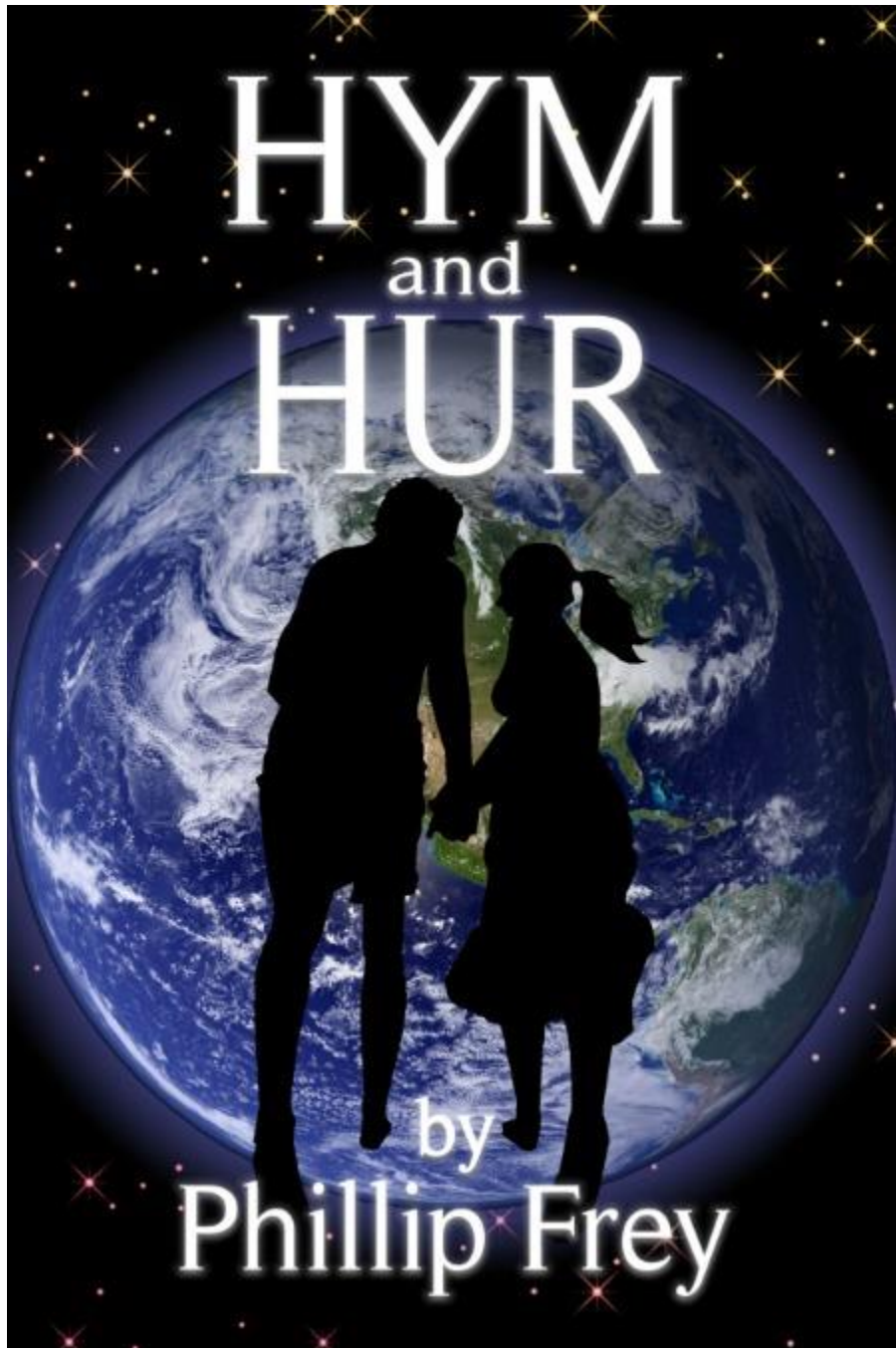


HYM and HUR

by
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Hym and Hur Excerpt

Chapter 1

A bright flash lit up the restaurant window. The waitress snapped her eyes shut, thinking it was the sun bouncing off a windshield. Blinking her eyes open, she noticed the booth alongside the window was occupied. A booth she could have sworn had just been empty, and she made her way over to it.

Hym set the breakfast menu down. "Coffee," he said to the waitress, "and can I get a hot fudge sundae at this hour?"

"No problem," she told him. "And for you, ma'am?"

"Hot tea," Hur said, "and a slice of cherry pie with two scoops of vanilla ice cream."

"Sounds great," the waitress smiled, and she left them.

"What'll we do today?" Hur asked Hym.

Searching for an answer, his hazel eyes filled with mischief. "How about this?" he whispered. "For twenty-four hours we give everyone in Los Angeles bad luck."

"But most of them already have bad luck," Hur said. "And it would be a negative. Why not give everybody good luck?"

"Not really my kind of fun," he slouched.

In the silence that followed, each tried to come up with something.

"Breakfast time," the waitress announced. She served the drinks and desserts, and then was off to the next booth.

Hur's blue eyes brightened. "I got it," she said, and it was her turn to whisper. "For a day or two, no one in Los Angeles dies."

Hym slapped his forehead. "That is great!"

"Oh-darn," she said. "We'll have to get you-know-who to go along with it."

"Why wouldn't he?" Hym said as he dug happily into his sundae. "It'll give him a chance to shorten his list."

Hur nodded skeptically as she took a big bite of her dessert.

Chapter 2

Barney's Beanery had just opened. There were only two customers at the bar. A chubby old woman sipped a beer at one end. At the other sat Death tossing back a shot of Jim Beam.

He grimaced with delight, slammed his glass down and said, "Barkeep—I'll have another."

Pouring the drink, the bartender eyed Death's black coat and fedora, the pale skin and long gnarled fingers. "Perfect weather for a coat," he cracked, "must be only about 80 out there."

Death took hold of his fresh drink. "You're too young to be a real barkeep," he said. "You're a standup comic, just trying to make ends meet."

"Got me pegged," said the bartender. "Which club you see me at?"

"None," Death grinned. He downed the Jim Beam, burped and said, "I'm a real whiz when it comes to people-insight."

The Beanery's door opened. Hym and Hur stepped in and gazed at the far end of the bar, at Death ordering one more for the road.

Death saw them and arose tall and lanky from his stool. "It's Hym and Hur," he said leaning in toward the bartender. "Pair of beauties, wouldn't you say?" Then turning toward the pair, he hollered over the distance: "Pair of troublemakers is more like it!"

The bartender said, "Hey, take it easy or I'll have to ask you to leave."

"It's them who ought to leave," Death said. He backed away from the bar, knocked his stool over, danced in a circle and sang out, "Pretty pair will fill your bottles with beetles and worms, and your drinkers will dance with pink 'n' blue pachyderms!"

The chubby old woman at the near end of the bar put her money down and left.

"Geez," Hym said quietly to Hur, "does Death need a vacation or what?"

Death stopped dancing, pointed a long finger at them and shouted, "Secrets—dirty little secrets!"

The bouncer came over to Death and said, "You're outta here, buddy!" He grabbed Death's coat sleeve and yanked him toward the back exit.

Suddenly, as if struck by lightning, the bouncer let go of the sleeve, reeled and hit the floor with a hard thud.

"He'll wake up after I leave," Death told the fearful bartender. "Now, now," Death said to him, "everything's fine." Picking his stool up off the floor, Death sat and threw back his one for the road, Hym and Hur on the approach.

"I'm feeling much better now," Death said to the bartender. "So good in fact, I'll have another for the road while I give these two a moment of my time, over there in that booth."

"And for us," Hym ordered, "two root-beer floats."

"Heavy on the ice cream," Hur added brightly.

Death stepped over the bouncer and said to the bartender, "No use in trying to use the phone. Landlines and cells have been temporarily brought down by an unusually large sun spot."
