

*The Town Drunk*  
*Presents*

## **THE GOD OF LAUNDRY**

*Tim W. Burke*

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In the Simple Time of our world, when the physical had almost been severed from the Dream, Funebria the Shroud-Lord whispered in the wind a message for the sorcerer-saint Moidle.

Said Funebria, “Your tales spread lies and make the world yearn for what does not exist. To you I shall speak the Last Words and give Consolation, and your body I will slay. Your name I will scour from record, and thereby from memory. But your soul I will let flee to the Dreamlands so that you will know the dolor of your people. When we meet this dawn, this I will make so.”

Moidle told his devoted followers of this message, and they were great afraid.

“Flee this night so that you may live!” they begged. Moidle had shown them how to imagine and believe, and so become nearer the gods.

The sorcerer-saint was grim. “There is no place upon this world that Funebria will not find me. Take this to the edge of the city Marahepsa and bury it in an iron box.”

The paper read:

*Beloved Snookiedookie,  
Take the five white shirts  
The ten robes  
And those undergarments rare  
To the best cleaner.  
All must be made clean for the appointment.*

“But master, why do you give us your laundry list?”

Moidle’s eyes teared. “It is all I have left of my spouse, whom Funebria sent to her ancestors. I cannot say why you must do this, as words once released take on their own life. It is one of the three principles of sorcery that the more rare a thing is, the greater its magic. The Second is that the more a name is spoken, the more power the named can wield. The Third is that the written word connects the Dream with the physical. Do as I say, and we may save the hearts of our people.”

The disciples were puzzled, but as Moidle knew the names, words, and inflections of all that was beneficial, they obeyed.

The next dawn, Funebria came to Moidle in his cave. Funebria spoke the Consolation and delivered Moidle to his mortal death.

Thereby came the days of the Shroud, when all people across the world contemplated nothing but their demise. Spice became irrelevant to its food. Music became no more than breathing. The living contemplated only its moment of life. Feeling no passion, civilizations stopped. His will accomplished, Funebria rested in his tomb on far Mount Pehene.

The spirit of Moidle watched from the Dreamlands, unremembered. And Moidle waited.

The city of Marahepsa grew but slowly, as its population drifted into unpopulated lands. These dispirited people made little bother with building dwellings.

In the seventh generation, the box was found by a child who lived in little more than rags. The child brought the note to the one in the village who still bothered to read. The village wondered at the words:

“Clean clothes?” “Shirts and finery?” “A person tasked only with cleaning clothes?”

“What of this grave appointment?”

And all puzzled over the one called Snookiedookie, who carried the items to be cleaned for the appointment.

The name was odd and whimsical. A chant and rhyme were made of the note. It told of proud Snookiedookie bringing dirty clothes to his important, unknown appointment.

With the creation of that song, strength sprouted in the spirit of Moidle. And Moidle waited.

The last man who could read and write passed to his ancestors. But the rhyme spread to the neighboring tribes, who were just as pleased and puzzled by its meaning. Some thought the appointment was one of reward, as it is anticipated. Others felt it an appointment of judgment, as a good impression would be needed.

Was cleanliness more important in assessing value? Certainly hygiene extended health and life. So all things that extend life must have value. The rhyme passed from generation to generation, and a muscle of reason gathered upon its skeleton of intent. All wondered: who was this Snookiedookie?

In the Dreamlands, the sorcerer heard the name each time it was spoken, and he grew.

None wished to rouse ire if Funebria were to come down from Mount Pehene, so all the rules were attributed to Snookiedookie. The rules were tested by experience and found true, so that as

generations passed, the rules were obeyed in faith.

Hygiene requires cooperation. So laws of governing were attributed to Snookidookie. The wisest of the land were elected to be Cleaners.

The sorcerer became strong enough to whisper in their ears, and that way did writing come back to the land. The power of it rippled across the world.

As the great judging place was being built and dedicated, from the throng stepped a being wrapped in moldering cloth. All fell to despair at the sight of Funebria.

“Again, illusions have caught the souls of man,” said Funebria. “To you Cleaners and all who heed I say this, ‘Desire nothing, for the pain of living is enough. This is your only law.’”

Said the High Cleaner, “We have another law, one that is reasoned upon experience and means to encourage life. It is the law of Snookiedookie. Look! We have carved his name on the beam above the entrance.”

“Who gave you written language, for that is more foolishness! And who is Snookiedookie? I know the names of all things mortal. I do not know this Snookiedookie.”

At the speaking of the name, there was a glow. The engraving above the doorway grew and opened into a door from the Dreamlands. From that door, Snookiedookie appeared.

He was broad shouldered and dressed in fine-stitched clothing that was blinding in its purity.

Snookiedookie declared, “The one who speaks my name needs taking to be cleansed. It is in the labor of tending that we are refined.”

All fell to their knees in a washer’s posture and exulted at their deliverance. Funebria made to speak the Last Words and give Consolation to Snookiedookie. But there is no Consolation for hope when it has experienced even the slightest success.

Snookiedookie popped Funebria into the sack. Throwing the sack over his shoulder, Snookiedookie strode off into the stars to his Appointment, the nature of which is still being conjectured during the Scrubbings.



**Tim W. Burke** was raised within a mile of some of America’s most secure penitentiaries. He has been published in *Weird Tales*, *Gothic.Net*, and *A Fly In Amber* magazine. His work will appear soon in *Fantasy Online*, *Aoife’s Kiss*, *Bewildering Stories*, *Pseudopod*, and *Space and Time*. Read more about him on his blog, <http://timwb.livejournal.com>.