

# The CLOVEN hoof

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can celebrate their boorishness in grand style. I would like spring more, for it is beautiful, were it not for the impending plague of summer with its human locusts thriving in an atmosphere far deadlier (if radiation levels are considered) than the worst blizzards. Other seasons may be violent in themselves, but summer is virulent; an incubator for *personal* malaise and discord. I like autumn and winter best. A sunny autumn day has a relaxed purity, a mellow tranquillity. To me, as with the ancients, autumn is from August through October, and Winter, from November to February. To me, the best thing about summer is that on the Solstice--its start as most humans know it--the days grow shorter and the night longer. And the best thing about any day is its gentle lapse into night, the dark mantle from whence all secrets evolve. Winter time is hell for many, and understandably. It's a Tartarus which causes havoc. But within a snug harbor--whether a dry tent, strong castle, or tight camper shell--winter can be the great season of contrast. \*\*\* In my *noir* world, the sticky glare of summer has no place, save for those parts of the world where nature has cheated humankind by injecting regional and regular fog and rain. An ardent supporter of controlled environments, many years ago I fashioned a room--a true ritual chamber--which I call The Cornell Woolrich Memorial Hotel Room. It could as easily have been named The Weegee Room or The Reginald Marsh Room, although its decided title somehow fits best. It consists of an exact duplication of a ~~seedy hotel room~~ in an old but still sound brick building. The walls are papered with faded yellow and a bluish carpeting clashes pleasantly with the brindle colored woodwork. Outside the single window it is always night and always raining and the intermittent flash of a neon sign, and on a butt-scarred mahogany bureau an old veneered radio plays songs of lost love and after-the-war dreams. The wood-grained metal bed upon which I rest bears the inevitable ~~invariable~~ ~~chintz~~ spread and a nightstand hold the inevitable telephone, pitcher of water, ashtray and clock. A naroon painted desk supports a lamp and ancient portable typewriter. And the artwork, framed prints of sad flowers trying to look cheery, a musty landscape with leaden sky, the casino at Catalina Island, and a pair of tropical birds. And, of course, the calendar from the Night Owl Cafe, with the Earl Moran cowgirl sitting on the corral. A few clothes (vintage) on wire hangers on wire hooks, from one of which dangles the obligatory shoulder holster. And over all, the fragrance of every such room that ever was, mingled with the sweet scent of the wet pavements beyond. I have shown this room to a few. The famous or notorious love it and understand it and would spend a night or more. The pretentiously unaware are repelled, sickened, and cannot get out soon enough, which suits me fine.

"The Mind is its own place, and in itself  
can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n

--John Milton  
Paradise Lost

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