

George M. Grow



# The Road to Urtopia

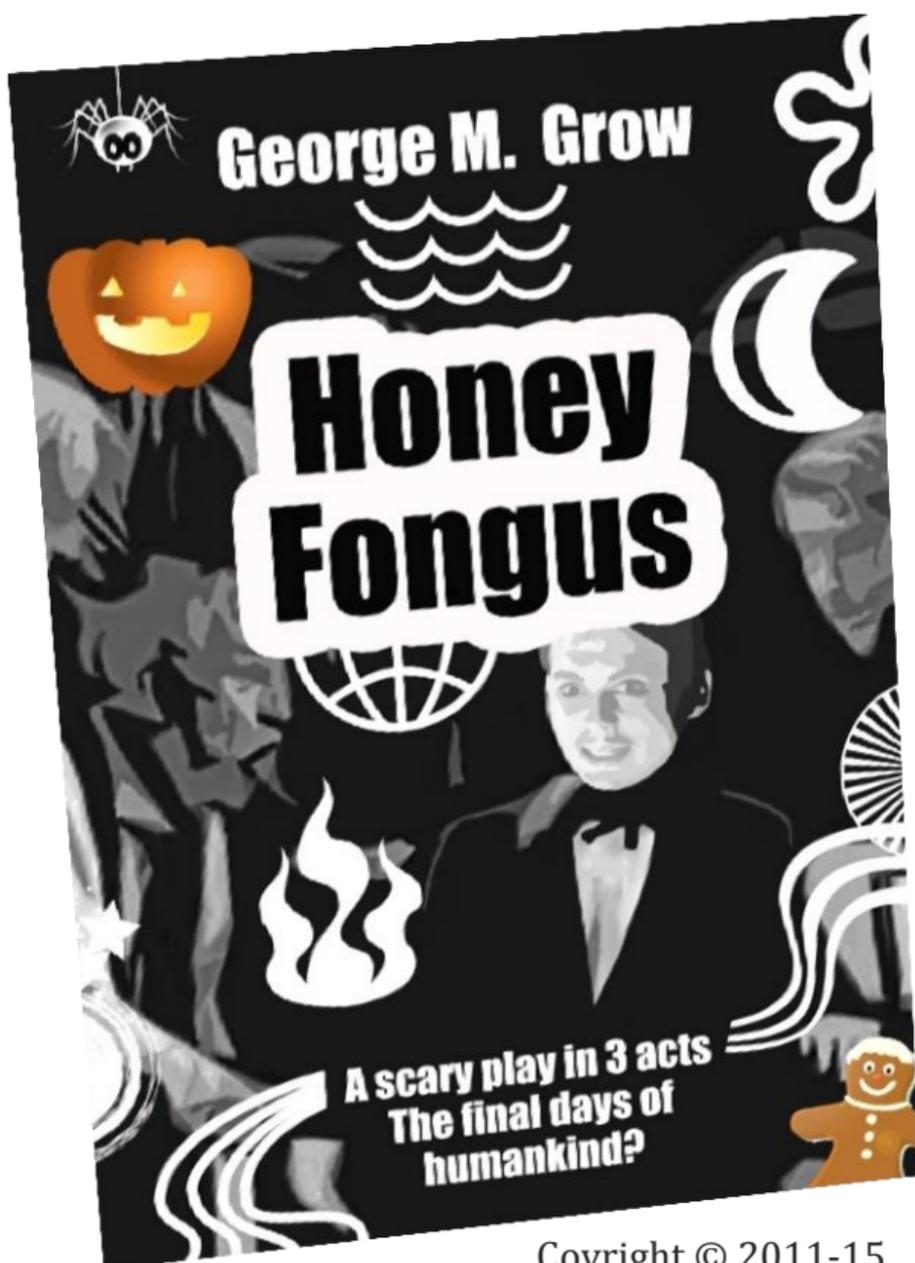
Awaken, You Sleeping Beauty  
Honey Fongus  
The Beggars' Banquet



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## Characters

WEINGARTNER, humble, shy, sloppily elegant, hornrims by Nerd-Fashion, kerchief fetishist, PhD in geology

KAPINSKY, cheerful, proud mustachioed, ruffled hair; chief executive at the Geologic Institute of New Hampshire; Prof of Geology and Paleontology.

OLD JOHN, legendary, tall, wiry, black felt cowboy flat hat, a likeness of the Spirit of the Sudeten Hills

FOUR BROTHERS, pious in their own way

MISS WALKER, Kapinsky's secretary; legendary legs, natural blonde, sailor-style suit, sheer white blouse

SHERIFF, for whom facts matter

WOMAN WITH CARRIER BAGS, red curls, petite, pale, lean, spooky beauty, bloodless lips

WOMAN WITH CHILD, superstitious, backwoods

OLD WOMAN

MAN WITH PICKAX, man of action

MAN WITH SHOVEL, stocky, sturdy, furry, shovel-hands, woodchopper's shirt

MAN WITH WHEELBARROW

INSPECTOR, musquash cap, English mustache

SERGEANT, woolen cap, big, white teeth

FIRE CHIEF, present as per enactment; in the uniform of the local Fire Department; on the right, directly next to the stage, along with his class L4 extinguisher

DUTY NURSE, in Red Cross uniform

*Honey Fongus*

also in Spanish and German

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## Honey Fongus

### **First Act**

#### FIRST PICTURE

*Time: present. Place: downtown Concord, New Hampshire, Geologic Institute, office of Chip Kapinsky. In the background, there are two doors. The one on the left leads into an ante-room, and when it is open, a full waiting room becomes visible. On the right, a desk with PC and reams of papers. At the window, Kapinsky, fifty-nine-year-old. Propping himself on the desk, desperately shaking his head. He looks out of the window at snow-covered, befogged roofs.*

SECRETARY (looks through the cracked door into the room). Professor! Here are two gents who came to see the doctor. Whoa, just thinking about it gives me a chill. I hope they take him away, the poor fellow. Shall I ask them in?

KAPINSKY. To see the doctor? Are the gents from the police, from the press, relatives? How often have I told you, you are to properly announce the visitors, you might as well let anybody in!

SECRETARY. I get the message.

KAPINSKY. Which message did you get, Miss Walker, who are you? A typist who thinks the stars would drop right out of the sky if she falls for a man.

SECRETARY. Don't forget that I'm just a human being too.

KAPINSKY. I want to forget it, but we have completely different worries. Ask the gentlemen in now!

SECRETARY. Gladly, since the gentlemen are gentlemen.

KAPINSKY. What's that you say?

SECRETARY. You shall not have any lady visitors here. The walls are thin, I can't put up with it, I hear every word, it will be the end of me. (She sobs; submissively.) Coffee?

KAPINSKY. I want nothing from you, why do you torment me?

SECRETARY. Because you insult me.

DUTY NURSE (among the audience, silently). Douche!

KAPINSKY (to the secretary). Haven't you the slightest sense of decency? Our good man Weingartner has departed and you can only think of yourself. In truth, you are black-mailing me.

SECRETARY. No.

A VOICE FROM THE WAITING ROOM. Professor Kapinsky!

KAPINSKY (sees the two gents through the cracked door). Indeed, do come in! (The two men enter quickly the room.) With whom do I have the pleasure? (He shuts the door behind them.)

FIRST GENT (while he is looking around). There are different ways to get rich. Some get married, others inherit. Some actually earn their for-tune, and not a few turn to crime. We are responsible for the latter group. My name is Heaney, Inspector Heaney, and this is Sergeant Hammett. We are Criminal Investigators, and the cases we deal with are called murder.

KAPINSKY. Murder? Utterly out of the question. Dear Weingartner...

INSPECTOR. Where is he, then, the dear man?

KAPINSKY. Here, in the closet.

SERGEANT (opens the door to the closet).

THE DOOR TO THR CLOSET (blocks the view into the chamber).

INSPECTOR (fans himself). Boo, he's been hanging there a while already, what's with the air conditioning?

KAPINSKY. It isn't working properly. (While opening the window.) He has certainly done this to himself.

INSPECTOR. I'd like to know what still works in this town at all. There are increasing deaths, times are hard enough, and then you say he did this to himself?

KAPINSKY. Exactly then, or not?

SERGEANT. Wrong, Professor. The better the times, the higher the suicide rate; the worse the times, the more they struggle. Inspector! The clothes rail he's hanging from! It is attached a lot lower than the dead man is tall.

INSPECTOR. Very strange. His feet are touching the floor.

SERGEANT. Either somebody helped him do it or he raised his legs on his own while breathing his last gasps.

INSPECTOR. Is that even technically feasible?

SERGEANT. With an iron will.

INSPECTOR. Quite the optimist, but yet still, we have to look into the matter. (To Kapinsky.) Did the deceased have any enemies, haters, enviers?

KAPINSKY. Weingartner? Difficult to imagine. I already told you that he was a good sort, the most decent man I have ever met. And who envies the good in a person, anyway?

INSPECTOR. You think he took his own life for decency's sake?

SERGEANT. This certainly would imply that he committed something bad,

anyway.

INSPECTOR (ransacking the desk). Well put together, Sergeant. (To Kapinsky.) Has he left a farewell note, any message?

KAPINSKY. Not that I know of. He was unmarried. No children, no wife, no romantic interests. All he cared about was his work, but he hadn't been active at the institute for a year. Two months ago, he dropped in and asked me if he could make use of the laboratory, but he never appeared after that, and now this.

INSPECTOR (pensively). No women, no children, just work in mind. Hem. The forensic people will arrive soon. If they don't find anything, we can close the case. You can imagine that we have got our hands full these days.

KAPINSKY. Inspector, aren't you going to take the poor fellow along with you?

INSPECTOR (walking off). That's up to the coroner. In two or three hours, you will be rid of him.

SERGEANT. Professor! (He and the inspector leave the office.)

KAPINSKY (alone; speaks into the closet). Weingartner, you stupid fool! You were too good for this world. That's what you get of it. (He takes a cigar from his breast pocket and looks for a light.) Where then are the matches? (He ransacks his pockets, then the drawers. In vain. He steps in front of the open closet.) Have you got a light, Weingartner? – No, no, in your case, I doubt you're in hell. Perhaps in your jacket pocket. (He disappears in the wardrobe.) Right, you don't smoke. (He comes out.) Ahem. (Hs

eyes look for the fire chief next to the stage.) Do you have a light, Chief?

FIRE CHIEF (moves, pats into the trousers pocket with a long, slow movement, searches and takes out a lighter, in turn, with a long, slow movement. He lights it.)

KAPINSKY (climbs off the stage, goes to the fire chief and lights up the cigar.) Many thanks, good work. (He appreciatingly slaps him on the shoulder, climbs back on stage, composes his white overalls, slouches in front of the closet and takes two puffs.) Weingartner, you stupid fool, how could you? "Carry your cross and it will make your life easier." My foot, now I have to deny everything. The reputation of the institute is at stake, and before the cock crows three times, I must betray you. God, what a profound word! I wish you a pleasant journey, Weingartner! Farewell, perhaps we will meet again. You were the best man who ever worked for me, adieu! (He waves good bye, shuts the door to the closet and leaves the office shaking his head. Overhead off.)

## SECOND PICTURE

Kapinsky's office

*Overhead on. The same setting. Instead of the snow on the roofs which can be seen out the window, there is now glistening sunshine. The room, too is well lit. Weingartner at the window. He sees a plate of cookies on the desk, approaches it, eavesdrops and puts*

*a piece quickly into his mouth, chews. Suddenly, the professor enters. Weingartner swallows.*

KAPINSKY. What a mess, that's all we needed. (To his assistant.) You know what happened, Weingartner? The dog carcass has contaminated the groundwater all the way from Fifth Street down to Ellington Road. Send out a warning to the affected households and inform the authorities!

WEINGARTNER. I wish you a good morning, Professor!

KAPINSKY (bustling). And what a good morning it is.

WEINGARTNER. How was your vacation, did you and the twins go sailing on Winnepesaukee Lake again this year? It's said to be an enchanting area.

KAPINSKY. Indeed, Weingartner, but it loses all its charm if you spend day for day at the helm with my wife at the bow. And then this horrible calm. Four days at a stretch, and then the storm. I called, "Twins, lower the anchor!" They lowered it, but it wasn't attached. We twisted about madly, we lost the anchor, the rudder, the keel, only my wife remained. That's life, Weingartner; the children grow taller and the days grow shorter; your wife gets fatter and the times get leaner. Would you be so magnanimous as to answer this enquiry? (He shoves a piece of paper towards him.)

WEINGARTNER (casts an eye at the paper and puts it down). Well, that's settled, Professor. The sewer authorities report of serious silting in several places throughout the

state. I've permitted myself to go through the geological survey from the last quarter again and came upon an odd, odd thing.

KAPINSKY. Just that the phenomenon is so widespread seems odd. Reports from all over the country came in. What does your analysis show?

WEINGARTNER. There are no definite results in so far, but if we ignore the fact that the silting advances only in certain places up to the sewer system, we gain a clear and convergent picture of how deep it reaches. See for yourself. (He clamps a sheet of paper clumsily onto the flip chart.) Indeed, the offsets are distributed unevenly, but the geological data shows that the scoria spread concentrically between the layers. The greatest depth was recorded here. Note the funnel-shaped curvature and the coherent draft of the layers. The greater the distance from this point, the flatter the curve. In your absence, I have permitted myself to let Mr. Copra take some samples. The mineral composition indicates bio-erosive material that, from the geological aspect, might not exist at all. The age determination is virtually zero, isn't this highly abnormal?

KAPINSKY. Bio-erosive material? Pshaw, you must be mistaken, Weingartner.

WEINGARTNER. The chemical analysis shows that it is some sort of chemical compound of organic origin. And the high phosphorous content and the high amounts of trace elements and hormonal substances as well indicate that we are dealing with some sort of secretion.

KAPINSKY. In God's name, what are you talking about, why you don't just say that we are in deep shit! I've never seen anything like it, have you?

WEINGARTNER. Until now, we just know that the deepest spot is in this area. (He turns at the armchair and places his finger on the wall map.) Peterborough.

KAPINSKY. Peterborough? Blow me down. It is sixty miles from here. And do the seismographs pick up anything?

WEINGARTNER. Bubkis, no abnormality.

SEKRETARY (looks in through the gap in the door). Professor! Your wife wishes to talk to you on the phone. And also two strange gentlemen are here about the dog cadaver. And still moreover you must...

KAPINSKY. Must, must, must. The carcass can wait, I'll be ready in a moment. (He gives a friendly wave through the cracked door into the waiting room. To the secretary.) And you out to go! (He hastily waves her away. Towards Weingartner.) So what are you suggesting?

WEINGARTNER (tactically). I don't rightly know.

KAPINSKY. You aren't a stupid man, Weingartner. Say, do you know the black army?

WEINGARTNER. May one say this, then?

KAPINSKY. Why? You know the state motto of New Hampshire, anyway.

WEINGARTNER. They say that creatures rove about under the fields. They dig tunnels and caves in which they live. And if you accidentally go

down into one of the holes, they drag you down into the depths.

KAPINSKY. Ha, ha, and this is exactly I've just thought of too, but not everything you think turns out to be true. Well, get yourself to Peterborough immediately, I'll take care of the dog carcass myself. Look around, ask the natives whether they have noted anything unusual, perhaps you'll find something out.

WEINGARTNER. Anything unusual?

KAPINSKY. Go, Weingartner, go, and give me your report as soon as it is ready! Ha, ha! (In leaving.)

*Well then, comrade, well then!  
Mount the horse, mount the horse  
Drawn to the field of liberty!*

*In the field, man is still of worth,  
Where hearts are still weighed.  
And no one speaks up for you,  
Or cares if you loved or hated.*

*Turned adrift, all alone, all alone,  
Mount the horse, mount the horse,  
Drawn to the field of liberty!*

## THIRD SCENE

### Boreen

*Weingartner at the wheel; the sedan abaft; the video screen is in front of it: country road, stately area, hilly, partly forested; here and there a small lake, music from the loudspeakers. Beside the stage, the fire chief on his post. He inadvertently whistles some notes along with the music from the radio.*

WEINGARTNER (switches off the radio, turns an ear to the darkness, leans

back and breathes deeply. It has been a long time since his last vacation. He is glad to have another outing in the county. We hear only the engine; the tires don't squeal. Weingartner takes his time. He starts singing Kapinsky's song and presses his nose against the windshield so he doesn't miss his turn). Gosh darn it! (Weingartner brakes sharply, turns the car and turns off the road. At first, we see fall landscape, then a built-up area and the sign reading "Peterborough." Weingartner eases up on the gas, rolls down the side window and waves at a passerby.) Sir, please, I have a question!

PASSERBY (turns round; without getting closer). A beautiful evening this evening!

WEINGARTNER. Yes, beautiful. Say, where can I find the mayor?

PASSERBY. Aha, and why?

WEINGARTNER. My name is Weingartner. I come from Concord. I'm a scientist at the Geological Institute and would like to have a bit of a look around here.

PASSERBY (rolls up). Look around? (He looks around, leans down and whispers). It's a beautiful evening this evening, Sir, but for some there won't be any beautiful ones anymore. Science can do nothing against this.

WEINGARTNER. I must talk to the mayor, where can I find him?

PASSERBY. Right over there.

WEINGARTNER. Where?

PASSERBY. There, in the cemetery.

WEINGARTNER. Cemetery, is he dead, then?

PASSERBY. I should hope so, he was

buried last week. (He takes two steps back.) Fancy car. A 500 K convertible, nineteen hundred...

WEINGARTER. Thirty-six. We use it for our field studies, makes it easier to find people we can consult.

PASSERBY. You'd better just turn around and head back home, Mister. Take my advice, your knowledge won't do you any good here.

WEINGARTNER. And what are you talking about? Don't run away, Sir! (He looks at the man rushing off, closes the window and picks up speed heading downtown. Soon his glance falls on a little girl who, all alone, is standing at a red light. Weingartner stops, rolls down the window and calls out.) Young lady, where can I find the sheriff?

GIRL. He's getting plastered. (She points over her shoulder.) Right there, at Halow's.

A WOMAN (jumps towards the girl, snatches her hand and drags her along across the street).

WEINGARTNER (would like to drive on but somebody raps at the side window. He recognizes the uniform and opens the window). Good evening, Sheriff! My name is Weingartner. From Concord. I'm a scientist at the Geological Institute and as a precaution, would like to check if everything is alright here.

SHERIFF (while taking pen and notepad out of his shirt pocket). Weingartner, did you say?

WEINGARTNER. Doctor Weingartner.

SHERIFF. As a precaution; well, well. (He goes to the front of the car and takes down the license plate number. Back at the side window, he puts his hands to the edge and

leans down having a better look at the driver.) That one of you would show his face here, you didn't really do your homework, Doctor. We have requested support more than once. We called as far as Washington, but no geologists have been here yet. Hick. License, please!

WEINGARTNER (more to himself). Better safe than sorry. (He hands over the document; lightheartedly). Actually, I ought to be suspicious as for your appearance, Sheriff.

SHERIFF. Ought you?

WEINGARTNER. Sure, the obligatory mirrored sunglasses are missing on you.

SHERIFF (hands back the documents, seriously). We have no stomach for jokes, Doctor. Peterborough is in mourning. There's nothing to laugh at, if you'd like to take note of that. I personally think nothing of rumors. What matters to me are facts, facts and more facts. Truth is stranger than fiction, but, still, a geologist can't help us anymore. It was the mayor's idea to request scientific support, and now he is...

WEINGARTNER. Gone? And which facts have you put together so far?

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End of extracts

From the comedy Honey Fongus  
by George M Grow

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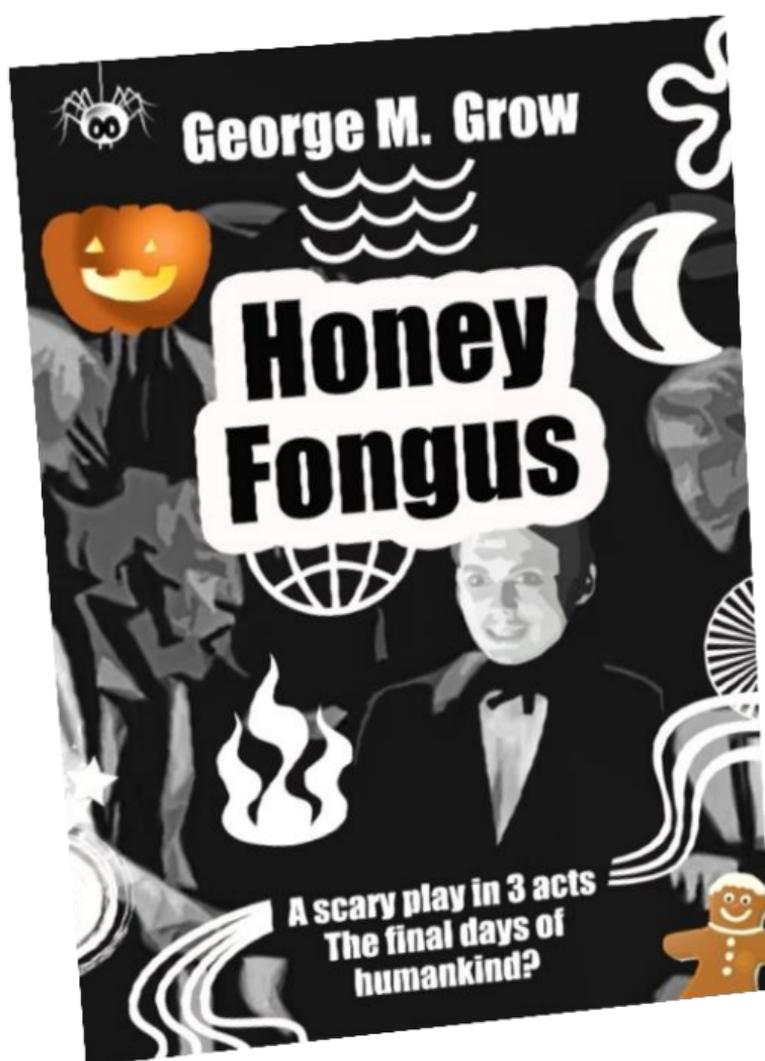
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