

ARTHUR BEDSLING, THE DEMON

A Kyle Derekson short

Arthur Bedsling, the demon, was employed by sundry rich men, Musk and Gates and Zuckerberg not ranking low on the list, by a genius design: His labor was to steal money and possessions from the poor and deliver it to the rich (while he got a considerable share of it as well). As he began to plunder towns and cities, becoming better-known and more cunning in his craft, his pride swayed him to compose a song which he would chant upon his entrance to every community: whose melody, though very troubling and annoying to those who unfortunately heard it, was so memorable, and even further broadened his reputation.

Being disposed very materialistically in his works, he never undertook to learn to manipulate his life-aurea like his comrades dexterous in that art; and this sufficed for him while he harried towns, because of the ten-foot rod he always bore with him. The tree-branch was thick and firm on its handle-end (where it was hewed off the trunk), and became progressively lithier toward the tip, so without applying much force he could swing the rod half its length so quickly (and repetitively), that it could send men flying back if it struck them on the cheek, or slice them clean if it hit their neck.

In his raids he reached the lowest depths of ruthlessness, maiming and destroying all who ventured near his path — even the lame, sick, and elderly he deemed fitting prey — and crushing cats and dogs and other animals, or rending limbs of theirs for fun. A plea for his mercy would whet his appetite for cruelty the more, so eventually his victims accepted their end if they had heard his reports.

Advancing Southwestward from Nevada where he despoiled Alamo, Indian Springs, and Pahrump (leaving their struggling inhabitants in even more miserable condition), he soon crossed into California and afflicted Bishop, Exeter, Porterville, and Shafter, making prodigious profits.

"Let's see," said Arthur Bedsling, looking at his map, "Nearest city would be Bakersfield. They'll be pretty defenseless against the great Arthur Bedsling!"

The morning later (he lodged outside the town so his entry should have more grandeur, taking place in the morning), he came through

Bakersfield's city limit, carrying the Bedsling Rod (as he called it). He was curious why few folks cowered in fear from the sight of him.

"Aren't you at least a little apprehensive of me, *Arthur Bedsling*??" Even singing his song was to no avail.

When at last he chanced on a poor neighborhood whose scanty riches, he thought, were ill-guarded, and whose working-class owners were at home to watch it being robbed of them; he chose a first house and was about to alight on it.

"Good thing Bakersfield's no home to any professional demon-hunters," he mused aloud.

"Hey," said a voice a few yards behind him. "I'm Kyle Derekson, Professional Demon Hunter." He lifted his staff and swung it a few times for show.

"Didn't expect that, that's for sure. But still you're no match for *Arthur Bedsling*, I'm *Arthur Bedsling*, yeah."

"What an annoying song you've got there."

"The way you announce *your*-self is no better, pal. Now, ready to face the wrath of Arthur Bedsling??"

"Okay." Kyle shrugged, seeing Arthur wrapped in the thinnest film of life-aura — Arthur could not see Kyle's abundant energy with his untaught eyes (he thought such things were boring).

Bedsling smirked lustfully and made a swift and violent thrust of his rod's end toward Kyle's neck (desiring to cleave it instantly); but in the half-second of its course Kyle put up his wrist, snapping the rod as it hit and flinging the smaller, cut end yards beyond him, as if it were brittle.

Bedsling made a sour countenance.

"Alright, Kyle, impressive. But remember: I'm Arthur Bedsling, don't forget it!" This time he drew back his eight-foot rod and wound it behind him to quicken its blow even more, and he discharged it against Kyle, making an attempt at his belly with the new sharpened tip.

Kyle Derekson blocked upwards. This chopped more of the stick off.

"You fucking thing, you hear me?" cursed Arthur Bedsling. "But I'm not that feeble!"

He withdrew the rod again, and this time swung it in a vertical arc from behind him, over his head, and down onto where Kyle stood.

Kyle finally reared his staff, and held it upright before his face. He reinforced it with aura (invisible to Bedsling). When Arthur's rod hit, Kyle's staff cracked off another splinter from it, and the even more minuscule stick continued going till it struck the soft turf of the residential front-yard the two were duelling in. Then, the flexible end of it warped a little against the mild grass, and bounced back, walloping Arthur in his own face.

"Ow!! Nobody better have seen that, Derekson... Take this!" Raged, Arthur shot what remained of his stick forward, at Kyle, like a spear.

Kyle flicked it aside. It landed on the side-walk.

Arthur Bedsling burst forth and issued a fist for Kyle. Parrying, Kyle answered with a kick to his belly, which sent him back, stooping.

"How about a patented *Arthur Bedsling Kick*®?" Bedsling gave a side-kick for Kyle's rib, but Kyle grabbed him at the ankle and flung him sideling onto the cement, beyond where his stick had been thrown. But he was swift to rise on his feet.

"Think that's enough to succumb me?" Bedsling spoke again, pompously.

"No, I think this is." Kyle thrust his energy-strengthened staff at Arthur's face, and his face shattered. The dead demonic body fell lifeless.

"I'm Kyle Derekson, Professional Demon Hunter," he said to himself, chuckling. "This guy should at least have learned about aura."