical. He and hundreds of others worked their lives out to keep The King immensely wealthy. Half of their meager earnings went in taxes to the king. He did very little for them in return, except to recruit a huge army to guard his vast realm. If they disobeyed a rule or law, they were either beaten senseless, or put to a work-house for a decade or a score, with no consideration of extenuating circumstances or possible innocence.

He thought it would be proper for him to mourn for the Dwarves’ deaths, but he quickly remembered that no one was watching him, and he had no customs to conform to. Even if the gods were watching, there was no rhyme or reason to the way they willed fate to act. He did not feel any sorrow at the loss of the Dwarves, for their lives made no difference to him any longer – his life was of sole importance. It was every man to himself. Neither did he have any rules to abide by now. He was free to do whatever he pleased.
and was able to do. There were no laws here except the
instinctively known and silently accepted law of the survival of
the strongest. This pondering once again brought back to Derrick’s
mind his thoughts as he ran through the passage-way towards the
source of the cold air. It was this same air that he was now in
the midst of, and was again clearly affecting him. With these same
inexpressible thoughts in his mind, he closed his eyes, and dropped
off to sleep again.

He slept for a long time, and he had two distinct dreams
that he remembered. He first dreamt that he was striking at a rock
wall with his pick back in the mine. He was trying to uncover a
huge gem in the wall that was glowing brightly. He was swinging
away swiftly, without tiring, and was very eager to knock the
glowing gem loose. He kept on swinging for a very long time.
Finally, to his delight, the huge gem came loose. It clattered to
the floor. He stared at it for some time, and slowly its light
faded away, until it was completely dull, and looked like any
ordinary rock. He continued to stare at it, dismayed and
disgusted. He felt he had been cheated, and all his hard work had
been wasted. As he continued to stare at it, he saw to his
astonishment that the gem began to vibrate, and then shake
violently. Then it expanded and suddenly broke asunder. Out of
the gem rose the form of a Raven. Its eyes shown with a piercing
light that far exceeded that of the gem. When it looked at
Derrick, it flapped its wings and flew off down the passage in
alarm. Derrick ran after it urgently, for he very much wanted to
catch it and peer into its eyes. He ran on and on in search of it.
Sometimes he would catch a glimpse of it from afar, but it would
quickly disappear. He dove into tunnels and caves with weird
stalactite formations. Derrick didn’t remember ever finding the
Raven in his dream.
The second dream began much the same as the first. Again he was pounding at the rock wall with his pick to dislodge the glowing gem. It clattered to the floor, and as its glow faded away, he stared at it apprehensively. When it broke open, he shielded his face with his arms in terror, and pressed against the wall. The form of the Raven loomed larger than before, and it spread its huge wings to surround Derrick. Derrick screamed and the Raven screamed and opened its beak wide to swallow him. Suddenly all was reeling and screeching and the mine caved in and the Raven enveloped him.

At this point, Derrick called out and awoke. He looked out across the chasm, and the cold and pain came back to him. It did not come back as strongly though, because he was concentrating on something else. He was thinking about the Ravens, and what would happen when they would come back.

He thought for a long time, and did not go back to sleep. His thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the sound he had long been tensely awaiting. The call of the Raven. He saw the Ravens swooping down from the air nearby, waiting for the flock to congregate together. They croaked and kawed, and soared through the air in an ever increasing circle as more Ravens joined them. Derrick pressed his back against the wall, and crouched balanced on the flat of his toes, with his fingertips pressed to the stone by his feet for additional support. His body felt taut and ready to snap, and a spirit of revenge and defiance was growing within him. The Ravens continued to soar for some time, and Derrick crouched, watching them intently, like a trap ready to be sprung. Suddenly, one of the Ravens let loose a piercing cry, and the whole flock, as if one body, turned in unison towards the ledge, and rushed towards
the Dwarf. He had not thought them capable of moving so fast. A wave of fear hit him, and the cold, hunger, and pain returned like a stab. Everything seemed to reel before him, and the black screeching mass of the Ravens was upon him. He felt his doom had come. But then a sensation of rage and power surged within him. He screamed a blood-curdling inhuman cry, and without realizing it, his legs snapped, he leaped high into the air with right arm outstretched, grabbed a Raven by the throat, and brought it down with him. Then, in a mad and sadistic manner, he pounded the Raven’s skull upon the stone. Again and again and again he pounded it while saliva dripped from his mouth, and his eyes were wide and staring. He continued to pound it though the crushed remains of the brain lay splattered far across the rock. Finally he stopped his pounding. He dabbed his finger into a portion of the remains and licked it off. Then he looked up. There he saw the scattered flock far away, flying rapidly to the other side of the cavern, screeching in fear and dismay. The Dwarf had defeated the Ravens.

The Dwarf sat picking at the carcass of the Raven. He ate it very slowly, and devoured every bit until only the feathers and bones remained. He gathered up the bones, crept over to the ledge, and tossed them one by one into the chasm. They clattered far below, and added to the ever increasing carpet over the ground. He then went back to the wall and sat amid the scattered pile of long, stiff, black feathers. His hunger was gone, and his body was filled with a strange warm feeling, a glowing sensation of vitality. His whole body felt less stiff, and more free and agile. He no longer felt cold or pain, and was filled with happiness, but
also an excitement and eagerness, that came from some magic quality in the Raven’s meat and the cavern’s air.

The light was always dim, though not as dark as in the passage and tunnel. The Dwarf slept whenever he felt tired, which was very seldom now. Once, after a rest, he realized that the mist had lifted from below, and that he could watch all that was taking place beneath his ledge. He had a view of the entire field of bones and its activities, and it seemed to be a vast arena with ever changing entertainments. Though he enjoyed watching them from a distance, he somehow longed to take part in them himself.

A cycle took place in the finding of food, and life and death were what kept the cycle continuing. He realized he had missed the first stage of the cycle for it was obscured by mist. This was when the largest birds of prey – the huge and majestic condors and eagles – captured the largest food – the Dwarves. From clashes between these great birds, many were killed and fell prey to the Ravens and crows. The Dwarf sat watching the stages that followed. When the Ravens and crows were finishing their feast, the vultures and buzzards soared slowly down to finish the remains. He watched the squabblings between these scavengers, and saw that those that were killed in the fights helped continue the cycle. He continued to watch for a long time, all the while wishing he was more than an onlooker. After the Ravens and crows had departed, and the vultures and buzzards were finishing up, the rats appeared. The rats and birds ate side by side without interfering with each other much. When the vultures and buzzards left, more rats came out to pick at the bones. Most of the food they carried off with them to their homes to store. As soon as the rats began to stay out in the open more, the falcons and hawks dropped in split second blurts and precise accuracy upon the rodents, and carried them off. Thus all the creatures secured their food. Because fights between
birds over food brought frequent deaths, the cycle started all over again with the first scavengers. Different stages were in progress in different parts of the cavern. After a while, though, the last of the falcons and hawks swooped down, there was no more food to find, and the cycle gradually ended.

The Dwarf could tell that his gashes were healing, but he was still afraid to look closely to see what condition his body was in, for fear of an appalling surprise. He also noticed he did not feel the need of any food. The glowing sensation in every part of his body grew rather than decreased. He had an urge to run and run and leap and roll, and he felt very cramped and uncomfortable to have to sit on the ledge. He no longer sat with his back to the wall, but at the very edge of the ledge with his feet dangling over. The Ravens never came again. They even seemed to shun him, and he didn’t hear their call anywhere nearby.

As the cycle petered off, his attention turned from the actions below to the sights above. All kinds of birds soared and glided, and screeched. Some were immense, and flew all alone with no others nearby. They stayed amazingly still in the air, in one place, without moving, as if frozen. Sometimes they would move one wing slightly, but otherwise they did not move in the air at all. Others soared together in groups, forming an easy, relaxing circle. As the birds circled, they traveled through the air in unison, from one place to another, still keeping the circle intact and constantly rotating. He noticed that across the chasm was a row of black birds. They were still and silent, and only their shapes could be seen among the crevices of the rock. Then he realized that there were no nests anywhere in the cavern. He wondered how the birds reproduced themselves, and how there could be so many. Once he watched a bird fly from its ledge into the air, and drop bones to the ground. Back and forth it went, and dropped them in
different areas of the cavern. The last trip it carried the skull of one of the Dwarves, and let it drop clattering to the floor. At other times, a flock of crows would gather in the air, in no apparent order, croaking and kawing, and would dive and twist and roll in the air in pure fun.

The Dwarf was jealous of the birds' ability to fly. He wished he could try to soar and glide through the air, to completely defy gravity and do whatever he wished in complete freedom with no fear of falling, to stay completely still, suspended in the middle of the air, and not drop. He could travel anywhere swiftly and with ease without touching the ground. He felt helpless as a baby as he watched them, and loathed his little ledge. Though it had no enclosing walls, in a real sense it was no better than an inescapable prison. And a prison was what he hated most bitterly now. He wanted to break loose of whatever was holding him back and be free at last. And then he realized that flying was a necessity, it was needed to live. For he could not live indefinitely without food, and no creatures would dare come within his grasp. He had to go to them, yet this was impossible. He felt as helpless as he was before he had caught a Raven. All his trials and his torturous initiation seemed for naught. His hunger returned as if a fist struck his stomach. He was doomed to die.

He flung himself down in despair and slept. When he awoke, it was grey all around him. The mist was descending once more to the bones. His hunger pains returned with force all over again. He stared into the greyness bleakly. The glowing feeling in his stomach was fading, and he felt weak once more. The weakness was not coupled with a feeling of indifference, though. There was more...
of a sense of determination, and refusing to admit defeat. His arms were stiff at his sides, and he was kneeling on his knees. As he stared blankly, the mist gradually dissolved and sank down to the bottom of the cavern. All was quiet now. There were no calls from birds. They were all huddled in the crevices and on the ledges of the rock. All was deathly silent and bitterly cold again. Mist poured from the Dwarf’s mouth and his heart pounded in fearful expectation. The unusual silence was an omen. Something was going to happen. The Dwarf cocked his head and listened intently. Then it came. A faint crunching could be heard clearly from the bones below. Something was moving down there. More crunching could be heard. How many things were down there? two? three? four? The Dwarf’s head throbbed. He began to drool and his eyes stared wildly. The sound became clearer. It was moving across the cavern floor towards the center, towards the Dwarf. The Dwarf swayed, and everything seemed to reel before him. The things were almost directly below him. The Dwarf felt he would fall unconscious. Suddenly, a tremendous sensation of power and vitality welled within him, exactly like the moment before he seized the Raven, but with even more force. He half fell, half leaped over the ledge, air pushed against him, and his stomach felt twisted. He cried out, but his voice became a rasping croak. Suddenly, the cavern exploded and screams and shrieks filled the air. He plummeted through the air, his arms flailing, but suddenly he halted, and swayed, balanced. Piercing cries erupted all about him, and birds were diving and filling the air. As he stayed wobbling in the air, he looked at his arms. Long, black, closely knit feathers on muscular wings met his eyes. His breast was covered with many short smooth black feathers, and at his feet were five strong, curled claws. A Raven soared by him, stopped for a moment with bright eyes, then flew on through the mist. Now he
understood those eyes. Their expression was clear. It was of excitement, eagerness, a little pride, but most of all – joy. He opened his beak, gave a loud croak of delight, then tilted his body and beating his strong wings, sped through the mist. Three Dwarves were being carried away by great birds. He caught sight of a flock of Ravens following an eagle with a Dwarf in its talons. He flew after them swiftly. If he had remembered, he would have realized that that Dwarf was one of the three Work Masters from the Search Party. He was to have a strange revenge. He joined the Ravens as they chased after the eagle, croaking and kawing as they went.

THE END