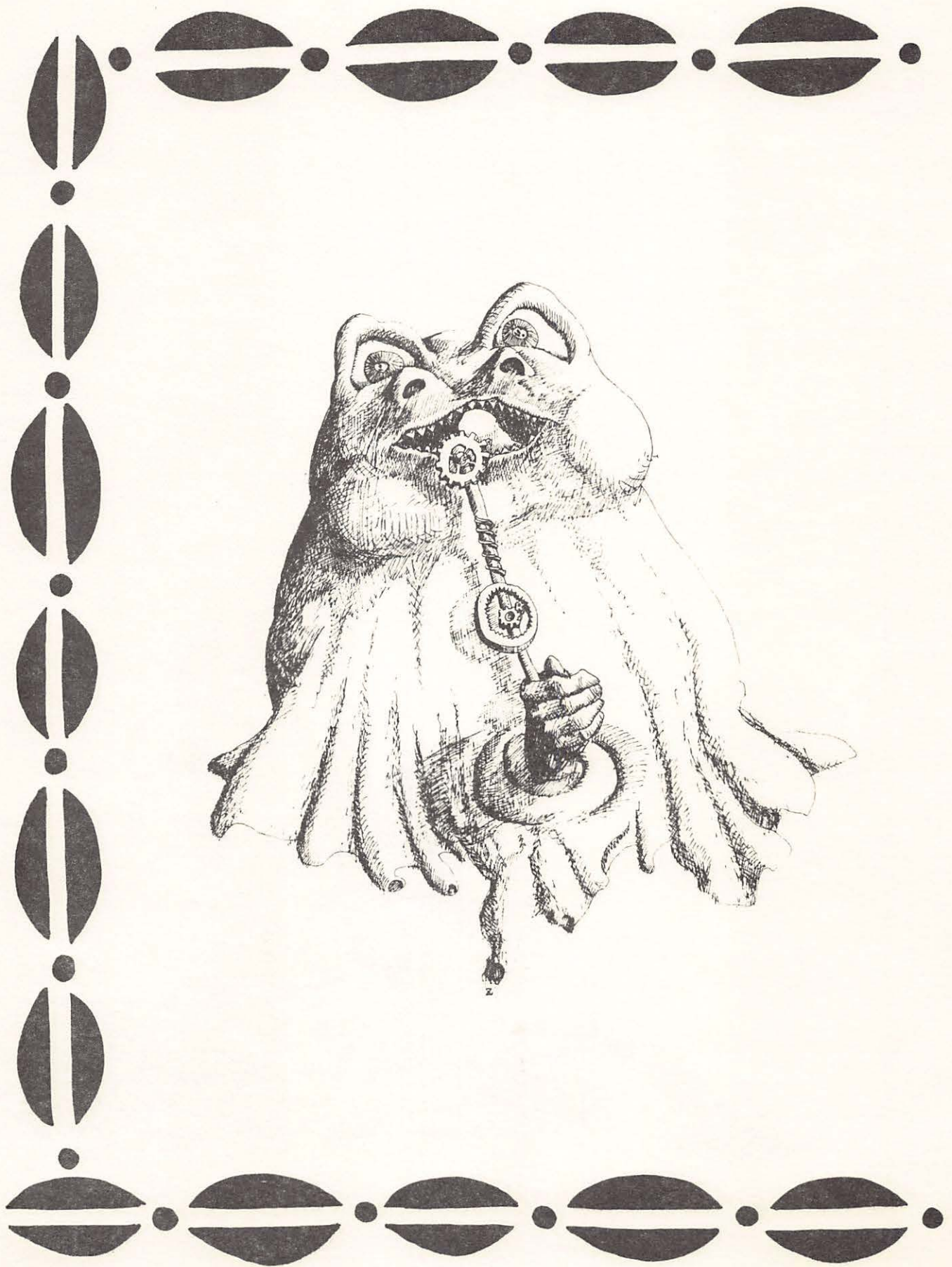


BETELGUESE





ART CREDITS

MATT ZIMET..... 0,1,4-6,8-10,28,30,31,35,38-40,45,46,58,67,69,85

GLENN F. BLACOW. 5,11-13,25,28,39,40,43,45,55,59,62,63,67

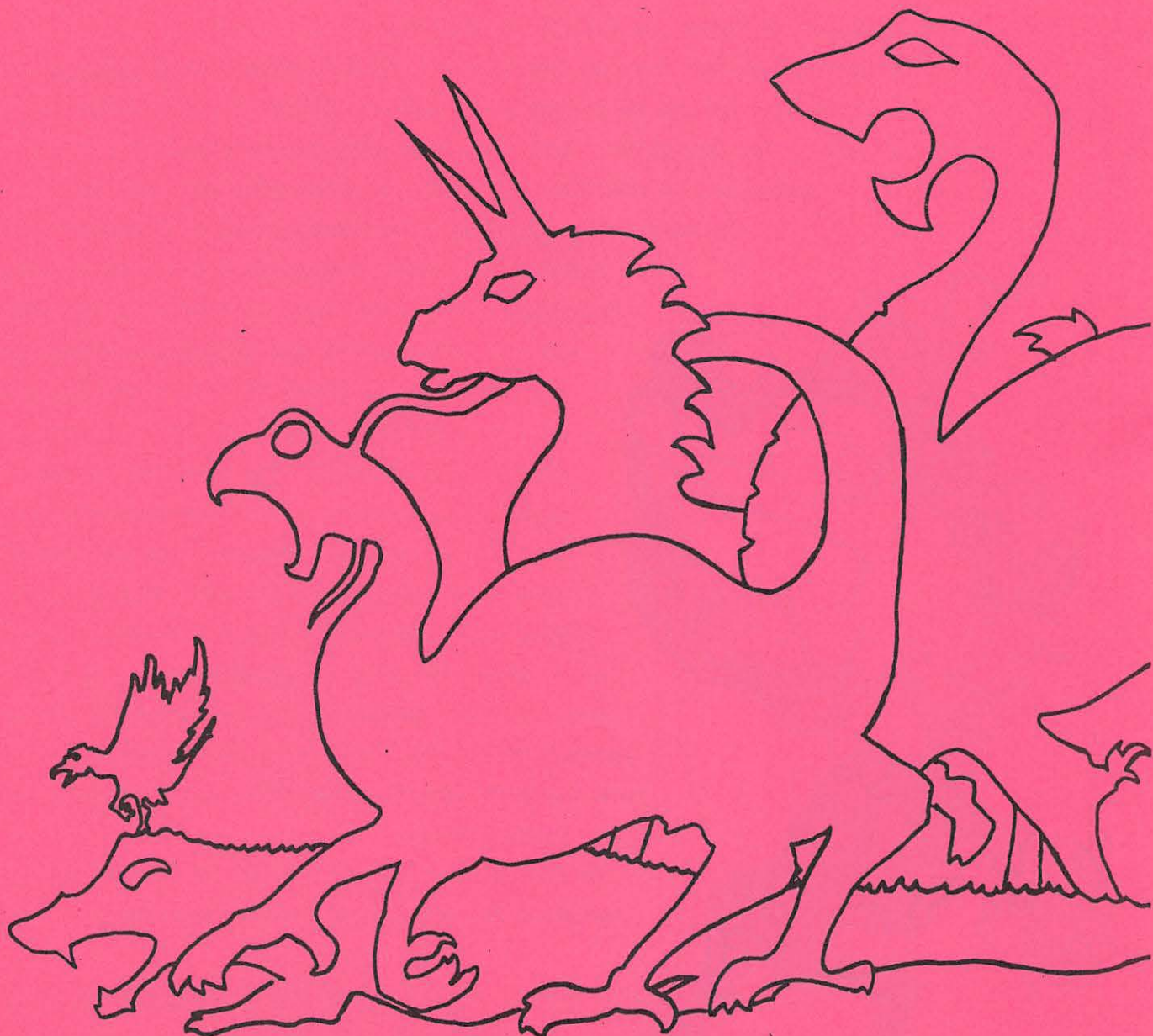
LANCE GLASSER... 3,17-19,32,33,41,44,47,64,65,68,71,80,82,83

BARBARA FELDMAN. 21,53,56

HARRIET FELDMAN. 0,45,63

MARK FELDMAN..... 50

J. CHAPIN..... 74



Gadzooks. This has to be the best pish, er, rather ish (excloop the bluser) the U. Mass. SF Society has yet published. In my opinion, this is because of the bounty of good stories and features it contains. The pages are oozing with pictures. It's been fun putting this together because, while working closely with the artists Matt, Lance, and Glenn, if I needed a space filler or story title lettered, the response with sketches was fantastic. A small part of this enthusiasm came from tiny seeds of competition I planted by looking over X's shoulder and exclaiming within earshot of Y and Z how delightful his picture was, and so on--they took it from there. However, the reason so many of Matt's pictures are displayed is not because he's my beau, but he promised to break my arms if I didn't.

It has been suggested that we introduce a letter column to Betelquese. This would let the next editor be a warm wall against which you can throw your comments, opinions, questions, tantrums, compliments, suggestions, and spaghetti, in addition to adding a novel (for us) personable feature to Betelquese. The communication dimension let-

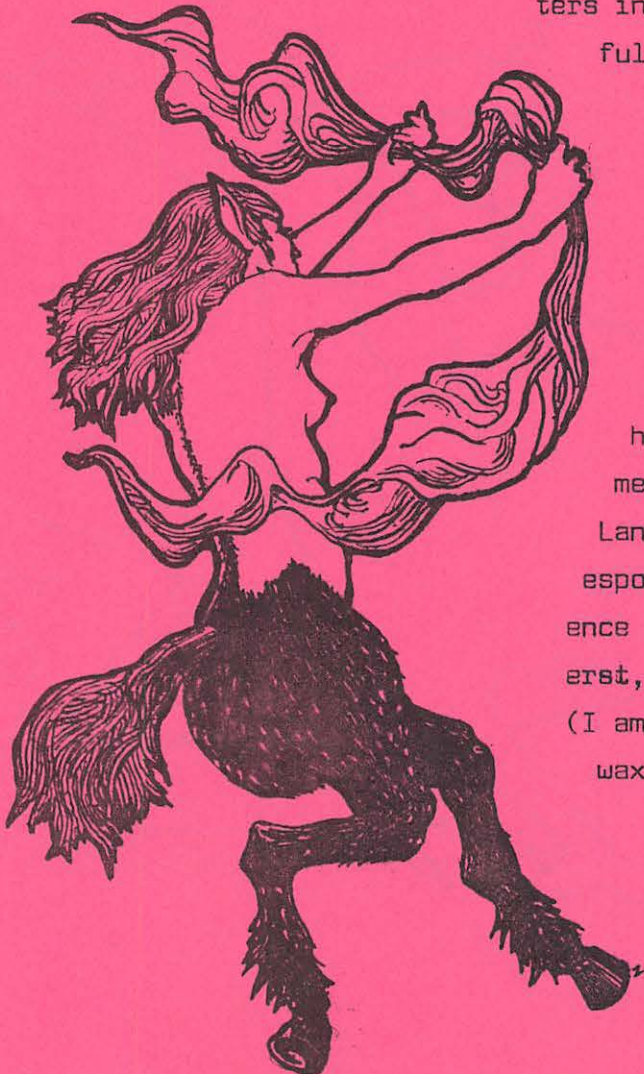
ters instill is almost necessary for a happy successful magazine to continue. Therefore, friends,

make us happy clams and at least acknowledge our creations. After all, "a grateful clam is not a gritty clam." Do you like the stories? The reviews? Any reactions? How would you rate the art? Professional? (I think so) Ugly?--Whatever, you get the picture. The floredora here with the dancing hooves will appreciate all responses. Write to me if you like as a forwarding agent (3 Pamela Lane, Canton, Mass. 02021), or address your correspondence to the University of Massachusetts Science Fiction Society, RSO #352, U. of Mass., Amherst, Mass. 01002.

(I am curious to hear if either of the quizzes waxed wroth with anyone other than me!)

Well, at last, welcome to Betelquese, where the rutabagas run wild....

Harriet



UNICORNSEARCH

by Anne McCaffee*

The Druso was coming to Pard. Centuries ago the wiseman of Casuedo foresaw that there would come to Pard one final cataclysmic Druso that would leave Pard a bare and lifeless planet. Now the Casuedo was no more and all but one of the Kosk-towers had fallen to dust. One majestic Kosk-tower stood defiant against time and on this Kosk-tower stood a man and a woman, watching the sun set.

"To think that when the Druso comes, all this will be no more." Selasta sighed. "I suppose that there's little we can do. Is there still no word from Satret? Will he never find a one-horned Allita?"

"I am not sure that he still searches. Since Tatulet was dissolved no Strafet seems to care for his duty any more."

"But Satret is no ordinary Strafet. Was it not he that beguiled Colloaknus when no other Strafet dared to look upon a gorfus? And is Satret's birthstar not the mysterious Gnillac that now shines both day and night? Can you deny the importance of that star's mystery?"

"I deny only that Satret is the only Strafet who can plumb the mysteries of the Gnillac Nova. We should all examine Gnillac Nova, forwards and backwards, to try to learn its secret. I have learned secrets from many stars not my own birthstar."

Selasta gasped, "But this is heresy against the Pontuls! Surely, Belnor, you are but jesting."

"I jest not. But are we not all guilty of small heresies? Am I worse than Fark, for his invocation to Jatell?"

"As always, your lips outrace your head. I am not sure I wish to initiate a Frufroo with such a fool."

"But surely the initiation of a Frufroo is as sacred a custom to you as it is to me!" It was Belnor's turn to be shocked.

"It need not be done. I would much enjoy to decline the Frufroo. It is only respect for Traletog that forces me to comply."

"It is the Grillnor hour." Belnor was impatient. "If you do not wish to betray the memory of Traletog, prepare to initiate the Frufroo."

"If you respect me at all, you will wait for me to prepare myself mentally." Selasta took a deep breath and concentrated. As she built excitement in herself, brick by brick, her catulls stretched to full length. "I'm ready," she said. "Let us initiate a Frufroo."

Silently their two bodies came together as Belnor counted to himself. "One...,two..., frufroofroo. One..., two..., frufroofroo." He looked at her. "You frufroo as well as any female I have ever known."

"Get your filthy Tsorkas off my Kazella. Just because I'm willing to frufroo with you, it doesn't mean I want to mate with you."

"Ten thousand apologies, dear lady." He walked to the edge of the Kosk-tower.

"Make it twenty." She was not going to be cheated.

"So be it."

"Perhaps there is another Strafet who might be better to send in quest of Allita."

"But if Satret has been unsuccessful..."

"What of young Vufus?"

"Vufus? Satret's blex? But he is hardly more than a nexog!"

"Was he not present at the beguiling of Colloaknus? Could it not be he who unawares did the beguiling?"

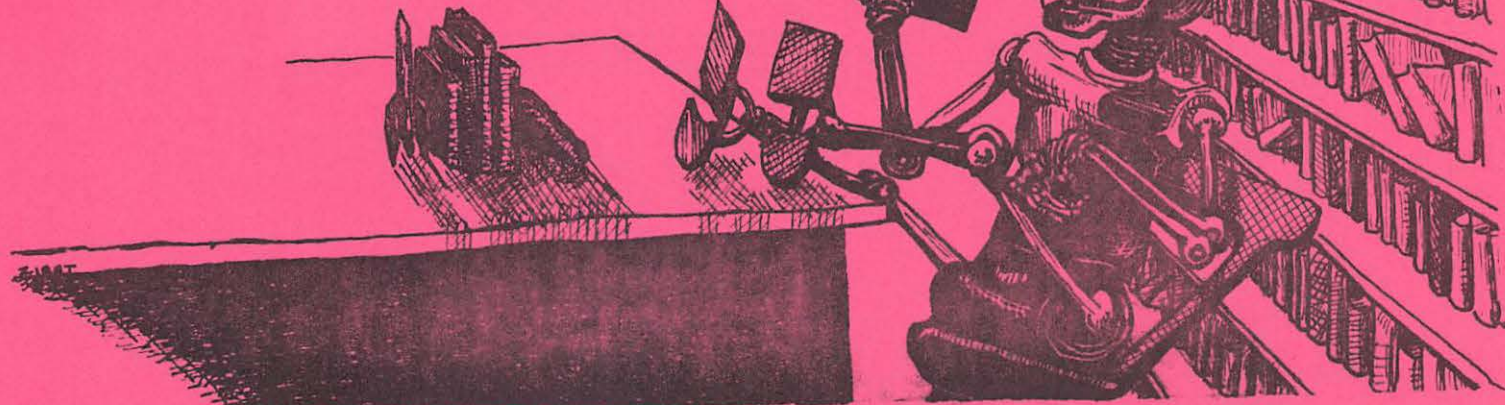
Slowly began Belnor to understand. "But that would make Vufus a Zonx and a Guvap, and Satret not a Guvap at all, but a mere mortal Strafet. Nessoock then would be a Plusus. But that explains the prophecy of Telgar! How could I be so blind? Of course you are right! I pray we are not too late."

"But we are. Look, Belnor."

"The Druso!"

* Mark R. Leeper

REVIEWS



The Roving Eye — (Art Criticism)

Science fiction illustration has for some reason or other been consigned to but brief critical mention in zines. (Perhaps this review will highlight that reason — who knows? Caveat emptor). At any rate I have before me a toppling pile of prozines; let us see what this past year had to offer.

F & SF has no interior artwork, with the exception of Gahan Wilson cartoons. (Either you like them or you're sane). But for the covers, F & SF has fielded some of the old pros. They sport a (Dillon), an Ed Emschwiller, and a Bonestell. The former two are superb, and the latter fine, although perhaps a bit trite. If you have not seen Ed Emschwiller's experimental film RELATIVITY, you have a treat in store. Two Bonestell-like panoramas by Hardy grace another sixth of the issues. Of these, the May silhouette of a radar scanner against an orange sky is particularly striking, but October's scene of an ice cave is marred by the brilliantly vel-

low-colored title logos and contents. This is a perpetual gripe of mine. Pastell logos, while very striking, certainly disrupt the continuity of the covers. Your eye is drawn to the printing rather than the painting even against a concerted mental effort.

Of the remaining covers, one each by Bert Tanner and Vincent di Fate, are excellent, while the four by Ron Walotsky I find slick and imitative. The not-quite-Bokkian July cover is particularly lame, and so I will give it my ultimate insult: I could do that well myself! (If you've ever seen my work you will realize the hideous magnitude of this swipe).

The great preponderance of muted paintings on the covers coupled with their matte finish gives them a curiously dusty appearance. I wonder if this is done on purpose. One gets the impression that whoever runs the show at F & SF knows a lot about art...but second hand only. At 75¢, I don't believe they can't afford an art editor...And why no internal illustrations?

Let us move on to the If-Gal-

don't care for some of his work this year." You can't miss his covers - no one else uses white so arrogantly. But why all these violets? Degustibus no est... I hear you claim.

It is hard to say what makes a drawing interesting, for there is no one criterion that holds. It can be that the artist simply portrays sights worth seeing, or plays tantalizing intellectual games in his choice of what and how things are represented. Or he can have a powerful line capable of holding attention in its own right. Alternately, the line can be strengthened with careful detail, or filled in with decorative patterns. (Therein lies a personal quandary - how can you fill in with detail when the accuracy of your outline is nil?) Concentrating on the play of light or on texture seems to be effective too.

At any rate, over the past few years Kelly has moved into a heavy cartooning style, at the expense of detail. However, if you've left out the detailing and the humor doesn't pull off, you're left with a very dull picture (often my complaint with Summers - always competent, but often pabulum). On the other hand, there are times when Kelly can be very humorous indeed; his lead illo for Anvil's story in the January issue has got to be a classic. The humor in it derives from a grotesque superposition of



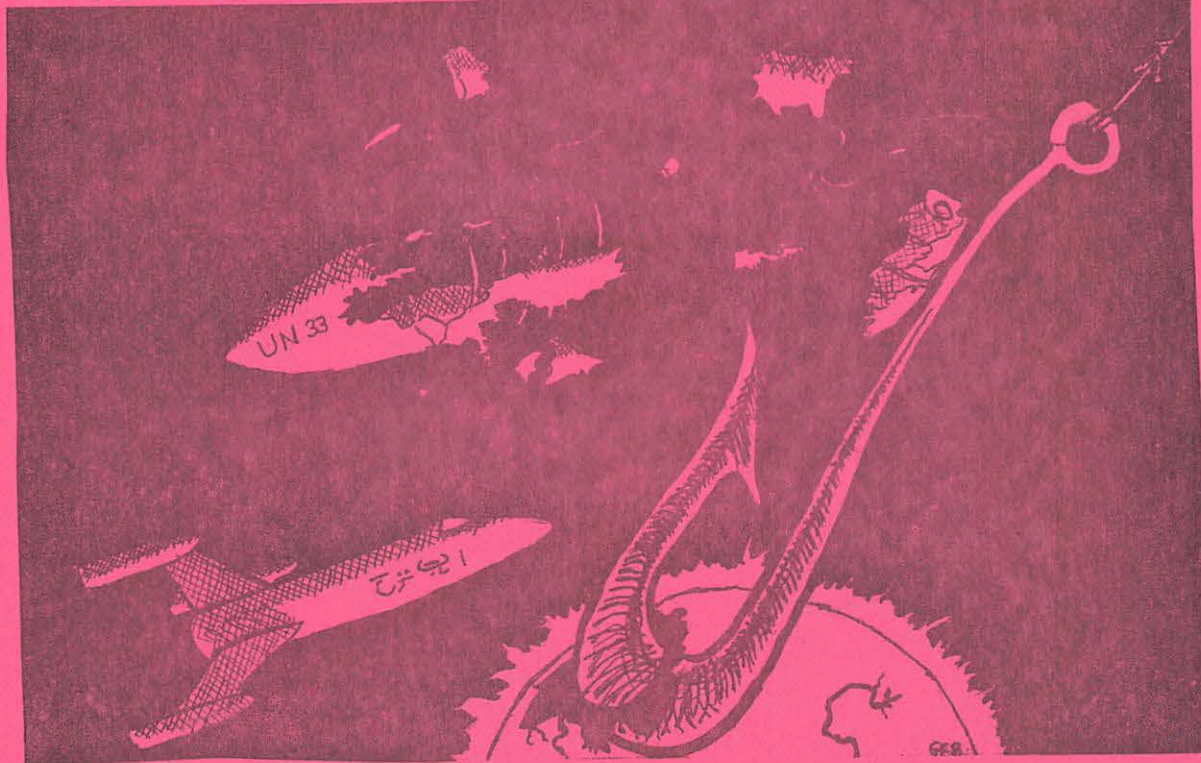
human gestures on a crustaceoid alien. Freas' style has come around to techniques which produce pictures faster and easier too (for me at least). I wonder if he might not be getting just a little bit lazy after all these years? Well, no right to complain - his draftsmanship makes it all look so easy.

I see Jack Gaughan has produced more work for Analog than I'd guessed. Some is excellent and some terrible. How will they react to all this in Galaxy? (And why no comment on Di Fate? I haven't made my mind up yet, that's all.)

This review has drawn on longer than I'd anticipated. I've been careful to avoid criticizing anybody whom I feel is likely to consider me worthy of a counterattack. Why? Because my personal response to criticism reminds me of nothing so much as that of a frog whose just been dropped into a barrel of rock salt. Perhaps I'll screw my courage up for the plunge next time. For now, enough.

--MATT ZIMET

THE ALIEN WAY



Science fiction readers often start their reading careers with a single author. After devouring him, they usually extend their SF diet to the great writers such as Heinlein, Zelazny, L.S. DeCamp, and Poul Anderson. Hugo and Nebula winners of past years and contemporary novels and magazine stories usually round out their reading. There is nothing wrong in this, of course, but a number of very good stories are sometimes passed over because they fit in none of the above categories.

An example of this is Gordon R. Dickson's The Alien Way. Dickson is not one of the great writers of modern SF. He began writing as a hack and has improved over the years. Most of his present-day work is very readable (the Dorsai series, for example), but not spectacular. Alien Way, a major exception to this rule, was nominated for (but did not get) a Hugo.

The book concentrates on the familiar theme of the First Contact, but on a much higher level than most of the stories written on that particular subject. The method of making contact is ingenious--and quite a welcome change from usual overworked plots on the subject. The Ruml are ALIEN, not merely humans in weird shapes and names. Even better, they are logically and believably so. Both of the protagonists, Ruml and man, are people, not mere cardboard characters. Their thoughts and actions develop naturally from the story and from the mental backgrounds of the people involved. At the end of the book, one cannot help but feel impressed by Kator Second-cousin Brutogasi, the Ruml hero. Tricked into becoming an unknown spy for earth, he rises far above the demands made upon him by his culture and proves himself far more of a "man" than either the humans who doomed him or the Ruml who killed him.

The Alien Way, in conclusion, is a very good book. It is difficult to think of any other recent book on the same theme--other than Ann McCaffrey's Decision at Doona--that is as good. It is only fair to warn readers that the book has been out of print for years. Given the lack of taste so evident in most publishers, it is all too likely to remain so.

--GLENN F. BLACOW



There is hardly an echo of logic in this ecological horror flick. The main character is a concerned, clear-eyed, idealist, young ecologist named Pickett Smith. On a July Fourth weekend, fate brings Pickett to a jungle island off what looks like Florida. The island is privately owned by Jason Crockett (Ray Milland) who has made millions by despoiling Nature with his paper mills. Each year on Jason's birthday, which just happens to be July Fourth, he invites to his island his children and grandchildren to celebrate by doing any number of fun things, each at the expense of the ecology. This year, however, the animals have started their own revolution. One by one, all the bad people on the island are picked off by assorted tarantulas, scorpions, birds, snakes, crabs, turtles, lizards, leeches, alligators, and of course, frogs. Good people, of course, are not attacked by the little critters with the exception of one small snake attack on Pickett.

At first the explanation is advanced that Jason has upset the balance of Nature by evidently killing off the natural enemies of every repulsive species on the island, but soon a conspiracy on the part of the animals is the only way to explain their noticeably intelligent attacks. For example, a number of seemingly harmless lizards lock a man in a green house, then knock over several bottles of volatile poison. The attack, then, is not the spontaneous result of man's folly, but a planned attack with intelligence behind it (as in The Birds). We are only left to conjecture what diabolical plot runs through the minds of the swarm of frogs that finally attacks Jason and his Irish setter (who evidently regrets his years as an "Uncle Tom"). The obvious question is, now that the frogs have Jason, what are they going to do with him? They certainly don't have the teeth to rip him apart! The producers are left with the problem that the animal they could supply in greatest abundance simply does not pose a threat to man. They solve their problem absurdly with the film's trademark, an apparently gargantuan frog with a human hand hanging out of his mouth, like the original "frog with a man in his throat." The only frog of size large enough to endanger a man in the entire film is seen in a cartoon under the end-title.

One would expect a company like American International to exploit the current interest and portray an ecological catastrophe. But they cannot do even that without resorting to the impossible and the absurd.

--MARK R. LEEPER



MALE SEXUAL FANTASIES REVEALED;
a Review of Captive of Gor by
John Norman.

The reading of science fiction requires that the reader suspend certain opinions or understandings developed in the course of his life in these times. Generally these suspensions vary from the simple, that John Carter could exist on Mars, for example, to the complex, the social system of Walden II, possibly. Generally, too, the writer goes to great pains to make the transition from this time and place as easy and painless as possible. After all, that's some of what science fiction is about. With a little help readers' imaginations are at home with the minds of nonhumans, spaceworms, computers and bisexuals. Less often do writers attempt to tamper with fundamentals of late Twentieth Century human personalities. Too much is known about the workings of our minds, for we are a singularly introspective and self-obsessed lot. Scientists catalogue our every lust and pigeon-hole our beliefs. Our behavior, our psychology are metered, measured and multiplied. We know a great deal about motivations and guilt, though much has yet to be learned. Science fiction (and other) writers must handle us as characters quite carefully, for they stand on the thin ice of the effectiveness of the communication of their vision over the deep waters of our self knowledge. To be careless with our true natures is to invite a disaster. Which brings us to Captive of Gor by John Norman published by Ballantine Books in 1972.

Mr. Norman has chosen a contemporary woman as a heroine, one Elinor Brinton of Manhattan, ivy league schooling and lotsa bucks. That Mr. Norman knows nothing about such a class of person we will pass over here without comment. The be-all of the book, all 370 pages, is how a headstrong, arrogant and dishonest bitch finds love (?) on the world of Gor, or Counter-Earth, a familiar one to the readers of any of the previous six "Chronicles of Counter Earth"--Tarnsman of Gor, Outlaw of Gor, Nomads of Gor, etc. Briefly Gor is a world of quasi-feudal human

society where various castes exercise power: warriors, merchants, etc. Most importantly for the purposes of the narrative, all woman--save an insignificant minority--are slaves. Even more ridiculous than this arrangement is that they like being slaves. Yes, they enjoy having no real rights, being led around on leashes, owning nothing, asking permission to speak and being bought and sold at the snap of their master's fingers. Other curious things about women on Gor, less the product of Mr. Norman's far-reaching imagination than of his carelessness, is that all the Gorian women are beautiful, none are old and, most happily from the single person's point of view at least, none ever get pregnant. No easy task, for they are banged left and right off-stage by supervigorous men of all sizes, shapes and mentalities.

One doubts that Mr. Norman is a teenager, but his understanding of human emotions, to say nothing of human dignity, seem more suitable to the Clearasil and Archies crowd than to the adult world. There is a certain simplemindedness afoot on nearly every page. El-in-or can get away with nothing, for example. Her every tiny theft and insult is paid back with clockwork-like regularity. She steals berries; she is punished. She betrays a friend; the friend becomes her taskmistress. And on and on. Gor is a really dull place in that respect.

Worse, we are expected to believe, in terms of plot, that whenever the heroine's "white silkness," i.e. virginity is seriously threatened that she escapes untouched, her "saviors" proving to be everything from tarnsmen swooping down on their great birds, to amazons, to softhearted guards or even more unlikely mechanisms. After 300 pages of near escapes one begins to root for the forces of violation to transform her to "red silk," such as hoping for a mob of sex-starved men a thousand strong, erections-at-the-ready, bearing down on old white silk El-in-or from land, sea and air. Get her out of that, John Norman.... By the time El-in-or finds her way to the super male chauvinist embrace of Rask of Treve the reader's mind is so awash with the unreality of it all that he can scarcely be moved by Rask of Treve later paying paying for her to get her back again, in what

one gathers is a high point of emotional revelation, mostly because it comes near the end of the book.

All these considerations: the omnipotence of men, the degradation of women, the sex without responsibility, the simple-mindedness of plot and character, the freedom from emotional entanglements are all familiar to any highschooler in Civics IV with a lust for the redhead in the first row who relentlessly puts him down. No harm in such a fastasy life in early adolescence. But when one becomes fixed in such attitudes and understandings time is lost in coming to terms with the complexities of human relationships. That is, the stuff of these masculine fantasies is the same as that of low quality pornography, XXX films and bad books, therefore is not to be taken seriously.

All the above can, by and large, be shrugged off as basically harmless. Yet there runs through the entire book a theme which should cause women's libbers in particular to fall upon Mr. Norman in a shrieking, frenzied mob for purposes of tearing him apart. Even a reasonable masculine reader is moved to protest. That offensive theme, which is a lie, is that a womwn's or any other human being's character, is improved by degradation. Physical, mental and emotional abuse are heaped upon El-in-or. Fear is her goad, helplessness her companion, and finally masochistic justice in the form of three blazing hot irons ("less than a quarter inch high" to make us feel better?) wielded at the order of the man who is to love her is supposed to be an intrinsic element in bringing about--at long last--her character change. The results of being branded a thief, traitress and liar, as El-in-or was, are interesting to consider in historical perspective. In the Middle Ages thieves' foreheads were branded and some even had a hand lopped off in compliance with someone's idea of justice. The effectiveness of these measurs in reducing theft has never been proved. One might suggest that slavery, degradation and the hot iron would engender relentless hate and desire for revenge. Survivors of the Bataan Death March were more savage in their revenge, more hate-filled than their comrade liberators. Few Belsen survivors fell in love with their German captors.

Further delving into Mr. Norman's lack of understanding of Twentieth Century human beings, one is expected to believe that El-in-or, her spirit broken, her pride gone and her principle wish in life a vegetable-like one to "please my Master" would have enough substance left to her to either be loved by Rask of Treve or to be able to fall in love herself. We of the Twentieth Century have learned love grows out of confidence and joy in self, and these are not nourished by whips and slave collars.

There is one final indiscretion of which Mr. Norman seems to be guilty: lack of compassion for Elinor Brinton. He wants to see her degraded, wants to see her caged and chained and terrified, with only a flimsy "love" resolution and an unconvincing character change to justify 300+ pages of humiliation. The reason for this are known only to Mr. Norman, but would undoubtedly make a better novel than Captive of Gor.

--by DIMITRI V. GAT



TANTRA

by Stephen W. Cline

The Attorney General looked out at him through cold green eyes. The amount of seriousness they conveyed bothered Monroe.

"But why," he asked, almost with a pleading tone in his voice, "why didn't they report it? Two weeks!"

"But sir, you've got to understand. As far as they're concerned, nothing wrong has been done. Nothing at all. The murder was sanctioned..."

"Yes, I know that," he dismissed the argument. "But the administration is going to be accused of covering up the incident. It seems to me that since they are intelligent creatures, uh, excuse me, people, and since they know most of our customs and laws, they would realize that this isn't allowed and they would have reported it."

"It's allowed sir, under the New Religions Act."

"No, it isn't, at least not specifically. That's a matter for the courts to decide I would say." Then he raised his voice. "Goddamnit, why does everything have to happen to me? Don't I have enough trouble without them bringing more? Let some other department get their fair share of hot water for a change." He smashed his fist down on his desk, striking the pipe there and sending tobacco flying across his desk and onto the carpet. He stared at the mess for a second, then called his secretary.

"Miss Moore, please have a janitor up here with a vacuum as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir."

"I'm sorry Commissioner," he apologized, turning back to Monroe, "but this is one of the tightest situations we've had in this office since I've been here." He paused for a few minutes. "Unless you have any questions about the way we're going to handle this, I suppose you can go now. I'm sure we'll be in touch with you later."

Monrow rose and headed toward the door.

"Commissioner. Our agents will already be there by the time you get back, and we'd appreciate any help you could give them."

"Of course."

The door closed and the Attorney General rang his secretary.

"Has the janitor come up yet?"

"Yes, sir, I'll send him right in."

"Fine. And after he's through you can send Brother Roan in."

While the custodian quickly cleaned up the mess on the rug, the Attorney General took a last minute skim through the file on Brother Roan.

The janitor left and shortly the door to the reception room opened and Brother Roan stepped in. The Attorney General rose and motioned toward a chair. Roan, a smile creasing the lower half of his face, bounced across the floor. You could see the difference immediately if you knew what to look for. His torso, especially his chest, was larger than normal while the arms

that stuck out below the short sleeves of his shirt were thin and sinewy. The hair on his head had been dyed black but on his arms it had been left its original color and gave a scarlet tint to his skin at a distance. He saw that Roan had a fourth finger added to each hand and wondered if he had a toe added too. He reached across his desk and shook the Brother's hand, smiling into his bony face.

"How do you do Brother Roan," he said.

"Please, just Roan," he asked as he sat down, "you see, I am used to informality."

The Attorney General sat down.

"Let me say," Roan continued, "that I find this an unusual experience, meeting with a...uh, police officer of such high status." Police Officer! The Attorney General tried to decide if it was an intentional insult. "You see, we have none on our world."

"No policemen?" he asked, incredulous.

"Oh, we have policemen, but only on a local level, and with very limited power. They handle traffic, lost children, things of that nature."

"In other words, you have no crime."

Roan nodded. "That's right. Oh, petty thievery here and there and what you might call "bending the law," but no major crimes."

Of course the Attorney General didn't believe this. "Well let's hope we see that here on earth some day."

"You will."

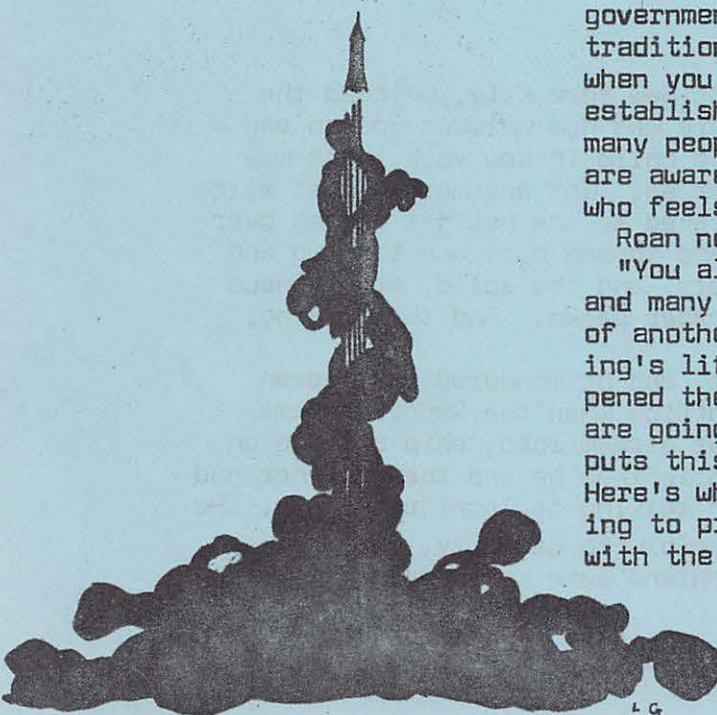
The Attorney General smiled pleasantly and then spoke, "It seems that we've run into a problem Brother Roan. This murder..."

"Please," Roan interrupted, "killing, not murder. It was done under the Eyes of Moksha."

"Yes, killing. Well, this killing has put our government in a bad position. We have a strong tradition of religious freedom in this country and when you arrived we were only too happy to let you establish your church here, even by allowing what many people have called concessions. I assume you are aware that there is a portion of our population who feels that your group should leave this planet?"

Roan nodded, "This is always so at first."

"You also realize that there is a strong taboo and many laws in this country concerning the taking of another," he searched for the right word, "being's life. When we release the facts of what happened there's going to be quite an uproar. People are going to demand that justice be done. This puts this administration in a very touchy position. Here's what we've decided to do. My office is going to present the Federal Bureau of Investigation with the opinion that killing of this nature is



allowed under the New Religious Act. It is going to advise that they take no action and that we won't prosecute under the '85 Federal Murder Act. Of course, this doesn't preclude prosecution on a local level, but the government of your state will do nothing also. And as your church claims such wide membership in that area, things will settle down after awhile and the incident can be forgotten."

"The Attorney General lit the pipe he had been filling while he spoke, "You have to do one thing, though. You must not let this happen again. The political pressure on us would be great and the next time it might not happen in an area where you're so strong and influential."

"But there is no way I can control that. Under the Eyes of Moksha, the Enlightened can do no wrong. The doors of sin crumble to those who have seen the Truth."

"Please, Brother Roan, I am not trying to argue against your doctrine, I'm just asking you to be a little expedient, for your own sake. The problem here is political; you do understand politics don't you?"

Roan shook his head. "There is nothing on my world like your politics."

"But surely, I'm not trying to pry into your church matters, but it seems to me that you would want to try to eliminate murder."

"We do."

"But don't you see, by placing no restrictions on it you do nothing to discourage it. It will get completely out of control."

"True, there will be a number of killings at the beginning but this is only what you might call growing pains. It is a little bit of necessary evil we endure to gain the highest Truth. There will come a time when almost no humans on earth will take each other's lives."

This is ridiculous, the Attorney General thought. Monroe was right, there's no way I'll be able to talk them into controlling the situation. He knows them pretty well.

"Well, I think that's all, Brother Roan. I just called you up here to let you know what course our government was taking. My man outside will let you know if he needs any more information. And thanks for coming down to Washington."

"It was no trouble at all." Roan smiled at him, turned and left.

The Attorney General slumped back into his heavily cushioned chair. This had been a bad end to a very bad day.

Stan Monroe, Commissioner of Law, State of New York City, watched the cityside slip past below. That was all there was now between Boston and Washington. He could remember when he was a child in New York there was still open country within an hour's drive or so. Not any more. Just miles and miles of buildings and streets. He watched as the helijet passed over millions of acres of suburban forest, low and spread out, and the two and three story foothills of commercial districts, and the solid, mountainous downtown areas of steel and concrete skyscraper peaks. And the curving, flowing expressway rivers.

Things can really change fast, he thought, and he wandered back seven years. He had just been appointed to his office when the Saphians came down. He remembered seeing the squat, but streamlined, ship sitting on the helipad at the airport. And then the briefings he and the governor had in Washington when the Saphians insisted on talking to local officials. He had been included because he was going to help with security. What a laugh. Washington had no idea what the Saphians were here for. They had

prepared him for almost every contingency, whether it turned out they were diplomats, merchants, soldiers, or just an exploratory expedition. Well, almost every contingency. It turned out they were missionaries. Monroe laughed to himself when he thought about this, it still seemed funny. They had asked the mayor for permission to set up a church in the city and begin exposing their religion to the population. After several days of indecision, the President had said yes.

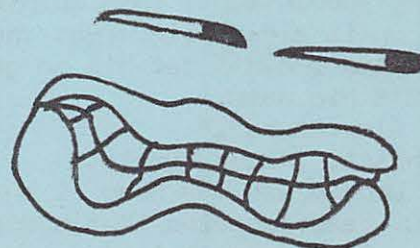
A Saphian ship had also landed in Chicago and Los Angeles as well as other countries around the world. Immediately they bought buildings and began their work of conversion. But a few weeks later, when it was discovered exactly what the religion was, the nation was in an uproar. It wasn't but a few days before Congress had a bill before it that would outlaw the Saphian religion, "Constitution or no Constitution," he had heard a senator say. Then the Saphians had played their ace and offered the process of their solar energy converters in return for a law allowing complete freedom of their religion. The low-cost, highly efficient converters, plus the disclosure that the Communists already possessed them, changed minds very quickly and the New Religions Act was passed and signed by the President in two weeks.

In the first two or three years their religion had experienced no great wave of conversion but since then, their growth had been unbelievable. Now a tenth of the population of America claimed membership in it. Twenty-eight million people. At that rate it would soon be the largest church in America in the next five years, maybe sooner.

Their success had been as great around the world. In countries that would have appeared the least receptive, the Soviet Union and China, they had no trouble at all. Immediately after they landed, the Saphians offered the governments their solar energy converters, promised they would increase worker production, cut crime, the youthfully oriented alienation that was beginning to take hold in their countries, and other "counter-revolutionary" traits, if given the chance, and guaranteed that they would pose no threat to the governments' power. Apparently they were making good their promises. The growth in Russia seemed a little slower than it was here and all anyone knew about Chinese Saphism was that it was there, but they were growing all over the world.

He had talked to several Saphians and if they were to be believed, their religion had solved, for them most of the problems that beset our world. No crimes, no greed, no hunger. Monroe had to admit that in concept they had a good idea. Basically what they did was simple. Instead of totally denying what many people called the baser behavior of man, they allowed it, all of it now, but only through religiously sanctioned occasions. At first it had only been four times a year, the solstices and equinoxes. Now it

AND THE PLOT THICKENS....



was once a month. And at first it was allowed only in the church. But as they had grown larger they had to permit members to participate in the privacy of their own homes, and of course the courts agreed. After all, who is to stop a man from practicing his chosen religion in the privacy of his home?

And some religion it was. Everything, absolutely everything was allowed; rape, incest, suicide, drugs, and now murder. They tried to discourage alcohol and narcotic drugs and had been very successful so far. They offered an enticing substitution, what they called the Eyes of Moksha. It was non-addictive and had shown a minimal amount of side effects. No bad trips either. It was widely assumed that this was successful because it was used as an escape mechanism, so thus only a substitute for the other vices, and in fact it did produce a state of euphoria and contentment, but recently people were coming to believe it offered consciousness expansion also. All the good effects of drugs like LSD and none of the bad. It was usually under the influence of the Eyes of Moksha that most of the members indulged in their monthly festivities. Visit your local church and have an orgy, Monroe thought half-jokingly and then thought, but after all, that's exactly what it was.

Maybe everything was working so well for them because they came at such an opportune time. A world-wide crime wave, the whole planet staying just a half-step ahead in a race with starvation, political tension, international and internal, as high as ever, and industry on the verge of sterilizing the earth. Yes, people were ready to try something new, all the old answers had failed and they knew it. And the Saphians knew it too; they'd been watching us for awhile. No one knew how long but they had been there.

He gazed out the window of the helijet as it descended onto the pad on the roof of the State Building. The late afternoon sun cast long shadows across the tops of the smaller building and turned the streets into dark canyons.

Monroe walked into his office through his private entrance and laid some papers on his desk. Then he walked to the window and opened the curtains, streaming in the bright yellow morning light. For a moment he stood and gazed out over the city from his high vantage point, trying to see through the walls to the millions of people as they went through their day, all of them tied together in a gigantic web of sticky dependency. Last night, after he had returned home from Washington, he had received some good news. The Bureau of Statistics had left a note telling him that the rise in the crime rate had slowed down again a significant amount. That made the third month in a row. He could start the day in a good mood for a change.

Maybe there's still some hope for you, he thought, looking out at the city. He returned to his desk.

"Mrs. Hoganfield," he spoke through the intercom to his secretary, "do I have any appointments this morning?"

"Not until eleven sir. But there's a man out here who insists that you see him and I can't get him to go away."

"What's his name?"

"Mr. Alex Conrad."

Oh Christ. "Send him in."

Alex Conrad was the head of the local chapter of the Freedom League, a group of reactionaries that had organized after the New Religions Act was passed. They weren't large, especially in the urban areas, but they were

well organized and partly covert. No one to dismiss too lightly.

The door opened and closed abruptly; Monroe didn't have a chance to say anything.

"Commissioner, this is the last straw!" He was carrying a newspaper rolled up in his hand, waving it around as he spoke. "We aren't going to stand for any more. Murder! Cold-blooded murder. Legal my foot. You just show me when there's ever been a time that murder was legal."

"How about war, Mr. Conrad."

Conrad apparently didn't hear. "And you're going to let it happen. It isn't enough that these things have to come down and be allowed to undermine our morals and religion and destroy two thousand years of human accomplishment but now they even control our government."

"Mr. Conrad, please. Nobody controls your government except the people who elect it. You heard the Justice Department's opinion and I concur with it. Under the New Religions Act nothing wrong has been done."

"Don't cite that piece of unconstitutional, Satan-inspired trash to me!" Conrad yelled, still standing and his face starting to turn red. "First you let them preach their paganism, then you let them laugh in the face of decent Christian teachings, then you even let them defile the sabbath by holding their orgies, and now you're going to let them murder! Murder, pure and simple."

"Mr. Conrad, this country is based on laws and I'm here to see that the laws are followed. If...."

"That's exactly it! Laws my eye. Our lawmakers sold out but our courts haven't. And you had better give them a chance to look into this mess, Mr. Commissioner. Don't give us any of this junk about legal opinions; we say take it to court and let them decide."

His eyes squinted and he pointed his finger at Monroe, "Let me tell you that the people of this country are getting a little sick and tired of this. We've had enough. If our government won't take care of us we'll have to take matters into our own hands."

"Is that a threat Mr. Conrad?"

"No, it's a fact, and the sooner you understand that, the better. Just remember what I said Monroe, the Freedom League is through being nice guys." He turned and stomped out, slamming the door behind him.

Obnoxious son-of-a-bitch, thought Monroe. But he was worried. The League was small, especially here in New York City, but it was not powerless. Jones was perfectly capable of carrying out his threat and was fanatic enough to do so. They could make a lot of trouble over this. He tried to think what he should do. Of course, he could only come to one safe conclusion, he'd have to prosecute. Unlike the Attorney General, Monroe had no questions about how the courts would decide. He knew that they would hold the killing legal under the New Religions Act.

"Mrs. Hoganfield."

"Yes sir?"

"Would you call up the Saphian church and tell Brother Roan I'd like to see him as soon as possible."

It went just as Monroe knew it would. The U.S. Circuit Court refused to hear the case, saying that nothing illegal had been done. Monroe knew all of the judges and had been confident of their decision. He knew that two of them were members of the church, although not publicly. The refusal was appealed to the Appellate Court which refused to hear the appeal and Monroe had the excuse he wanted to drop the prosecution of the case. Now the Freedom League had no issue.

Alex Conrad stopped in front of the Sapphian church. It didn't look much like a church. It was actually a converted department store, four stories high, with only a small sign over the door that said 'Church'. Conrad walked in through the revolving door, feeling as if he were contaminating his hands by touching it. Inside it was not quite as he expected it.

He had primed himself to see people laying around in increasing stages of what he called 'narcotic influence.' He had half expected to be propositioned the minute he was inside. And of course, he was convinced he would actually see 'fornication' before he got out. He had hardened himself for this and knew he would make it.

But what he really found was unbearably anticlimactic. One-half of the first floor was taken up by a very clean, very modern cafeteria. There were only a few people eating, it was past one o'clock, and two people behind the counter. He had heard something about these free cafeterias but had dismissed them as a public relations ploy, which were probably small and filthy, and served drug-drenched food to mesmerize drunks and addicts so they could be shanghaied into Saphism. The other half of the first floor was a library-lounge. The walls were covered with bookshelves and pictures. Scattered around among the chairs were videos, both the receiving kind and the cassette machines. They even had a large holograph video in a corner.

Within half a minute, as he stood gawking, a man walked up to him and said, "Hello, my name is Jim. May I be of any help to you?"

This was a bona fide human, he noted, no alien. "Yes, I want to join."

Jim smiled, "Fine, but you'll see there's not much to it. If you'll follow me please."

He led the way to the escalator in the middle of the building and they were on their way up. The second and third floors were exactly alike. They had no divisions or walls like the first floor but were completely open. Both were carpeted with a deep, soft-looking carpet, one blue, the other red. Scattered throughout were hundreds of cushions, chairs, and different kinds of couches.

So this is where they do it, Conrad thought. And he could imagine what an utterly disgusting sight it must be, those two floors jammed with every possible deviation on earth, and probably not on earth too. But this last thought was so revolting that he had to force it from his mind to keep from getting sick. The Freedom League knew that the Saphians were unnatural hermaphrodites. They had proof even if nobody believed them.

They stepped off the escalator when it went no higher, the fourth floor. It was like the second and third only it was abbreviated. At the end Conrad faced a wall that had been erected from floor to ceiling with a door in it. Jim spoke as they walked down the path that had been cleared among the furniture.

"Up ahead is the office and the Brother's quarters."

Conrad, alert to pick up any valuable information, asked, "How many of them are there here?"

"Just three. There's Roan, who is head of the church for the whole United States, and Dgin and Hefta."

"Do they stay in there all the time?"

"Oh no, it's just that they need a place to sleep and eat because, of course, their metabolisms demand non-earth food. But they're usually out and around the church. Hefta was down-stairs when you came in."

They had reached the door and Jim walked in without knocking. Inside was a room, a lounge really, with another door leading out, presumably to their living quarters. A man was sitting on one of the chairs. But not a man, Conrad noticed. His arms appeared to be faintly red. But when he looked for the distinguishing three fingers he found four instead.

Trying to blend in huh, thought Conrad, and allowed himself a bit of private irony.

"Yes, Jim?"

"This is..."

"Conrad, Alex Conrad."

"...and he wants to join."

The alien smiled and stood up to shake hands. Conrad forced a smile and a handshake.

"Well, Mr. Conrad, we don't get many people applying in person since we allowed doing it by mail, especially here in the down town church, but we really like it better this way. It's too bad we're so big, I guess." Then he laughed, "Not really. Won't you please sit down."

Conrad sat down. He was aware of a very faint, vague accent in the alien's speech.

"Actually, there's not much to this. All I have to do is explain the tenets of the church to you and give you an ID card. In fact, Jim would you mind running down and making one?"

He reached to his side and opened the drawer of the end table there. He pulled out a camera and snapped Alex's picture. While he was waiting for the print to develop he got a piece of paper and a pencil out of the drawer and handed them to Conrad. "Just write down your name, address, and citizen's number and hand them to Jim." A few seconds later the camera produced a small picture and the alien handed it to Jim, who left.

"Well, Alex," Conrad shivered at this thing calling him by his first name, "there's not much to it. Every society of intelligent beings has to have certain acts which are proscribed in order for it to maintain it-



DON'T SHOOT, JASON!
IT'S UNDER THE LEGAL LIMIT!

self. For individuals to live together in a society demands a sizable amount of meaningful and productive interaction between these individuals; that is why societies were started in the first place. Actions and situations that interfere greatly with this interaction must be prohibited. The general smoothness of society must be maintained. You understand what I've said so far?"

Conrad nodded.

"Now there is a certain hierarchy of proscriptions that individuals, and societies as a whole, must move up through. As children many things are forbidden to us for what we consider, then arbitrary reasons; we are given no reasons why simply because it is beyond our intellectual capacity then to fully reason out and comprehend these justifications. This is also true of primitive societies. They are much more rigidly controlled than more advanced societies, usually either by dictatorial leaders or religions .

"But as individuals mature they are given much more freedom as they gain ability at rational judgement and their store of information grows. Again, it is the same with societies. As technology and knowledge grow, the people within a society tend to become better educated and more capable of coping with their environments and understanding the complexity of society, and the need for it. In turn, they are given more freedom in determining the course of their own lives.

"But in almost all societies, even the most advanced, there is a limit placed on this striving for freedom. Certain taboos and laws remain in place when their actual usefulness has long been left behind. Many times they are actually counterproductive to the needs of society. The reason these holdovers stay is because the justifications are never debated or questioned. Just as when we were children, we are told these rules are inviolate and they usually take the form of religious morality, thus being shielded behind walls of tradition and sacredness.

"Most important of all, these anachronistic morals are usually the cause of most of the concrete problems that advanced civilizations suffer from, primarily various neuroses and psychoses and the traits and problems they cause: jealousy, greed, anxiety, self-contempt, prejudices, murder, rape, and a whole multitude of lesser crimes and traits. There is only one way to rectify this type of situation and that is to openly investigate and see through these false restrictions.

"That is what our church is here to do, to help people gain a complete understanding of their lives and the forces that guide them. One way we do this is by allowing people vent for these pent up frustrations. This not only works as a form of therapy but also helps awaken people to the fact that there is no reason for them to consider their thoughts and actions sinful. But for most people a stronger vision is needed, something that will help them pierce through this screen of ignorance and see things as they really are. We have a substance that allows people to do this which we call the Eyes of Moksha."

Conrad had heard of this, of course, and was a bit worried, "Isn't that a drug?"

"Essentially yes. It's a modification, designed especially for the biology of earthmen, of the substance our church uses on many of the worlds. There are absolutely no side effects or dangerous possibilities. It is completely safe."

Naturally he didn't believe that. "Will I have to take it before I'm allowed in?" he asked, trying to mask his anxiety.

"Oh no, no. We never force anyone to do anything. Most members end up trying the Eyes of Moksha several times, at least, and many use it regu-

larly to maintain a state of understanding, but no one is ever forced to take it. We have only two requirements. One is that you must show your ID before you are allowed to enter the church and partake of understanding on the holidays. This we have to do because your government requires us to. The other is that members may partake only on the days designated by the church. The reasons for this are obvious and tie in with what I said earlier. If we allowed understanding to go on anytime and any place, chaos would soon result and the functioning of society would be greatly impaired. Our goal is exactly the opposite."

The door opened and Jim stepped in. He handed Conrad the card, the alien thanked him, and he left.

"Well, Alex, do you have any questions you'd like to ask?"

"Yeah. I can just come and walk in any holiday and... jump right in?"

"Yes, all you have to have is an ID. And don't forget, you don't have to come here. The law allows for understanding to be carried on in member's homes as long as it involves only other members. And I understand that's quite the vogue right now. If you desire some Eyes of Moksha for use on such occasions, you need only bring the ID's of everyone who is going to use it and take enough home. We keep the IDs until the holiday is over. Again, this is a restriction of your government, an attempt to prevent the Eyes of Moksha from getting into the hands of non-members."

"Then I'm in now?"

"Yes. Unless you have any more questions we're through."

Conrad stood up, again forcing a smile, said "Thank you."

"You're welcome," the alien replied and Conrad turned and walked out the door.

"And you got no indication what he's up to?" Monroe asked his agent.

"No, sir. When he left the church I had Franklin shadow him and I went inside. I talked to Dgin, he was the one that initiated him, and explained to him that Conrad was out to destroy them but he didn't seem too concerned."

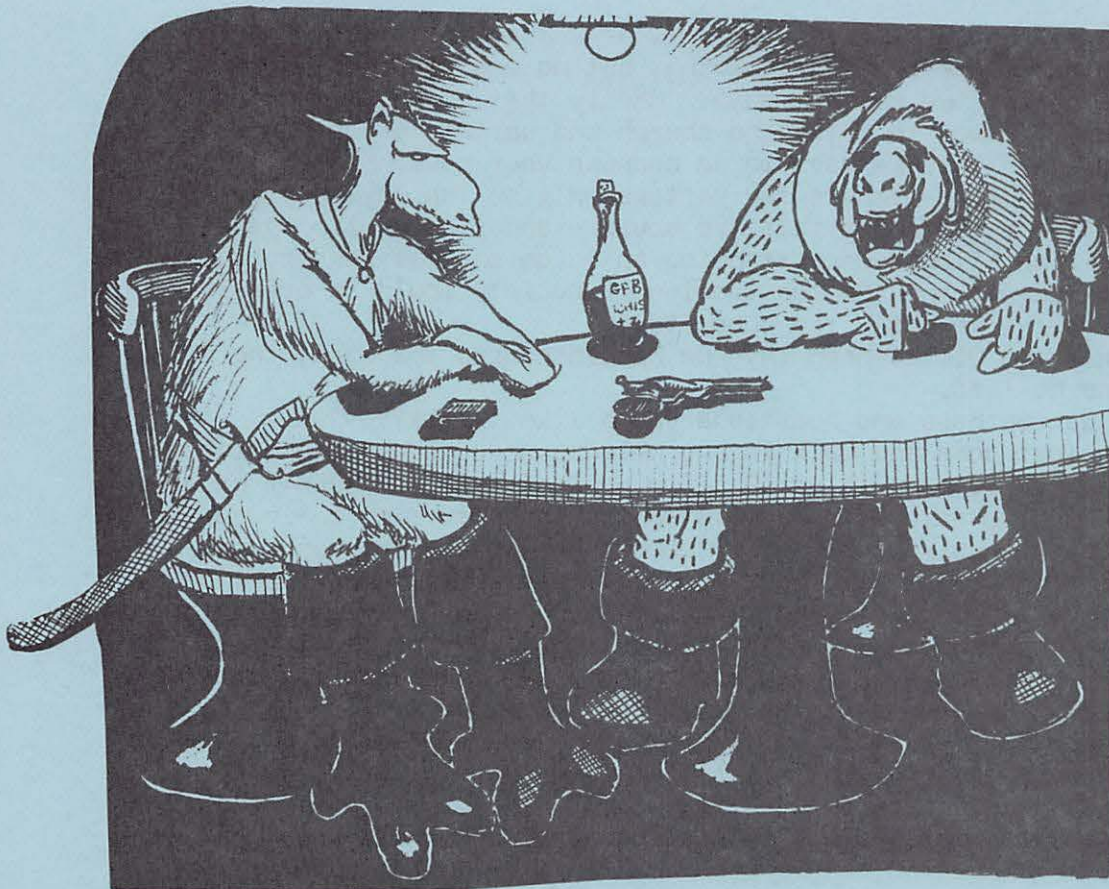
Monroe was puzzled. What in the hell was Conrad up to? Whatever it was, he was up to no good. The problem was whether he was just joining to spy on the church or had more dangerous ideas. It was Monroe's job to be sure he didn't disrupt things.

"Well, okay, just keep a close watch on him."

The agent nodded slightly and left the room.

It was a tumult of almost overpowering sensations that pounced on him. The confusion was incredible. People running, walking, crawling. People laughing and yelling and making more obscene sounds than he dreamed were possible. Nudity was the rule and people took their sex anywhere, in every conceivable manner, in every combination, with or without regard to what their partner(s) thought, although he hadn't seen any resistance yet. It was enough to make Conrad sick and he would have been, but his hatred strengthened him and his resolute mind guided him through it all unthinkingly.

He wondered when they would come out, soon he hoped, for he didn't know how long he could last. He tried hard not to draw attention to himself but it wasn't easy. Already three different people, who appeared to be part of the church 'clergy', had come up to him and offered him some Eyes of Moksha



because he "looked as though he wasn't enjoying himself." Well, he wasn't but he soon would be.

Finally he saw another one of these communion givers and approached him. "Say, I've been anxious to see the Brothers. Do they ever come out during the holidays?"

"Oh, sure. They've probably been in their quarters eating or something. They'll be out before

the day is through. But remember, we're all brothers." Conrad smiled. Then, assuming Conrad was just a curious neophyte and noticing that he wasn't "seeing", the young man tried to interest him in their drug but Conrad wiggled out.

He had to suffer through another hour before the aliens finally came out. The confusion had increased during the time.

All three of them came out. Lucky so far, he thought. He had planned everything in advance and moved over to a position near the head of the down escalator. About two thirds of the way to him, one of the aliens left the other two and Conrad cursed. He stayed while the two made their way to within ten feet of the escalator. Conrad felt relieved then, when he realized they were waiting for the third. He was within a few feet of them, not quite directly between them and the escalator.

As he watched them they somehow seemed to be acting strangely but he couldn't quite figure out what it was. The one he had talked to, although he was disgusting, had appeared to be intelligent and perceptive. There was something strange about those two... they were... doped up! That was it. They were on the same junk as everybody else. He had thought they weren't in on this. If his theory was correct they were trying to drug and hedonize humans into a state of total degeneracy for some devious reason and that they didn't personally engage in the vices they peddled. But he was wrong. Maybe they wallowed in this filth and were trying to pull everyone else in. He shook his head as his last hope of crediting the aliens with a bit of reasonable action faded.

Then he noticed the third one approaching. Conrad waited anxiously until he joined his companions. They said a few things to someone, then stepped toward the escalator. Conrad took one step sideways, putting himself directly

in their path, and pulled a machine pistol from inside his coat. He pressed the trigger, swung it left to right, across the three at chest level, back again, and then once more before its twenty five cartridges were spent. Then he turned and ran down stairs. He had worried that their followers would surge after him so he took the steps three at a time. But at the bottom, as he turned onto the next set of stairs, he saw no one chasing him. Hell, he thought, as he ran down, drawing absolutely no attention in the mass of chaotic people, they're all doped up. Don't even realize what happened.

In a minute he was out on the street walking calmly toward the closest rapid transit system station that would have him home in ten minutes.

"Damnit, damnit," Monroe said between clenched teeth. "He's got us, there's not a damn thing we can do. We can't even book him. Nothing!"

He paced around his office while his chief of state-police and a district chief watched him. He was well aware what this meant and when he thought about it he almost panicked. He turned abruptly and said, "Release him, let him go right away. And be sure to keep a close watch on him and the brother's replacements.

"Send in Brother Gask, please."

In a moment Gask walked in. He had been sent out from the Los Angeles church. Monroe wondered how it had been out there for him; South California was one of the most conservative states in the nation. Gask approached him and they shook hands. After he sat down, Monroe spoke.

"Well, Gask, I'm afraid your church is in trouble. I advise you to prohibit killing during your holidays immediately."

"But commissioner, it is allowed by your laws."

"I understand that. That's not what I meant. Your church is in trouble because you're destroying yourselves. This isn't going to be the last time some of you are going to be killed unless you outlaw it and keep all weapons out of the church.

"But we realize this is a possibility. Anybody can be killed. However..."

"No, I mean that now that this has worked for the Freedom League they're going to infiltrate more people into your church and kill off you Saphians as fast as you can be replaced. And they can get any humans that serve as clergy too. Unless you compromise on this you essentially are destroying your church."

"But commissioner, we can't compromise this, it..."

"Then you're through," interrupted Monroe, getting angry with this obstinacy. "Can't you see that?"

"Please, let me explain. You see, we've run into this problem before and we have a way of handling it, Brother Monroe."

His wife pulled Conrad away from his early Sunday afternoon football game by telling him someone had come to see him. He walked into the foyer to find Monroe, the shoulders of his overcoat wet from the damp snow that was falling outside. Conrad confronted him angrily in the hallway.

"What are you doing here? You haven't got anything on me. You let me go four weeks ago and nothings changed since then."

"I didn't come here to haul you in. I came to see if you were here because you didn't show up at the church today. It is a Saphian holiday, you know?"

Conrad laughed. "I'm through with that. Once was enough to get the ball rolling. They've put me on the national executive committee now, and I'm going to be in charge of getting rid of the Saphians. No hurry now, we've got them licked. In a few more weeks we'll be organized enough so we can start full scale." He laughed again.

Monroe said, "I came over because I hoped you had decided not to go on with this."

"Why? Your pervert friends putting the pressure on, Monroe? We'll stop when the Saphians get off our planet and don't come back."

His voice rose with his fervor. "And when the decent citizens of this planet finally get control, people like you..."

He stopped when he noticed that Monroe was holding a pistol on him. He started to say something but Monroe spoke first.

"I've been a member of the Saphian church for two years. And you've overlooked one little thing.





It seemed like a nifty treat to have a quizzo or two, so I asked Glenn for one. He came up with this. Not being a humongus fan of S & S, I was a little depressed because I flunked; but it's here and certainly will please some. Plodding on, I asked Matt if he'd do a different sort, you know, Little League stuff, with questions even I could screw my nose and face up at groping for answers. Gol-ly Dad! Flunked again! Oh well, and his jewel sparkles anon. Meantime methinks I'll find a mushroom to sit under and design my own for basketcases fer next time... HF

SWORD & SORCERY QUIZ

BY GLEN F. BLACOW



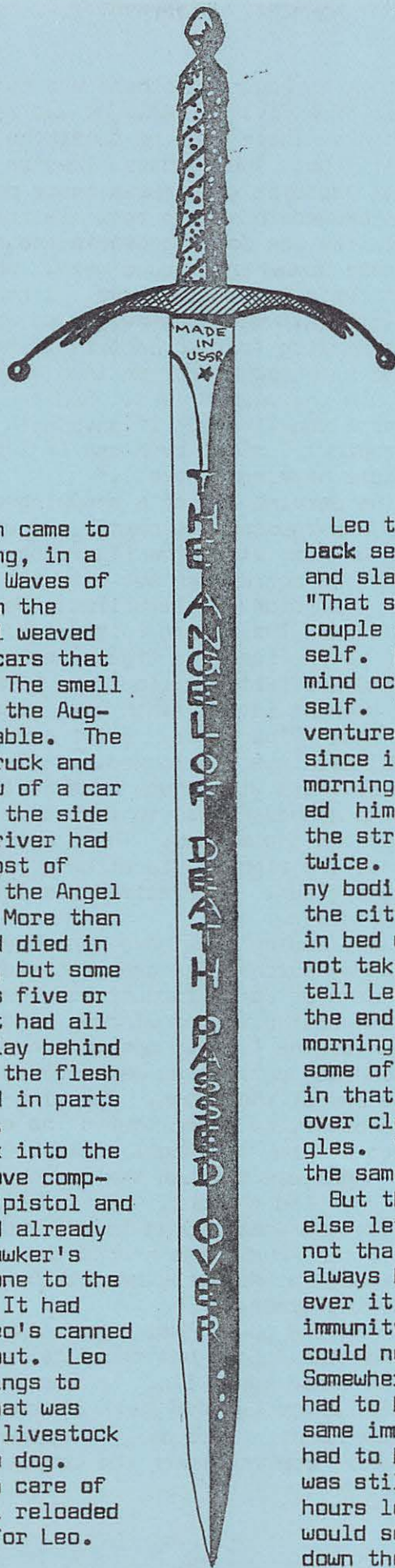
1. What was the name of the least of the three wizards named in the Ring Trilogy???
2. What strange characteristic did the magic sword "The Bells of Shoredan" have ???
3. What wizard did Harold Shea ask for help from in getting Brodsky from Kanadu ???
4. What was the favorite weapon of the Ilkarsi tribesmen ???
5. What author created the being known as Hastur the Unspeakable ???
6. Name the sword that was twin to Elric of Melniborne's Storm-bringer ???
7. What wizard imprisoned Turjan in a maze with a tiny dragon ???
8. From what godling did Koris get his axe ???
9. Name the two wizard patrons of Fritz Leiber's pair of heroes ???
10. Match the following warriors with their swords.

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| A. Ogier | 1. Durandel |
| B. Fafhrd | 2. Grayward |
| C. Elendil | 3. Narsil (as in windowsill) |
| D. Leothric | 4. Sacnoth |
| E. Giles | 5. Tailbiter |

Call Glenn COLLECT for the answers.

(or look on page 57)





by MARK R. LEEPER

The Angel of Death came to Rock Springs, Wyoming, in a Ford pickup truck. Waves of heat rippled up from the highway as the Angel weaved around the wrecked cars that littered the road. The smell of flesh rotting in the August sun was inescapable. The Angel stopped the truck and looked in the window of a car parked carefully at the side of the road. The driver had lived longer than most of those whose corpses the Angel had seen that day. More than half the drivers had died in a matter of seconds, but some had lived as much as five or six minutes after it had all begun. The corpse lay behind the wheel. Already the flesh was rotting away and in parts it had turned brown.

The Angel got back into the truck. From the glove compartment he took the pistol and reloaded it. He had already taken care of Leo Hawker's farm, but Leo had gone to the city to find food. It had been ten days and Leo's canned goods were running out. Leo had all of Rock Springs to choose from. All that was left alive of Leo's livestock was four sheep and a dog. Five shots had taken care of them. Now the Angel reloaded and began the hunt for Leo.

Leo tossed the A&P bag into the back seat, walked around the back and slammed the trunk of his car. "That should tide me over for a couple of weeks," he told himself. He was trying to keep his mind occupied by talking to himself. This was the first time he ventured this far from his farm since it had all happened. That morning he had not really prepared himself to see the corpses in the street and he had vomited twice. Still, there were not many bodies lying about. Most of the city must have been at home in bed when the end came. It did not take much detective work to tell Leo that in Rock Springs, the end had come at 2:17 in the morning ten days earlier. In some of the houses Leo had been in that week, people had knocked over clocks in their death struggles. The broken clocks all read the same time.

But there had to be someone else left. Leo knew he was just not that special. His health had always been pretty average. Whatever it was that had given Leo immunity when everyone else died could not have been that rare. Somewhere in Rock Springs there had to be somebody else with the same immunity. Somewhere there had to be the answer to why Leo was still alive. Leo had a few hours left before sunset. He would search for life. Up and down the streets he drove the

car, shouting until his throat burned. But there was not a sound. Not the bark of a dog. Not the buzz of a fly. Finally he was reduced to talking to himself. "Well, Leo, think. There must be something alive. Why? Let me think. Something doesn't jibe. The corpses. They're decaying. Does that mean anything? I think bacteria or viruses cause decay. No. There must be something else that causes things to rot. Is rotting a chemical or biological process. If all life was dead, bacteria and everything, would bodies rot? There's a library somewhere around here. Ah, what the hell. Supposing I find out the bacteria are still alive. I can have a great conversation with a damn bacteria. What the hell good would they do me, anyway? Leo Hawker and His Amazing Trained Bacteria. How about a nice thick bacteria steak? About a thousandth of an inch thick. What I've got to do is find out if there are any people left. Radio! If I can hook a radio up to my gas generator I can find out if anybody's left. At least, if anybody's broadcasting radio. I might even see if I can find a transmitter. There's a radio store here somewhere..."

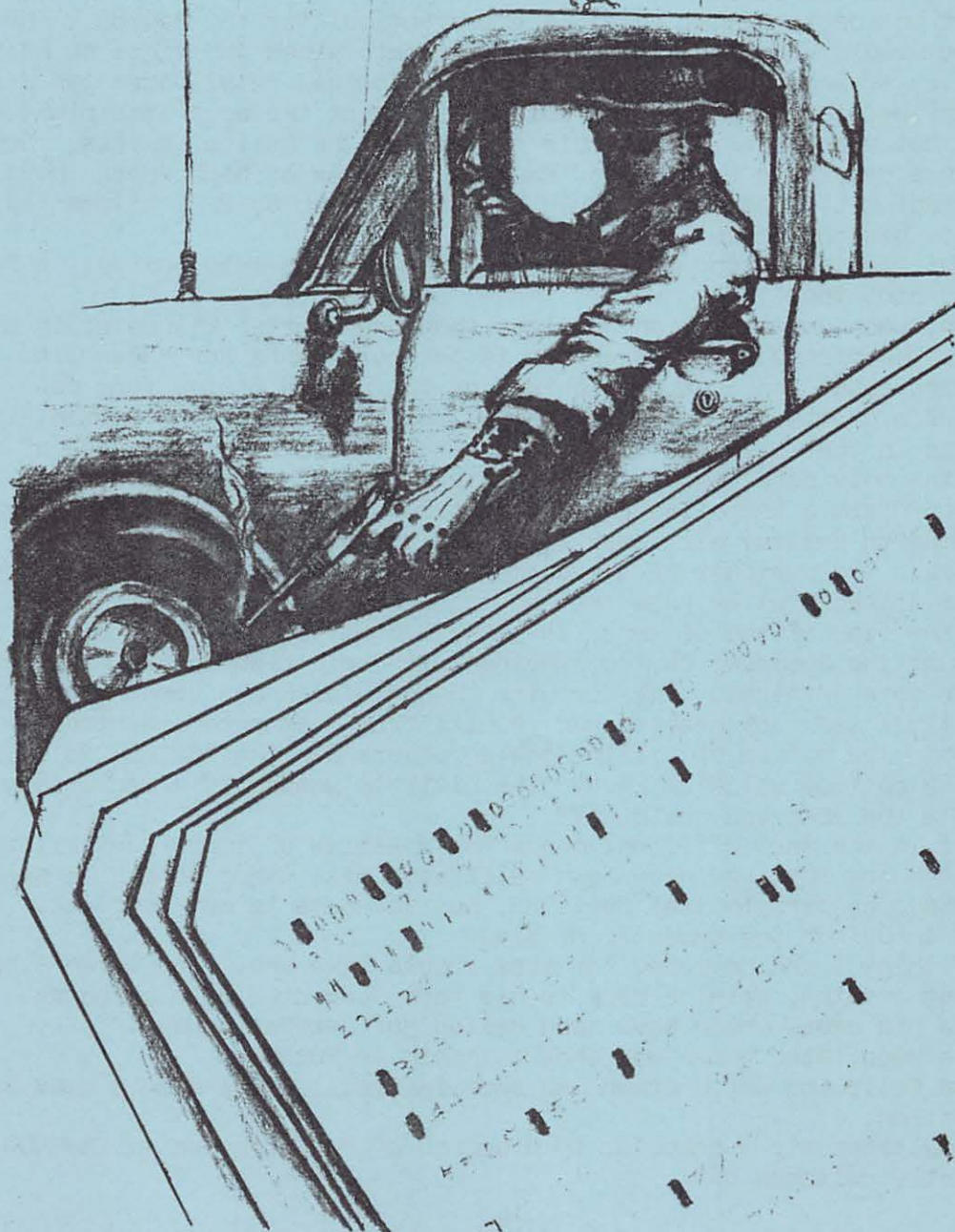
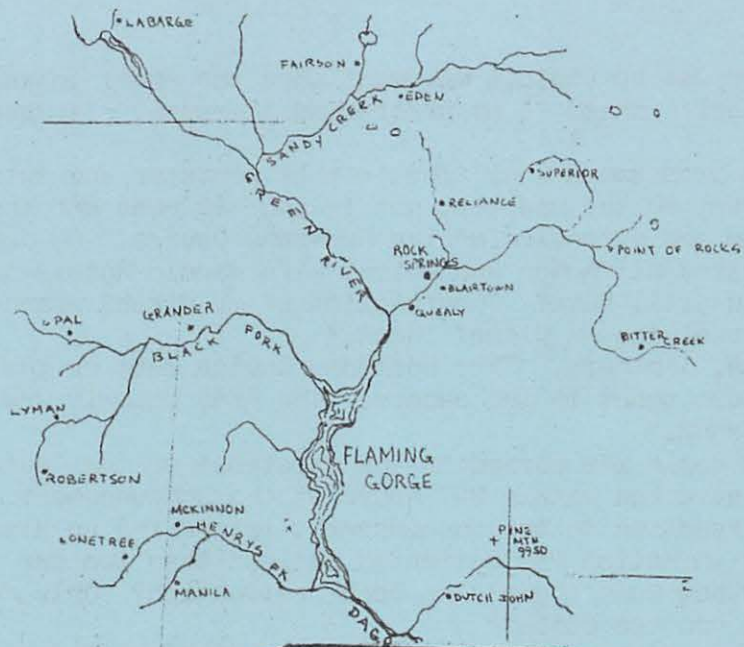
He abandoned the car in the parking lot of a shopping center. "Just around the corner here." He had rounded the corner and was walking west. There, twenty feet in front of him, stood the figure of a man. With the sun setting behind the figure he could make out only the outline. The shock kicked his chest with the force of a stallion. He gritted his teeth at the pain in his chest. Slowly the figure raised its right arm out in front of it. Leo jumped as he realized the figure was aiming a gun. There was a muffled "pop" and Leo felt his right arm burning. The wounded man compressed a minute of thought into a tenth of a second. "Blood on my arm. Shot. Like Korea. Hide. Find cover. Get a gun. Got to fight back. Get to cover. These buildings all locked. 2:17 A.M. Locked that late. Any cover. Store over there with truck crashed through window. I can get in. Some cover." He dashed across to the store and took a flying leap through the jagged holes in the window. There was a flare of pain; he had jumped wrong. Too far to the right. His already bloody arm was cut open by the sharp edge of the glass. He realized his left leg had been shot as he dived through the window.

"Paint store. Damn it! Why couldn't it have been a sports store, or a pawn shop? No guns here." He searched the cash register counter. No gun. Can of paint, couple cans of spray lacquer, a wide paint brush. He could hear the Angel of Death coming to the window. The lacquer, that was it! Ducking behind the counter, he flipped open the can of lacquer and sprayed the bristles of the brush until they were soaked. With a match from his pocket, he lit the end of the brush. Carrying the torch in one hand and the lacquer in the other, he moved toward the end of the counter. In order to get a clear shot at him, the Angel would have to be less than two feet away. By now the Angel was through the window and crawling over the window display. "Come on," Leo thought. "By the time you get here the flame will be out." Silently the Angel moved toward the flickering light behind the counter. Finally the Angel came around the corner, gun raised to fire. Leo aimed the already raised spray can at the Angel's face. There was the sound of cracking glass.

Leo ducked out of the aim of the gun. "Not a bad little flame thrower." He tried to grab the gun from the Angel, but the Angel's grip could not be broken. The blinded Angel's shots went wild. He emptied the gun into the floor and counter, aiming for where Leo had been. Finally Leo pried the gun loose from the mechanical hand. "A robot. A Goddamned robot."

"Congratulations, Mr. Hawker, you've beaten the computer." The Angel spoke with a Slavic accent.

"You talk."



There was no visible movement when the Angel talked. The sound came from the Angel's chest "I am programmed to speak. It does not impair my function."

"Who programmed you? What's that computer you said I beat." Leo cautiously sat on the counter, not taking his eyes off the Angel.

"I am the extension of the Doomsday Device. My computer was preprogrammed to destroy all human and animal life should Russia suffer a nuclear attack. Are you still here? The function of my visual scanners has been impaired. I am receiving no visual input."

"Yeah, I'm here. That Doomsday Device must be that thing there was so much fuss about in the papers. The Army said it was all hogwash. Russky propaganda."

"The world was warned of the existence of the Device, yet Russia was still attacked within 247 hours of the announcement. The probability of world reaction to the announcement triggering an attack that would set the Device in motion was estimated at less than two per cent."

"But how come there's no bomb destruction? Only dead animals and people. Didn't you use bombs?"

"It was decided that bombs were impractical for the Device. The delivery system would have to be constantly maintained and might be easily countered by advanced American missiles. Biological retaliation was decided to be infeasible because of the possibility that the organisms might either leak out and contaminate or die and render the Device useless. Soviet scientists developed a method of causing a vortex of high energy particles. The radius of that vortex could be made as much as 2700 kilometers. The vortex destroys only living things."

"But something kept me alive. I lived through this vortex. A few of my sheep did, too."

"No, each vortex had an eye less than one quarter kilometer in diameter, like a hurricane. In the eye it is perfectly safe for human life. The Western coast and Southwest border of the United States form very nearly an arc of a circle. The vortex for the western half of the United States was fitted to that circle. The center of that circle, and the eye of the vortex, the only safe region in the western half of your country, was located on your farm a few miles from Rock Springs. The Doomsday Device was programmed to destroy all human life, yet the vortices left a handful of survivors. The designer of the Doomsday Device must have known this dilemma would arise. Yet he knew that his purposes would have been fulfilled before the rise of the dilemma, so he neglected to program an answer to it. Nor was the Doomsday Device provided with more fissionable material to cause more vortices. The computer thought for hours about the problem. Finally I was reprogrammed and rebuilt from a computer maintenance mechanism. The method of killing the survivors was the optimum Solution."

"The optimum solution, huh? The ultimate weapon is a man with a gun. That's the best you could do?"

"It is the most efficient means for a series of individual kills."

"And now that you have been nullified, will other robots be sent?"

"I have no part in that decision, but the game is not over yet. You will have to defeat the computer or die."

"I think I can be ready for more robots like you. You weren't so tough."

That evening, driving back to his farm, Leo died of a coronary. In other times his death would have been called "of natural causes."

Two days later a man was shot to death in Poland.

The following day a woman was shot in Brazil. She died a week later of infection.

Simultaneously a computer in a suburb of Kiev reached an ENDPORG card and silently switched off.

Shirley is a really sweet lady who works at the University book plant and wears a replica of the Enterprise on her necklace (the scale is somewhat reduced). When I asked her to write a few words on Star Trek concerning its fandom and rumored underground revival bubblings, she surprised me with this encouraging article...

STAR TREK LIVES

by SHIRLEY S. MALEWSKI

When one considers the fact that Star Trek was cancelled one dark day back in 1969, a victim of the ridiculous rating system of commercial television, it may seem strange to think that in the waning days of December, 1972, anyone would still care. What other series that was cancelled in 1969 can you even remember?¹



Yet, mention Star Trek and people say, "Oh yeah! That was a great show! I still watch the reruns!" "Hey - what about that Spock!"

Who do you know that looks forward to "Lost in Space" reruns? Who do you know that can rattle off the titles of the episodes of current favorites such as Columbo or MacLeod or Ghost Story? Yet there are literally thousands of Trek fans who can name every episode - tell you which of the three seasons it appeared in - who the guest stars were, down to the security guard who got killed on the landing party! Thousands more can tell you exactly why Mr. Spock never smiles, where James T. Kirk stood in his graduating class at the Space Academy, how to figure how fast the Enterprise is going at Warp 6, who the enemies of the United Federation of Planets are, why Mr. Spock's father didn't speak to him for 18 years, and what the Vulcan term 'pon far' implies.

Why?

That's a good question. One NBC wishes it could answer. NBC, which even now has secretaries whose whole job consists of answering mail about Star Trek. NBC, which for some nefarious reason tried to kill Star Trek by shuffling it around to the worst possible time slot. NBC, which bowed to the pressure of literally tons of mail after planning to cancel the show following the second season and gave it one more chance - at 9:30 on Friday night - the worst time slot of the week! NBC, that even now has asked Gene Roddenberry, the genius

behind Star Trek to revive Star Trek - either as a TV movie or a theatre movie.

Why?

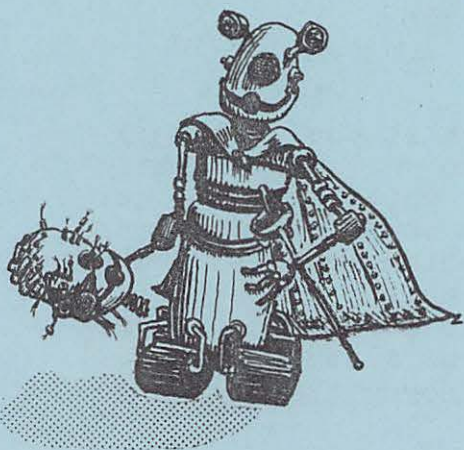
Because Star Trek has been kept alive by a large, constantly growing following of people - ranging from astronauts, to college professors, to school teachers, to housewives, to school children, to business men, to famous authors², to college students, to grandmothers, to secretaries, to construction workers, to - well the list is endless.

To use the questionable rating system to Star Trek's advantage, the show's re-runs now receive higher ratings than any other re-run show in most cities, even when the series has been rerun sometimes daily and has repeated its entire list of 79 episodes time and again.

What is the attraction that Star Trek holds for all these people, young and old alike? Are they all science fiction buffs? No, although many are and many that weren't before are now; but there have been science fiction shows before that didn't cause a ripple of interest and have and gone without a trickle of protest.

Many theories have been offered: the genius of Gene Roddenberry in creating a whole unbelievable technology is one important factor, an excellent cast, thought-provoking stories, good scripts, excellent visual effects, only enough BEMs to be interesting and not enough to be boring, the idea of universal brotherhood, beginning with a united Earth and a Federation of Planets containing humans and aliens working together, an idea practically unknown and unthought of (especially on TV) before Star Trek.

However, even these points do not fully explain the fascination of Star Trek. Most of its followers will admit to being attracted originally by that strangely fascinating character, the Vulcan Spock. Here, for the first time, was a leading character who was an alien, not a robot or a monster, but a humanoid, just slightly different, something about the ears and the eyebrows. Later we learn more: he shows no emotion, he has a mind like a computer - but wait, he does have emotions! Why does he deny them? Vulcans, we learn, consider emotions a weakness. They live by pure logic. Ah - but Spock is a half-breed! His mother is human...



By now you are hooked! You must know more. You keep watching. Then, one day in a bookshop, you find a paperback "The Making of Star Trek"³, by

Stephen E. Whitfield. For anyone with the slightest interest in Star Trek, this book is a must. It tells the story of the show: from its conception, through the making of the two pilots NBC demanded before buying it, how the cast and characters were chosen and developed. You begin to realize what goes into putting the show together, and again your interest grows. You find more books - the James Blish series - Star Treks #s 1-8⁴, (more are planned). Bookshops can't keep up with the demand, and in fact #1 is in its 15th printing. David Gerrold, well known science fiction author who wrote the script "The Trouble With Tribbles," has two new Ballantine books due soon, both Star Trek based.



You go to a Sci-Fi Convention - find space and time devoted to Star Trek - meet people who are even more enthusiastic than you - and that's it! You're a - 'fan' - 'Trekker' - 'Trekkie' - 'Trek-nut' - whatever the term, you're it! You have found the world of Strek Fandom.

'Fandom' is a word that conjures up thoughts of screaming girls running after some movie 'star'.

No, not where Star Trek is concerned. With the possible exception of a few 'teenie-boppers', most Strek fans are serious-minded people joined together in a common interest, with a common goal - "Keep Star Trek alive and get it revived!"

Keeping it alive has been easy. There are over a hundred fanzines being published. Full of original stories based on Strek characters, poems, art work, and humor. In addition there are essays on astronomy, light and warp speeds, Vulcan history, and even Vulcan language and customs. These 'zines keep interest alive and growing. But then there are the Cons!

Star Trek conventions are being held in all parts of the country. The first Con, entirely devoted to Star Trek, was held in New York in January, 1972. The committee hoped they could attract 600 people. By Sunday afternoon, when they gave up counting, over 3,400 had paid \$3.50 a head to get in.

The New York TV stations heard of it and CBS and ABC sent

camera crews to record the event for their news programs. NBC was conspicuous by their absence!

TV Guide and other national publications reported the story. More cons were planned. In October, 1972, a Con in Detroit prompted the Mayor of that city to issue a proclamation declaring, "Star Trek lives in the heart of Detroiters..." and welcoming the Convention to the city.

In November a large part of the Fantasy Films Fans International Con was devoted to Star Trek. This con was visited by many of the Star Trek cast and the lawn of the hotel housing the Con was graced by the shuttlecraft 'Galileo 7' - the full sized prop used in the show.

In February, 1973, over the Washington's Birthday weekend, 16th-19th, the second NY Star Trek Con will be held - at the Hotel Commodore. The planning committee is anticipating having to put a limit of 6,000 on the number of reservations accepted.

What happens at Cons? The first Star Trek Con was a good example of 'A great time was had by all'. Gene Roddenberry, his wife Majel Barrett (Nurse Christine Chapel), Isaac Asimov and Hal Clement were the main speakers. A panel consisting of Majel Barrett and D.C. Fontana answered any and all questions - i.e. "What does the T in James Kirk's name stand for?" "Tiberius!" And D.C. Fontana should



know, she was a script writer, ('This Side of Paradise' and Journey to Babel') and script consultant on the show. Asimov was - Asimov, Hal Clement gave a learned dissertation on space travel.

Episodes of the show were shown on the big movie screen. The famous or 'infamous' Blooper Reel - errors made in filming, some more than slightly x-rated, was shown to an accompaniment of screams of laughter. There was a costume ball, an excellent art show and the huckster's room, where Star Trek goodies could be purchased, film-clips, posters, etc.

But the highlight of the Con was when Gene Roddenberry told of feelers being put out by NBC to possibly revive the show. Reports that the roof of the Statler-Hilton lifted three inches were exaggerated - it was only two. This report was later substantiated by a short announcement in TV Guide, "NBC has approached Gene Roddenberry with the idea of reviving Star Trek..."⁵

At this writing only one major obstacle is preventing Star Trek's return to production. Paramount studios is dragging its ponderous feet. However, word is they are weakening. The word has gone out to Strekkers: "WRITE!" It has succeeded before. Networks, studios, officials of all kind notice mail, if it is in quantity and especially quality. Star Trek should never be mentioned on the envelope, it will automatically then be sent to Gene and he's on our side! Petitions don't work, one letter is worth 100 signatures! 'Cute' letters don't work - be business-like. Sign your letters, and do type or write a neat intelligent letter with a firm view of opinion to Paramount Studios, 5451 Marathon St., Los Angeles, CA 90038.

You can help too! WRITE!

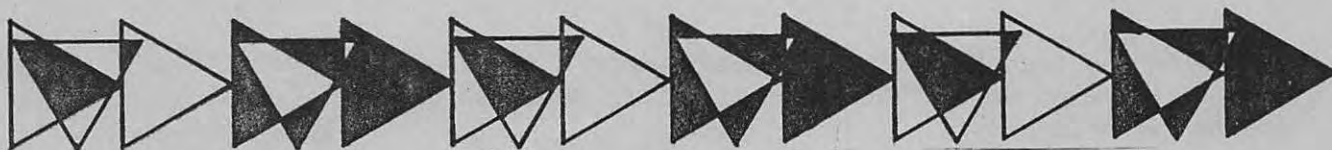
This new venture probably will not be a TV series, but more likely a movie, either TV or theatre. If successful, it might lead to more, as for example, the "Planet of the Apes" series.

Star Trek lives! It deserves to live! It has something to say. Strekkers are working to see it has its chance.

Live Long and Prosper!

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With a Hearty High-Oh-Oh, who takes off but...

BUCK GORDON OF THE SPACE PATROL -- #1

by GLENN F. BLACOW

Space Cadet Buck Gordon waited patiently - but not calmly - outside the office of Admiral Natas, better known in the fleet as Admiral Satan. One of the Marine guards grinned at him.

"Don't worry, son. He only eats cadets for breakfast, and here it's almost noon."

A head suddenly popped through the door and yelled "Cadet Gordon!"

He willed his shaky legs into propelling him through the door and snapped a salute to the Admiral. The commander of the Patrol wasn't twelve feet high, only seven. He did breathe smoke, but only because he was smoking a cigar. He did, however, have evil red eyes and a smile that showed a set of shark's fangs.

"Ah! Cadet Gordon, I believe! Grandson of the founders of the Patrol, right?"

"Yes, sir!"

The Admiral leaned back with a gratified smirk.

"How well I remember those two muscle-bound do-gooders. They horned in on my father's rackets so often that he had to turn honest and change his name from Ming the Merciless to Smiling Ming the used Spacer Man."

"Honest, sir? A used spacer salesman?"

"Well," conceded the Admiral, "legitimate, anyhow." He continued, "In any case, I've called you in to tell you that you just volunteered for an ultra-secret and very dangerous mission."

"I did?...er, uh, yes, sir."

The Admiral grinned maliciously. "Why yes. It seems that ten years ago a scout found the planet down below us. The reason we're interested in it is that the inhabitants seem to be invulnerable. Every year we pick a volunteer to test all our latest weapons against them. If we don't find something effective before they discover how to get off their planet, then we're doomed." He paused to light a cigar. "And this year, you're the selectee."

The guards outside heard the Admiral's fiendish laughter with a shudder.

"Poor kid," said the first. "He wasn't a bad guy - for a cadet, that is."

The landing capsule's window looked out on a scene of frozen desolation. The wind of over 150 kilometers per hour was blowing - a mild breeze for this planet.

The cadet gloomily contemplated his fate. If he went out and found the alien he'd probably be killed. If he didn't, the Admiral would bust him down so far he'd have to salute Camp Fire Girls. And possible skin him alive to boot. He decided that he preferred to face the aliens.

Hitching up his weapons belt, he clambered down the ladder and began his search pattern.

A cave seemed to offer some hope, but it contained nothing but gigantic icicles of unknown composition, sculpted into knifelike forms by the howling winds, with edges sharper than those of his knife or space axe.

No sooner had he left the cavern than a monstrous, apelike alien appeared, covered with shaggy white fur. It charged with a howl of fury. Buck's lightning reactions gave him time to pull out and blast the alien with his ion gun, scrambler, and infra-ray. Unsuccessfully. Thermite grenades, proton bombs, and canisters of acid proved no more effective. The cadet barely had time to draw space axe and knife before it was upon him.

The collision sent both rolling across the ground in a tangle of fangs, claws, and slashing weapons. Neither of Buck's weapons, however, seemed able to penetrate the shaggy hide. The monster was equally unable to break through Buck's armored spacesuit. With a roar of frustrated rage, the alien suddenly sprang to its feet, seized its opponent's leg, and threw the cadet into the cave. The impact sent both weapons spinning away, fractured his left arm, broke the suit's major propulsive units,



and snapped off several icicles.

The nearly helpless cadet watched in horror as the alien charged into the cave. His frantically groping right hand closed on a fragment of shattered icicle. Without any real hope, he thrust it at the onrushing creature -- and saw it slice through the alien's tough hide. With feverish intensity, he stabbed again and again until his foe lay silent in death.

With the last of his waning strength, Cadet Gordon pushed the recall button on his suit. Then he fainted.

Cadet Buck Gordon lay proudly at attention as the Admiral pinned the Order of the Double Cross on his hospital gown.

"Well, I see you're the same breed of luck-ridden clod as your grandfathers," said the Admiral with a cynical smile. "I was counting on it."

Oh, by the way, the lab boys finally decided what killed the alien."

"What was it, sir?"

"Indigestion, my boy, just indigestion."

"INDIGESTION??" screamed the outraged cadet.

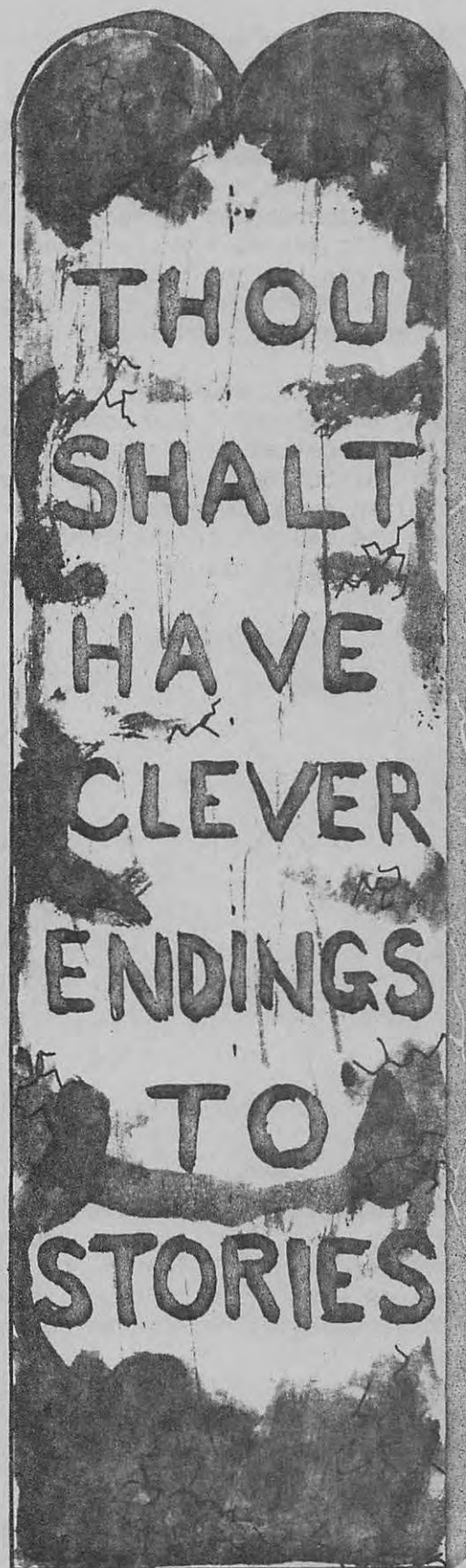
Admiral Satan grinned evilly as he lit a cigar. "Yes, indigestion.

Too many cold cuts..."

Glenn has to be the only person I know who eats blueberry yoghurt with the suavity of a cess pool cleaner,- but that's not what I started out to say,- Glenn is probably the only person I know who would (and hopefully will continue), to write a three episode ditty just for the punchline, and then ask a friend (?) to read it!

Lance had some sort of commandment in mind when he drew this picture for the story,- but some of us thought it was a gravestone.

In spite of all this, Glenn is a good egg, and a yoghurt-eating egg is a rarity these days. But I enjoy a good groan now and again and I would look forward to reading more of Buck's adventures. Please let's hear some comments and encouraging words if YOU liked the story, because if you do, Glenn could be cracked to spill more of these runny yokes into a series -- so WRITE!





ALL THAT JOZ

by RICHARD VALCOURT (or Irkum Z.)

My name is Ed Phillips, I'm a high school history teacher, and I'm crazy. I must be crazy to have had someone like Dave sharing my apartment with me. Well, maybe I wasn't crazy for letting him share it with me in the first place. We had been friends for a long time, and he was having trouble with money and couldn't afford one himself. That was fine. But soon as he started those experiments, I should have... Well, maybe not. After all, everything did manage to turn out OK. I don't know. I have the feeling I'm getting ahead of myself. Rather than confuse anybody, I'd better start at the beginning.

Like I said before, I teach history at a large public high school. It's a good job. History fascinates me, and being a teacher allows me to pass my knowledge on to other people. It's a secure position, not immensely lucrative, but I'm not living in poverty. I'm perfectly happy with it.

Then, on an otherwise normal weekend, Dave showed up. I answered the knock at my door, and there he was, all red-haired 5 feet 6 inches of him, grinning broadly, looking like he had looked the last time I saw him, which was about 6 months ago.

"David Stokes, you old son of a gun!" I exclaimed. "Haven't seen you in a long time. What brings you around this area?"

"Well, you see," he said, walking in, "it's like this..."

He proceeded to tell me what it was like.

Dave was a jack-of-all-trades. He seemed to specialize in being free-lance. At the moment, he was a free-lance writer whose work was not exactly causing any eyebrows to be raised. He had had a few articles published in a couple of semi-popular magazines, but now he was in a slump and had more rejection slips than dollar bills. His plight was clear. And his next question was even clearer.

"Would you consider letting me share your apartment with you?"

This was awfully sudden. True, it would take some of the load of the rent off my back, and it would enable Dave to avoid poverty for a few more precious months, but, I just didn't know. Something in my mind seemed to be saying that this would be a mistake. But, I very seldom listen to what my mind has to say, and Dave was a friend in need, so before I knew it, we were shaking hands on the deal, and I found myself with a roommate.

Things started out fine. Really. I had no complaints. I would go to the school in the morning, come home during late afternoon, and Dave would be sitting at the typewriter, banging away at some new story which he hoped would be THE one to enable him to break the slump.

It was like that for a while. Then one day I came home to find him banging away at something other than a typewriter. It was some sort of wooden box, about a foot square, with wires sticking out of it and a plastic dome on top. He was sitting there in the living room, surrounded by nails and pieces of wood of various lengths, hammering noisily.

"What is that?" I inquired.

He stopped hammering and looked up at me with his famous grin.

"This, my dear roommate, is the start of a new science the likes of which no one has yet conceived! It will make us famous!"

"That's all well and good," I said, "but you still haven't answered my question. What is it?"

"I really am sort of busy," he said. "Could I give you an answer when I am finished?"

"Oh, sure, I guess," I said, "just try to hurry up. I'm a bit curious as to what this mess is all about."

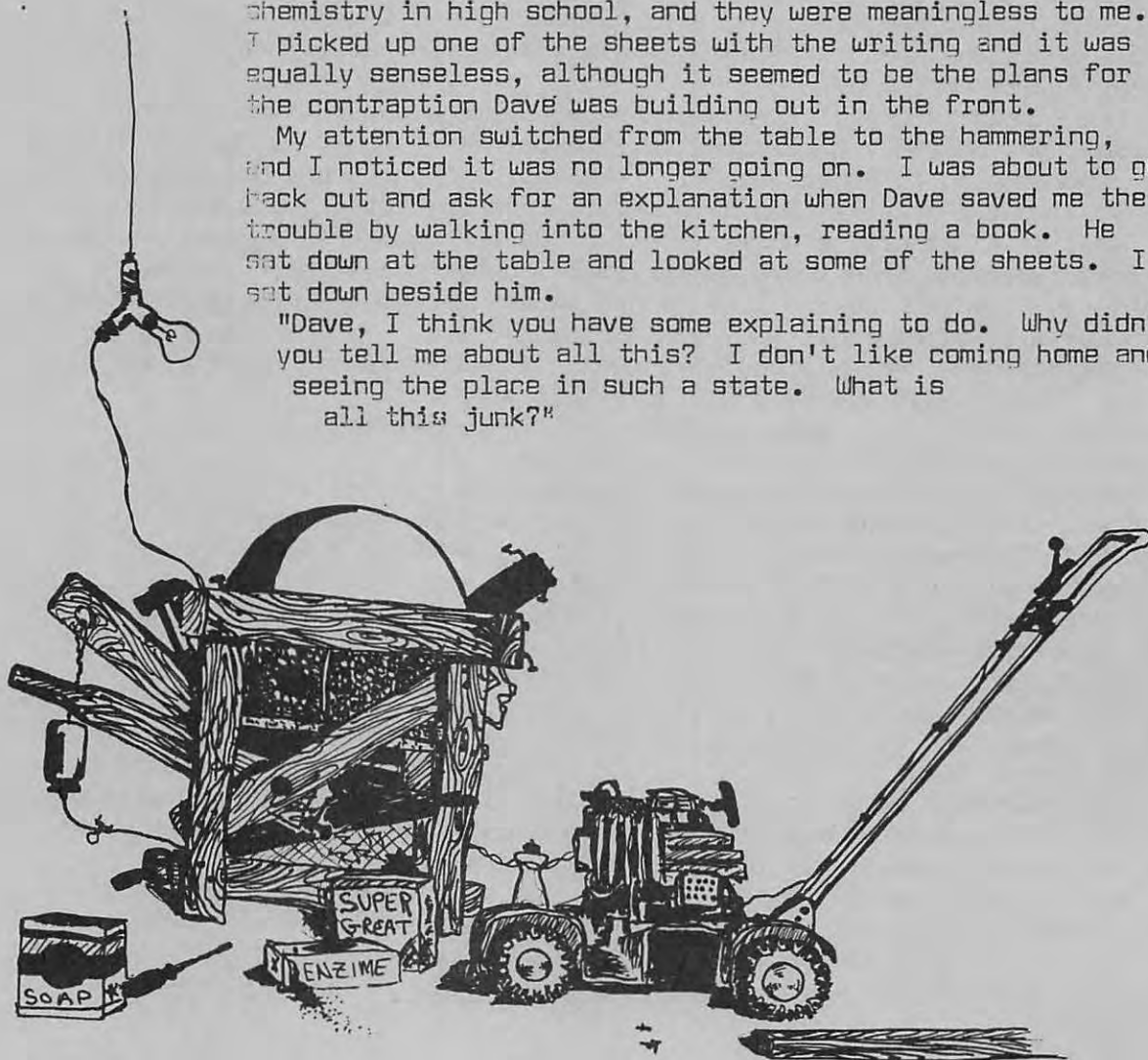
"Right!" he said, and with that, he commenced wacking in the nails again.

I felt somehow that I was intruding in on some deep, dark, scientific secret, so rather than hang around and watch, I walked into the kitchen with every intention of preparing something to eat. The mess that was on the table succeeded in spoiling my appetite.

Scram all over it was more wood and nails, many sheets of paper containing writing and pictures, and a vast array of jars, bottles, and cans containing all types of exotic chemicals and vile substances. I looked at some of the labels on the jars, but I had failed chemistry in high school, and they were meaningless to me. I picked up one of the sheets with the writing and it was equally senseless, although it seemed to be the plans for the contraption Dave was building out in the front.

My attention switched from the table to the hammering, and I noticed it was no longer going on. I was about to go back out and ask for an explanation when Dave saved me the trouble by walking into the kitchen, reading a book. He sat down at the table and looked at some of the sheets. I sat down beside him.

"Dave, I think you have some explaining to do. Why didn't you tell me about all this? I don't like coming home and seeing the place in such a state. What is all this junk?"



He looked at me, then at the table, and then sighed.

"You're right," he said, "I guess I have gotten carried away. It is a bit disordered, isn't it. I should have told you about what I was going to do. Sorry about that."

I was glad to know that Dave was still sane. For a while there...

"That's okay," I said, "no real harm done. But do you think maybe now you can give me an answer to my question? What are you doing?"

"Ah, that is an excellent question, because I am going to attempt to do what no man has done before. Many have come close, but no one has succeeded yet. It will be a boon to science."

"Well will you tell me what it is?" I said impatiently.

"That machine you saw out there in the living room is an artificial life synthesizer."

I guess my next question sounded pretty stupid.

"Is that good?"

Dave looked shocked.

"Is that good? Why, don't you know what this will mean if I'm successful? People have been trying for years to do this. When I'm through, man will be able to fashion life from ordinary laboratory chemicals, for any purpose he can imagine. Why, I could even win the Nobel Prize! I..."

"Wait a minute! I think you're getting ahead of yourself. You haven't even got that fool machine built yet. How do you plan to go about doing this? You don't know anything about chemistry."

"But that's the beauty of it! Sometimes those who don't know what they're doing have the best results. Some of the most famous scientific discoveries were made by accident! Anyway, I've read some books on organic chemistry and I think I know how to do it."

"Do what?"

"Create life, man! I know you flunked chemistry, but do I have to spell it out for you? I'm going to take these chemicals you see here, mix them up a certain way, place them in my remarkable machine out there, and in a few days, they'll have a life of their own!"

This was starting to get a little ridiculous. Dave had had some weird ideas in the past, but this topped them all.

"Are you serious?" I said. "How can you possibly think that you can make life out of nothing? Only God..."

"Oh, please, Ed, don't start to get religious with me. Everybody knows that life evolved independently on the earth a few billion years ago. There is nothing religious or supernatural about it. People just don't want to admit it. It's perfectly natural, and there is basically nothing different between that process and what I intend to do here, except that it's not going to take me billions of years to accomplish it. If everything goes according to plan, I will have synthesized life in three days.

Not bad, huh, considering it supposedly took God seven days to do the job."

"Six days," I quoted. "On the seventh day, he rested."

"Whatever."

I really didn't like the implications of this, but I could see that he was fairly set in his ways and that no amount of persuading on my part would change his mind. So, I decided to inquire further about this "process".

"How are you going to create this thing?"

"Ah ha, so you are interested. I thought you might be. This "thing" you mention will be the end product of a process so simple that I'm surprised nobody has thought of it before. I'll bet you didn't know that you have the potential life materials scattered all around your apartment."

"No, I wasn't aware of that." Actually, I couldn't have cared less.

"It's true. Except for some specific chemicals which I had to go out and buy, I took everything from the medicine cabinet and underneath the kitchen sink. The procedure is elementary. But before I continue, let me ask you something. Have you ever heard of the Miller-Urey experiment?"

"No, I can't say I have."

"Well, briefly, back in 1953, two scientists took some water, put it into a container, pumped various gases like hydrogen and methane into it, closed the lid, gave it a charge of electricity, and in a few weeks, they had synthesized the basic building blocks of life... amino acids and such. Okay?"

"Fine," I said. "I'm glad it worked."

"Well, here's the thing," he continued. "Miller and Urey started with nothing and ended up with the basic constituents of life. But what would happen if you started with the constituents and took it from there? Why, with the right amount of chemicals and electricity, you could create life itself!"

"What makes you think people haven't tried that already?"

"Oh, I'm sure they have, but they haven't used the right approach. They think that since life on earth started in the water, life in the laboratory must start there, too. I don't see it that way. If life is going to show up at all, it's not going to let a little dryness stop it. That's why I'm not going to restrict myself to water. I'm going to start with a lump of organic material, put it in my machine, and watch it grow and grow!"

He made a motion with his arms to indicate something increasing in size.

"And, just so I know that it's got the necessary head start toward vital life processes, I'm going to add some enzymes. They'll act as a catalyst.

That's why it'll only take a few days to attain life."

"And where do you expect to get these enzymes?"

"Right here," he said, reaching behind him on the table, picking up a box, and holding it so that I could read it. SUDSO ENZYME DETERGENT it said in large red letters. I considered this, and at the same time, considered calling the men in the white coats.

But I remained calm.

"You've lost your mind," I said.

"Not in the least! All the thing needs is some simple enzymes which it can later on turn into more complex ones. But at the beginning, the simpler, the better."

"But, why enzymes from detergent?"

"Why not? An enzyme is an enzyme. They'll speed up the reactions."

He sat there smiling, and I let out a huge sigh. What else could I do? Try to talk him out of it? He'd spent almost all of his remaining money on this project. I only had one choice, and that was to let him finish what he'd started. I just hated to see him fail. I mean, everybody knows you can't create life with detergents, right?

"Dave," I said, "if you want to do this, fine. It's your idea. But I don't want to be held responsible for anything that happens."

Dave's smile got even wider.

"Thanks, Ed. I knew you wouldn't let me down. You won't regret this, I can guarantee you that."

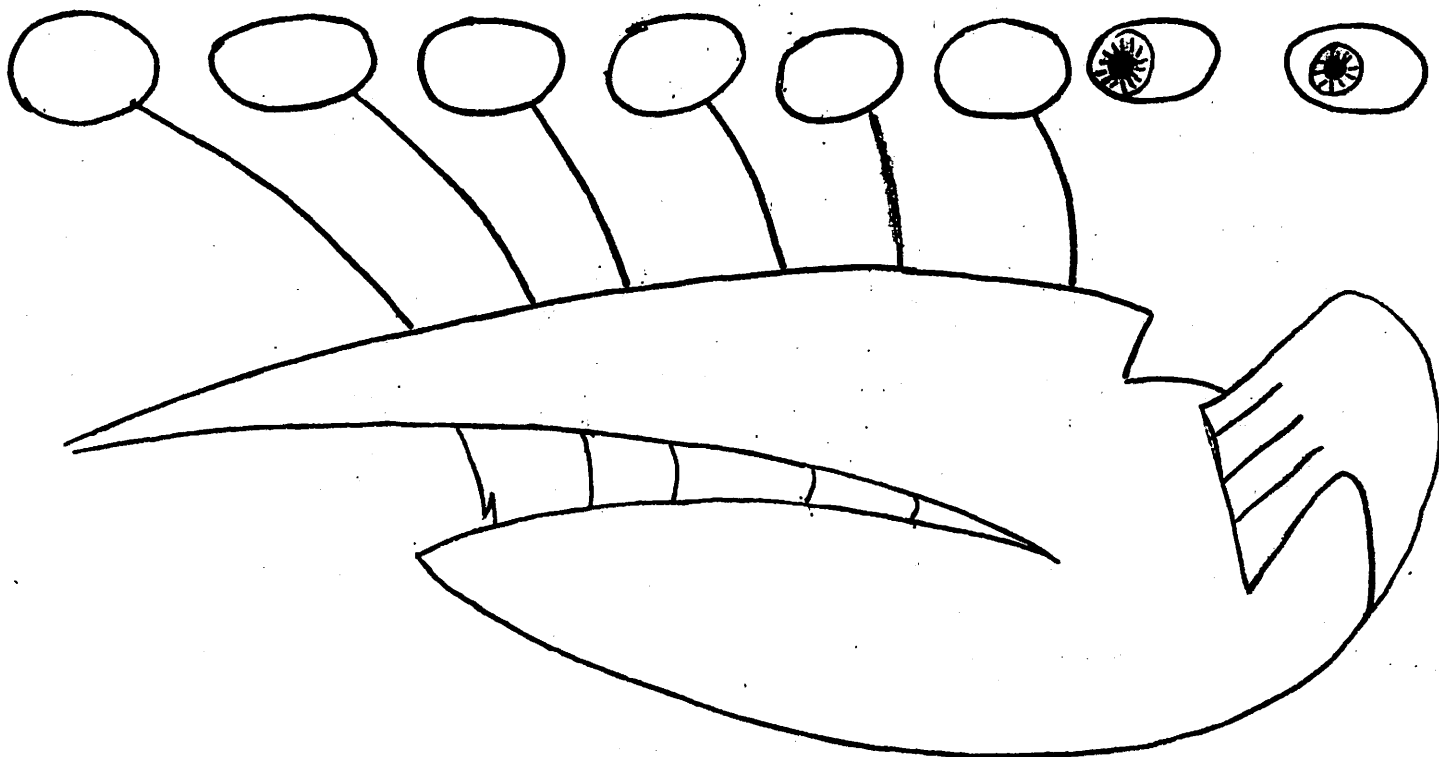
He jumped up and started to run back into the living room.

"Oh Dave," I said as he was almost out of sight.

"Yeah?" he said over his shoulder.

"Where do you intend to live when you go broke?"

He laughed and disappeared from view. I remained at the table with my head in my hands, trying to make sense out of this whole thing. But it was hard to think. Dave had started hammering the nails again.



That night, my sleep was laden with dreams of creepy, crawly, slithery things, and I awoke feeling no better than I had eight hours before. I wished that I was sick, because then I would have had an excuse to stay home. But, it was Friday, so maybe I could last out one more day. Besides, maybe the night had knocked some sense into Dave's thick head and made him abandon his project.

No such luck.

I came into the kitchen with fried eggs on my mind, and as I looked at the table, I realized that Dave had succeeded in spoiling my appetite for the second straight time.

There, in the middle of it, lying on one of my cake pans, was a brown, jelly-like mass of disgustingness which quivered with every step I took. I cautiously approached and touched it. It was slightly sticky and it smelled like a combination of airplane glue and bananas. At that moment, Dave saw fit to walk in.

"Good morning!" he said cheerfully. "How was your night? Sleep well?"

"No," I answered, "my night was terrible, and I have a feeling my day is going to be worse. Do I dare ask what that is?"

He picked up the pan and held it in front of him. The thing perched on it was small and round, about the size of a baseball, and the slightest movement would send it shimmying like a bowl of jello.

"This," he said, "is a potential living organism. It's that mass of organic material I told you about yesterday. I worked all night on it. I combined the chemicals and detergent in a pot, heated it up, and got what you see here. All I need do is place it in my synthesizer and let it develop for a few days."

I looked at the junk, then back to him.

"Dave, I know you read some books on chemistry, but how can you be sure that's the right mixture of things? You could have made something with no life potential at all."

"I know that's possible, but I think I've got the right recipe, so to speak. That blob contains all the elements needed for metabolic processes, and if nothing happens at first, I'll just add more compounds. Besides, don't forget the enzymes. They should have quite a significant effect."

I looked at the junk again with obvious distaste.

"That mess looks like something out of a '50's horror movie."

"Please!" he said, "Have a little respect. You're going to have to call it by its correct name. From now on, call it Joz."

"Joz?" I repeated.

"Yes, Joz. That's an acronym for Jelly Out of Zymes."

"Yechh. It sounds like you were just desperate for a name."

"No, not really. You have to admit it's jelly-like, and it's going to derive its life from enzyme processes. Zyme is just another name for enzyme."

I had no rebuttal to this. I was drained of any reply. The whole affair was becoming very sickening, and I didn't want to get into a big discussion like the one the night before. At this point, I was almost totally apathetic. The best thing to do was just to leave for school before my attitude changed and I murdered someone. Needless to say, I ate in town.

I arrived home expecting the worst. I wasn't disappointed.

As I got closer to my door, the sound got louder, and as I was getting ready to put my key in the lock, I realized that it was coming from my apartment! I quickly unlocked the door, pushed it open, and thrust my head in. There, in the middle of my living room, was Dave, and the machine, and next to them was the superintendent's lawn mower, roaring like crazy. The words "carbon monoxide" entered my mind, but I was more or less relieved to see a pipe leading away from the exhaust manifold to an open window. However, this relief did not stop me from grabbing Dave by the arm and dragging him outside where I could be heard above the din of the motor.

"What the hell are you doing?!" I screamed.

"I don't blame you for being angry," Dave said innocently. "You have every right."

"You're damn right I do! What's going on?"

"I needed electricity."

"So what are you doing using a lawn mower?"

"I'm utilizing the 'mower's electrical system. I've attached wires to the spark plug and its connector. Then I put these into the dome and turn on the lawnmower."

"So why didn't you plug the thing into the wall?"

"I do have it plugged into the wall. From there, I put an insulated wire running through the Joz. That's so it will have a constant energy source it can use. But I wanted to ionize the air inside the dome, too, and I needed a sparking mechanism to do that. I couldn't afford to buy one, so I just connected wires to the generator inside the lawnmower, put them in the dome, and separated them a little bit. The electricity jumps the gap and creates a spark. You ought to see it. It's really nice."

"What about the rest of the people in the apartment?"

"Nobody has complained yet. I think everybody has gone out. It's a small apartment, you know."

"What about me!?"

Dave looked hurt.

"Does it really bother you that much?"

"Yes!" I screamed. "It bothers me to such an extent that I'm going in there right now and turn it off!"

I began walking in. Dave grabbed me and tried to stop me.

"No Ed, you can't! You'll ruin everything! It'll work, I know it will. Why, even now I can notice some changes in the Joz. There are some green spots on it that weren't there before."

But I ignored these remarks and kept on walking, determined to end this thing once and for all. Dave hung onto my arm, pulling with all he had, but his small weight was useless against my 6 foot frame, and so he gave up and ran in ahead of me.

He was quick for a small man and made it back well before I did. I did not rush, though, as I knew what I was going to do, and no amount of pleading on Dave's part would stop me. I was almost through the door when suddenly, the lawnmower stopped, and all was quiet again. At first, I thought it had run out of gas. I stood in the doorway and looked in at Dave, who was kneeling near the synthesizer, staring in, with an expression on his face like I'd never seen before. He saw me, stood up, and pointed a shaking finger at the machine.

"Look!" he yelled. "Look! Will you look at that!"

I walked over and gazed at the Joz. At first, I didn't notice anything special. Then I saw it. A green spot on the Joz which hadn't been there before. The spot seemed to get a little darker, then suddenly expand and ripple at the edges. The Joz was vibrating slightly. At first, I thought it was because of my footsteps, but the vibrations increased in amplitude until it was definitely pulsating at a rapid rate. The green patch was expanding and contracting in time with the pulsations.

Dave slapped me on the back.

"Look at it!" he screamed. "It's alive! It's actually alive! And I only had the synthesizer running for one afternoon!"

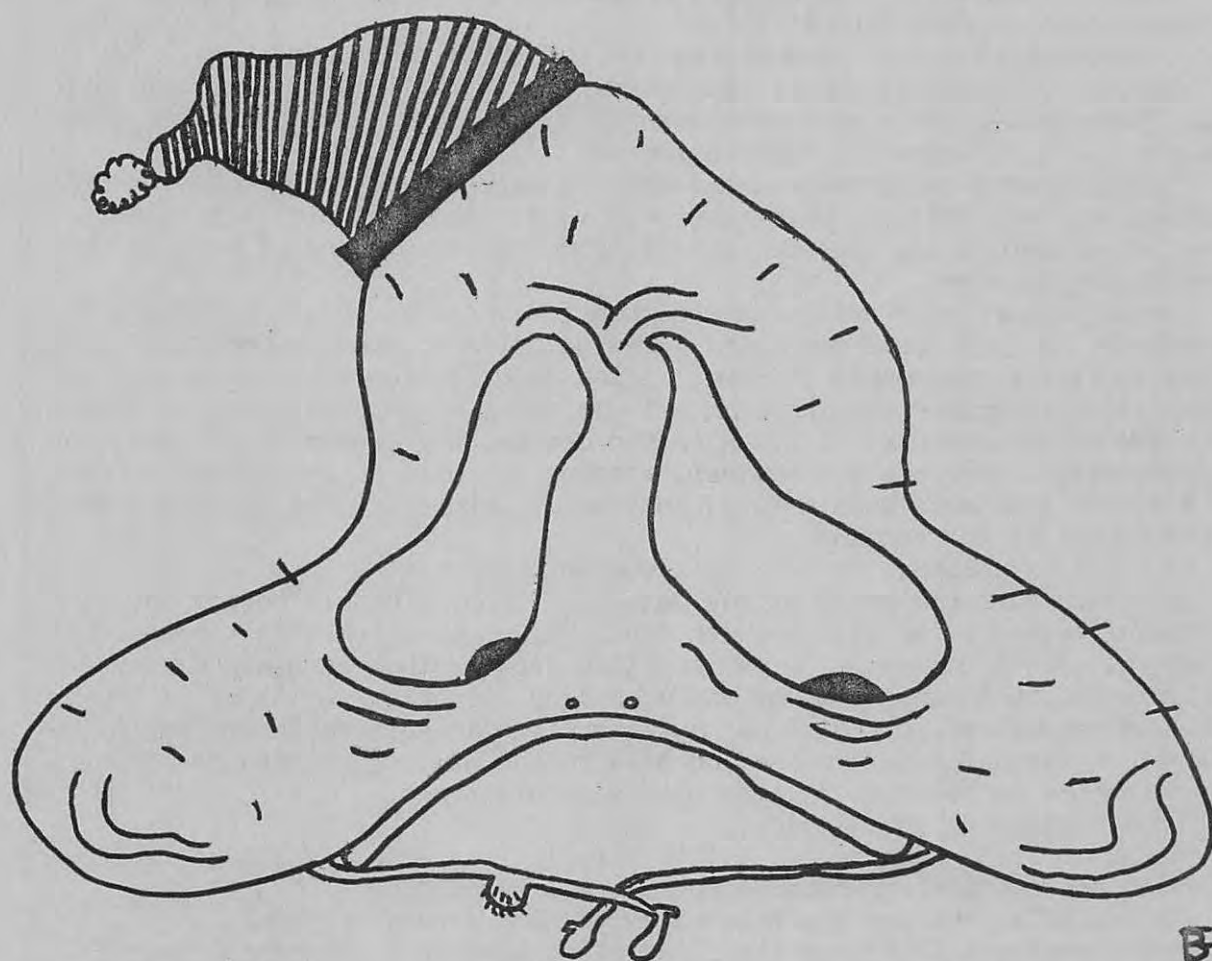
He looked at the Joz and then began running around the room.

"It's moving! I've done it! I've given life to an inanimate object! Can't you just feel that new life? Can't you just sense the presence of that new entity? Look at it! It's moving with the force of life!"

I stared at it and then slowly sank into the nearest chair. I'm not sure if I could have supported myself much longer. I couldn't move. I just kept staring at the machine. All I could see was the Joz pulsating, and Dave running around the room.

After I'd recovered my ability to move and react, I reasoned that to stay here was to risk my sanity, so I excused myself and went for a VERY long walk, allowing Dave to experiment with his little creature alone. I really didn't go anyplace special...just around. I think I was afraid I'd lose my way, because at the time, my mind was in another world.

All the while, I was trying to figure out if there was a correct way of responding to what had just happened. I hadn't really prepared myself for it, because I never expected Dave to succeed. Now I was confused as to whether I should congratulate him or throw him out on his ear. I suppose I should have been a little excited. After all, that little chunk of living whatever-it-was underneath that dome used to be just a bunch of jars and bottles of assorted chemicals. Dave had the... what, luck? All right, call it luck. Dave had the damned incredible luck of combining those things in just the right amounts and getting it to live. I suppose just the concept of such an event should have made me react, one way or another.



But I didn't react. I was just walking around, more or less numb to the whole thing. I felt that there was something wrong because I should have either been tearing Dave apart, or kowtowing to him.

After about two and a half hours of going nowhere, I decided to return home and try to face up to what had happened. Maybe seeing the Joz again would squeeze some sort of reaction out of me.

I entered the apartment, but went directly to the kitchen, avoiding even looking out of the corner of my eye at Dave, who was fiddling with his Joz.

The table was clean, and I sat there, unable to build up enough courage even to peek around the corner and see what was going on. I was contemplating on why I should be afraid when Dave walked in. It startled me a little, and I looked at him. I was even more startled when I saw what he had with him. There, crawling on his shoulder, was the piece of Joz!

He sat down next to me. I just stared at his shoulder, watching the green and brown blob slowly slither and flow and then start to crawl down his arm. He picked it up and put it on the table, stroking it gently.

"Whaa...", I managed to croak finally.

"It's great, isn't it?" Dave said proudly. "After less than a day, it can move around on its own accord. And notice how it's no longer sticky on the outside. It's built up a tough layer on its exterior, probably for protection. Just like a cell membrane. As a matter of fact, this piece

of Joz is essentially a giant amoeba, since it's not composed of individual cells. However, I'm sure the resemblance is only superficial."

The most intelligent thing I could think of to say at the moment was, "It looks so icky!"

"But it's not," Dave said. "Go ahead, feel it. It's not wet or anything. It's smooth and dry, sort of like very soft plastic. But it's not rigid. It stretches and allows the Joz to contract or elongate itself. I've been watching it for a while, and it can really change its shape."

By now, the Joz had started to crawl around the table, and I don't know where I got the nerve, but I actually reached out and touched it. I was amazed! Dave was right, it was smooth and supple, like a plastic bag filled with water.

"I was doing some experiments while you were gone," Dave said. "All the time I was thinking about how to give it life, I never gave a single thought as to how I would feed it. I had passed by that aspect of the experiment completely. Naturally, I had to think of something, otherwise I would have to start all over again. So, I tried a couple of methods. I figured the only way it could feed would be through its skin, so I prepared a mixture of yeast and water and put a drop of it on top of the Joz. Nothing. No response."

By this time, I had picked up the Joz and was holding it in my hands, feeling the soft blob squirm and wiggle.

"So," Dave continued, "I tried different formulas, hoping that I would hit on the right one. I tried egg whites, flour and water, milk, vegetable oil, tomato juice, even plain water. Nothing happened. Then I had an idea. I took some of the enzyme detergent, dissolved it in water, and put a drop of it on the Joz. I got an immediate reaction. The Joz vibrated and formed a depression where the drop was, and slowly the drop was absorbed into the skin."

"Absorbed?"

"Right. I guess the Joz can change the structure of its membrane and allow things to pass through. Anyway, that's definitely how it feeds. I used up half a cup of detergent and water before it stopped absorbing it. Boy, I sure would like to know what enzymes they put in that stuff."

I was listening and looking at the Joz at the same time, and I guess I was smiling. Dave was smiling, too.

"You know," I said, "this stuff isn't as repulsive as I thought it was."

It's not a furry little mouse or anything, but it does have a certain appeal to it."

"So, you've finally discovered what I've known all along," Dave said, taking the Joz from me and standing. "I'm glad you're no longer mad at me OR the Joz. You're right about it being appealing. I sort of instinctively think of it as being cute, like you would think of a dog or a kitten."

"Well," I said, "I wouldn't go so far as to compare it to a dog, but..."

"Never mind. Come on. Why don't you watch me experiment with the Joz some more. It should be fairly interesting. I'm going to try to determine what that green spot is for."

He turned and walked into the living room, and I rose and followed him, feeling, for the first time, an actual interest in what was taking place. It seemed unbelievable that only a short while ago, I had hated the sight of the Joz. Now I was willingly watching Dave play with his new pet. It was certainly going to be an intriguing night.

We never did find the purpose of that spot, and at around two in the morning, I decided to call it a day. Dave was still working when I went to bed.. He just wouldn't quit.

I woke up feeling fabulous. It had been a while since I had slept that well. It was late, but I didn't mind. I just lay in bed, trying to imagine what surprises Dave and the Joz had in store for me today. Then I swung my feet around to the edge of the bed to put on my house slippers. Instead, of the slippers, my feet came in contact with something soft and mushy, and I immediately jerked my feet back and looked to see what it was. There, lying flattened on the floor, was the piece of Joz.

At first I thought, "Oh God, I've killed it," but I breathed an enormous sigh of relief when it began to move and fill out again. Thank goodness for its great flexibility!

I picked it up and walked into the living room. There, asleep on the couch, was Dave, and crawling on his stomach was another piece of Joz!

I looked at my piece, then back at the other one, and almost screamed.

I ran over and shook Dave hard.

"Dave, wake up! You've got to see this! The Joz! It's starting to reproduce!"

He slowly raised his eyelids, looked at the pieces of Joz, then suddenly opened his eyes wide and stared. He grabbed them, sat up, and looked at them with his mouth hanging open.

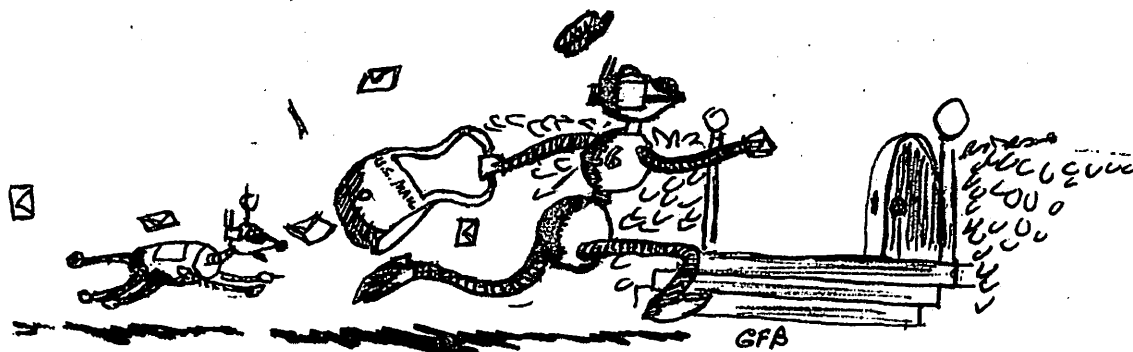
"Holy cow, it's already starting to reproduce!"

"You mean you knew this would happen?" I questioned.

"Of course! Any living thing has the power to duplicate itself. The Joz is a living thing, therefore I knew it would eventually. I just didn't know when or what method it would use. Judging from the equal size of the pieces, I'd say it uses the fission method, like a one-celled animal. And did you notice how rapid it was? It must be fantastically prolific. In a single day, it can split into two separate pieces. That means it will double its numbers every day. This is incredible!"

It certainly was incredible. Also somewhat annoying. By the middle of the following week, we had 64 separate pieces of Joz crawling around the place. That was more Joz than we could handle comfortably. We could never keep track of them all, and we were always finding them in the most absurd locations: in the beds, in the bath tub, we even found one inside the toaster. I can imagine what it would have been like had we turned it on beforehand!

I think we would have really been in trouble had Dave not thought of



putting them in the refrigerator. He figured the cold would slow them down a little. He was right. In fact, the cold rendered them completely dormant and lethargic. They didn't move or reproduce at all while they were in there. That was good, because then Dave could just take one out, let it warm up, and then do some experiments with it before it became necessary to rush it back into the refrigerator. Sometimes he kept them out too long and they would divide while he was in another room. One time he managed to catch them in mid-division and was able to rush them back to their little home before they could complete the process. They're still like that, stuck, with a large indentation in the middle, waiting patiently for when Dave will allow them to finish what they started.

Not everything was going badly. Word about the Joz got around, mostly because Dave had had a story written about him in the local newspaper. Many people were skeptical, but some weren't, and soon, he received an offer to appear on a local television program and explain what he was doing.

I'm positive that Dave had had all this planned from the very start, because the events that followed seemed to flow by like scenes in a movie.

First, he appeared on the local program, then soon after that, we were visited by some college professors who had seen the program. They asked him to explain, and he was only too happy to oblige. He told them all about his theories and the basic process, and he even let them handle some of the Joz themselves, but he was careful not to divulge the combination of chemicals he had used. The professors left in a state of shock.

They must have passed the word on to other people and places because soon, reporter after reporter showed up, looking for a story. They weren't just reporters from small newspapers, either. They represented the biggest papers from all over the United States. I was at school all day, but Dave stayed home and told them all they wanted to know; everything, that is, except the secret formula. He told them about the detergent, but that was it. No amount of persuading could get him to reveal that secret.

After the newspapers came the magazines, and after that, came the offers from hundreds of colleges and corporations. They were willing to pay us money, thousands of dollars, just to get a piece of the Joz for studying.

Dave's eyes lit up when he saw the first of these offers.

"Ed, my boy, this is what I've been waiting for. We are now on our way to wealth."

He sold the Joz to the assorted colleges and corporations for the specified sums, but not before applying for, and receiving, a patent on the



Joz.

"Just want to make sure I get all I'm entitled to," he said.

That's essentially what happened. We soon made large amounts of money and we were able to buy a house and move out of that small apartment. Dave also bought ten more refrigerators and stocked them to capacity with Joz. I thought this was going a little too far, but he wanted to keep the customers happy. I had to get used to having Joz cluttering up the basement, kitchen, and bedrooms, because our "orders" were getting larger every day.

I found out some interesting things from the people who were studying the Joz. No one has yet been able to figure out the formula Dave used, and Dave doesn't intend to tell anybody, at least for a while. A mathematician figured that the odds against Dave finding the right formula on the first shot were astronomical, but I think he should try to convince Dave of that.

One scientist thinks he may have discovered the use of that green spot on the Joz. He found that when kept in the dark for extended periods of time, the Joz weakens. He theorizes that the Joz is able to utilize solar energy, but the exact nature of it is still unknown to him or anyone else.

People have even started to put Joz in Skinner Boxes and tried to get it to push a lever for a drop of enzyme formula. Most scientists think it can't be done, but they're still trying.

Oh yes. The SUDZO detergent company is doing its best business in years.

So, that's it. I'm happy, Dave's happy, and we're both very rich. But I still don't know what to do with all that Joz.



ANSWERS TO SWORD & SORCERY QUIZ

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Radagast the Brown | 6. Mournblade |
| 2. It was invisible. | 7. Maziriur |
| 3. Lemminkainen | 8. Volt |
| 4. The two foot long
Ilparsi knife. | 9. Sheeba of the Eyeless Face
and Ningauble of the Nine
Eyes |
| 5. Lovecraft | 10. A--1
B--2
C--3
D--4
E--5 |



by the ~~shind~~ sweetheart of them all, who fuels his jets with rhubarb:

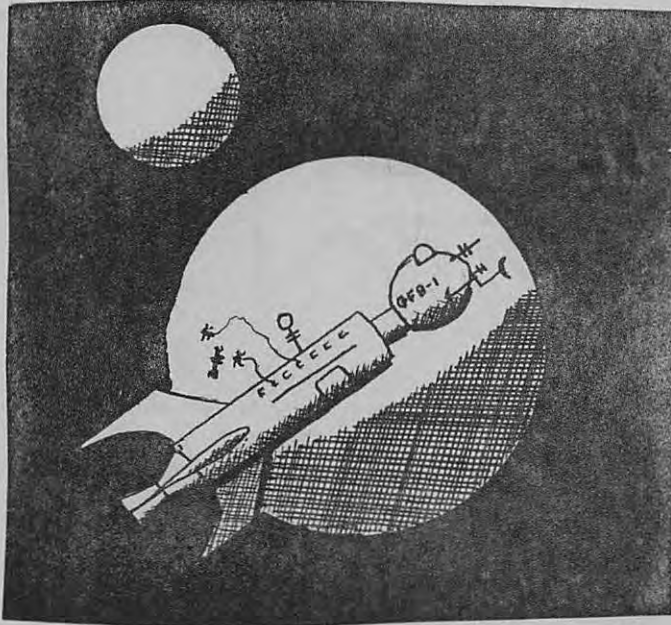
MATT ZIMET

1. What was the which of what-she-did ???
2. Why was Jack O'Shea the first man to orbit Venus ???
3. Who put pebbles in Dak Broadbent's shoes? Why ???
4. What do Jason DinAlt, Cayle Clark, Teela Brown, and Captain Pausert all have in common ???
5. The Freetrader's ship that hosted Thorby was called the "Sisu". What does 'sisu' mean? From what language did Heinlein borrow the word ???
6. How did the addition of NH_2CHROOH polymer chains affect Troedh's dimensions? What did this reaction yield ???
7. In Emphyrio, by Jack Vance, glorious Finuka had proscribed killing throughout the land. How did the evil officials circumvent this when they banished criminals to nearby and presumably peaceful Bauredel ???
8. Calculate the ultimate magnitude of the 'X' force in Neutron Star ??? (Given: The neutron star is 12 miles in diameter, with a mass equal to 429,000 x that of earth, which in turn has a radius of 3,945 miles. Our General Products hull is 300 feet long, and passes in hyperbolic free fall orbit within one mile of the star's surface. Express your answer in Gees).
9. What did Sam do to the automated prayer tigers that made the gods wax wrath ???
10. How did Schon's fiendishly clever hiding place help Ivo Archer win the "Sooper Dooper Snooper Pooper" in a contest? What was this SDSP anyway ???

ANSWERS ON PAGE 83

THE SERVANT PROBLEM

by MARK R. LEEPER



"I think we should consider ourselves extremely lucky," Ted Watson said, looking up from the controls. "Wolf IV looks like it should be a very good choice. Examining the composition of air, the amount of water on the surface of the planet, the gravity, and almost every other environmental factor, we seem to have a planet that is almost a twin sister of Earth."

"We have agreed to Wolf III and we will stick to that agreement," William Bowan's voice boomed. "As long as I am the captain of this ship, my orders are going to be

followed."

"Bill, be reasonable. There are only the four of us left. We are the last of the human race. If we die, there is nothing left of mankind. Why take chances on a desert world like Wolf III?"

"I'll tell you why. Have you looked at the surface of Wolf IV? Have you looked at the map of the continents?"

"Of course I have. So the planet has the same map as Earth. Stranger coincidences are possible."

"That's too much of a coincidence for me. We really don't know what kind of life is out here. This could be some kind of trap."

"What kind of life are you expecting? Some sort of super-powerful intelligence that can change the very face of a planet to look like earth?"

"Look, maybe it works by some kind of mass hypnosis. I don't know. If they can make us think that the planet looks like earth, they can alter the meter readings. We could be landing on a death trap that they have set for us."

"THEY? Who the hell are THEY? Some kind of little green men who can cloud men's minds. Come on, Bill. We're talking about the future of mankind, that's what the four of us are, all that's left of mankind. We're not talking about some damn science fiction story. I admit that there is a strong coincidence here, but, but that's all that there is, a coincidence."

"Look, I am the captain. I am the one who decides what happens on this ship. Once we land on Wolf III, you can do whatever you damn well please. But you'll be doing it on Wolf III."

"If the girls agree with you that there is a danger on Wolf IV, I won't raise any objection. If the girls agree with me that a little coincidence should not endanger the four of us, then we'll land on Wolf IV if I have

to bind and gag you to do it."

"You call that a little coincidence? Well, all right then. If both girls agree with you, I'll let you take over the ship."

Carol Watson and Ann Bowen, the last two women of the human race, were getting ready to leave the Arcon. The Arcon had been their home for years now, but they were getting ready to move to a new home. A home where they could hopefully be the forefathers of a new race of man. There was a click on the intercom. "Could you two girls come to the control room, please. We'd like the two of you to arbitrate in a small argument."

"We'll be right there, Ted," Carol called to her husband. When the girls got to the control room, Bill was sitting at one end and Ted at the other end of the room. Ann was the first to speak.

"I don't believe that you two are arguing. All these years and you choose our last day on the Arcon to have your first fight."

"It isn't a fight," Bill said. "We just disagree. I can see his point and he can see mine, I hope, it's just that each of us think the other is wrong. Look at the pictures we took of Wolf IV. So you notice what I noticed?"

"Why that's amazing. It looks almost exactly like Earth. Ted, what's the probability of two different planets looking so much alike?"

"Quite small, I admit. But the probability is not so very small that we should assume foul play."

"What do you mean, foul play?" questioned Ann.

"We really don't know what kind of life is out there," explained Bill. I think that the fact that the two planets, Earth and Wolf IV, look so much alike indicates the possibility that intelligent life may be down there and controlling what we see. The probabilities are far too great that we will fall into a trap of some sort. We are toying with the future of mankind and it doesn't pay to take chances."

Ted was getting a little hot under the collar. "You are the one who wants us to take chances. Just how long do you think we could survive on a desert planet like Wolf III."

"And if there's some kind of intelligent life working, how long will we be able to survive on Wolf IV?"

"Bill, I think my husband is right. You are letting your imagination run away with you."

"I promised that if all three of you were against me, I would let us go ahead and land on Wolf IV. If you agree with your husband, the decision is up to my wife. What do you say, Ann?"

"I don't know. Do you think there is a big enough chance that we won't survive if we land on Wolf IV. What do you think, Ted?"

"Well we can't land on both. Once we set down, we are settled. If when things got bad enough on Wolf III, we could always pick up and move to Wolf IV, I would agree immediately to Wolf III. We just do not have the rocket design to reuse the Arcon. Once we land we are where we will stay. I can't quote you the probability that we can survive on Wolf III, but I can tell you that it is one desolate planet. If we do survive, we will live like rats. It will be hard work to get every bite we put into our mouths. If you call that survival, then we could probably survive. What I would say is that the four of us would eventually evolve into beasts ourselves. If we want the human race to survive, we've got to land on Wolf IV."

"I agree with my husband," Carol said. "With the plants on an Earth-like planet, we could build houses out of wood. Beautiful houses, not just holes in the sand, like we would have on that desert planet."

"I'll bet we could find metal on the surface of the planet and make tools," said Ted. "The Egyptians did it, why couldn't we. We would have only our hands to work with on Wolf III."

"Bill, what would we have to eat on Wolf III?" questioned Ann.

"We might be able to find some edible plants growing. Figs grow in that kind of climate."

"Bill, I love you. But we can't live on figs, and you don't know for sure that there are edible plants on Wolf III. On Wolf IV there are probably great varieties of fruits and vegetables growing. It's a green planet. Will you be too angry with me if I agree with Ted and Carol."

"If that's your decision, I have no right to be angry with you. But the three of you are making a mistake. We will all be dead within an hour of landing on Wolf IV."

"Aren't you getting a little melodramatic, Bill? If there is any danger on Wolf IV, we will be just as new to them as they are to us."

"That's what I am afraid of, Ted. That may well be our biggest danger."

It was a slow descent to the surface of Wolf IV. But after years of hyperspace flight, this was really nothing. They landed in the middle of a green field. They stayed on board the ship to make some final tests. The air was pure. There was a little more oxygen in the air than there was in Earth air, but not enough more to make any real difference. They would not need helmets on this planet. Slowly they disembarked onto the new world. To look at the sky and the grass of this planet, they could well be on Earth. Then they saw the first animal life. Something that looked like a blue chipmunk ran across the lush green grass. He stopped for a minute to look at the four new tenants of his planet. Then a voice cut across the meadow.

"Do not be afraid when you see me. I am here as your servant."

Something that looked like a platinum spider walked across the meadow.

"Let me explain to you that you are welcome to live as long as you want on Wolf IV. Do not be surprised that I know what you call this planet. I have been listening to your conversations since you entered the Wolf system. Billions of years ago, Wolf IV was inhabited. The Beings who lives here had great intelligence. After they found out that they could no longer live here, they created hundreds of thousands of us automaton. The idea was that Wolf IV would be a rescue planet. We know everything about anybody who enters the Wolf system and we make Wolf IV habitable for whoever needs it. When you came into the system, we redesigned our planet so that it would suit you perfectly. We would be happy for you to settle on this planet and we will serve you as slaves."

Ted was astonished. "We suspected that there might be intelligent life here, but nothing like this."

There was a soft musical tone in the air. "There is my signal," the spider said. "Your new homes are done. Follow me please."

As they walked, Ted asked the spider questions. "We noticed on the way down that the map of this planet is almost exactly the same as the map of earth. Is that natural?"

"Of course not. We designed this planet to be as much like your own planet as possible. Not all of the four of your minds think the same about Earth. We have made this planet to be as close as possible to all of your memories of Earth. If we could see your planet, we could have done a better job. But of course Earth is too far away for us to do that, so we work on the data we get from reading your mind."

"Can you even move continents around?"

"We can, but that is not how we reshaped the planet. Our continents were nothing like yours, so we destroyed them and built these continents

from scratch."

They came upon two tropical looking grass shacks. "This is summer weather now and these grass shacks will be quite comfortable," the spider said. "I believe it was Mrs. Watson whose thoughts on board the ship were for a nice home. You will find that this is not a hole in the ground, as you feared your home would be on Wolf III."

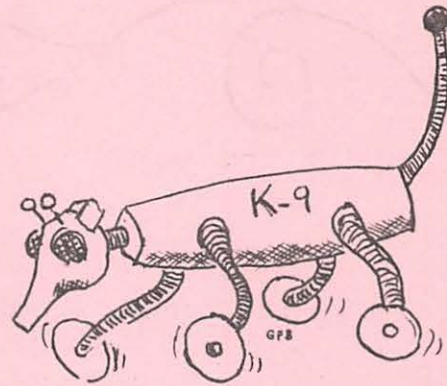
"You were listening to our conversation?" Carol asked.

"I said that we have listened to every thought you have had since you entered our system. Mr. Watson, you expressed a need for tools. If you will look inside your home, you will find both the mechanical and scientific tools you desire. There are two or three devices that you think you understand how they work, but you don't. We could reproduce those devices to work as you thought they would because they simply could not work that way. We have made our own devices to replace them. I am sure you will find them adequate."

"I thank you for that," Ted replied. "I don't know when I will get a chance to use the tools, but they will be good to have."

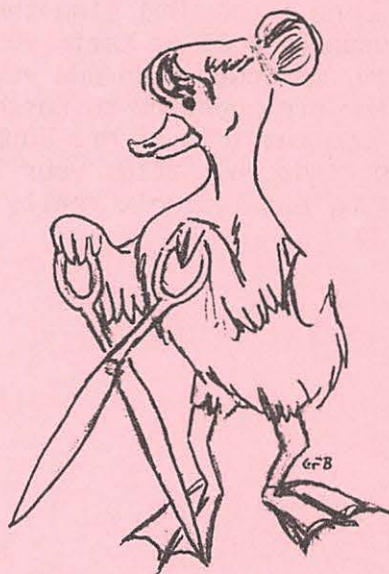
"You are most welcome. Mrs. Bowan expressed a wish for fruits and vegetables. You will find the garden behind your home, Mrs. Bowan. It is presently full of Earth varieties of fruits and vegetables. If you want them, we could also add some varieties that are not found on Earth, but which are superior to Earth plants. The strangest desire from the four of you was that of Mr. Bowan that the four of you should be dead within the first hour after your landing."

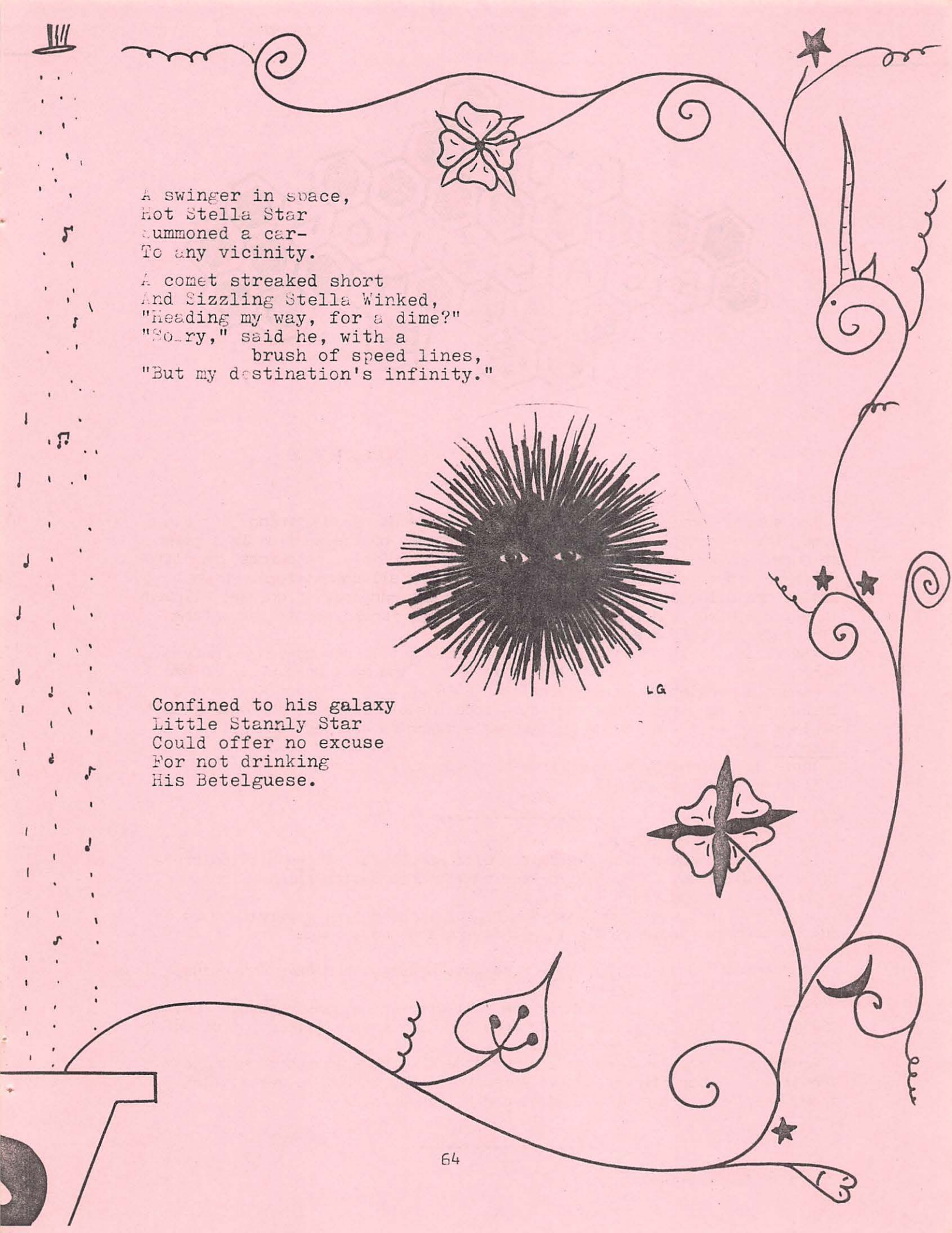
"Oh, but I didn't really mean that I..."



The Moons, Goons, and (groan) "How COULD you?" Sector
by Harriet Feldman

Snippety Schenectady Snip
As the duck cut her Moebius Strip,
"SQUAWK!"
She quacked
As she tried to cut more,
And watched them float
to the floor.

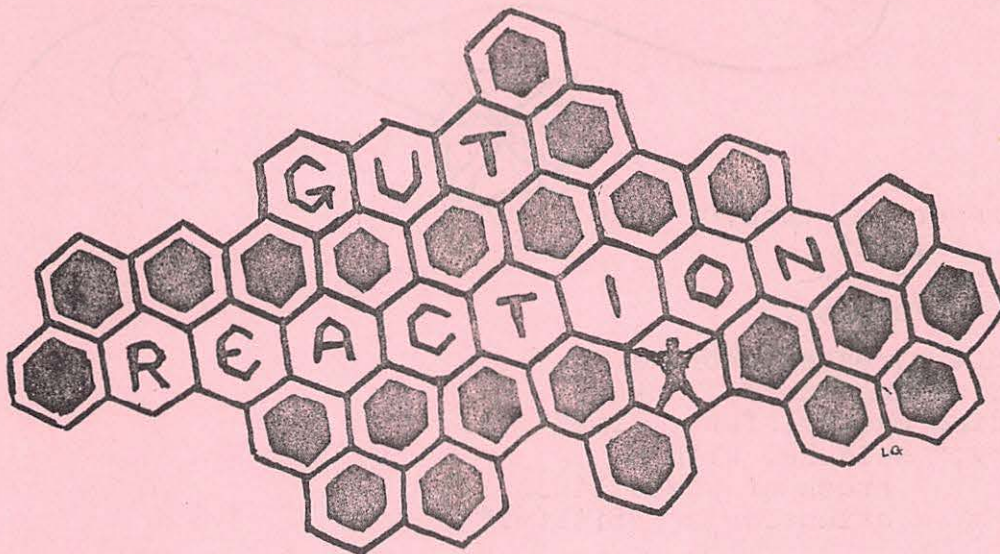




A swinger in space,
Hot Stella Star
summoned a car-
To any vicinity.

A comet streaked short
And Sizzling Stella Winked,
"Heading my way, for a dime?"
"Sorry," said he, with a
brush of speed lines,
"But my destination's infinity."

Confined to his galaxy
Little Stannly Star
Could offer no excuse
For not drinking
His Betelguese.



by GLENN F. BLACOW

The survey Commission officer began with his standard warning: "As you know, the information supplied for the purposes of the auction is limited to purely objective assessments of a planet's climate, resources, and life forms in order to allow free competition among all competitors. Down Scouts are allowed 10% of the exploitation fee and are, of course, allowed to set a minimum bid for the planet concerned, regardless of the information supplied by the auction to bidders.

The first planet up for bids today is Serpis III, discovered by Scout Georg Tibor two years ago. Climate is AAA A- the best possible. It has a humanoid population, classification AACFG -7,..." The voice droned on through the required codes that described the new world. "The Down Scout's minimum bid is," - here the auctioneer's eyebrows climbed-"one billion credits!"

There was a shocked murmur from the bidders.

"Let the bidding begin!"

.....

Georg Tibor looked over the papers with surprise. "Three billion credits!" he whistled. "The Syrian Development Corporation paid at least twice what I hoped for."

Arana Pollard, his blond mistress/partner, put the kafe service down on the counter and nodded. "They're entering the system now."

"Who?"

"Zuckerman, Hu Wan-chieu, Tsu Ching-lai, Shassky, and Damu Ashkenzua. A pretty hard lot, if you ask me."

"Sure. The S.D.C. is probably the most crooked company around. That's why I was willing to break regulations and give them a little inside information to whet their appetites."

A warning buzzer sounded as another object or objects approached the scoutship. Tibor flipped on the screen. "Ready to put on our little show, dear? It's the S.D.C. yacht and a transport."

.....

The five S.D.C. members settled back into the lounge's comfortable chairs. Ashkenzua, the giant black, cleared his throat. "Well, Mr. Tibor, since we had to pay an astronomical sum for exploitation rights, all on the basis of your leaks, perhaps you had better show us some solid evidence to back up your hints." The faces of the others added a silent "or else!"

Georg smiled and turned on the tri-D projector.

"Here," he began, "are the natives, who call themselves the Voldi. They are quite intelligent, docile, and show considerable skill at fine manual work. As you can see, they are physically small and, by human standards, quite attractive."

Shassky grunted an affirmative as his piggish eyes scanned the shapes of Voldi females on the screen.

"Technology!" snapped Zuckermann. "How about technological illiteracy. Here..."

The screen suddenly showed a black dome of stupendous size straddling a broad canal, with a slim black shaft at each corner.

"These domes are the dwelling-places of the natives, which we have dubbed Hives. They - and the towers and canal linings - are made of some nearly indestructible material. The mechanisms that keep up maintenance must be fantastic. The interior is kept at a constant, comfortable 70 degrees F, waste disposal is immediate and untraceable, and either there is no need for repairwork or it is done so quickly and quietly as to be equal to the same thing. The canals bring water - sometimes incredible distances - for irrigation. We were never able to discover any reason for the towers.

The Voldi no longer have any idea how the Hives were built or how they were kept in running condition. They work a little in bronze and clay, but otherwise have reverted to a Neolithic way of life. No, Mr. Zuckermann, unless you count bows and spears as serious weapons, the Voldi are harmless."

Tsu's wrinkled face looked puzzled. "Mr. Tibor. If the natives are no longer capable of building or running such technically advanced systems, then how do they explain their presence?"

"They don't. Ask them about any part of their lost technology and they just say 'Iswi (the Hive) takes care of everything.'"

The former Down Scout resumes his exposition. For three hours he detailed the spectacular potential of Serpis III's mineral and animal resources. At the end of the film, the five magnates clustered around him in congratulation.

"Brilliant, Mr. Tibor!" said Tsu. "We have an offer to make you. We need someone familiar with conditions on the planet to head our exploitation team. The salary alone comes to a half-billion credits a year, with plenty of side benefits. Your-ah-partner is offered a job as your assistant at a third the salary."

Georg and Arana huddled briefly, then turned to their guests. "We'd be very happy to accept your offer, gentlemen. What did you have in mind for an initial move?"

Zuckermann leaned back in his chair and lit a cigar. "If my colleagues agree, I'd say it would be to move the natives into concentration camps in order to sort them out as to actual or potential skills. This will be necessary in any case, and will empty the Hives. First priority for those fascinating dwellings, of course, will be to investigate their technology. After that, they can be converted into luxury apartments for the human supervisory personnel we'll have to import."

Heads nodded in agreement around the table.

"Of course, sir." replied Tibor.

.....

Georg and Arana strode into the Hive at the head of fifty heavily- armed S.D.C. thugs. Old Ibold, the spokesman for the Voldi of that particular Hive, pattered anxiously to the front of the murmuring crowd of natives.

"All right!" bellowed Tibor. "Paradise is over! The New Dispensation is here. No more singing, dancing, or laying about dreaming! You little cretins move out of the Hive tomorrow and into the processing centers!"

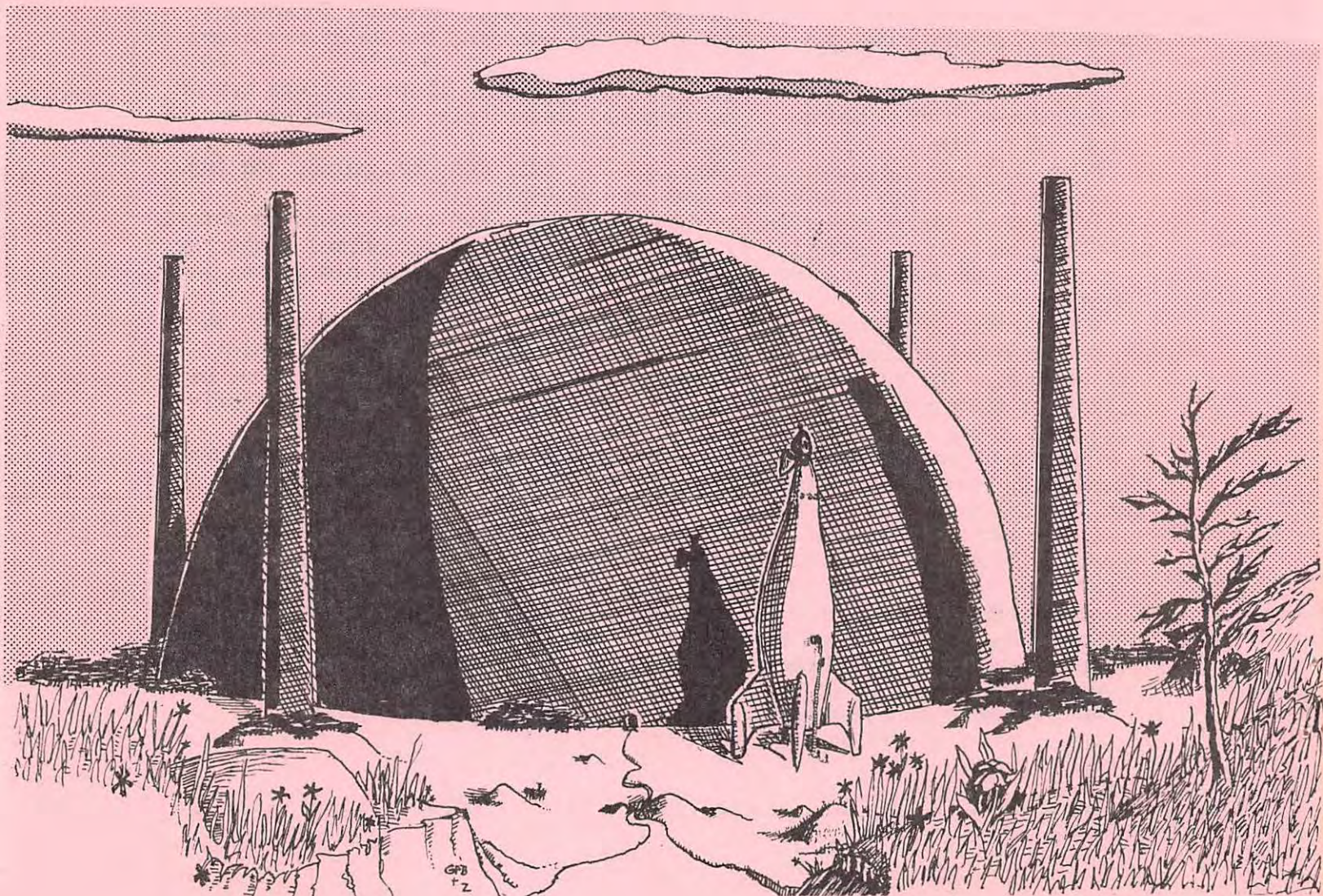
"But you cannot move us!" shouted a trembling Ibold into the shocked silence. "The Hive will not allow it!"

Georg Tibor and Arana laughed. "The Hive will not allow it, he says! Why, all of you little scum put together couldn't stop a single Earther from doing whatever he pleased."

"I said not 'we of the Voldi'" quavered Ibold, "I said THE HIVE!"

The five executives in the yacht above snapped to attention as one. Just before the cameras went dark, they saw long, ropelike things whip from the ceilings and jerk their underlings into the air. The screens covering the outside of the Hive suddenly showed the four towers pivoting on their bases and spurting beams of destruction into the sky. The transport vanished in a soundless explosion, and only Ashkenzua's frantic slam at the controls saved the yacht from the same fate. The slim vessel fled the system, dodging and twisting in a barely successful attempt to avoid a deadly barrage of killer beams.

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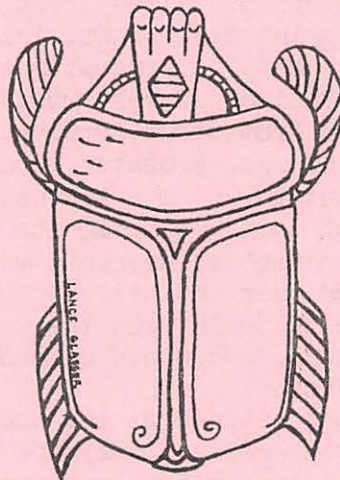
"Well sirs, we have the answers-or at least all that can be gotten from the available data." said the S.D.C. scientist. "There are TWO forms of intelligent life on Serpis III-and the Voldi are NOT the dominant one. The master race is composed of the Iswi, or, as Tibor called them, the Hives. They are living organisms, not dwellings, and it is they who built the canals and towers."

"What about the Voldi, then?" queried Tsu.

The scientist sat back. "There are parallels between them and certain Earthly organisms," he replied. "The Voldi are symbiotic to a large degree. Certain termites cannot digest wood without the aid of micro-organisms in their stomachs, not can the bacteria in question survive except in that kind of digestive tract. The Voldi perform a similar function, and also do some kinds of fine work that the Iswi cannot. Again, there are social insects such as ants or bees that keep other, unrelated insects within their communities merely because they secrete pleasant-tasting fluids or even, perhaps, for amusement. The singing, dancing, and other arts of the Voldi might be construed as similar in general idea."

"As for the ray cannon-reconnaissance indicates that humans weren't the first to try to exploit Serpis III. We've found at least three non-human wrecks on the planet. The Iswi must have caught some of the would-be 'exploiters' and gotten the technology from them."

Zuckermann looked shaken. "Then we were trying to deal with somebody's intestinal fauna as near-equals." He giggled shrilly. "I'll bet Tibor was shocked, though. It was probably the first time in history that Hives had people."





The lair of the last dragons

by Edward F. Koenig

After crossing the Channel and passing over a shipless and decaying sea town, near some sorry remnants of Hitler's Atlantic Wall and a cluster of Roman ruins, the helicopter began to descend over a region of fields and untended orchards. The broad valley ahead was tinted pink by the setting sun; the glossy blue and silver of the 'copter were the only strong colors in a landscape dominated by autumn pastels. There was a large white chateau at the end of two parallel lanes lined with Lombardy poplars. A herd of deer grazed in a hilly pasture across the road from the chateau; they cocked their ears and stared as the helicopter flew by, but held their ground. The road was divided, by the grass that filled every crack, into irregular polygons of pavement; the telephone poles along one side, their wires for the most part torn off by fallen trees, stood like a Greek or Roman colonnade, not a single one missing all the way into the lifeless village in the distance. The village streets were littered with the rusted remains of various automobiles; even the most practiced of eyes would have been hard-pressed to tell Renault from Citroen, electric from steam turbine. The churchyard was a tangle of weeds, mossy gravestones, and weatherbeaten wooden crosses; many of the latter had fallen over or were about to, as was the case with their counterparts in the graveyard on the far side of town, which in its size and rigid pattern resembled a battlefield cemetery; monuments, however, were absent. To the south a line of high-tension towers marched over the hill through a slash in the forest, but the pines were well on the way to reclaiming the wounded land; seedlings obscured the legs of most of the towers, and vines draped much of the rest, even sheathing some of the cable in places.

The helicopter landed on the cobblestones at the doorway of the chateau, and a man and a woman, both tall and dark-haired, emerged. "I feel so ridiculous wearing this," the woman said, glancing at her long formal dress. The man was wearing a tuxedo.

"You won't when you get inside." He pressed the button beneath the lens of a TV camera mounted beside the door. "John Rexford et Sarah Gregory, pour voir Mademoiselle Durant." The speaker attached to the camera remained silent.

"I thought you said you called."

"I did." He tried again, with the same result. After waiting several minutes they looked through the windows on either side of the door, then walked completely around the chateau. It seemed as empty as its furnishings were elegant, and the helicopter hanger likewise. "I'm afraid we've wasted a trip," said John.

"She's gone."

"Nobody else lives in that huge place?" Sarah had been perplexed ever since they left London.

"Once she would have had servants. These days, robots. Less trouble to handle. And much more dignified."

"She must have some neighbors."

"Frequent guests. Each of whom takes as much pride as she does in living a dozen kilometers away from anybody else. If you've never met any of the new aristocracy it's hard to understand; suffice to say that your coming in slacks would've been a severe breach of decorum."

"It's not HARD to understand; it's impossible."

"Well...call it a retreat into the past, a reaction against the vulgarity of city life. It hasn't hit England yet, but the movement is growing very popular on the continent. Doomed to extinction, though; perhaps carrying the rest of the human race along with it."

"Why?"

"None of the women would be caught dead having children. Hell, Durant would never share a room with anybody, let alone a bed. Though she's a hedonistic as anybody in Paris; it's just that her pleasures are exclusively electronic."

"In that case, I can't imagine how you've come to know her." She smiled and Rexford laughed.

"Actually, I don't. All my knowledge is second-hand. I guess I should've told you, but this was supposed to be a business trip. I thought you might enjoy the ride and the chance to meet...well, let's say what might be called the wave of the future."

"Nonsense. It's surely only a passing fad."

"I hope so. But I wonder." He took her hand off the door of the helicopter and kissed it in very courtly fashion, then bowed. When they had stopped laughing John leaned against the side of the 'copter and put his arm around her. They gazed at the darkening pastoral landscape in silence for several minutes. Eventually John shook his head wearily. "Terrible shame that nobody's taking care of those orchards. No more Calvados when we run out."

"What?"

"It's an apple brandy. Made only in Normandy."

"Being a country girl, I don't run across many wine cellars."

"There are an awful lot in England for the number of people who're left, but moderation's one virtue that died with the Plague. Some people down around Bordeaux are turning out some very good wines as a hobby, but not here. But you're the opposite of Durant. Why don't you try distilling that famous applejack of yours? Keep us warm in the winter."

"That reminds me. You're going to help cut firewood next week."

"I am?"

"Once you're out of the domes it takes a lot more than brandy to keep you warm."

"I know. I lived off the land myself for a few years, remember."

"Pity Miss Durant didn't. It might have helped."

"Maybe. Like most orphans, she was scared and starving for a few weeks. Then somebody found her and took her to a government shelter in Le Harve. And, like most survivors, that taste of hardship was enough to leave her permanently terrified at the very thought of anything strenuous or uncomfortable. So maybe she takes short walks around the grounds, has her fuel oil parachuted in--which might not be a bad idea for you, by the way..."

"The farmhouse doesn't have a furnace. Besides--I enjoy a good fire."

"Very well. If you've been cutting it yourself all these years I guess I can do half. And it's nice to know that somebody else, in the face of the 'wave of the future,' isn't going to stop swimming in the opposite direction." They entered the 'copter and belted themselves in, Sarah taking the pilot's seat this time. As she revved up the jet engines, John suddenly stamped his foot on the floor. "Damnation. I should've wheedled her radiophone code out of the London



exchange before coming. Though now I'd probably only get a tape informing me of an indefinite absence, if that."

"I thought such people paid quite a bit to keep their codes private."

"Theoretically, yes. I had to go through an hour of insufferable bureaucracy just to get the government line that calls up people without giving away their codes. But I could've done a lot of national-security shibbolithing with my superiors and gotten our man ~~at~~ the exchange to pull the code, so I could use the 'copter radio. NOW I have to go through the red tape all over again."

"National security? To call some prissy snob?"

"Well...as it turns out, we aren't the only ones to be swimming in the opposite direction. Her brother's as aggressive as she is dainty. Aggressive enough in the wrong ways to be worrisome."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"That the government is not yet too senile to take action when threatened. I actually came here to try and find out where Monsieur Durant might be keeping himself."

"Threatening the government? What's there left to threaten?"

"It's not so much the government as...the human race, most of which could care less about what goes on in London."

"That sounds so very melodramatic. How's he threatening to go about threatening the little that's left of the poor human race?"

"That I can't tell you."

"Because you don't know?"

"I have some ideas. But I'd rather not talk about it."

"If you insist on being so secretive I assume it's your duty and not your usual aversion to explaining the complexities of the London madhouse."

"A correct assumption."

"Very well. What's going on in the government that you CAN talk about?"

"The birth premiums are up for consideration again. There's a faction that wants another increase."

"Another one? Christ, is the Census report going to be THAT bad?"

"Bad enough. Still declining -- probably'll hit two million in a few years."

"For all Europe?"

"The Soviet block isn't doing any better. Drug-related deaths still on the rise. America and China seem to be in for a slight gain, but the Chinese were so hard-hit...Africa's reverted so much to tribalism nobody knows. And India's just about given up any idea of government, so they're having a recurrence of both kinds of plague. Though the viral kind has pretty well run its course through sheer natural selection."

"Medieval plague, even now..."

"Why not? None of this viral drop-dead-quick nonsense for those Hindus. Got to have time to meditate on your face turning green and blue."

"John..."

"Sorry. Where were we? Oh yes. A few of the German reps have come around to suggesting that the pill be banned except in cases of deleterious genes, pregnancy dangers, or two-children families."

"Why can people never let a sleeping dog lie?"

"Who knows? Well, shall we go?" Sarah restarted the engines and engaged the rotor blades. As she turned the 'copter in the direction of the Channel, they caught a glimpse of the high tension towers on the crest of the hill, some five kilometers distant, silhouetted by the last rays of the sun. "And besides," added Sarah, almost yelling to be heard above the roar of the engines, "I suspect another round of fascism wouldn't sit too well with perennial bachelors like yourself. Speaking of which..."

"For an independent female like yourself you're beginning to sound surprisingly unliberated as regards maternity."

"I get a big kick out of the thought of a brood of little Rexfords."

"If there's one thing Europe needs less than Nazis..."

"It's anti-father figures. I'm tempted to ignore your wishes in the matter entirely."

"You wouldn't dare."

"We all must have our secrets."

"You haven't..."

"Of course not. But I do wish you'd give the matter more thought. You government types ought to be setting an example, you know."

"Why bother?"

Sarah made a difficult twilight landing by a small stone farmhouse; a pair of horses trotted over to the fence from the middle of the pasture, and she paused to scratch their heads before leading them to the stable. The following morning, John took off for London.

Almost exactly a week later, Sarah was returning from her fields, looking expectantly in the sky towards the glow that marked the top of the London dome. She had opened the door and was turning in the direction of the light switch when one hand grabbed her around the waist and another clamped a wet piece of cloth over her mouth, and she lost consciousness.

She awoke on a luxurious red couch in a room with a huge chandelier, a harpsichord, and several suits of armor. The walls were hung with tapestries and plaques displaying various coats of arms. There were no windows. The floor was slate and the ceiling plaster, elaborately vaulted. A fire blazed in a huge fireplace to her left, and at a long wooden table, sitting in a high-backed chair, of which there were two, one at each end, was a man of medium height but impressive build. He wore a tan leather jacket tied at the neck with black thongs. His tight pants were black also. He was drinking red wine out of a large clear goblet, and had just finished lighting a pair of candles set in massive bronze candlesticks. Almost all the light, however, came from concealed semiconductor lamps.

"Who are you?"

"Would you like some claret?"

"I asked you who you are."

"Marcel Durant." He spoke with a moderate French accent. "To anticipate your next question, we are in southern Switzerland. Listen. Do you hear the waterfall? As castles go, we are fairly high up in the Alps."

"Is this a castle? I'd have thought it was an art museum."

"No. The tapestries"-- he pointed; they represented royal figures and various stylized hunting scenes, and were rather badly in need of restoration -- "belong to the castle, as do most of the furnishings. The armor and heraldry had to be -- how shall I put it -- obtained elsewhere."

"What do you want with me?" She stole a quick look at the crossed broadswords above the mantelpiece, but they were out of reach.

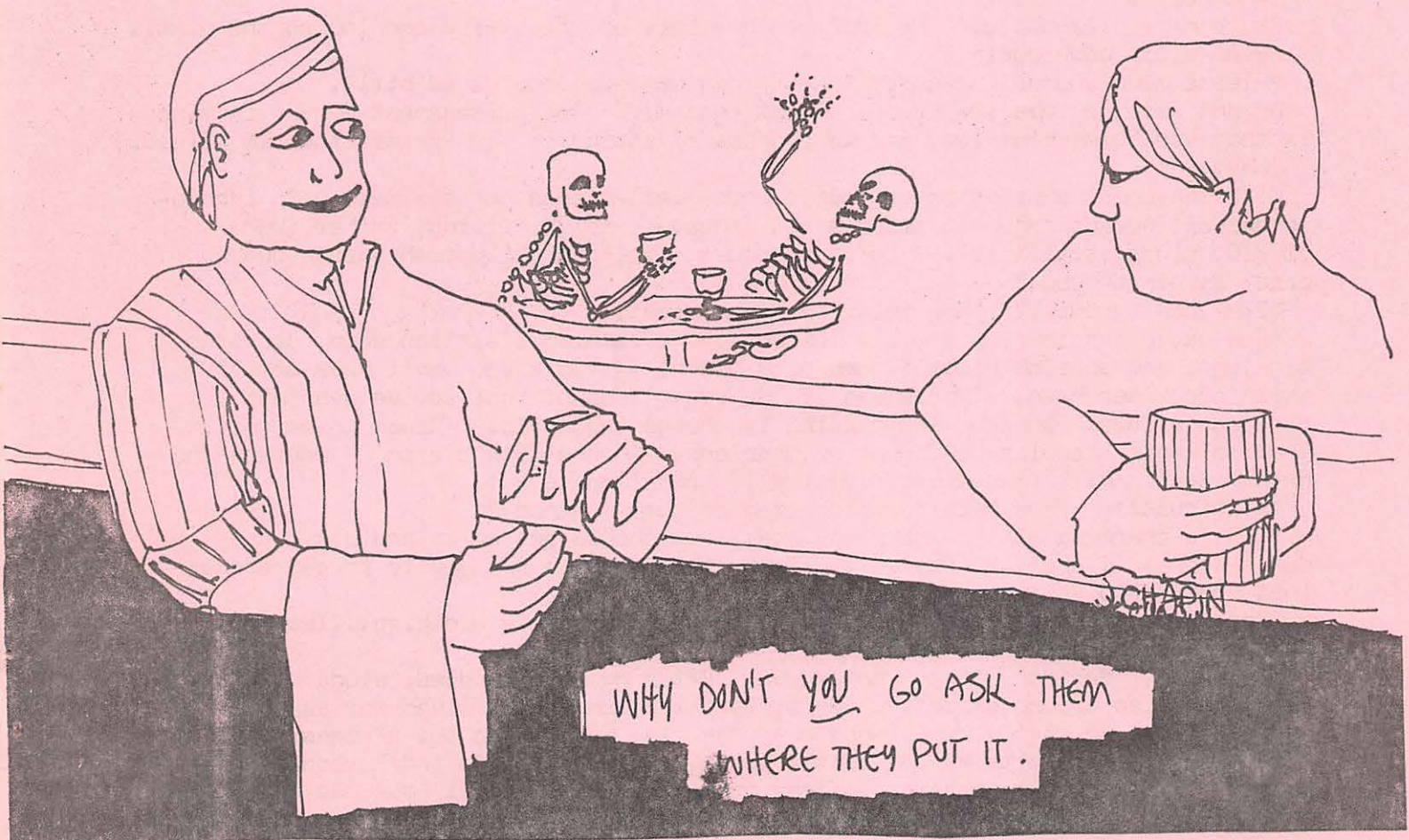
"Several things. A word of explanation first -- I shall try to be brief." He waved his hand at the chair to her left. "Please sit by the fire. I want you to be comfortable."

"The only place I'm going is out of here."

"Very well. I see we must have a demonstration, though I had hoped to begin our relationship on friendlier terms." He pointed at a small silver case attached to his belt. "This is a radio transmitter. It remains on so long as my heart beats, or until I choose to stop it. Should I die, you could not reactivate the transmitter without knowing the combination that would allow you to open the case. It is a rather weak unit -- with a simple receiver its range is about ten meters -- say from where I am to the door behind you." Sarah glanced at the thick oaken door, which was half open. "Now if I step back..." He backed up

several paces. A sound of heavy footsteps came from behind the door, and a scaly clawed appendage, chest-high, appeared. Sarah drew a quick breath and dashed behind the table, and a six-foot creature, seemingly clad in metallic-blue chain mail, strode through the doorway, its rows of dagger-like teeth gleaming as it snarled. Its long tail swung back and forth, knocking the door, and its short arms, long snout, and blood-red eyes gave it a remarkable resemblance to some of the dragons in the heraldic symbols behind it.

Durant returned to his former position and the monster fled. "Fascinating creature, is he not? I suppose you heard of the thefts from the London zoo. He enjoys being free, but he isn't, really. He and his fellows -- I have many, believe me -- have a miniature receiver implanted in their skin. This triggers an electrode in a pain nerve. Now you see how I control this castle -- and why you will do as I say. Now sit. Please." She obeyed, slowly. Durant began pacing the room. "You have taken being kidnapped very well. I expected you would -- I did not choose you at random, by any means. But kidnapping would reduce most people today to quivering masses of jelly -- and it's only logical that it should, for there are very few people in this world who could kidnap, EVEN IF IT BECAME NECESSARY, and even fewer who could mount such an enterprise as I have. I know of no one, in fact, besides, myself. Few people can do anything of significance these days. That reptile's home planet -- only twelve light years away, and since the Plague no one's even thought of returning, let alone making new explorations. Why? Why are people content with zoos? Why are people content with the air-conditioned bubbles that pass for cities?" He was back at the table now, and slammed his fist on it. "I believe that the basic genetic complement of our species has deteriorated ever since the weak could use the physical and intellectual endowments of the strong to survive and reproduce. Now I do not advocate



a return to natural selection -- only a carefully controlled, highly scientific program of selective breeding. It will take centuries, of course, even millenia, for the project to reach fruition. But I, acting entirely alone, have taken the necessary first steps to return the human race to the level it attained in the past. I have...but come, let me show you." He pulled back a tapestry and slid aside a panel, motioning to her to descend a narrow stone stairway that wound down into the darkness. She obeyed, but halted on the third step and waited until Durant flicked on the lights.

The room at the base of the stairs was cold and damp, and it contained a vast amount of machinery, plumbing, stainless steel tanks, and large interconnected chambers. On the panel just in front of Durant were a large number of pilot lights and meters; he inspected them carefully. "Everything seems to be in order. And would you believe that at the heart of this equipment, behind many layers of insulation, is, at the temperature of liquid nitrogen, the future of the human race?"

"No, I wouldn't," answered Sarah curtly. Durant's jaw dropped and he gaped at her for a moment, then regained his composure.

"No? The DNA of the best men of our time is in there."

"How'd you manage that?"

"I requested sperm samples for my genetic research. Everyone was very flattered. To get eggs, unfortunately, I had to be content with cadavers. You've no idea how much time I spent checking family trees."

"So you're a grave robber too?"

"Heavens no. Decay sets in far too quickly. No, I was reduced to looting hospital freezer rooms."

"I gather you yourself are participating in this noble experiment?"

"Naturally. I haven't done any fertilizations yet, though; the equipment for the embryos isn't quite ready."

"And how do I fit in?"

"Much more pleasantly." He followed her back up the stairs and locked the panel.

"Please sit down again."

"Please make yourself clear." She folded her arms and stood still.

Durant shrugged his shoulders. "Suit yourself. The arrangement I have in mind is that you be my mistress, and we produce offspring IN VIVO rather than IN VITRIO."

"What?"

With the usual expression of people whose well-turned phrases meet with incomprehension, Durant began to twiddle his fingers. "VIVO, living, rather than VITRIO, glass, artificial. You're a robust girl, and childbirth should put no great strain on you."

"If I don't comply?" She returned to her seat.

"One way or another, you will. Besides," he remarked, sitting down, crossing his legs, and pouring himself some more claret -- "Sure you won't have some?" Sarah shook her head. "Where was I? Oh yes. I doubt that you've ever met a real man before. Someone who's going to change the world. Though to be sure, that no longer requires a Caesar or Napoleon. Anyone with a gram of courage and determination will find himself virtually compelled to act."

"Particularly if he hasn't a microgram of common sense."

"What a charming wit you have, my dear. We should get on splendidly. And don't worry; I shall be patient. It may take a while for you to forget about that London fop you've been hanging around with."

"Yes, he does have a most distressing taste for archaic clothing...leather jackets, boots..."

"Tsk, tsch. Besides, I have an excuse. After my parents died, along with everybody else around except for my sister, who ran off, I lived for several years by killing cattle, when most everyone else was eating out of cans. And I tanned the skins with my own little hands. When I go into the Sorbonne, of course, I picked up a number of better products. But I still have one of my old outfits upstairs, which I will be happy to show you, just to prove I'm not a lot

of hot air."

"Volcanoes are fond of proving that also. You seem to be equally constructive."

Durant slapped his thighs. "But what a great analogy! Rolling right over the decadent Pompeii's of this world, and leaving fertile new land in their place." He was wide-eyed and not a little intoxicated.

"Graveyards are usually fertile. But I'd choose daffodils over supermen any day."

"I see that you follow the masses in your lack of concern for the future."

"Masses of what? And future of whom? It seems to me we're entering the happiest period of human history. We're in harmony with nature for the first time."

"Feeble romantic! Don't you know decadence when you see it?" Sarah looked around at the castle furnishings and tried unsuccessfully to suppress a very girlish giggle. "Funny, is it?" We shall see, my dear; we shall see indeed. Within a few years I shall have the finest children in the world, and when they reach maturity the world will find out who is decadent." He calmed down somewhat and ran his hand over a portion of the stonework between two tapestries. "Decadence is the inability to do anything of lasting value. There's not a man alive who could do a masonry job like this. Even with machines to do all the heavy work. And this was done with pure sweat..."

"I always thought they used mortar."

"...and it's lasted eight hundred years."

"This place is that old?"

Durant nodded, and poured himself yet another glass of claret. "Built by Bartolomeo Armandi, one of the greatest of medieval alchemists." He turned to stare at her. "What do you think of alchemy, my dear?"

"A rather noble pursuit. If a trifle mercenary."

"Ah yes. But the great ones didn't care about gold; it was the challenge that they sought. I regard myself as the only heir to that proud tradition -- DOING something with science rather than carrying on an unending search for trivial details. And the alchemists were wrong -- it is in the biological sciences, not the physical, that the real power to alter the human situation lies."

"I agree. Wasn't Frankenstein written in Switzerland?"

Durant frowned briefly, then grinned. "My, but for a farm girl you're surprisingly well read."

"I was a bookworm even before my parents died. After I was on my own there was little else to do."

"We should complement each other quite nicely; I know as little of the humanities as you must of science."

"Perhaps if your education hadn't been so narrow you wouldn't have started this idiotic project."

"Idiotic? Did you ever read of Alexander the Great?"

"Yes. From him to you is like going from alchemy to Frankenstein. Alexander seems very noble now; Caesar less so, Napoleon less still, Hitler not at all, and you downright ridiculous."

Durant became genuinely angry for the first time, and stomped about the room in a drunken rage, eyes on the floor, hands clenched behind his back, seemingly mad not so much at her as at the world. He returned to the table and leaned over it, holding himself up with his arms, his wild eyes aimed unswervingly at Sarah's. "Very well. If you're so clever, then suppose you tell me why there are almost no more scientists at all."

Sarah was cool. "There's more knowledge than anyone could ever handle in any good library."

"No more artists or writers worth mentioning."

"On a percentage basis, there shouldn't be. But there are."

"Subjective degeneracy is all they do."

"Mirroring the age."

"Why won't anyone rise above it? Whatever happened to transcendence?"

"Four billion corpses."

"Deadwood. We SHOULD be entering a new golden age."

"By most people's standards, we are."

"Vulgar materialism! And surely YOU don't believe that."

Sarah shrugged her shoulders. "I love my farm and my neighbors. I can't imagine being happier in any other time."

"Not Elizabethan England?"

"No. I can see Shakespeare. They couldn't see Shaw."

"Always the past!"

"You expect that in a decade we should equal the best of the last twenty-five hundred years?"

"No. But I wish people would TRY. Our parents were part of the last Faustian generation; had it not been for that damned virus, they would have conquered the galaxy. Now...No Byrons. No astronauts. Locked to earth in body as well as spirit." His manner had become very mournful. He drained his glass and once again uncorked the decanter.

"Five years of Plague and you expect people to get enthused about playing pioneer in another ten?"

"Damn it, they should. Thanks to the Plague research, every virus disease down to the common cold is out of our lives forever. People are assured of living a century. Instead, they insist on dying, usually in a lot less time."

"After the terrors and struggle of those five years, people have earned the right to a little play."

"Play? You call the vegetable existence our inheritors are ushering in PLAY? And why must such tremendous cooperation and energy be aroused only in times of war or catastrophe? Why not continuously?"

"Because people get tired. And security was what they were fighting for anyway. But cheer up. You may be just the threat to pull everybody together again."

"There's nobody worth pulling together. Believe me, I've tried." He sank wearily into his chair, his eyes again on the floor. "Tried to get more people to have children. Tried to get Europe and America to take over the world, like Alexander, and spread civilization once again. Tried to get people interested in using the spaceships you see orbiting overhead at night. Tried to get people to stop using the last generation's buildings, the last generation's helicopters, the last generation's wine, the last generation's creativity, the last generation's EVERYTHING. Tried to get people to stop the plunge into a new and permanent Dark Ages, and start living like human beings and DOING something."

"The man who would be king."

"Better that than whimper like everyone else. And I don't want to be. I wouldn't, if I weren't the only one with any initiative. But I am. And the small population's no excuse, though everybody thinks it is. Athens, Rome, Paris ...they all had fewer people than we do, and almost all their people were engaged in manual labor. We don't HAVE to go the way of the dinosaurs. But try to talk to the government. Worse still, try to talk to one of the new aristocrats. God, but I hate those people. Like talking to a brick wall. And there's so little I can do...It's doing bad things to my mind." After a while he jerked his head up to find Sarah gazing at him sorrowfully. A thunderclap filled the silence. "It promises to be a long and dreary night, my dear." He spoke very groggily. "So while you are thinking things over, might we be entertained? I brought some of your music along; I myself am only a ama...only an amateur." Without a word, Sarah rose and walked slowly over to the harpsichord.

A man, dressed in black from head to toe, ran up the steps of the hotel, taking them four at a time, and eliciting puzzled stares from the guests he passed. He

crossed the lobby to the reception desk without slackening his pace, and, panting heavily, asked the attendant to direct him to the stables. A man who had been reading a newspaper overheard his question and sauntered over to the desk. "If you just got here I wouldn't recommend riding right away. I tried it as soon as I arrived and didn't feel right for days. It was the first time I'd been in the open air for, let's see, almost a year." The man in black shook his head, mumbled something, the looked up at the attendant.

"It's...a...monsieur's decision, entirely."

"Good. I need the finest trail horse you've got, immediately."

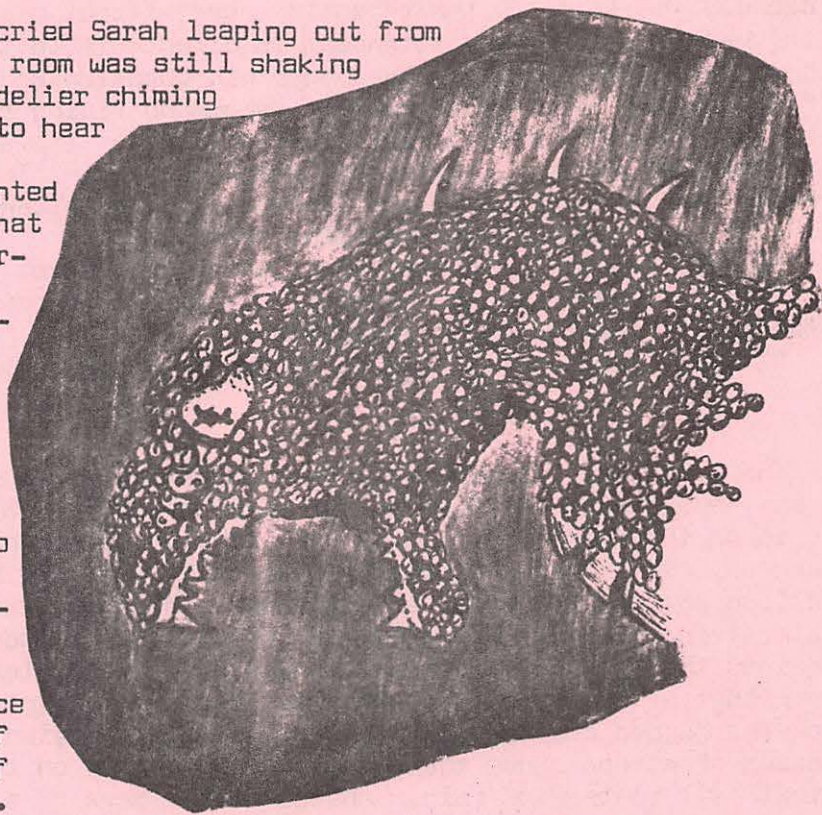
"But it's seven in the evening. There's a thunderstorm brewing. You can't be serious!" the bystander exclaimed.

"I said immediately. And don't you two look at me like I was a madman."

The trail was illuminated with considerable frequency by the lightning, but the thunder that followed often caused the horse to rear up, and only a firm grip on the reins kept him on the path, which was narrow and rock strewn. They had covered fifteen kilometers before the rain had begun. Now they were travelling against the wind, and it blew rain in the faces of the stallion and rider almost incessantly, bringing them nearly to a standstill. But eventually they gained the crest of the ridge, and a brief but intense flash froze their motion and that of the lashing pines about them, revealing the whole awesome panorama of the jagged countryside. Mountains with dizzyingly steep slopes towered hundreds of meters above them on either side, and on their barren peaks it was snow that fell instead of rain. Ahead, at the base of a wide valley bounded by craggy escarpments, to which a few gnarled firs managed to cling, lay a thickly wooded plateau, beyond which only blackness was visible. A castle, its high and pointed turrets silhouetted by the lightning, lay on the very edge of the plateau; the forest had been cleared for a short distance around it. A sustained roar from that direction gave evidence that the raging steam which swept past the castle became a cataract as it reached the end of the plateau; the castle was evidently perched atop a cliff.

The man turned his horse around and backtracked a short distance, drew a Japanese samurai sword from its scabbard, sidemounted, and tied the horse to a tree. After climbing to the top of the ridge he began, cautiously, to make his way down to the plateau, stopping often and seeming, between bursts of thunder, to be listening intently for something. As he approached the castle, he slowed to a silent, measured walk, and held his sword parallel with his back, his hands behind his neck. Suddenly the sound of a massive animal running at full speed sprang up on his left. He wheeled around and took a firm stance; a far-off flash of lightning afforded a dim glimpse of a head full of teeth and two claws held high, the sword met skull in the darkness with a hideous splintering sound. He sprinted now to the castle's entrance, sword positioned as before. At the very brink of the moat he thrust his weapon into the ground and attempted to use a walkie-talkie; a moment of pure static and he abandoned the device, just in time to grab his sword and dispatch a second dragon as he had the first. Ready with a small black sphere in one hand and a pistol-shaped rope gun in the other, he flattened himself on the ground, slid aside a cover and flicked a switch on the sphere, and lobbed it at the raised drawbridge, shielding his head with his arms as the explosion sent wood fragments whipping through the air. A hole had been blown through both the drawbridge and the steel door behind it; the man fired the rope gun into the remnants of the top of the door frame, then swung across the moat, pulling himself up as he did so, and disappearing into the darkness of the castle interior.

"What the hell was that," cried Sarah leaping out from behind the harpsichord. The room was still shaking from the explosion, the chandelier chiming noisily. Durant seemed not to hear her and, on standing, stared dumbfounded at a black-garmented figure, its raincoat open, that had just appeared in the doorway opposite that through which the dragon had come before, and now stood with its back to the wall. The figure was covered with dirt and blood; its face was charcoaled; water streaming down from its bare head washed some of the blood onto the floor. One hand held an automatic pistol of much larger caliber. At length Durant acquired a semblance of pure, if unsteady, nonchalance and poured himself a glass of wine. Holding it in front of him, he toasted the intruder.



"Death, I presume?" The sound of two helicopters was heard outside.

"If you wish. Put your hands up. Sarah, get down and stay down." Durant obeyed, but only after pressing a button on the case attached to his belt.

"Sarah, what's that thing..." The entrance of a dragon cut short Rexford's question. He fired a single shot from the heavier pistol; the explosive bullet nearly decapitated the creature, and it fell with a sickening crunch on the couch. Durant had retreated to the harpsichord and was fumbling with the combination on the transmitter case. A second dragon met a similarly violent death. Rexford ambled over to a now dazed Durant and motioned with his automatic to the chair. As Durant made his crooked way, a dozen soldiers hurried into the room, bearing grenade launchers, automatic rifles, and tranquilizer guns. Rexford directed them to search the building and they dispersed, except for two who began frisking Durant. Sarah strode up to the vacant-eyed man and said, "John is hardly your run-of-the-mill London fop, by the way. And you just tried to kill one of the kind of people you value so highly. Not to mention myself." Rexford came over and inquired as to her health. "I'm all right, but you...!" He threw off his raincoat and embraced her.

"Dragon blood. I'm a little cold, but otherwise OK."

"How'd you ever find out..."

"Some pilot spotted the dragons. We were debating what to do when you disappeared. I'd have gotten here sooner but I wanted to surprise him."

"Yeah. Especially since I had to kill a couple of dragons quietly. And YOU thought my samurai practice was a waste of time."

"You win. Well, follow me. I have something to show you." She obtained Durant's keys from one of the soldiers and led John behind the tapestry and down to the cellar. "He's a lunatic, but rather pitiful, too. And he wanted me to be his mistress."

"Can't be all THAT crazy." They contemplated the machinery.

"How'd he get all this stuff, anyway?"

"They use it for growing embryos. For replacement organs. Durant said he wanted to do some experiments, and the government does everything it can to encourage science...From the amount of equipment he got, he must have been planning on

growing twenty of them at a time. A new start for the human race...a parentless bunch of neurotic children."

"Great. It's been an interesting day, in many ways. I've met two fascinating people."

"I'm one?" She nodded. "I don't do this kind of thing often, but sometimes I have to...When Durant was still a more-or-less respected biologist he wrote an essay in which he called the government "a tribe of eunuchs." He was wrong...We were both orphans, you know, like you."

"How come you and I didn't turn out like he did?"

"Who knows? Or is running a farm by yourself that much different from trying to take over the world? Both very anti-social."

"You didn't seem to think so."

"Because I'm antisocial too. Playing secret agent when nobody gives a bloody damn about anything? No. We're the last of a species, you and me and the madman upstairs. Everybody else..." He shook his head. "And the next generation's even worse. The newest drug and the latest electronic thrill-show are all they care about. It'll be nice, though -- no wars, no crime, nothing but a dreary sort of fun. And absolute security."

"They'll get bored."

"No. Imagine a decadent Rome going straight into the Dark Ages, with no monasteries, no Constantinople, no Crusades...Durant has been pushing very hard for crusades, you know, of any sort...Face it. Courage, ambition...all dying. The human race, in terms of anything worthwhile, is doomed."

"I doubt that."

"You do? Why, those soldiers are more scared than you are. Hmmm. You're taking it so calmly, maybe we should act as a team from now on."

"Love to."

"But I'm afraid there won't be much to do. My whole bureau is on the verge of semi-retirement; I can spend more time at the farm."

"Why?"

"Because there are no Durants left. And there won't be anymore, either." He scanned the panel and flipped three switches. The hum of the machinery ceased, leaving a dead silence. John unlatched the low, decaying, Gothic-arch-shaped door to his left and groped around for a light switch. There was none.

"Where are we going now?"

"There's something I have to look for. Though maybe it'd be better for our egos, if we and Durant really are birds of a feather, if we found nothing." He produced a pocket flashlight and they went in.

The tunnel was cold and dank, in places covered with mold and slime. John took Sarah by the arm. "The air's very foul; maybe you'd better wait outside."

"Come on. And give me your automatic."

"No."

"I've killed many a fox, dear John."

"Not with a pistol. And a nine millimeter'll only tickle a dragon." They continued, being careful not to slip on the damp and fungoid floor.

"Let me take the flashlight, at least. God, but I wish I was wearing a jumpsuit instead of this dress." At the end of the passageway Sarah played the light over the recesses of the dungeon-like chamber ahead, and swore religiously under her breath. "Was this what you were looking for?"

"No." The room was littered with human bones and bits of black plastic bags. Putrifying flesh clung in scraps to some of the bones, few of which were intact. Fragments from a number of skulls lay scattered about, but no complete one could be seen. Large reptilian footprints were ubiquitous. Holding his nose, John made a quick search of the chamber, then followed Sarah back to the main floor, where he went straight to Durant. The biologist was a little clearer-headed now, the soldiers having moved the claret to the other end of the table. "For your

sake, I hope all those bones are from the cadavers you stole."

"Why Mr...REXFORD, isn't it? I'm surprised at you. I'm not...I'm not EVIL, you know. And dragons must eat like the rest of us."

"Then where is she?"

"Find her yourself." He folded his arms and refused to speak further.

By this time all the soldiers had returned, and reported finding nothing of interest beyond two dragons, now tranquilized. "Maybe we should give Durant to the zoo along with them," suggested the sergeant.

"Not a bad idea. Are you sure you've checked everywhere?"

"Couldn't find an entrance to the south turret. It might be just for show, but the roof's locked, too..."

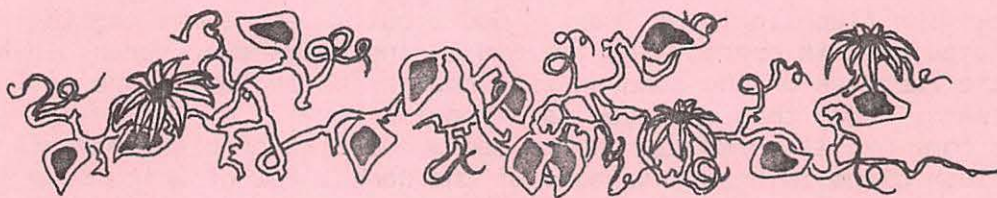
"Sarah has the keys. Haul Durant and the dragons into the 'copters, and we'll be along in a few minutes."

As the soldiers ushered Durant out, he became more communicative. "Hell, a man used to bury most of his children and a few wives as well. Diseases were never heard of...And the Renaissance recovered from THEIR plagues. Maybe what we need is a stronger military. How would you men like to..."

John led the way up the marble stairs, still carrying his large-caliber pistol. A wooden ladder in a third-floor storeroom went up to the trap door; Sarah handed John the keys, and hoisted herself up onto the roof after him, refusing his offer of assistance. The lightening had stopped; after walking to the parapet they could barely make out, by the weak moonlight, the loud waterfall directly beneath the turret towards which they now headed. The rain continued indiminished, and both of them were quickly soaked, but neither seemed to mind.

The turret hung over the side of the castle, and had only deep slits for windows. The door was locked, and John had some difficulty finding the proper key in the rain and near-darkness. Sarah held the flashlight while he yanked open the wooden door, which had a small barred opening at eye-level.

What the flashlight revealed was a tangle of dirty, matted blond hair, two long, thin arms that were milk-white in the places the grime of the cell hadn't covered, and two legs, like the arms in appearance and having in addition dried blood encrusting the inside of the thighs. The girl seemed to have been awakened by the creak of the opening door, and with John's help was able to stand. He escorted her out onto the roof, while Sarah illuminated the way to the trap door. The girl happened to look up at this point, and the parapet caught her eye. She sprang free of John's hold, her unexpected strength taking both of her rescuers by surprise, and had one foot in a low section of the parapet and was swinging the other up to the top when Sarah grabbed her by the waist and pulled her down. The rain had washed off most of the dirt and she stood in the moonlight, lividly naked, white and glisteningly wet, shivering as they all were. John and Sarah were silent; the rain and the waterfall were noisy, but both were drowned out by the girl's cries: "Liberez-moi! Je veux mourir!"



SOMEWHAT MEANINGFUL ANSWERS TO TRIVIA QUIZ

1. She hid the Bell with a blot, she did,
But she fell in love with an hominid.
The hominid was Lord Jestocost and she was, of course,
C'mell. Together they plotted with E Telli Kelli to
save the underpeople. All by C. Smith.
2. Economics, mostly. As he was a 60 lb. midget, his cap-
sule was half again smaller than it would have had to be
for a normal spacer. From the SPACE MERCHANTS, by Pohl
and Kornbluth.
3. The Great Lorenzo, in DOUBLE STAR. He did it to change
Dak's spacer's stride as part of a disguise, when they
needed to go incognito.
4. If one is to believe their respective creators, they are
all innately lucky.
5. Sisu means 'courage' or 'determination', or something
like that anyway, in present day Finnish.
6. Eating meat, which contained proteins converted Iroedh
from a hive warrior into a creature of voluptuous prop-
ortions, at least by Earthly standards. After her hor-
mones started flowing, she became a rogue queen, from
the book of the same name by L. Sprague DeCamp.
7. There was a stone wall just two inches over the Bauredel
border, and the officials made it a habit to banish peo-
ple over this borderline forcibly, with a concrete piston.
Very few condemned men indeed survived such treatment.
8. The relevant formula here is $\frac{2GMm}{r^3} r = \frac{d(\text{Force})}{d(\text{radius})}$, where $G = 1$
earth gravity, big and little m are the masses of the star and
spaceship respectively, and big and little r are the distances
between the centers of mass and the distance over which the tid-
al force will act, also respectively. The force works out to ma-
ny millions of G's per foot, enough to kill our hero no matter
what.
9. Sam was otherwise known as 'Lord of Light,' and he put slugs in
the prayer tigers.
10. Schon hid inside of Ivo. So he was Ivo, or at least Ivo was part
of him, or something of that nature. But he did leave Ivo some
of his powers, which is how Ivo won the SDSP in a sprouts contest.
SDSP was a nickname of the Macroscope, from which Piers Anthony's
book takes its name.

EPICLAM

eat hot lead,
demon spawn!

BLEK. WHO WANTS TO
EAT HOT LEAD WHEN
THEY CAN HAVE SPOCK'S
EARS POTATO COOKIES?
YUM.

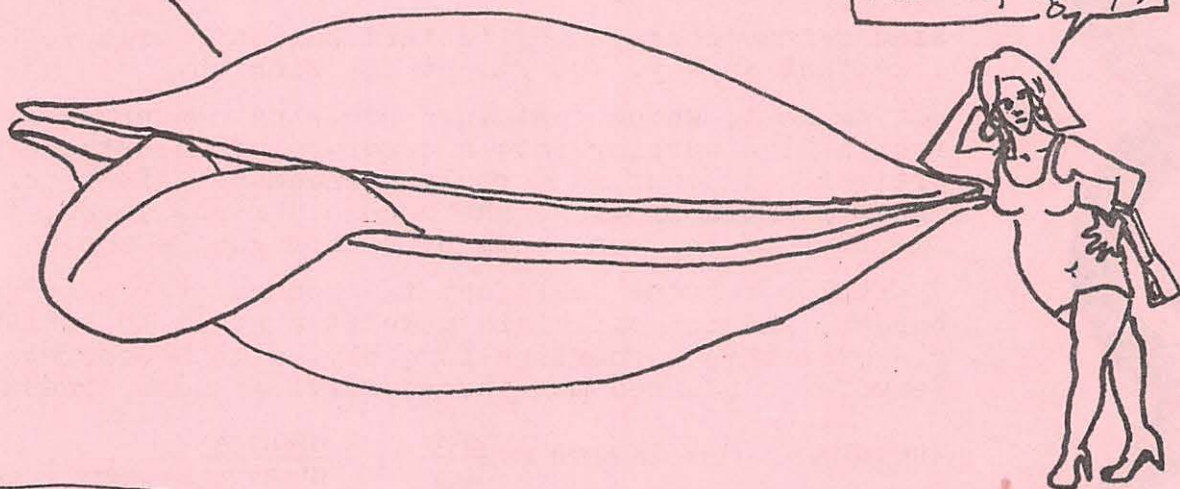
you may not like to believe this
but this is an outline for a
Spock's Ear Cookie Cutter.
Send for the recipe.
You'll want it.

4×10^8 m/sec / what??!

DON'T YOU MEAN HOW?

Bellies full?

So how's the
rain on the
rhubarb, big boy?



^{be}
MAY you editors should
have left this page blank?

REAL
SOON
NOW!

- and now folks, here's something we hope
you'll really like -- the last page!

☺)))

It done so lets go get drunk!

CONTRARY TO POPULAR belief, that clam
is not named audrey, Jr.

That's all, folks? What? You
didn't like it? Well, only your contributions
can improve it, so send material to Betelguere,
c/o U. of Mass, RSO Box #352, Amherst Mass 01002.
Or come on down to the club. you'll be welcome.

WORD FROM THE
TYPIST - #%*!!\$#@?#

yeth
(*send gift to
our crumpled
fingers fund!)

84

NO, OF COURSE WE'RE NOT FOR
REAL. WHATEVER GAVE YOU
THAT IDEA?



ALLEN ACNE
OF THE
SPACE PATROL

