

Some valuable lessons offered by rejection

Once in desperation I told an unsuitable and persistent suitor that I would rather clean the oven than meet him for a drink. It was cruel, but effective and, compared to the form adopted by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright's butler, it was positively sweet. The butler, Julian Carleton, found it untenable working in Wright's house in Wisconsin because Wright was living in what was then considered sin. Instead of merely writing a letter of resignation or reporting his employer to the authorities — ecclesiastical or otherwise — Carleton waited until Wright was away on a business trip and then axe-murdered the woman and her children, similarly dispatched four guests, and burned the house down. Carleton, who was known for his rigid morals, swallowed acid and died in jail before he could testify, but his motive was generally attributed to a violent disapproval of adultery.

That grisly story is only one of hundreds included in *Rejection* by John White (Addison-Wesley, 166 pages, \$7.75). White believes that rejection is not the same as failure, that it happens to everybody, and that it can be a valuable, strengthening lesson. By quoting myriad examples of famous people who have been slighted, Wright hopes to cheer and inspire rejectees. (Presumably they will do the same for him by buying this book.)

Certainly it is encouraging to learn that Einstein's own parents thought he was retarded and that one of G.K. Chesterton's early teachers believed that if the child's head were opened, "we should not find any brain but only a lump of white fat." My favorite entry is a rejection letter from the publisher of a Chinese economic journal:

"We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper it would be impossible for us to publish any work of a lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that, in the next thousand years, we shall see its equal, we are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition, and to beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity." That rather takes the smart out, doesn't it?

Do you remember *Masquerade*, the book written and illustrated by Kit Williams which contained, in its paintings and verses, the clues to the location of a \$30,000 jewelled hare buried somewhere in England? The book sold more than 100,000 copies before the treasure was finally found inadvertently by a man walking his dog. Now there's a new hunt for \$10,000 in jewels buried throughout North America. The clues are hidden in *The Secret: A Treasure Hunt* produced by Byron Preiss (Bantam, 224 pages, \$9.95).

Preiss (who produced *Dragon-*

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Paperbacks

world and *The Dinosaurs*) and his collaborators (Canadians Sean Kelly and Ted Mann of the *National Lampoon*; sculptor JoEllen Trilling; illustrators John Palencar, John Pierard, and Overton Loyd, and photographer Ben Asen) have concocted a lively and colorful package. It is their contention that gnomes, goblins, sprites, and other invisible peoples emigrated to North America along with humans, but that after a time the Fair People (as Preiss calls them) became disgusted with the dissension and depravity that was polluting the New World and hid themselves away. Before they disappeared, the Fair People collected 12 precious jewels, placed each in a treasure box and buried them in secret locations throughout North America. By examining the pictures and reading the verses in *The Secret*, you should be able to find the treasures. And, unlike *Masquerade*, you can claim the prize by sending the exact location to the publishers.

In addition to inventing a mythology for North America and devising a treasure hunt, the authors have concocted a guide to modern spirits, those descendants of the original Fair People who have adopted human guises. These contemporary nuisances, such as the Torontogre or the Union Jack can be identified by prescient humans equipped with *The Secret's* spotting tips. For example, the Union Jack (Britannicus, -a, -um), a Brownie passing as a Bogie and more British than the British, can often be found sleeping peacefully in an overstuffed chair in a Vancouver men's club, his feet resting in the roaring fire and is guaranteed to be present at Shakespeare festivals, dog shows, and Ye Olde English Pubbes.

Another reincarnation from the dim ages is *A Stress Analysis Of A Strapless Evening Gown* edited by Robert A. Baker (Prentice-Hall, 192 pages, \$5.95). Originally published in 1963, this collection of humorous essays about the perils and pretensions of living in a scientific age is largely outdated — particularly the title essay which today is quaintly sexist — and often not very funny. In a time when doctors seem constitutionally immune to wage restraints, Frank Getlein's ruminations about the evils of socialized medicine provokes nary a chuckle.