

King Kauhng's Personal Secretary



Ingrid whooped with excitement when she learned she'd been picked to be King Kauhng's personal secretary! More than 20 girls had applied for the job, but Ingrid had two distinct advantages. For one thing, she had a very keen ear. Not only did she regularly hear voices in her head, she could also decipher tête-à-têtes all the way across the room, even if a nest of noisy vipers was camped out nearby – not an uncommon distraction in Kauhng's kingdom. This was vitally important because her main job would be to transcribe the king's often rambling monologues, which he claimed were his side of conversations he held with the gods. Second, she was the *only* employee of Kingdom Klerical who had her own type-writer, a newfangled writing machine that successfully integrated movable type with a friendly little warning bell. The type-writer much intrigued the king, who was a recreational calligrapher. Kauhng sometimes challenged Ingrid to see who could write a sentence faster. The sentence was always “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy Babylonian.” No matter how slowly and introspectively Ingrid hunted and pecked, she always beat the king – once by more than an hour. At least he was a good sport about it. Her job was mostly uneventful until one day when Louis the eunuch anxiously summoned her to the king's rec room. She found Kauhng pacing in an erratic circle and muttering in a high-pitched voice, and she had to really concentrate to comprehend his gibbering. He was apparently talking to Norman, a heretofore unknown god in the pantheon of kingdom deities, who fancied a sacrifice for the Great Mesopotamian Star Weasel. Ingrid was ready to dismiss the half-conversation as just another royal fantasy, but then she noticed Kauhng looking at her the way one might inspect a potential burnt offering. The king was fast on the draw with his ceremonial scabbard, but Ingrid ably parried his thrust with the typewriter. Then she cleaned his clock with the case, an action that put an abrupt end to her highfalutin secretarial career.