

THOUGHTS AFTER READING ONE TOO MANY FILES

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*We are the arbiters of doom:
We are the fateful five!
Our judgment stern none shall gainsay,
Not any man alive:*

*Infallible, august, remote
From all remorse or pity:
Of rectitude the paragons,
The Personnel Committee!*

*Of all the realm of academe,
All-seeing, we guard the gate,
Tending the sacred portals of
The professoriate.*

*Forever fixed and firm is our
Infallible decree:
And when we speak, our utterance is
The voice of destiny.*

*In caverns dark we hold our court,
In dim sequestered cell
Within the very bowels of earth,
A bit this side of hell,*

*Where bats and moles and vipers lurk;
Where nightless lizards play:
A place where never penetrates
The cheerful light of day.*

*There, like the angel with the book
Who sits at Heaven's door,
The files we endlessly peruse;
No detail we ignore,*

*But seen with Rhadamanthine eyes
These books of true confession:
Some few with favor we receive;
Most make a bad impression.*

*Then we like inquisitioners
Our judgment do intone.
Now hear the gasps, the piteous cries!
The verdict is, thumbs down!*

*Our holy writ we treasure well,
Preserved from ancient day,
Those hallowed writings, sacred still,
Known as Appendix J.*

*Those graven tablets of the law
We may not hew nor whittle,
Nor change the sacred paragraphs—
Nay, not by even a tittle.*

*So toil we like the sisters three
Weaving the web of fate,
Spinning the shape of things to come
As we deliberate,*

*Passing the thread from hand to hand:
It breaks! Ah, woe and woe;
Another piteous quivering wretch
Doth to perdition go.*

*But hark! What is that dreadful noise,
That dismal clanking sound?
It is the fetters that we wear,
The chains by which we are bound*

*To drudge eternal in our cave,
To stay our wandering feet,
Condemned forever to this place,
Stuck to our judgment seat,*

*Never to know a kindly face
Or see a sky of blue
Until at length we are paroled—
In nineteen eighty-two.*