

# Anton

by Bill Underhill

“Couldn't we get something to eat?” he asked as we walked to my car.

“Sure. There's a diner...”

“Oh, I wouldn't want you to spend any more money on me!”

Incredible! How many kids that you meet in a video games arcade are likely to tell you *that*? I looked at my young companion with added respect.

“Well, we could go over to my place,” I suggested warily, “I've got fresh ground beef and...”

“Great!”

I opened the door for him. “Uh , when do you have to be home?”

“No special time.”

Even more incredible. I climbed in beside him, knocking on hypothetical wood that my luck would hold. A Saturday morning at the arcade almost always resulted in my getting to know one or two youngsters, and sometimes after spending a pocketful of quarters I would leave in the company of a friendly fledgeling to see a movie or watch a football game.

Ever since I was old enough to know the difference between lads and lassies I've preferred the company of boys to that of almost anyone else. Surprisingly, quite a few kids of ten or twelve or fourteen have found my company not altogether vexatious and like 'hangin' around' with me on weekends. Their free and easy camaraderie proves a degree of trust and affection that I find pleasantly flattering. Not all adults are taken into the confidences of those high-strung, high-spirited creatures.

And, sometimes, there are a few who intimate – some shyly and obliquely, some frankly and with impudent grins – that they know how to play the Great Game (which, Kipling notwithstanding, has nothing whatsoever to do with espionage), and would be happy to spend an hour or six in its ecstatic give-and-take. Memorable was the twelve-year-old scion of a libertarian household who arrived at my door one Saturday morning and departed late the following Sunday afternoon, not having gotten, I'm afraid, much sleep in the interval.

Enter, then, Anton, whose last name I hadn't asked and which he

hadn't chosen to volunteer, a tall, slim youth of perhaps thirteen years, wearing faded denims cut off exquisitely close to the crotch and an old football jersey that ceased its downfield march just at the level of the xiphoid, leaving the admirer an enticing view of tanned abdomen and deliciously semi-protuberant umbilicus. A string of tiny Tiki beads encircled his throat, and soft brown hair, shaggy and sweet-smelling, half-hid his ears.

At the arcade he had been content to deal me defeat after humiliating defeat, distracting me each time my turn came by pressing his scantily-clad body to mine, an unconcerned arm around my waist, his movements against my side timed superbly to coincide with those critical moments in which millimeters stood between my survival and electronic extinction.

Whenever I'd returned the favor, standing close behind him with my arms 'round his tummy, the intensity of his attention and skill of his play had only seemed to increase.

At last my supply of coins had run out; he had gently vetoed my proposal of an afternoon at the cinema. Now I was more than content to let reflexes conditioned by years of suburban driving guide us homeward while the boy and I exchanged pleasant small talk. He spoke with a faint but maddeningly unplaceable accent. And put off my queries about school, family and friends with charming evasions.

After the usual struggle with three different kinds of locks and a burglar alarm we entered my unkempt bachelor's flat.

"Make yourself homely," I said, pointing to the armchair.

"What?"

"I mean, sit down. I'll start the hamburgers."

I cleared a pile of papers and my typewriter from the table.

"What do you do?" the boy asked.

"I'm a writer."

"For the newspapers?"

"Great Ghu, no, I write science fiction."

"Ever met anybody from another world?"

"Not yet," I smiled, and went to the kitchen to busy myself with the hamburgers. When I turned a minute later to ask him what he wanted to drink I found the armchair empty but for a scrap of cloth recognizable as the boy's football jersey.

Craning my head a little, I spotted the faded blue heap of his shorts in the hall leading to the bedroom, and at the entrance thereunto a pair of briefs, carelessly discarded. I dried my hands and went to the bedroom,

and there on the broad expanse of my bed was Anton himself lying supine on the coverlet with his ankles crossed, his hands behind his head and a smile on his face. The Tiki beads were still around his neck, I observed as I began to unbutton my shirt. I noticed that the depth of his tan continued uniform over the length of his body.

Warm in the pleasant glow that follows mutual satisfaction, we rested on the rumpled bed, I on my back and Anton nestled in the hollow of my arm, one leg drawn up over my body, his thigh rising and falling on the tide of my breathing.

With one meditative finger the boy began drawing small, slow circles in the dark nimbus of hair clouding my chest.

“That was nice,” he sighed, pressing his nose into the sweaty folds of skin under my arm.

I bent to kiss the top of his head. “I thought so too.”

Suddenly he lifted his face, clear gray eyes glowing with curiosity. “Why,” he asked, “didn’t you go inside me?”

For a moment I was too flustered to speak. Then, “I suppose it was because I didn’t want to hurt you.”

A look of disbelief.

“You see,” I continued, “I’m a little bit bigger than most men....” Anton flattered me with a grin and a nod of agreement. “Maybe *too* big. Most kids your age get scared when I ask them about it. A few have let me try, but... Well, I could see how much it hurt, no matter how gentle I tried to be.” I brushed a wayward strand of hair away from his eyes. “So I’d always stop, and we’d do other things.”

“Did they *ask* you to stop?”

“Some of them.”

“And the others?”

I sighed. “They’d say something like, ‘Go ahead, I can take it!’ but I just couldn’t!” I gave him a gentle hug. “I didn’t want to hurt them, and they looked so little and so helpless.” I let my fingertips stray through the fine golden down adorning the sleek thigh that pressed against my belly.

He shifted slightly, reaching down with one hand. I could feel myself quickening. His supple body bent almost double as he intensified his attentions.

Now he was staring down at me through a cloud of tangled hair, straddling my supine body, rocking his hips downward with deliberation and clear intent. There was pressure, slowly building, then I felt him

open to me.

“There!” he exclaimed with soft exultation. “Would you like to try it now?”

There was nothing I could say. Smiling and flushed with triumph, he let himself be drawn against my chest in tight embrace, our bodies joining in the gentle pulse of passion.

We remained for a while in that misty realm that succeeds consummation, exchanging caresses and murmuring small words of endearment. It took a soft and very prosaic growl of hunger from Anton's bare belly to dispel the haze that enfolded us. I grinned at him; he giggled in return.

“I think it's time for lunch,” I said. I rolled a reluctant Anton onto his back, kissed him, and stood up, my knees more than a little wobbly, to make my way into the kitchen.

Quick work followed with chopping board and knife, ingredients and spices, and soon I was able to heap two plates with french fries and hamburgers with all the trimmings. As I set them on the table Anton entered.

He'd found a hairbrush and worked his wayward locks to a luster like beaten bronze. He hadn't seen fit to resume his clothing, nor had I. Now we fell to and commenced an act of demolition on the hamburgers that did credit to the healthy appetites we'd both worked so hard to build.

When the dishes had been washed and returned to their cupboards, we dried our hands on the same towel – and each of us caught the other looking at him speculatively.

Anton was the first to laugh. “I'll bet I know what *you're* thinking”

“Guilty,” I pleaded. “Shall we try it again?”

He took my hand and led me back to the bedroom.

A happy time later I lay beside my sleeping little guest, stroking idly with my fingertips from the nape of his neck to the base of his spine, wondering at the strength that inhabited the deceptively delicate form of this lovely manchild.

How casually he conquered! How easily he'd brushed aside my reticence to pierce through my defenses and fill the darkest corners of my soul with a light I'd thought gone from the world with the memories of Eden!

Bending lower to kiss one ear, I closed my eyes and inhaled the sweet scent of his hair. In his sleep Anton made small sounds of contentment

and snuggled closer.

I can't say precisely when it was that I began to realize something very curious was happening, something entirely unrelated to Anton's warm presence in my arms or the cloud of contentment surrounding us both.

It was an odd stimulus, just barely perceptible at first, then recognized as a faint, pervasive drone that filled the room.

Looking up I could see a pale glimmering in the far corner, a patch of opalescent radiance that grew in size and intensity as the sound deepened in pitch. Now each object in of my room was picked out by its flickering brilliance, as by a strobe light, making the homely clutter seem stark and alien.

I suppose I should have been terrified. The fact is, I wasn't. Caught up as a boy in the wave of discovery that had carried mankind outward into space and inward through the realms of quark and chromosome, I had long ago fallen in love with the physical universe. I was a child of an era when it had become taken for granted that "all that the mind of man can imagine, the hand of man can realize".

I had filled my waking hours with every bit of scientific literature I could handle and all the science fiction I could buy. I learned how to plunder the lands of the known and the knowable for the stuff to spin dreams of the possible and the might-have-been...

So perhaps this lifelong eagerness to grapple with the unknown was what saved my sanity at that moment, and accounted for the uncanny calm I felt when I realized – without knowing *how* I realized it – that this ghostly intrusion was some kind of door, the terminus of some sort of passageway into my bedroom from...

From *where*?

The hum grew sharply louder and suddenly deeper, until it was less a sound than a shuddering in the marrow of my bones. The light flared brighter to burn itself with icy whiteness through my tight-shut eyelids.

And sensation, so profound as to transcend pain, then...

Gone.

In place of the light there stood a man, tall and fair. He was dressed in dark brown clothing, a tunic and kilt of apparently military cut, with knit stockings on his ankles and caligulae on his feet. He wore a narrow-peaked cap picked out with the same chrome green that piped his tunic collar and sleeves. A buttoned-down holster belted at his right side confirmed my impression. A soldier.

He spoke then, in no language I could recognize, his tone affectionate

and admonishing. I felt the boy by my side rise from his slumber with a start, and realized the man had been addressing Anton rather than me. The lad smiled shyly, as boys will when caught in some minor mischief. He replied in his own tongue, as apologetic as the man had been chiding.

The discussion continued for a few moments before the man turned to me and, in flawless English, begged forgiveness for his trespassing.

“You see,” he explained, “Anton was supposed to have returned to Center over three hours ago. When the chief technician told me that he'd gone overdue on *this* line...” – His face became grim. – “I set the portal controls myself, homing in on his locator...” – He indicated the youngster's necklace. – “and came charging through without bothering even to change out of my uniform. You can't imagine how glad I am to find him safe with one of our agents. I was more than half expecting him to have gotten beaten to a pulp trying to seduce one of these manic locals.”

“Oh, they're not *that* bad,” put in Anton, the devil in his eye.

“Youngling, you've not been here more than twice before. We,” he said, indicating me with his hand, “have been studying this sorry mess of a world for more than a year. If someone from the Commonwealth hadn't found you and worked the starch out of your sheets, you might've wound up in the hands of a gang of toughs, bound, beaten and burrowed.”

The boy chuckled and ground his belly against the bed lasciviously. “Sounds like that might've been fun!”

His would-be rescuer made an exasperated sound. He turned to me in appeal: “Do you see what I'm up against?” He glanced back at Anton, smiling fondly. “I've been his Guardian ever since the day he came to me, lying about his age, and demanding to be broken in. And *still* I haven't quite learned that, for Anton, even too much isn't enough.”

He sat down at the foot of the bed, reached over to muss the lad's already disordered hair. Anton laughed, grabbed the extended hand and turned it over to plant a kiss on the palm – whereupon he proceeded to deal the man's thumb a painful bite.

Snatching back the injured member, the man looked, mock-ruefully, at the impudently grinning boy. I remember looking within myself for a trace of jealousy over this easy intimacy and being surprised to find none – only warmth. And gratitude that I'd been permitted to witness a tenderness outlawed by the society in which I'd been raised.

“And what section,” the man continued, addressing me, “are you with? I'd like to contact your team leader and commend you to him, if

you don't mind.”

“Uh, you really needn't bother,” I began.

“Nonsense. It took a sharp eye to pick out this one youngster in a crowd of boys, and a quick wit to persuade a lad like Anton here to go to ground.” He frowned. “You really should have signaled Center as soon as you'd found him, though. The chief technician told me he'd alerted all the survey teams on this line immediately after Anton failed to return via the prearranged rendezvous. You might have saved me a deal of embarrassment – and the chief a thorough chewing-out.” Then he looked back at Anton, his frown softening to a smile, and nodded at the rumpled bedclothes and our mutual undress. “I can see, however, that you might have found yourself much too pleasantly preoccupied to remember policy and procedure.”

“You mean you don't mind that Anton and I, uh...?” I let it trail off uneasily.

“Mind? Stars, no!” He drew the lad close, the boy graciously allowing his Guardian to pillow his young head upon one kilted thigh. Anton sighed contentedly as a big hand – slightly worse for wear by one bitten thumb – slipped down across chest and belly to gently cup and caress. “Who better than I should know Anton and his ways? He spends himself where he pleases, and with whoever pleases him, and knows himself far better than most grown folk do.”

“Give credit to my Guardian, Peder.” The boy sent his left hand up to stroke the man's cheek. “He's the one who taught me that pleasure spent is pleasure multiplied.”

The man chuckled and glanced at me with a grin. “So you needn't fear any anger of mine, my friend. Anton chooses his lovers as he likes, and I'm not a great enough fool to think that any Guardian owns the lad he loves. Besides,” he continued, looking at Anton again, “the only way to keep him in one place for any length of time is to wear him out completely.”

“Peder,” said the boy demurely, “are you sure I'm *completely* worn out?”

“Eh?” Peder glanced downward, then raised his eyebrows in feigned surprise. “Well, we must do something about this, mustn't we?”

“Yes,” agreed Anton, sliding his right hand gracefully up inside Peder's kilt. “We certainly must, though I think I should tell you something first.”

“And that is?”

“I'm afraid that my friend here isn't one of our agents.”

The hand upon Anton's body ceased its gentle motion and began to draw deliberately toward the holstered sidearm. A pair of eyes gone suddenly cold were locked on mine and I quickly came to the conclusion that any sort of sudden move would be exceedingly unwise.

I think I was just as startled as Peder when I heard him give a sharp gasp, astonishment appearing on his face. He looked down, his left hand holding the boy's wrist through the material of his kilt.

"Anton!" he said in a wounded voice. "You wouldn't!"

The youngster shrugged. "I might. I don't want *you* to shoot my friend. Besides, you'd always have the other one."

Peder let his right hand drop to the coverlet. "All right, Little Longlegs, use your head as well as your hand. What will we do about *him*?" He nodded in my direction. "Regulations..."

"Oh, Peder! Every time *you* put on that uniform *you* think you're the Commonwealth Legate-General. Regulations are *guidelines*. Quote: an operative has to be able to use his initiative in any unusual situation he might encounter, unquote Peder Chelka my Guardian!"

"Well," Peder said slowly, "this certainly seems to qualify as 'unusual.'" He looked at me. "Where do we begin?"

"Why not start," the boy suggested, "by answering each other's questions?"

In the discussion that followed I learned that Peder was an officer in the Intelligence Section of the Commonwealth Service. The Commonwealth itself...

There was a notion fit to take one's breath away!

"I suppose you're familiar with the parallel universe concept?" he asked.

"Well, there's been some speculation here about worlds co-existing with our own on different lines of probability. It's something of a stock device in science fiction."

The gist of Peder's explanation was that some of my colleagues' blue-sky maanderings were fairly close to the mark. There *were* alternate worlds, in numbers that staggered the imagination, existing each on its own line of events and distinguished from its "neighbors" by virtue of different outcomes of certain critical occurrences.

"Consider, for example, the extinction of the dinosaurs that took place on your line as well as my own. On some the thecodonts survived cataclysmic environmental changes to go on and evolve intelligence. On a few lines the cetaceans – the whales – became the dominant species, while hominids evolved into that niche on many more."



Even those alternate earths where humanity had developed intelligence could differ radically from our own. Some were sparsely populated by ruthless and anarchic individualists who spurned cooperative effort, while others had the equally ruthless democracy of the termite mold, with populations and individual liberties to match.

A number of cultures were matriarchal, others male-dominated – Peder and Anton's world, Phelonia, was something of an extreme example of the latter. Females were simply breeders, not, properly speaking, intelligent creatures at all. They were kept in preserves and artificially inseminated. Genetic engineering with carefully selected spermatozoa ensured healthy, intelligent – and 90% male – offspring.

Philenian boys were brought up either by their natural fathers or in creches during their infancy. At the age of seven or eight each boy was expected to select an adult as a Guardian whose responsibility it would be to provide for the education of his charge and the lad's guidance into manhood.

The sexual side of the relationship was quite important, for all that Peder and Anton seemed to take it for granted. It seemed to be a bond strong enough to last a lifetime yet flexible enough to permit considerable sexual freedom for each participant.

I permitted myself a small smile at the thought of certain moral crusaders' reactions to *that* little bit of information. Then...

“What if a boy decides he wants another man as his Guardian?” I asked.

“He packs his clothes, kisses his old Guardian goodbye and moves into the new Guardian's home,” replied Anton.

It wasn't uncommon for a boy to change, especially when he wanted to establish himself in a career radically different from that of his old Guardian. Anton and Peder were together primarily because of the love that had grown up between them over the years – but Anton had originally sought out Peder Chelka because of his interest in Commonwealth Service and the exploration of new worlds.

And there were a lot of them. A loose confederation of more than a thousand of these alternate worlds formed the Commonwealth. Bound by ties of material and intellectual commerce, the Commonwealth was forever examining newly discovered worlds as prospects for membership – or candidates for quarantine, “in which case we place the line in a sort of purdah,” Peder explained.

“The Service intercepts portal transits to the line,” said Anton, “and any attempts to get in or out are stopped.”

I thought about that for a moment. It implied an organization with tremendous technical and material resources. “That’s a lot of power,” I said.

“There’s almost never a need to interfere on the subject line.” Peder said. “And, with an almost infinite number of other lines to open up and exploit, no reason to engage in conquest. The Commonwealth was formed to prevent warfare from crossing the lines of probability. It’s a mutual assistance league, not an empire.”

“What chance do you give us – our world, I mean? Membership or purdah?”

“It’s too early to tell. There’s a great deal of potential here, but... All this warfare; how can we be sure it won’t burst out, into our Commonwealth? And then there’s the matter of these strange cults of yours, obsessed with pain and death, proscribing almost everything loving and living. You fill prisons with men who sin by giving boys the same affection we do in Phelenia, and let the batterers of babies walk free to torture and kill.”

There was something bleak in his eyes. “It’s as baffling as it is repulsive, and altogether terrifying. If such a sickness were to spread into the civilized worlds...” Then he regarded the boy, his expression softening.

“And – though I can’t for the life of me understand it – my Anton seems quite taken with the place.”

“I like the video arcades,” the boy murmured.

“And some other things besides.” Peder nodded at me.

“Aren’t you afraid he might get into trouble?” I asked.

He shrugged. “Of course. Any sane man recognizes the risks – but Anton’s had at least as much training as any of our junior agents. Once he’d been briefed on the customs and hazards of your line, I left it more or less up to him to decide when and where he went.”

“You trust him that much?”

“Anton is a free – a *very* free – person. I love him enough to let him go.”

“And I love you enough to come back,” the boy said, delivering a long, passionate kiss to his lips, at the same time reaching down to fumble with Peder’s belt.

“Anton!” the man said with surprise. “Here?”

“That *damned* uniform!” the lad muttered. He yanked something and it gave. Faced with the prospect of losing either his holster or his dignity, Peder tried to save both at the same time, resulting in the loss of not only

gun belt and kilt but cap as well.

He glanced at me with a mute, halfhearted appeal for aid. I shook my head and sat back, smiling, to watch Anton struggle with the buttons of his Guardian's tunic.

Peder Chelka out of uniform was as impressive a figure of a man as he'd been when weighted with the dignity of Commonwealth livery. His powerful body was covered with a crisscrossing array of scars, evidence of a career which brought him frequently into conflict with hostile and violently-inclined creatures. Obviously his opponents had consistently come off second-best.

I recall thinking, as Anton settled one of us on either side, that risking an attack on my present bed mate would have been one of the most foolish – and final – acts of a lifetime.

Then there was a small hand sliding down my belly, and Anton turning his possessive smile from Peder to me and back again, and then there was no energy to be spared for such silly exercises as rational thought.

Only in lovemaking does the wisdom of the flesh find its fullest expression, kindling the needs of separate souls and then drawing them together to flame brighter and higher until they burst out in a flare of fulfillment, clean and pure.

*En menage*, almost as one body, one presence, we built our blaze, centering it around Anton's brilliant spark and piling sensation upon sensation. Soon it became impossible to contain, impossible to hold at the peak any longer, and we surrendered ourselves to the blissful inferno of exultation.

"I've been thinking..." I said after a long time, speaking softly to Peder over the head of the contentedly sleeping youngster who lay between us.

"Yes?" Peder rolled over onto his right side, head propped on one hand to face me.

"When you first came through the portal you thought I was one of your agents."

He nodded. "So I did. I saw you and Anton together, here in bed..."

"And concluded – correctly – that we'd been making love. Why did that suggest I was from the Commonwealth?"

Peder shrugged one muscular shoulder. "The way your society treats the matter of boy-love, I couldn't conceive of Anton ever finding a man bold enough to risk trysting with him. I'd forgotten that Anton has

boldness enough for a whole battalion.” He smiled, bent and kissed the shoulder blade nearest to him. “Besides, you showed very little surprise when the portal appeared.”

I laughed. “As a writer, that sort of thing is my stock in trade. But what I was getting at... I assume that your survey here is still proceeding?”

Peder nodded. “For at least another five or six years.”

“Could you use a new recruit?”

Anton opened one eye and looked at me long and hard.

“What are you getting at?” Peder asked.

“Oh Peder!” Anton rolled over on his back. “Are you being dense deliberately? He wants to join the Service.”

The man's eyebrows rose. “Him? Impossible! I mean...”

“You mean ‘certainly’, don't you?”

“Only Commonwealth citizens can be accepted into the Service.”

“Which is understaffed.” Anton snorted disdainfully. “Think about it for a moment. He has everything we need in an agent – an open mind, caution, the willingness to learn. What's more, he's really much smarter than most of the people on this line: he's not stupid, just uneducated.”

“You forgot to mention that I'm good-looking,” I added.

“That, too,” replied the youngster. “And sexy besides.”

“But, Anton, the problems...”

“Problems exist to be solved.” The boy grinned.

“Any guesses as to whom I'm quoting?”

Peder paused for a moment, reflecting, then raised his eyes to me. “It's possible,” he said, half to himself. “We're so damned short of good people, I could swear you were my long-lost brother and they'd at least pretend to believe me.”

“He might even *be* your brother,” Anton mused. “He does some things just the same way you do. For instance...”

“Enough!” Peder sat up abruptly to turn the boy belly-down across his lap. He fetched the lad a few light swats to his bottom cheeks, heightening their tone. “Please allow us ageing cripples to retain at least the remnants of our pride!”

He let the laughing youngster roll onto the bed and stood up, searching among the disordered pile of his clothing until, grunting with satisfaction, he held up a palm-sized device and triggered it with a brisk twist of the wrist.

“Time to go,” he said. “If the duty technician's gotten over the scorching I gave him he should have a portal here in a few minutes.

Where's my other sock?"

Anton was making no move to dress. He pressed, instead, one warm foot against my chest. "Can't we stay a little longer?" he pleaded, drawing his toes downward to tangle them in the curly hair below my navel.

I gently removed the boy's big toe from my belly-button and sat up to draw him close.

"You," I informed him softly, "are absolutely insatiable." Then I kissed him. "But all good things must come to an end. If Peder says it's time, then it's time."

Anton gave a good natured shrug, sprang off the bed and knelt to buckle his Guardian's caligulae. By the time he'd finished the familiar hum was again reverberating through the room, the faint, unearthly light glittering in the air between the closet and my color TV.

Peder finished buttoning his tunic and turned to face the appearing portal. Suddenly his hands went to his waist and a stricken look appeared on his face. He said something quickly to Anton, who chuckled and lunged gracefully under the bed to emerge a moment later in dusty triumph with Peder's gun belt and holster.

"If the answer is 'yes' I'll be back in a few days," Peder called above the increasing hum. The pitch dropped suddenly to the same bone-shuddering level I'd felt before, the light of the portal nearly blinding me with its brilliance.

But the light couldn't become bright enough to hide Anton's bare beauty, nor prevent me from seeing him take the Tiki beads from around his neck and toss them onto the bed, and from hearing his voice, clear in my mind: "Keep them close to you. And I'll be back, too!"

Peder stepped forward to vanish within the portal and Anton paused to give me one last smile of farewell before he turned to follow his Guardian through the circle of light to the Commonwealth and his home-world.

They say all writers are at least a little mad, caught up in the worlds they create, entangled in the yarns they spin. Sometimes I think they're right. Confronted constantly with the commonplace, I half-believe I've imagined everything – the Commonwealth, Peder Chelka, the Service in which I've just completed my basic training...

And Anton. Have there really been nights when I've been awakened by the moonlight visitations of a supple young incubus, his warm body sliding silk-smooth between the sheets and beside me, gray eyes agleam

in the shadows, all hunger and eagerness? Have I dreamed it all?

But then I still have Anton's necklace, the locator. By accident I've discovered that the little beads emit a subtle glow, perceptible in the darkness or in dim light, to warn of a portal opening nearby.

Yes, I might even convince myself that I've become a candidate for psychotherapy, except...

Except that Anton's necklace lies on the desk beside me as I write this.

And it's glowing...