

“THEY TOLD THE BOY ALMOST NOTHING”

by
J. H. Johns
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They told the boy-
almost-
nothing;

oh,
he knew
where they were born;
he knew
that they had gone;
he knew
that they had come back;

but the standard-
“...who, what, where, when and why...”
bits of information
were missing;

no names;
no places;
no stories;
no memories;

they told the boy-
almost-
nothing,

and it had a price...

END

“THE NUCLEAR FAMILY”

by

J. H. Johns

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Is it the fission
or the fusion
or maybe
just the extensive radiation
that will kill you
in a nuclear family?

Maybe,
it's the soul-searing heat;
the psychological blast;
the lifelong after-effects-

the fallout-

of
constant and repeated
and
endless detonations
of all the “warheads”
that make up

“the nuclear family...”

END

“THE WITCHES”

by

J. H. Johns

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He was precocious
and
probably a bit autistic
as well as
A.D.D.-
(even before they knew what it was)-

but, still,
at his age
he knew
where the witches lived;

on the other side of the block,
down toward the corner;

of course,
you would have
missed the doorway
if you hadn't know
to look for
the peeling black paint
and the opaque glass
with the, now,
unreadable-
or maybe it was cryptic-
lettering;

that's where they lived,
upstairs-

yes,
that's where the witches lived-

and
at four years old,
he was certain of this...

END

“THE PAINTING”

by

J. H. Johns

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You didn't-
couldn't-
see it when
you walked into
Saint Anne of the Lakes Church;

no,
unless you turned around,
it wouldn't be until
you were leaving
that your eyes were drawn
to a place above the center aisle-
and there it was,
stopping you-
especially if you were a young boy-
in your tracks;

what you saw
was a Jesuit missionary-
Saint Isaac Jogues-
standing in a canoe,
Bible in his hands
and
Indians all around him;

it was shocking,
it was stunning-

it was scary-

and knowing
what you knew
as a five year old.

your imagination
would run wild

wondering
what would happen next...

END

“ONCE AGAIN, THEY WERE GONE”

by

J. H. Johns

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It wasn't like
they were waiting
for months
or
weeks
to pass;

oh, no,
it was almost
a day-to-day existence.

Would they be gone, today?
That's what they thought,
yesterday.
But what happens, tomorrow?
Will they be here?
Will they be gone?

Then,
one day,
once again-

they were gone...

END

“BACK WHEN”

by

J. H. Johns

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Back when
we were little,
back before
the EPA,
back when
the Rust Belt
was shiny and sparkling,
back when
the air was full of effluents
and
particles
and
odors-
of every sort and kind-
back when,
on our way home from school,
we would grab an icicle
and
lick it and suck it
as if it were a popsicle-

yes,
those were the days of
innocence and fun and ignorance-

back when...

END