

fertilize
 her mind
 and body.
 unpromise your quoted Bible verses,
 your wealth,
 warmth,
 and comfort she was to receive.
 a wasted \$6 that could have been used for the
 destruction of your
 promise.
 the season died the reason erased.
 child would have been orphan birth.

MISS QUENSOME'S HERO: THE PHOENIX OF SQUALOR

BARBARA FEICK

"There are heroes in evil as well as in good."
 from *Maxims* by La Rochefoucauld

Hero is a dog, Miss Quensome's pride and joy; Hero is also a malevolent, hulky, and odious mutt that defiles everything he passes with his abominable smell. He spends most of the day rolling in dunghills of the neighbor's horse. After he has lain there enough, he walks in his lumpish way, bits of dung still clinging to his fur, to bask in the sun on the bank of the local cesspool. Towards evening this reeking cur prowls around looking for food at the various garbage cans. Many times he has shown his decaying fangs to a plump sewer rat that tried to steal his moldy chicken or turkey carcass. While his head and tail are affected with acomia (his tail being so devoid of hair that it resembles the rat's,) his nose is occupied by worms which makes him all the more loathsome. So foul a beast is Hero that the existence of another creature lower than he is unlikely.

His name is attributed to a lonely old maid who grows gladiolas and roses for the annual flower show. She cannot afford a greenhouse, so she grows them in several flower beds in her back yard. During the growing season an old tomcat named Rick likes to eat the buds of the gladiolas, leaving the rosebuds alone because he has not yet figured out a way to get past the thorns. Because of Rick's

voracious appetite, Miss Quensome has not had any prize-winning gladiolas for the flower show. Sometimes in an effort to save her gladiolas, she sits in the garden, holding a birch rod, her only weapon besides her tongue. Whenever she catches Rich in the flower bed, she yells curses and tries to strike him with the rod, the only result being the complete destruction of the flowers by her misses. Last year Miss Quensome changed fertilizers; she now uses one that smells like a heap of fish rotting on the beach on a hot summer day. Hero was on his way to the cesspool when he caught the fishy fragrance in his wormy nose. So powerful was the odor that it lured the dumpy mongrel away from the cesspool and into the garden. Hero lay himself down on a muddy, unplanted flower bed and went to sleep. On his way to the gladiolas, old Rick caught scent of Hero. The arrant odor drove Rick away as though a skunk had been sleeping there instead of Hero. That year Miss Quensome won at the flower show. In appreciation for everything the mutt did for her, she named him Hero, and she puts out a bowl of dogfood every day for him. (The rats eat the dogfood because garbage is more to his liking).

