



Tom Trainor
COCOON

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A FABLE

Rumors are rife / That
Hugo Hyde
Took his frail mother's
Life
That her death was no
Accident / No / That
He smothered his own mother
With her favorite feather
Pillow
Sole heir to her estate
Nor was that the worst of the
Gossip
He keeps weapons of mass destruction
Is a cult unto himself / Abnormal
For Hugo is under suspicion by the
Clearhaven neighborhood association
A man who should be tracked
Registered
His comings / His goings
How he lived with his mother / Just the
Two / In that tall brooding
Victorian
Encircled with a balustrade porch
Set back / Way back
In the woods /
And high up a turret / A light
Still flickers day and night / The room
Where Hugo's frail mother
Drew her last gasp

The floor down below dimly lit / As
Hugo Hyde sits / Surrounded by stacks of
The New York Times
Stacks piled high from floor to the
Ceiling / Room upon room
Narrow useless aisles Hugo can barely
Squeeze by
Delivered daily and Sundays but left
Unread / Except
For an occasional crossword puzzle
Near genius he's been described
Though strange if true / More likely
Perverse
He sits and he sits / Long nights
Alone
Never answers the phone
Mail gets slid through a slot in
The door
Pizzas too
Boxes of KC fried chicken / Along with
Icy cold cola by the case
Man's diet's restricted to
Bloat
Four / Five hundred pounds of it
More
Since his poor mother's demise
He has grown thrice in size
Can't fit up the stairs
Can't fit through the door / Stuck
There on the first floor
The neighbors / They wonder
What is it he's doing / Braced in an
Oversized leather lounger / Laptop
Set precariously on the lowest roll of
Distended intestine / Face
Bathed in a fiendish green glow
Hugo stares at the screen / Eyes
Dazed
Fingers fiddle the keyboard / Man's
Crazed

How is it the neighborhood
Knows so much about
Hugo Hyde / It's
Their kids / They roam
On nightly security patrol
Creep
Along the balustrade porch
Peek
Into windows and watch
One with nappy hair
Another a slanty-eyed glare
A third red and fair
For decades ago Hyde Farms raised prize
Thoroughbreds
The stables and meadows where
Race horses once grazed / Now abound
With quarter acre tracts of flat
Bungalows
Occupied by waves of invading
Immigrants
With Hugo the only Hyde left / Last scion
From a fine family / He abides
Barricaded behind
The New York Times
Unread
Tapping out something
Indecipherable / With
Demonic intensity

The sight of / The fright of
Huge Hugo Hyde
Doesn't prevent these three
Neighborhood kids from
Snooping / No
They're merciless
They chide him / Deride him
Rattle the handle / Scatter when
Hugo comes hollering after
"Leave! / Leave me alone / I own
My own home!"
Laugh / They mock
Since Hugo's so slow / Up
Out of his chair / Fat
Can't get passed

The door / The dog
Too old it can barely *ru-roof*
Cats / Legions of which recline
Supine / Stretch / Scratch
Upon stacks / Of
The New York Times
Combined with a stench / That pervades the
Balustrade outside / Though
Hugo's safe / Enclosed within a
Thick case / A
Cocoon

Why / Why
Do these kids taunt him so / Try to
Flush him out
See what Hugo Hyde's made of
Flesh / No bone
Hand to mouth his existence
Rest and digest
Age indeterminate
Occupation none / Yet
Beyond
The Victorian's balustrade porch
There's war / There's more
Those coping with loss
Costs
A mortgage / No job
New babe on the way
An emergency room visit
Though Hugo Hyde's immensely
Oblivious
He pays cash for the delivery man's
Visit

The kids / They creep upon the
Balustrade porch / Catch
Hugo dozing
Contentedly sprawled across his leather
Lounger
Dog too / The cats
Kids could care less / They
Bang on the panes
"Hugo / Fat Hugo"
They cry / Run off

Hugo's so startled he stays awake
Day and nightmares / Plays
Hide and get sought / Awaits the next
Onslaught

If their creeping and peeping aren't
Punishment enough
Come Halloween / Three masked marauders
Rattle the knob
Cats go ballistic
The dog *ru-roofs*
Hugo tries / Struggles to rise
To rise too late to
Retaliate
They've already spray painted the
Balustrade porch lime green
Tricked / Hugo is / While the three
Retreat
But what can he do
Ignore them
Yes / Hugo consoles himself
They'll grow up / They'll go away
He hunkers down further into his
Cushy chair
Chin to keyboard / Fingers to lips

"What?" / Asks the nappy haired kid
"What's he doing in there all by himself?"
"Something mighty suspicious!" / Shouts
The slantily eyed child
"We've got to find out!"
"Storm the door!" / Braves red freckles
"No! Let's slip through the window we broke!"
"Yah! That one in the cellar!"

Invasion
Stealthily they slip inside / Drop a few feet
The dark / The dank / The stench
Seep between the floorboards
While directly overhead
Creak / Creak
Hugo's up / He's heaving himself about
The dog *ru-roofs*

The kids / They can't see
CLANK!
One steps on a rake
Movement above stalls to a halt
Have they been found out
Creak / Creak
Creak / Creak
The floorboards again squeak
The kids below breathe relief
Creep / Creep
They tread up a stair
Creak / Creak
Slivers of light outline a door / When
Suddenly / Without warning
A shadow passes / A hulk / Hugo
"What's he doing?"
Chomp / Chomp
Hugo's feeding
RU-ROOF?
Chomps stop
WHAM!
Cellar door swings wide
WHACK!
The steamy remains of a greasy pizza gets
Flung / Down steps
"Run!"
Hugo yanks the tab off a fresh can of cola
With bared teeth / Launches it
Ru-roof / Ru-roof
Crash / Crash
Getting out a tall basement window in the
Dark worse a
Task / Than
Getting in
Crash / Splash
Again and again
A stray can lobs off the side of freckle's face
Another full force upon the neck of nappy hair
Two kids lift one up to the window
The one in turn pulls the other two out
Crash / Crash
They tear across the yard
Splash / Splash

Under steady barrage by
Six packs

A few days truce ensues
Wounds heal / Replaced with a brooding
Revenge
Kids hover / They plot
What would be an appropriate response
“Hot foot!”
“Hose in the face when he opens the door!”
“A smoke bomb tossed through the slot!”
Ah hah!

They dress freckles up with a
Pizza delivery
He knocks and listens while
Hugo lumbers toward the door
“Who is it?”
Kid carefully inserts this evening’s advertised
Special / Pepperoni double cheese
Garnished with
Cockroach
The live crawling variety / *Choke*
A cry from inside / Hugo
It seems
Doesn’t much appreciate the joke

Still / The mystery remains
What is it
Hugo’s sitting there doing
Hours upon hours
Days into night
Computing
His stocks / His bonds
Net worth to the penny
Some other adult game / A war
Against alien invaders
Chat rooms / Seduce the unwary
Porn of a horribly rarified type
A twenty four hour site into
Someone else’s most intimate life
Though too / They could be
Underestimating the man
Hugo Hyde might be designing his very own
Encryption system

Millions of lines of code / Or
Spamming / Or
Hacking his way past
Formidable firewalls into the very bowels of the
Pentagon's super computer
But whatever Hugo does / These three kids
Need to know / Need to know now

Midnight
They're back / They'll stay out as late as
It takes
Traipse across the lime green balustrade porch
Spy close by the window / And as
Three sets of eyes rise to the sill
CRASH!
A fist / Shatters the glass / A
Monstrous huge Hugo
Erupts / Spewing
All sorts of trash / While the
Kids race for cover

Nights later / Nothing better to do
They slip *oh so* silently back upon
The balustrade porch
Chuck a flare through the slot / But
What starts as a joke smolders into
Smoke / Bundles of
The New York Times
Set ablaze
Cats freak / Riled / They leap
Pile to pile
The dog *ru-roofs* / No where to run
Hugo / He tries and he tries to
Get up / Get out
He shouts
Fire trucks respond / Spray down the
Blaze
Ax through the door / Uncover
Hugo / Poor Hugo / Overcome
Aslump in his lounger
Takes eight to haul Hugo out / And as they
Lift / Off slips his laptop / Cracks
Against the step of the balustrade porch
Lid splits / And there

For all the neighborhood to stare
Black Jack to Red Queen / Conclusive proof of
Hugo's highly suspicious / His sole solitary
Preoccupation

Years pass
The proud old Victorian reduced to ash
No longer a light in the turret / For
Hugo's been moved safely
Out of sight / Kept nearby inside a quite
Private institution / And the kids
They grow / Slip off one by one
Each to his very own cozy
Cocoon

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