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Futile Effort

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Mullin and the blond man laughed. Leary picked the bottle off the bar and swung it wildly around his head.

"Damn it!" he said, "How can a man do the job if you don't give him the proper tools?"

The blond man backed toward the door. Mullin took a large wooden mallet from underneath the bar.

"Leary," he said, "I'll give you just two seconds to get out of here."

The little man stiffened. He threw the bottle on the bar and turned away.

A sound like a pistol shot echoed in the barroom. The metal cork flew from the bottle and crashed into the juke box. Bright tongues of purple flame flared from the machine and then subsided. Thunder exploded against the walls of the building and a thick cloud of smoke ascended from the juke box. It was

shaped something like a mushroom.

Brophy, the Prophet, leaped to his feet. "I'm coming, Wyrd!" he shouted. He plunged through the smoke, collided against the Yale man and ricocheted out the door.

Rain slanted in through the open doorway and the smoke gradually cleared away.

The blond young man sat on the floor. He shook his head slowly from side to side. "Incredible!" he kept saying, "Incredible!"

Mullin's voice came from the floor behind the bar. "Leary, if you ever split another atom in here—out you go!"

Mickey Leary stood at attention about ten feet from the blond man. There was a large smudge on his right cheek and the smoke had made his eyes water, but his face wore an expression of reverent dedication. It could easily be seen in whose hands the Torch of Aristotle rested.

Futile Effort

● John Keenan

I have tried to rake leaves on a windy day,
 Attempting to guide them to captive stacks
 Where I could deal with them the neatest way;
 But they're elusive with the wind at their backs.
 So there I stand with persecuted face
 And empty basket, knowing for a fact
 The wind will win and the leaves will play, and
 So once again chaos will have its say.