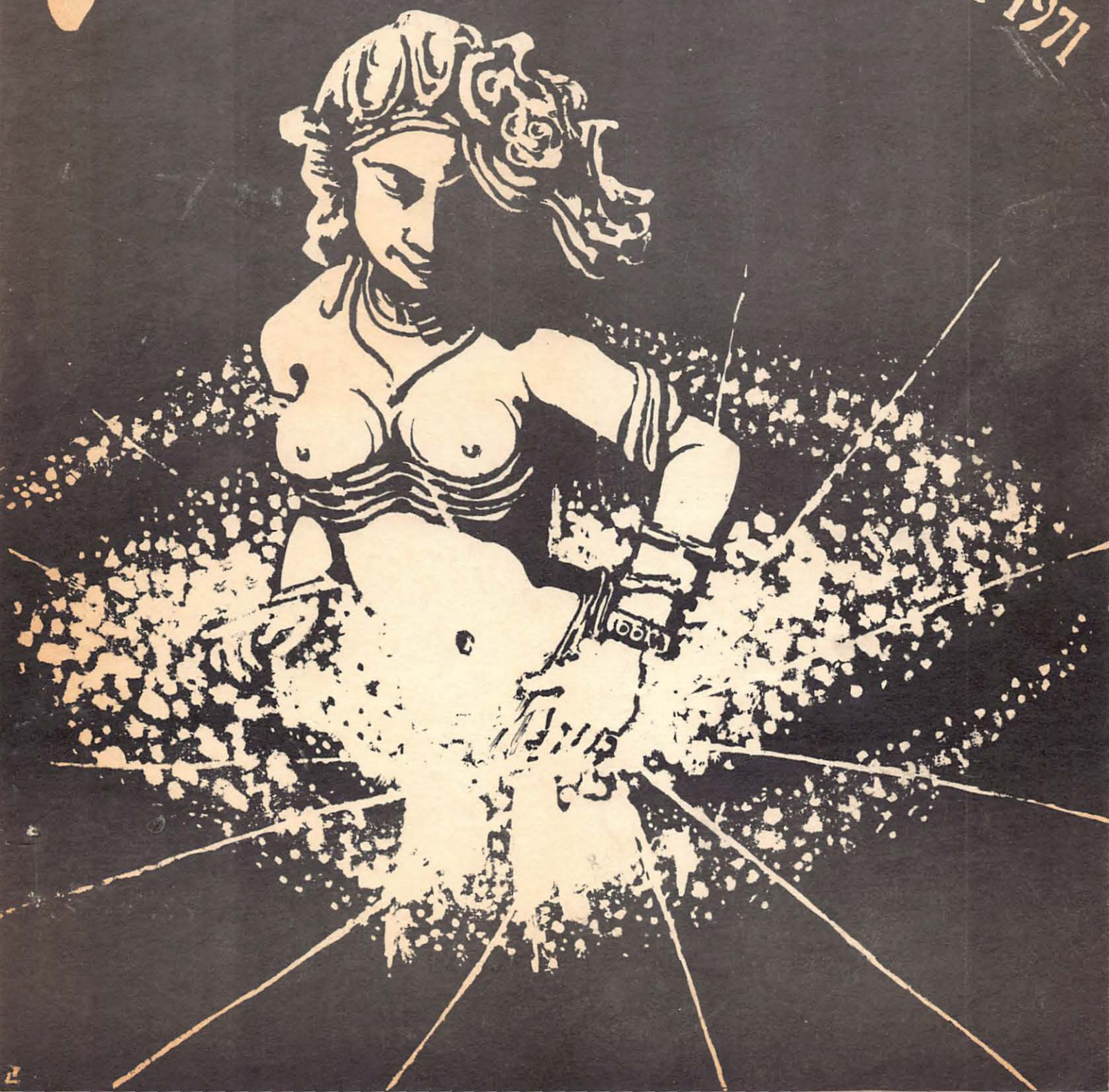


PETELGUESSE

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS • FALL 1971



BETELGEUSE

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Betelgeuse, Volume IV, No. 2, Whole No. 7, Fall 1971. Published semi-annually by the University of Massachusetts Science Fiction Society at 50¢ a copy. Annual subscription \$1.00. All correspondence should be addressed to: UMass Science Fiction Society, R30 #352, University of Mass., Amherst, Mass. 01002. Printed by University Duplicating Service, Whitmore Building.

EDITORIAL

You now have the pleasure of holding in your hands the seventh issue of the UMass Science Fiction Society's magazine. The title this time around is Betelgeuse, proving only that a permanent name for our publication can not be settled on, since the magazine was originally called Zobee, and, before the present change, Grok.

Whatever the title, though, our magazine has been steadily improving in quality with each issue. The present issue is the best yet, and hopefully our next issue will be even better. Betelgeuse will be appearing on a more regular basis than has been the case with our publications in the past.

Most of the content of Betelgeuse is fictional, which is a distinction that can be claimed when comparing Betelgeuse to other amateur publications. We don't claim that we put out the best fanzine, but the material found within is certainly of a reasonably high quality.

Because of its proximity, we are certainly aware of the presence and activities of MITSFS, which lays claim to the largest library of science fiction in the country. Yet, despite this, and its large membership, MITSFS puts out a regular publication known as The Twilight Zine which is certainly not a very fitting tribute to an organization with the prestige and reknown of MITSFS. As a matter of fact, I have personally wondered how they can continue to put out regularly a fanzine which is primarily a piece of junk. It seems to me that MITSFS could, and should, do a much better job than they are doing at present in the field of amateur publication. Without being immodest, I can say, in all honesty, that UMassSFS, with a comparatively small membership of some fifty-five individuals, does a superior job, in comparison to MITSFS, with its publication--a fact that ought to cause some red faces around MITSFS. Hopefully, things will change in the near future. MITSFS is capable of far better than The Twilight Zine.

Turning now to the present issue of Betelgeuse: Because of the necessity of preparing the issue over the summer, it was a more difficult task than normally. My co-editor, Mark Leeper, was away in the Midwest for the summer doing research, and was thus unable to contribute any work beyond the selection of stories. As for myself, I will admit to being somewhat negligent in my own duties as co-editor. I haven't been able to put the amount of work I should (and would) have into Betelgeuse primarily because of its summer preparation.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Evelyn Chimelis, who worked long and hard in helping prepare Betelgeuse for publication, and is personally responsible for typing or re-typing the entire issue. Along with Evelyn, I would like to thank Matthew Zimet, our art editor, and artist supreme, who worked with Evelyn in getting Betelgeuse together. Finally, I would like to thank all of our contributors. Hopefully, they will continue to furnish us with good material for our future issues.

--David E. Bara

(The opinions expressed above are solely those of the editor and in no way express official Society policy. --Evelyn Chimelis and Matthew Zimet)

STRANGE ALLIES

by Glenn Blacow

Part I

The aliens plummeted from the sky almost undetected on bright summer day. They did not answer the challenges and they ignored the threats of the defenders of Earth. The missiles erupted from their launching pads in shimmering shoals of death--uselessly, for their nuclear warheads failed to detonate, and they fell back to the surface.

The great ships landed, and from their holds poured forth fighting machines, atmospheric flyers, and hosts of giant soldiers. The invaders began to kill, to burn, and to destroy. The outraged nations of Earth replied with all the stockpiled means of destruction they had so long feared to try upon each other. Missiles, tanks, artillery, aircraft, all of the varied arsenals so inventively thought up, backed by the seemingly endless conscript hordes of an overpopulated Earth, were hurled against the foe. In vain. Only the shattered and decimated remnants of those armies were able to fall back, broken in spirit by the bloody slaughter.

The defeated nations offered abject surrender. By radio, television, written message, and envoy, attempts were made to offer humanity's submission. Crackpots and fanatics of all shades tried to make contact by telepathy, spiritual communication, messages to the dead, heliograph, smoke-signals, and an awesome array of devices. No reply came. At last the truth sank in--the aliens did not care what humanity wanted to do. They had come, not to enslave, but to exterminate. The broken and demoralized armies of humanity began to rally again with a pathetic and hopeless determination that, if they were to die, they would at least try to inflict damage on the foe....

The High Lord Z'zaru stood proudly before the communications desk, listening to the daily report-spool. Over ten feet high he stood, from the tip of his brilliant crimson crest to the end of his wickedly-spiked tail. His entire being radiated arrogant confidence as the spool wound to a close.

"...the northernmost gathering of the softskins on Continent 4 was wiped out by atmospheric fliers of the 133rd and 204th Ground Support Wings. This leaves only one major focus of resistance on the continent. Recommendation on disposal of this?"

Z'zaru flicked a switch with his tentacle tip and dictated into a recorder:

"The mopping up of this particular group should be left to the ground forces. They have had too little use and grow lax! I command!"

"To obey!" came the answer over the intercom. The High Lord's tentacle moved to cut the connection, only to halt as a signal shrilled.

"My Lord!" called the speaker-box.

"I hear!"

"A direct call from the Eternal Palace! From," and here the hiss quavered slightly, "the Most High himself!"

The High Lord swayed with shock, the air whistling from his breathing vents.

Could it be? Had the invasion gone so well that the Emperor would personally commend him? The giant form hastily gained control of itself.

"Connect us!"

"To obey!"

There was a brief swirl of color on the screen overhead, then the awesome visage of U'Rahazan the Most High, Emperor of the Urazzu, appeared on it.

"I speak!" boomed the screen.

"To listen!" The High Lord crouched low, crest flattened and tail waiving in ritual submission.

"Reports of your successes have reached us, Z'zaru. Should they be confirmed by your official account, then rewards will come! Casualties?"

"Ships in operation--two thousand. Lost--none. Regular troops in operation--two millions. Dead--two thousand, one hundred and three. As for your guards...."

"My Zarakai! How have they fared?"

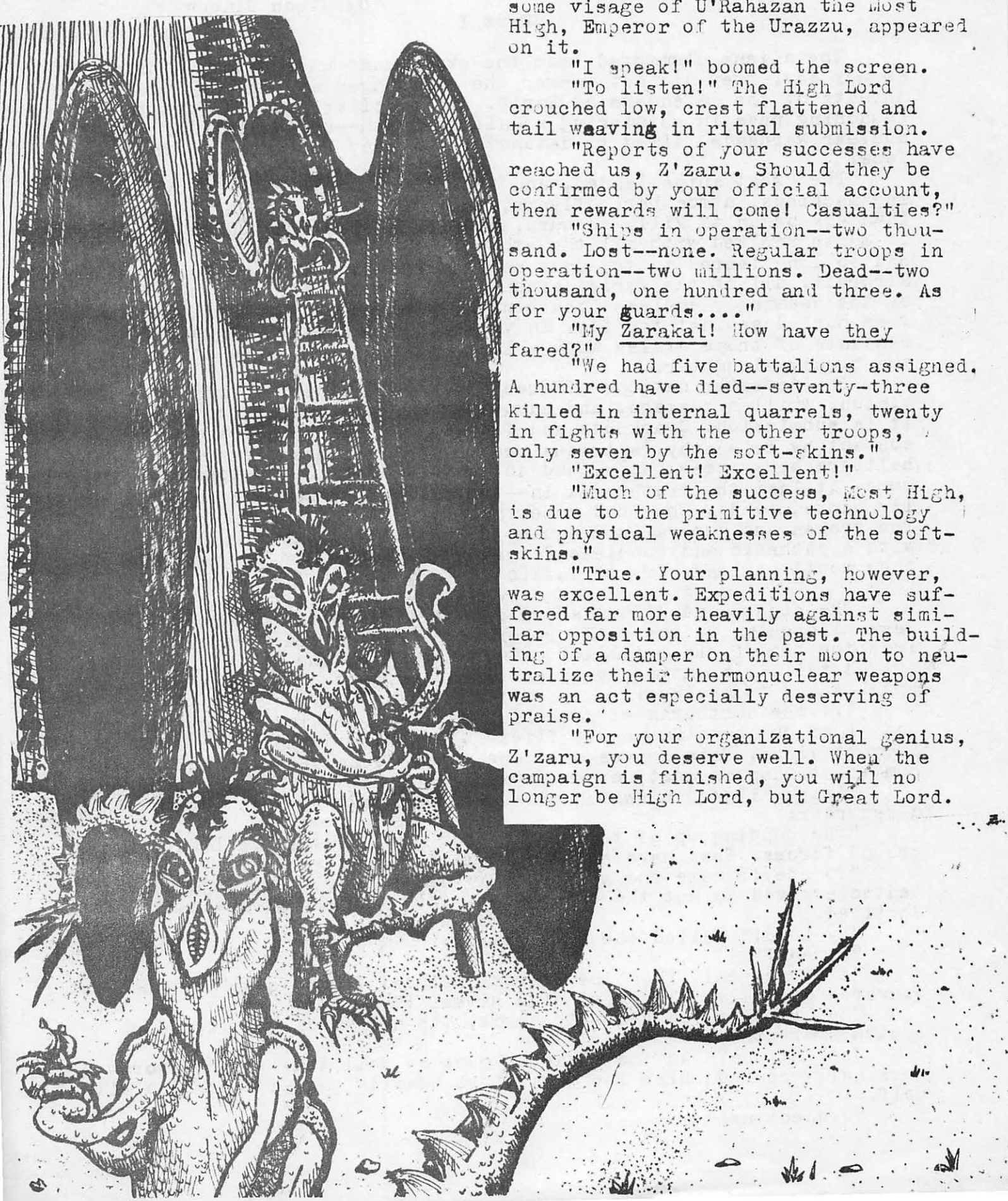
"We had five battalions assigned. A hundred have died--seventy-three killed in internal quarrels, twenty in fights with the other troops, only seven by the soft-skins."

"Excellent! Excellent!"

"Much of the success, Most High, is due to the primitive technology and physical weaknesses of the soft-skins."

"True. Your planning, however, was excellent. Expeditions have suffered far more heavily against similar opposition in the past. The building of a damper on their moon to neutralize their thermonuclear weapons was an act especially deserving of praise."

"For your organizational genius, Z'zaru, you deserve well. When the campaign is finished, you will no longer be High Lord, but Great Lord."



Your lineage shall be enlarged, and a she sent from any stable's hatchery to you."

"Most High One! I am not worthy!" ~~kenned~~ the High Lord.

"Enough! It is my wish! Now tell me of how the plans for colonization go. I command!"

"To Obey! The native factories are being converted by soft-skin ~~skaxes~~ to produce the needed goods for the settlers. As soon as they are finished, the surplus population, over and above breeding stock, will be converted to food. The natives, however, though suitable for food and for amusement, are of little value for sport. Would you recommend seeding the planet with Isu Rhedi captives, Most High?"

"Perhaps. Although I may recommend T'Umnohar instead, as being superior in speed and cunning. Proceed."

"To obey!" The High Lord Z'zaru continued with his detailed report until the Most High One was satisfied.

When the communicator snapped off, he rose slowly to his feet. Great Lord Z'zaru! His lineage expanded! Confused thoughts whirled through his head as he tried to evaluate the news. The dominating one, however, was that he should select some small but suitable island as the site for his stables and hatchery. A silver-hided daughter of the Most High....

A thousand miles away, a man wearing three stars on his sweat-stained shirt collapsed wearily into his chair. He glared at the evaluation report in his hand through red-rimmed eyes, then cursed tiredly and flung it on the desk. A personal energy-shield that nullified high-speed material objects! Something that would stop a bullet in mid-air and deflect most objects with lower velocities. A defense that could stop almost every modern weapon his troops owned.

"Sir?" came a voice from outside the tent.

"Come in, Captain. What's the latest in bad news?"

"Well sir, there's a report from the left-flank command that Third Corps has been destroyed by alien air attack. There's been no report of any survivors."

"That was General Frazer's command, wasn't it? I only met him once. And, of course, what was left of three divisions of men. What else?"

"Our last posts in Indianapolis have reported that the invaders are cleaning out the city. Seems to be another extermination drive." The captain turned another page. "The last of our airplane fuel stocks are gone, General Williams. A request from their commander as to what he should do."

"Considering the losses we were taking every time they went up, it's just as well. Hmm. Tell him to send his men to the supply lines for weapons and then place them in reserve so they'll ~~have~~ have at least a little time to train in. Any good news, Walter?"

The captain made an unsuccessful attempt to smile. "We've found some weapons that will get through their damn screens, sir. Besides the three tank-mounted lasers we've got left, that is."

"What?"

"Captured weapons--about a hundred of those damn ray-guns of theirs. Gas weapons, hand grenades--if they go off within the shield--flame throwers, and just about any missile that travels at less than five hundred feet per second. Besides hand-to-hand combat weapons, of course."

"It would almost be better if we had bows and arrows instead of guns, huh?" mused the general. "How long does Intelligence give us with this information?"

"A month, sir."

"Well, we still have the possibility of getting allies against these invaders, don't we?"

"Yes, sir." The captain's face twisted slightly. "They're here now. I saved that bit of bad news until last. I'd almost prefer getting wiped out to working with Them."

"Really, Walt?"

The captain brushed his trembling arm across his face. "I said almost, sir."

"Send them in, then."

"It is agreed then, General Williams? You will cede to us Europe, and all surviving humans on it?" asked the tall one.

"You have our signatures, don't you?" snapped back the general.

"Very well then. We will attack tonight." A quiver of anticipation ran through the four ambassadors--and the general nearly lost his supper. The four arose and filed out. As usual, cold fear ran down the general's back. It was not the first two who were really the worst, he thought, swallowing the sour taste of vomit. It was the shambling horror of the third that did it. He hastily averted his eyes to the last of the delegates. If it wasn't for her, he might have agreed with Walter that death at the hands of the invaders might have been preferable....

It was a dark night at the Urazzu encampment. All slept, serene in the knowledge that the perimeters were guarded by tireless robot brains programmed to destroy any life form that did not exhibit the unique life-patterns of the Urazzu. All except the lone watch-operator.

Technician A'hurzan drowsed at his board. To think that he should waste hours this way. A relic of antique discipline, useful perhaps against worthy foes, but against these Katani? These soft-skinned whimpering things? His half-asleep mind turned to more pleasant paths. Daring greatly, he thought upon a silver-skinned she he had once seen on U'Razz itself. Such beauty!

...A Beastly gray form scuttled across the ground. It passed through the perimeter--and the unsleeping computer guards failed to trigger their weapons. Only one, set to fire on any moving object, sent a barrage of high-intensity radiation into the object. It failed to stop it, and the mechanical mind triggered warning lights inside the operator's post. A'hurzan, however, dreamed quietly of past ruttings as the thing crept through the door. Only as his scent-tendrils began to react to the stench of decay did he twitch awake....and then it was too late. A long, rubbery arm covered with leprous flesh snaked around his neck (?) and constricted with incredible force. While needle-sharp teeth tore into his flesh. A brief, frenzied struggle and then the torn carcass of the Urazzu was hurled to the floor. Taloned hands reached for the lever that would turn off the defenses.

Shadows began to stir in the darkness outside of camp....

(To be concluded in our next issue)

NOSFERATU

by Mark R. Leeper

Two eyes, red coals, swimming in darkness,
 The fear of the bat, the wolf, and the fire.
 Carpathians know in their heart what the fear is,
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

He came at night with business with Orlock.
 He came through the snow, the muck, and the mire.
 An evil fear reached him from out of the darkness,
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

He came through the dark on Walpurgis Night,
 The night when all evil spirits conspire
 To spread through the world the terror and dread,
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

He had to climb the last mile himself,
 The coachman refused to take him higher.
 For the coachman knew in the castle there dwelt
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

He finally met the evil Count Orlock.
 He heard, so he thought, death angels in choir.
 Orlock carried with him the feeling of evil,
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

His dreams that night were filled with terror;
 He dreamt of blood and the funeral pyre.
 Next morning he knew in his heart that the fear was
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

That day the search for the vampire's coffin.
 He stopped but a second, a moment's respite,
 Suddenly were wolves and bats all around him and
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

He could not fight off the bats and the wolves;
 He was up against some mad devil's ire.
 Though he fought while he could, soon he no longer knew
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

That night he lived again in his coffin.
 Together with Orlock he did conspire
 To spread near and far the cold gray terror,
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

Four eyes, red coals, in a sea full of darkness,
 the fear of the bat, the wolf, and the fire.
 The mountain folk know in their hearts that the fear is
 Nosferatu, the fear of the vampire.

Rennson Slagmyre had never made biscuits from scratch before. He eagerly opened and closed the oven door to check his muffins' progress, noticing but not reacting to the quivering lump of smooth nude dough in the fourth row of the pan.

He opened the door once more but responded this time. He slammed shut the door. Wide-eyed, Rennson grabbed Betty Crocker by her binding and stupidly ripped through the pages in search of an explanation.

"Cmigosh," he screamed, "that thing is **ALIVE!**"

Bumblng, he sat down and rubbed the perspiration off his head, now streaming in little rivulets down his neck, matching the course of his veins. Taking a handful of flour, he proceeded to slap his head and throat until the flour turned to paste. For ten minutes he glared at the oven door until the smoke-filled kitchen encouraged him to turn off the heat. He boldly considered peeping in the door. A three inch crack left ample room for the dough to fly out and crash onto Rennson's spectacles. Paralyzed, Rennson watched the dough roll down his nose and plop onto the cookbook. Then he fainted.

While Rennson dozed, the dough slipped a pseudopod over a page with a recipe for spaghetti. The words dripped off the page like wet decals and oozed into the pod. Suddenly a voice, shrill and weak, with a distinctive whine to it said, "Combine the above ingredients and cook over moderate heat for three hours."

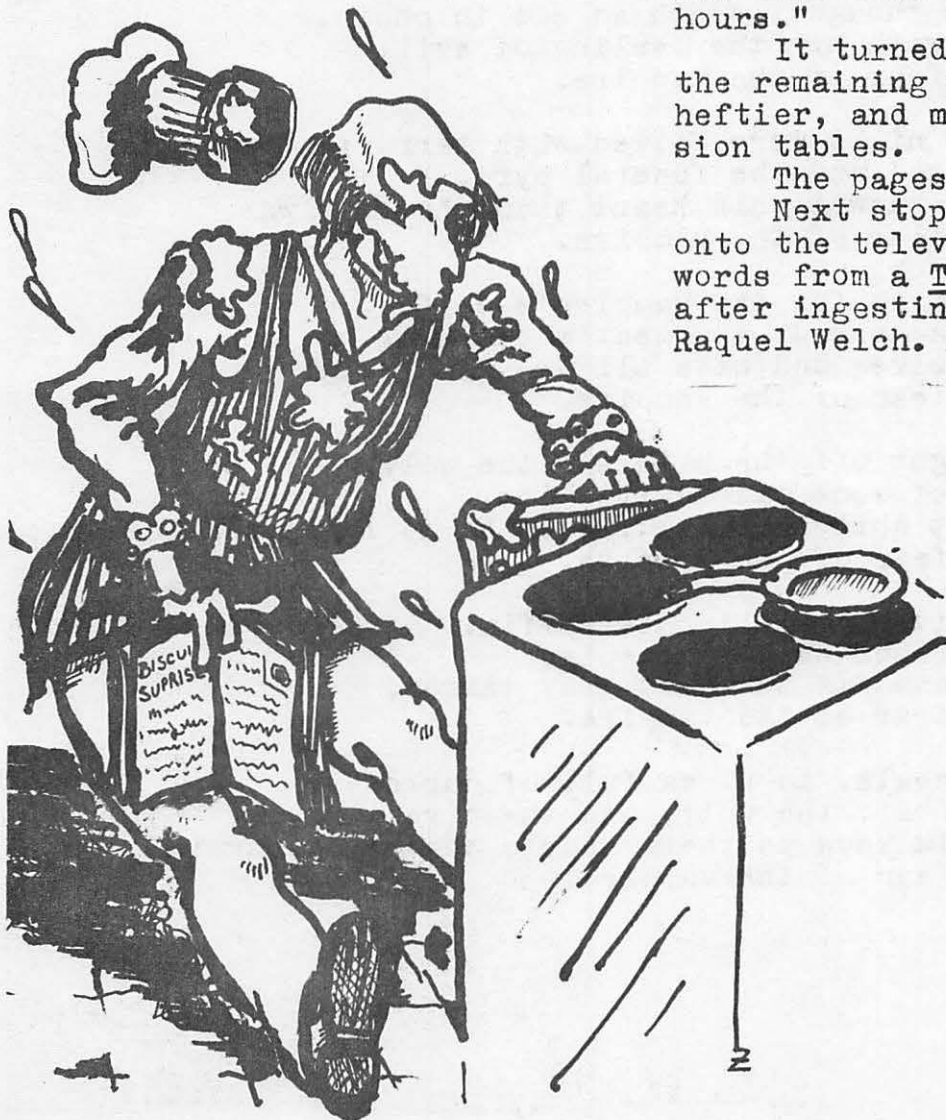
It turned the pages, slid through the remaining pages and waddled off, a bit heftier, and muttering equivalent conversion tables.

The pages of the cookbook were empty. Next stop was the living room. Hopping onto the television stand, it stripped the words from a TV Guide and hideously giggled after ingesting a tasty interview with Raquel Welch. A Popular Mechanics, National Geographic, and A Guide to Better Turkish Museums were respectively swallowed next. Rennson woke up just in time to see the pastry having an orgasm on a Play-boy magazine.

"An extraordinary assignment," the pastry glob whined. "Words! Books! I want MORE BOOKS! Where do you keep them?"

Still shuddering, but with a gust of dauntless energy, Slagmyre squeaked, "U-UPstairs, in the library."

Now that Rennson's initial surprise was fading, he swelled with suicidal courage and tried to begin a conversation with the dough.



"Who are you?" Rennson queried, as he watched his breakfast ripple up to the top and fifth shelf of the reference book section.

"Hymm--Funk and Wagnall's Standard Encyclopedia."

Rennson watched the four inch glob squeeze out of sight behind A-Alpha. The volume moved forward on the shelf about an inch and as he later reported, sounded like the satisfied slurp of a St. Bernard's tongue on the bottom of his supper bowl.

"Who ARE you?" Rennson repeated. "WHAT are you?"

"So much to cover, need more time," the dough spluttered.

At five second intervals the glob penetrated the backs of each volume. The books appeared to breathe as it assimilated their content. The fourth shelf consisted of assorted dictionaries. It gulped down two at once.

"For Chrissakes! What are you doing to my books?" Slagmyre bellowed.

"Stop blubbering and let me finish," in return the dough snarled.

In five minutes Rennson watched the books heave in and out as the dough pulled the words into its flesh. It ate the remaining three walls of words in the same way.

The lump collected itself, rolled onto the center of the rug, and aside from an occasional twitch, remained motionless.

Slagmyre's frenzy was peaking. He reached for what he presumed to be his favorite book, The Quahog Family. (Slagmyre displayed a fondness for clams. He enjoyed digging them, drawing them, and eating them.) The cover was blank. The pages were blank. In his tizzy he yanked ten books from the nature and wildlife section, thumbing jerkily through five volumes of clear white paper before slinking to the floor. He actually wept over the loss of his brand new complete goldleafed set of Shakespeare's works.

"The human race--it's, it's...doomed--DOOMED--by a goddam dollop of dough!" Rennson cried, his head swaying in grief and disbelief.

"You BOOKRAPER!"

"You're the bastion of stupidity. I told you to let me finish the books, didn't I?" The dough asserted itself and formed an amorphous pseudopod to point in Slagmyre's direction. In just three hours it had grown from a two inch mum muffin to a twelve inch glib glob.

"Relax tootsie, the implications are always immense in this type of situation...That's your problem, but if--"

"Well what's your name? You must have a name. If you are to be around here awhile, let's get acquainted. Hi there, my name is--"

"Gracious, I know who you are," the dough wheezed. "Rennson Hassel Slagmyre III, 36, single, sole inheritor of your Uncle Julian Emil Slagmyre's 700,000 dollar estate, here in Fletcher, Wyoming. As a useless freelance jigsaw puzzle expert you are starving to death, forcing you to auction off some furniture. There's more from a diary I have absorbed, but why must I take a name at all? Although you can call me Rose, ho-ho."

As it spoke, it sluggishly swayed around the library and a personality of regal pomp emerged. Within rolling movements it strutted almost triumphantly, ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom, through the house. The last book it had absorbed was a history of England.

"Look Rennie, here's my story, and no interruptions."

Rennson, on all fours, was crawling after the dough like a puppy dog.

"I come from a planet 400,000 of your light years away called Ariel. I have come on an information gathering mission to catalogue your planet into our system, little more. You might call me a librarian of sorts. With a given planet I collect its entire history and knowledge by assimilating these in whatever form of storage banks the respective planet possesses. In Earth's case, written words. I must

have the actual words themselves or the classification will be incomplete. You see, once the mass of words has been accumulated inside of me, then my planet can scan me in an instant at which point you will reclaim the words."

"Hey, wait a minute, wait JUST ONE MINUTE!" Rennson was still crawling after the blob and with these words threw his right arm in front of its path only to discover his arm was stuck in the paste to the elbow. Two choices were open to Rennson. One was to crawl in the dough's wake, and the other was to be dragged in the dough's wake. Rennson crawled. The two of them tumbled into the bathroom, almost all arms and legs. Poor Rennson was at his breakfast's mercy because he found himself stretching his limbs to the breaking point as the dough explored the walls' higher altitudes. Panting, he said, "C'mon, now, let me go--can't we make a deal or something?"

"Dear boy, pre-CISE-ly what I had in mind."

Rennson clambered over the hamper, under the sink pipes, in the bathtub, and..."Oh no! It's only the toilet bowl! I'll tell you all about it!", and in the toilet bowl. Gayly, the dough and Rennson's forearm romped and splashed in the water.

"Ah," the dough wheezed, "water, the sweet dew of the gods, isn't that so, Rennie?"

"The deal, what about the DEAL?" Rennson said, choking on his tears.

"What about the water? Answer my first question, dear, ISN'T THAT SO?" the dough challenged.

His head resembling a bouncing ball, Rennson answered eagerly, "YES, YES, YES, YES, YES, YES--What is sweeter than toilet water, for the gods?"

"Good boy."

Let us examine the situation to this point, reader. We have on hand, quite literally,, one stubborn alien Ariel who desires the Earth's words for filing in its own planet's celestial body bank. In addition, we have one splendid exemplary terrestrial shnook who could save Earth from the aforementioned Ariel. Is Rennson as stupid as he seems? What sort of deal will they make? Will Rennson save Mother Earth from total annihilation? And finally, what do Swedish turnips have to do with all this?

The dough lugged Rennson into the library where he set loose his arm. While Rennson nursed and lavished the arm with pity, the dough began once more, "As I was saying, my mission as an intellectual blotter will be accomplished once I am scanned. I undertook this task with the thorough understanding of never returning, in body. I am, in fact, an honored member of my society's Suicide Squad." If the dough had eyebrows, they would have been raised, in expectance of some sort of respectful acknowledgment, or bow.

Rennson replied, "O.K., so you're a loony undercooked biscuit trying to rack up a few stripes--Why can't they haul you home?"

With less pomposity it answered, "Because once my skin is saturated with the words, it cannot resume its original form, and so my people cannot transport miles of stretched, sagging skin. A pithy pea I was, planted in your oven, destined only to increase--that growth is irreversible. And this is where you come in."

Rennson's ears opened. ("This must be the deal," he thought.)

"Basically, I need your help in two ways. First of all, I want you to help spread me over your world, plant me in every literated country there is. Secondly, when step one is finished, I want you to kill me, all to your advantage, of course."

Rennson's eyeballs were knotted, and he looked at the blob suspiciously at first, and the suspicion melted away into an atypical Slagmyre daze.

"Are you in pain?" the dough queried.

"Uh-uh," he hesitated, "but what about me?"

"Ah yes, what's in it for you? I was coming to that, boob. I was warned about this too! They said you'd want your slice of the pie, your piece of the action, your cut of the cake. I'd like to be around to see just how much you could swallow. Can't imagine you haven't figured out how to use me!"

"Use you?" Rennson asked pathetically.

"THAT'S IT!" The dough bounced, "EXPLOIT me, for your own benefit! Here's how it goes." Rennson edged closer.

For the moment, imagine meek little cross-legged Rennson playing secretary on the floor, scribbling frantically a recipe for success. Directly in front of him, addressing the dictation, is the Arielian, one giant convincing tongue.

"You're the one who's rationing my body. You know in what places I'll be dropped, and when, because you're doing the dropping, buddy. So, once we start rolling, and the newspapers stop, you step in. Get it now?"

"Not quite."

"Look, Rennie boy, you play the prophet. Soon there will be a catastrophe, right? People won't be able to read, so in flies Rennson Slagmyre, soaring high o'er death's valley warning all where and when I will strike next. Once you catch onto the game, when a country begs you to read its palm, you throw your bid in for a few pennies, see? For a little excitement, you might tell a major country, like France for instance, after an initial diagnostic fee, That I won't strike them at all, and later on, for a sum, tell them you have important news to impart, and bang, then zonk me on France. It's your toy to wind just as long as you see to it that I cover the whole earth. O.K.? And by the way, when I'm finished off you can start all over again because the words I eat will be inside of me and you'll have the key to my lock. At this point you request from the worldly officials that they supply you with everything you will need to start a World Word Reconstruction Company. You'll be President of course, and with your jigsaw background, what possible trouble could you encounter opening up branches of the most vital corporation of the time? But you work out the details for yourself, it's a better character builder anyway. Think you can handle it, baby? I'm going to make you rich and notorious."

Rennson looked like a bug-eyed grouper.

"But why me?"

"Do I detect a change of heart? First it was, 'What's in it for me?' and now it's 'Why me?' I hope you realize that our pawn wasn't randomly selected. One, you are the most suitable person on this planet to get its people back on its feet again, once we've drained it. And two, the Slagmyres are not known to put down a good business offer. Well Rennie, is it a deal?"

Rennson stood up, snorted, paced the ten feet of the rug, and as he turned, looked up at the ceiling and snorted again. He repeated this three more times. If he was coming to any decision, it was in deciding how a tycoon paced and snorted.

"Well?" the dough asked patiently.

"You have yourself a deal, little friend." and with that he thrust a world-under-the-thumb beneath his lapel and strode toward the doorway, where he caught his foot on the rug and vaulted across the threshold.

The name Slagmyre could exert a little influence, and Rennson was after all the world's greatest authority on jigsaw puzzles, so without any trouble he appeared on a well-viewed talk show where he gave a generous benefit prediction of the imminent doom in store for the United States. He casually mentioned that he expected that every single written word in the U.S. would be wiped off its background. That was on a Sunday.

The next day was Monday. Rennson cut off a six inch square of the dough, and then cut that up into two hundred pieces. Into two hundred stamped envelopes, he sent these bits off to two hundred strategically dispersed post offices in the United States. He could have used far fewer pieces, but he really got into this first major attack.

The next day was Tuesday and the movement was rolling smoothly. Silently the dough bits slid the words off millions of library books and magazines and papers at newsstands. Letters in transit arrived as sweet slips of stationary tainted by the plague. The "Made in Japan" signature from the soles of shoddy slippers vanished. Words in magazines, students' notebooks, pricetags, food labels, paper currency, and Monopoly games all slid into the growing bellies of the Arielian. Moreover, much of this took place in daylight, in plain view of anyone looking at the right moment. The American woman presented a classic scene. Picture the average housewife cliché: seductively arrayed in frayed apron, terrycloth slippers, curlers dangling out of a netted scarf, armed with a chair in one hand and a rolling pin in the other, badgering and trampling on the dough while it sucked up her mother's brownie recipe. Some women froze in horror as it ransacked the house; some threw it in the oven to watch it seep out again; some churned it through a meat grinder or cut it up, only increasing the number of directions the dough could turn in. Others flushed it away. But the monster from Ariel was nearly indestructible. It could not be burned, frozen, mangled or poisoned.

Rennson was pleased with his initial American experiment, and began his prophecy campaign for the rest of the world as the dough suggested. He mailed out a form letter to all the presidents, premiers, dictators, and kings he could think of, requesting huge sums of money in return for the date of the dough's arrival. (They were assuming a few priceless manuscripts could be saved, or hidden underground, but none were.) Within a month Rennson's house was brimming with francs, roubles, farthings, pesos, and more.

After one country's words were licked, the bloated dough blobs each plodded its way back to the United States to latch onto the mother Arielian glob at Malibu Beach, California. Then Rennson dropped a new batch of unfilled globules on the next country on his list. He kept up well with his part of the bargain. The Arielian cooperated too, as the world rocked under the weight of golden pastry nuggets littering the earth and rolling in every direction sucking words into themselves to inflation, like leeches.

Need it be said that after the dough's trekkings, waves of chaos exploded. The prospect of trying to recreate the literary masterpieces and encyclopedias horrified the world. Why should Earth have to sacrifice its stores of knowledge just to complete another world's library journals? Why did the words have to be taken away totally? Why couldn't the planet Ariel scan the books instead? People screamed these questions over and over. Also, they wondered what else might disappear next. Tree trunks perhaps? Or maybe window sills, or brains? Television reporters floundered on the screens, adlibbing from necessity, with hopes of subduing the public's fright and astonishment. They recom-

mended standing aside for the dough if it approached and letting it feed peacefully until a solution was discovered. Foreign ministers gathered at the U.N. and communally prattled like beheaded poultry. None knew the cause of the blight or dared consider a solution.

No one except Rennson Hassel Slagmyre III.

By now everyone knew of Rennson Slagmyre. He was rich and notorious. He called himself a prophet, and the one man who could put the stopper in the drain. The people called him a Daniel Webster.

In any event, by this time six weeks had passed and the Arielian's compilation was completed. Thousands of rippling hunks of flesh gathered on the beach where they coagulated into one behemoth-sized blob. A courier lump broke off to issue Rennson his last instructions.

The dough found Rennson sitting at a desk in the library. It waddled up to him. "Well Rennie boy, I'm finished. Once I attach myself to the mother dough, Ariel will scan me and zap! I'm as good as dead here."

Rennson was startled. "What are you saying, friend, why not stick around here?" he asked.

"Here we go again, goop, my role in the Suicide Squad has been to store information, and then give up my body. It can't be retrieved, so it stays here. Then, the instant I return to the beach, the information and my soul, if you will, will be carried back to Ariel, so I'm not really dying, see?"

"Sure, but what about all those tons of oozy flesh?"

"Here it is. Today I will return to Ariel. So tomorrow, you finish up your prophecy act and announce the fact that you can kill me. Simply blow me up with about five hundred pounds of yeast. You should try to arrange to corral my body in the ocean, because it could get a bit messy. Then, quickly switch into your Saviour costume and go ahead with part two of our plan, putting the words back together.--Is anything simpler?"

Rennson only scratched his head.

"Good, I'm glad you do understand," the dough said, "we like to clean up loose ends before leaving a planet. So long Rennie."

Rennson watched it waddle away and heard a few faint mutterings, "--glad to be out of here, couldn't take much more, all that squashing and stabbing..."

During the next week Rennson had the blob moved to a floating pen, and triumphantly announced his plan to blow up the "blasphemous beast". People now dubbed him a traitor to two worlds. Poor Rennson.

Rennson released his destruction method, and a bomb containing four thousand pounds of yeast was dropped on the Arielian's body. It puffed up and swelled for six hours when a hole tore through the dough casing. Black words gushed from the heaving bubble in grotesque spasms. The last of the black juices oozed out the following morning and the blob sank to the bottom. The words were not totally lost however. Close to five square miles of them floated on an oil slick.

What remained was for Rennson to organize his corporation and then head a sundry group of scholars, historians, scientists, journalists, and all writers in order to rearrange man's literary past.

WILD ROSES ARE HELPFUL

by David E. Bara

Chapter II

There was a message waiting for me on my desk when I came into my office. Count D wanted to see me immediately. It figured--the old bat couldn't give me a few hours more to hang around and recover from the after-effects of my last assignment.

I took my time walking over to his office.

The Count looked up as I walked in.

"You're not looking so hot, Michael."

"You know something, boss, you really are an amazingly observant fellow."

Count D smiled up at me.

"Thank you, Michael, and as I've told you on numerous other occasions, please try to avoid encounters with Miss Vallen. She really doesn't seem to do you much good. I know she's very attractive, but every time you see her you're quite listless for several days afterward. I don't like to lecture you, but I pale at the thought of you ending up on the wrong end of a stake."

I stood there, patiently listening to the old man. It wouldn't do me any good to argue with him, so I let him talk himself out. He finally wound down. He also finally noticed that I was still standing.

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry, Michael. Please sit down."

I sat.

Count D shuffled through the papers on his well-ordered desk. He soon managed to find what he'd been looking for and handed me an official WOCCV assignment sheet. The heading on the paper consists of a coffin with a stake and hammer lying atop it. Neat, huh?

"I assume you're ready for your next job, Michael," said Count D.

"Do I have any choice, sir?" I asked.

He smiled.

"It's a case I'm sure you'll find of sufficient interest. It seems that we have a vampire afflicted with the beaver syndrome to deal with. There hasn't been a case in nearly two hundred years. I thought that you'd appreciate the honor of taking care of this one. It's something you can really sink your teeth into."

Another smile.

"Thanks a lot! Anything else, sir, or do I get right on it?"

"You might take a look down in the arsenal and see if there's anything which might aid you in the speedy solution of this case. Otherwise, fly to it, Michael."

Again, the smile.

I got up, walked to the door, made the sign of the cross to the Count, and left. The blessing is sort of an in joke around WOCCV. Count D doesn't really like it, so I made sure to do it to irritate him. He had once studied to be a priest, and happens to be quite religious. My night of loving with Laura Vallen hadn't left me in a very good mood, however. I still had a crick in my neck left over from her nibbling, and my interview with the Count hadn't improved things any. So, I took out some of my spite on him. Besides, I figured he deserved it anyway. Something I could really sink my teeth into, huh?

Oh well, I could look forward to not seeing Laura for some time. I hoped I wouldn't need any more of her conditional favors for a while.

I took the elevator down to the basement level, where the WOCCV arsenal is located, my mind reverting to thoughts of my new assignment.

The beaver syndrome is a disease peculiar to vampires which springs up every now and then. It is, quite fortunately for vampires, rare.

The last recorded case occurred some two hundred years ago. (Count D is seldom wrong.) There was no mention of the end result of the previous case on the assignment sheet. It figured. I'd have to come up with a brilliant solution of my own.

The syndrome causes a vampire's canines to grow uncontrollably and continuously, as do a beaver's incisors. (Hence, the clever name for the disease.) If the syndrome is not checked in time, you might eventually have a vampire who keeps tripping over his own two teeth.

The elevator came to a stop at basement level. I got out.

On the wall opposite me were crosses ranging in size from the ten-foot tall vampire bausters down to the little silver crucifixes that all WOCCV agents carry with them. A door off to the left leads into a hot-room used for growing garlic, roses, and wolfbane. (Though wolfbane is of no use against vampires, we grow a small amount of the stuff for two reasons. First of all, you never know when a werewolf will come skulking up on you while you're on the job somewhere in the backwoods. Secondly, WOCCW (The World Organization for the Conservation and Control of Werewolves) has neither the budget nor the facilities that our organization has, so, as a friendly service to them, we grow the wolfbane.)

To sidetrack further for a moment, most of WOCCW's agents either can't meet the rigid requirements necessary to become WOCCV agents, or have a strong streak of masochism and prefer werewolf conservation to vampire conservation. Not to be snobby or anything, but there is definitely a great amount lacking in class in being a werewolf agent. I mean, not only do you have to put up with the howling at the moon and the mud on the floors, but what if you forget to put down old newspapers on the rug? Terribly messy.

A door off to the right leads into a room where stakes, hammers, crossbows, and crossbow bolts are manufactured and stored. (We feel more independent if we make our own.)

On the far right is a small room where sanctified hosts and holy water are kept. (One of our agents is a real priest. We couldn't get along without him considering our line of business. He's a real blessing to WOCCV.)

Straight ahead of me, a locked door leads to the room in which WOCCV's ultimate weapon is stored. It's a small piece of the original cross which Christ carried up Calvary, and you wouldn't want to know the effect it has on a poor vampire. It isn't Christian. Count D allows us to use it only in extreme emergencies. He says that he can't stand to see undead people suffer so much. I hate to admit it, but I agree with him. There is such a thing as humanity, you know. The stake, even sunlight, is merciful compared to the ultimate weapon. It's really ungodly what that thing does to a vampire.

I looked about, wondering where Rosie Cross, the Head of the Weapons Department, was. (His real name is Roosevelt, and he's a big, burly guy who used to play football for Manchester. Fortunately, he allows us the use of the nickname.)

As I started towards the door of his office to see if he was hanging around in there, it opened to reveal a man in a frayed old grey suit which should have been thrown out a few years ago. The man stood about five foot nine, was on the chubby side, and in need of a shave. He had the look of a bum who had come to ask for a handout. The man was, of course, Talbot Laurence, chief agent of WOCCW, and probably did need a handout.

"Hi ya, Mike," he said as he saw me approaching.

"Hello, Talbot. What brings you to the higher sanctum? Just step out for a breath of fresh air?"

Laurence scowled at my reference to the fact that WOCCW's headquarters are not exactly in the high-rent district, being directly across from the London sewage disposal plant with the prevailing wind generally blowing in the wrong direction.

"No, Mike, I was just here to borrow some silver. The Black Forest pack is causing trouble again, so we've had to go in to settle things down. Ran out of bullets, though."

"Another budget cut?" I asked.

Laurence's face took on a disgusted look.

"Ya know, Mike, sometimes I think nobody gives a damn about werewolf conservation anymore!" (I wondered if anyone ever had.) "We're having as hard a time getting new recruits as the Catholic Church is getting priests." (I found that hard to believe.) "And if the budget gets cut back any further, we'll even have to give up our present headquarters. In expensive as they are. I can't understand it."

I avoided making a sarcastic remark, realizing that even werewolf conservationists have feelings. Talbot needed some sympathy, although, admittedly, I wasn't exactly the right guy to be expected to give it, considering my present mood. Damn Laura Vallen and Count D and sick vampires.

"You know, Talbot," I said, in as sympathetic a tone as possible, "it'll do you no good to moon about it. You're expected to set an example for the newer men. Chin up and grit your teeth. Get a new suit, a haircut, and a shave. You'll be a different man. Before you know it, you'll be out of the woods and things will be fine at WOCCW."

Considering the circumstances, I thought it was a damn good pep talk.

Talbot took my hand in his hairy palm (you know how some people get overly involved in their work) and wrung it. (Without the use of one of those old washing machines.)

"Thanks, Mike, I needed that."

"Glad I could help you out, Talbot. Now get your ass out of here and get to work. I'll give the Lone Ranger a call. I'm sure he'll be more than happy to help you clean things up in the Black Forest. I hear he even has his own supply of silver bullets."

Talbot smiled as he walked over to the open elevator.

"Can I invite you out for a bite to eat?" he asked.

"No thanks, Talbot. Some other time. I've got a tough case that I've got to get busy on right away."

"Probably something you can really sink your teeth into. Right, Mike?"

I'd had to cheer him up.

"Still as sharp as a whip, I see, Talbot. By the way, are you going to have some lunch before you get back to work?"

"O.K., I'll bite. Yes."

"Well, don't wolf down your food," I said as the elevator doors closed on Talbot Laurence, agent extraordinaire of WOCCW.

I sauntered into Rosie Cross' office. (My encounter with Talbot Laurence had cheered me up somewhat, and, as I'm sure I've mentioned before, I'm the sauntering type anyway.) He was sitting at his desk reading a paperback science fiction novel.

"Hi, Mike. What can I do for you?" asked Rosie.

"Got anything to help me cure a vampire with the beaver syndrome?"

"I could glance through the files, but I'm pretty sure that I couldn't come up with anything that'd be useful. Sorry."

"That's all right, Rosie. I wasn't really expecting any help." Did Mr. Laurence give you any trouble?" I asked.

"No, not really. But I assigned a couple of men to the Black For-

est as a stakeout. Just to make sure that none of our interests are compromised."

"Good idea. Well, I guess I'll be off to the Continent," I said.

"You're not exactly what I'd call an eager beaver over this assignment of yours, are you, Mike?" cracked Rosie.

"That I didn't need!" I said as I left Rosie's office a little more cross than when I entered, took the elevator to ground level, and got a cab back to my apartment to pack a few things in my overday bag in preparation for my impending trip to Romania. The scenic beauty of the Carpathians was about the only thing I was looking forward to on this job.

The plane trip was as uneventful as they usually are. The stewardess was prettier than average, but I tend not to be overly enthusiastic about women in general for several weeks after a night with Laura Vallen. Sometimes I regret ever having met her. Of course, there are other times that it all seems worth it. A night with a passionately sexy, beautiful, female vampire like Laura Vallen does have its good points. Especially the ones at the ends of her teeth.

Anyway, I finally got into Bucharest and rented a car for the remainder of my journey. I drove into the usual, run-of-the-mill peasant village at around nine that night. (As I've mentioned previously, we are not allowed to mention names because of tourist problems which may result.) The innkeeper was naturally reluctant to have an outsider intruding into local affairs, but he did give me a fairly comfortable room despite this. I was quite tired, so I decided to have a light meal and then hit the sack, intending to start my investigations early the next day. The local peasants were bound to be less nervous, and thus more cooperative, during the day. Sunlight tends to make them braver and more garrulous. Strange, but true. (Or, maybe, believe it or not.)

I was up at dawn the next morning, probably at around the time my client-to-be was retiring for the day. It's much healthier for him that way. In fact, the vampire insurance agencies demand it as a contract clause. Vampires don't get sun-burned, they get sun-crisped.

As I was eating breakfast, I used my very busy Van Helsing questioning method training to try and obtain a clue to the vampire's whereabouts from the innkeeper. He wasn't too helpful (they seldom are), and since most of the rest of the peasants weren't available for comment (they were probably out gathering wild garlic flowers, or whatever else it is that peasants do), I decided it would be best to start looking around myself.

I won't bore you with the details of the long, exhausting search. Suffice it to say that it took me four days to find the hiding place of my client. By this time, of course, my stomach was beginning to weaken from the effects of breathing garlic-impregnated-inn air. I'd really have to remember to get a pair of nose filters before my next assignment. Garlic is definitely not conducive to helping me do my best work. The garlic bread that was served at every meal at the inn didn't help much either. I've often wondered if peasants are born with a natural immunity to the smell of the stuff.

The vampire's hiding place was some three miles southeast of the village I was using as my base of operations. The reason that I had such a hard time finding it was that no imagination had been used in choosing the place of concealment. The coffin was in a simple deserted family mausoleum. If there is one thing that I really detest while on assignment, it's the vampire who lacks the breeding to put his coffin in the traditional completely-obvious-and-therefore-hard-to-find hiding place. I was really tempted to drive a stake through him and forget

about the case for making it so difficult for me to find him. I resisted the temptation, though, since Count D has a hang-up about that sort of thing.

I was sitting beside the coffin at sunset on the fourth day. The lid of the coffin didn't even creak as it swung open. This guy had to be one really strange vampire. He even oiled his coffin hinges!

He stepped out of the coffin. His problem was immediately apparent as he realized my presence and turned towards me. His canines were some two inches ~~too~~ long, protruding halfway down from his lower lip to his chin. Otherwise, though, he was perfectly normal-looking.

"Who are you?" asked the vampire. He had a slight problem speaking due to his overly long canines.

"I'm Michael Ashley. I work for WOCCV. And I'm here to help you."

"What is WOCCV?"

"It's the World Organization for the Conservation and Control of Vampires."

"It figures."

I guess it did.

"Offices in London, Paris, Rome, Moscow, Tokyo, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York," I said.

"Oh. I'm impressed."

"Can I possibly be of any service to you?"

"It depends," he replied.

"On what?"

"Whether there's a fee or it's free."

"It's free."

"Then you can."

"Can what?"

"Be of service."

"Oh. What can I do for you?"

"Take my cape to the cleaners, of course."

I guess I deserved that for playing dumb. His problem was rather obvious.

"Well, perhaps if you tell me the relevant facts concerning your problem," I said, "then I can get a better perspective on the whole thing, and maybe come up with a solution."

"I've found by experience that it's worth the few dollars it costs to have my cape cleaned by professionals. They generally do a good job, and, anyway, I'm damned if I'm going to take the time to go to the trouble of getting out the bloodstains."

It figured that along with all my other problems, I had to run in- to a comedian. Sometimes my job gets to be one royal pain in the neck.

The vampire was attempting to smile at me. The condition of his canines sort of prevented him from smiling well, however. The effect was more of a sardonic scowl.

"Seriously, though, there's not much to tell," he said. "Up to a month or so ago, undeath has been kind to me. There are enough pretty young throats around to sink my teeth into, and there are no fearless vampire killers after me for my crimes of passion."

He glanced at me, suspiciously.

"But, there I was one night, fanging around the woods with one of my buddies, reflecting on my good fortune, when I suddenly realized that my teeth weren't what they ought to be. For no apparent reason, they were growing longer. I'm not exaggerating that it nearly scared me to life. I had no explanation for it. What had I done to deserve such a fate? Why should I be singled out to suffer?"

"Well, we all have our little crosses to bear," I said. I have, you notice, a tendency to get in my own share of licks.

The vampire did his best to ignore my remark and continued.

"The next time I decided I needed a drink, I found out that I had quite a problem. My first victim ended up impaled instead of bitten. I had to spend half the night extracting my teeth from her neck."

"After that I was more careful, but one of the best aspects of being a vampire was now lost to me. I mean, There's quite a sexual thrill involved in biting a girl's neck, and there I was drinking through, what were for all practical purposes, straws."

"Things haven't gotten much better since then. My canines keep on growing a little longer by the night. I'd be biting my nails from worry if I weren't afraid of taking off the whole hand."

"What is it I've got anyway?" he asked.

"It's called the beaver syndrome."

"Of course. It figures."

"You know, we have people who sit around all day, whose sole purpose in life is to come up with clever names for diseases like the one you've got. And what do you do? In stead of being properly appreciative, you're making cynical remarks. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. How would you feel if people were cynical about vampires and the things they do?"

"I'm sorry," he said. "I hadn't realized...."

"Well, you do now," I replied. "And see that it doesn't happen again, or there's liable to be serious repercussions. You simply have no inkling of the number of people who'd be out of work if everyone had your attitude."

"Cross over my heart and hope for a stake that I won't let it happen again."

"All right. There's no need to overdo it."

"Now, can you help me?" asked the vampire.

"Of course I can!" I responded. "Do you think I'm paid for being incompetent? Do you realize the hard years of study you have to go through to become a vampire conservationist?"

"No, but do you realize what I had to go through to become a vampire?"

I disregarded his remark.

"As far as I can see, there's only one way to put a stop to this curse."

The vampire looked puzzled.

"Which one?" he asked.

"One more crack like that, and you won't see the dark of night again," I told him.

"O.K. How?"

"I'll have to use a crucifix to burn off the excess tooth. I'm quite sure that that will also inhibit any further growth of your canines. And, if I'm careful, it won't be too painful."

"Who are you trying to kid?" The vampire said. "I didn't die yesterday, you know."

He was, of course, right. Burning his canines with a crucifix would most likely be excruciatingly painful for him. But it was either that, or leaving him as he was, which was not much better.

"I could try using an anesthetic to knock you out," I said.

"What did you have in mind?" he asked.

"The only thing I know of is the oil from the bulb of the wild garlic," I answered.

He cringed, naturally, but shook his head in acceptance.

"Shall we get it over with now?" I asked him.

He shook his head.

(continued on page 22)

TRADE AGREEMENT

by Mark R. Leeper

The message came upon a Christmas eve. I wonder if the Purveyors planned it that way. If so, it was the only mistake they ever made. Those of us who remember what governments were like before the coming of the Purveyors will understand what a hassle it must have been for the Purveyors to get their statement approved by the government, and for the press to be allowed to print the message in the newspapers. It was January 29 before there was a censorship release and the message was printed in the newspapers and read on television. Of course, by that time, many of us had heard rumors as to what the message said. Sweden had printed the message on December 26, so there were a few printed copies in the United States, but of course, by the nature of the message, nobody but a few nuts believed it until it appeared in the U.S. newspapers. Even after it did appear, it was difficult enough to believe.

People of Earth: We bring you the greetings of virtually every great scientific mind in the Galaxy. We represent a society of scientists that has representatives from every technically advanced civilization in the Galaxy. The goal of our society is to pool our scientific knowledge for the benefit of all races and all civilizations. Think, if you will, what it could mean to your planet if you knew how to abolish disease, abolish hunger. All of your people will live in luxury and happiness. In return, we ask only for your scientific knowledge. No two races have the same insight and the same intuition. You will benefit from the society's knowledge and we will benefit from your knowledge. You must understand, however, that we will have to be certain of your civilization's intelligence. As an intelligence test, we will give you the instructions for building a craft in which you will be able to travel to the society's headquarters. If you are intelligent enough to build the craft from our instructions, we feel you will be intelligent enough so that you can benefit from our knowledge and we can benefit from yours. The same capsules that brought down from our monitoring satellite the communicating devices by which we are bringing this message to your governments will bring down instructions on building the craft. We will be watching to see your progress.

At first there were claims of fraud. After all, why wouldn't the Purveyors show themselves instead of just sending down capsules? But the monitoring satellite was in the sky where any fool with a telescope could see it. Three days later, several of the Purveyors' communication capsules were dropped into the atmosphere. Each one sought out the capital of a country. The countries of the world had the specifications to build the craft that would take man to the stars. The United States chose several men to learn from the Purveyors the principles of their craft. That was where I came in. We were all escorted into a room for three hours a day and watched the screen of the Purveyor communicator.

The communicator looked like a shoebox with a pole in it. On the pole was a screen about three feet square. On the screen flashed a course in what the Purveyors called "Hyperspace Transporter Drives." The course was taught slowly and precisely but somehow we just did not understand the overall picture. I began

to think that perhaps we just were not ready to understand the new hyperscience.

When the course was done, we were chosen to oversee the construction of the hyperspace craft. By the instructions of the Purveyors, the craft was to be built on a floating platform in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. That way few would be hurt if something went disasterously wrong, we were told. There was a certain amount of danger inherent in the engine, which converted any matter into pure energy for the immense energy levels needed for hyperspace travel. As a result, the engine would work with extremely high levels of radiation.

It took three years of international effort to build the hyperspace craft. Attention was paid to every detail of the specifications. Human error had to be kept to a minimum by checking and rechecking. Still, in a mechanism as complex as the hyperspace craft, it would have been impossible to avoid human error completely. We could only hope that it would not be high enough to endanger the flight. For three years the nations of the world worked under the ever-present eye of the never-seen Purveyors. At the end of the three years the craft had been built and checked and christened Galaxie. The craft looked like an inverted dish balanced on a sphere. A crew of scientists was chosen to man the craft. I was hoping that I would be one of them but was passed over. The day finally came for the first test flight. Each of us who had been in the original principles course were invited to be on a ship one mile from the platform and observe the test. The Galaxie rose several feet into the air. As it rose, a cheer went up all over the ship. But as we were congratulating each other, the Galaxie faltered and tipped to one side. As it tried to land again, it tipped the platform and simply slid into the sea.

Immediately ships were deployed to rescue the test crew, but the Galaxie sank like a stone and was too deep by the time a rescue could be attempted. The Galaxie and her crew were irretrievably lost too far down to even find the wreckage. Other people started voicing my fear that man was just not ready to travel to the stars. The international results of the Galaxie disaster were astounding. Russia blamed the United States, and the United States blamed Russia. The United Nations was deadlocked in debate as to where the blame lay and who should take the financial responsibility for repaying the countries that had happily put up the money to build the craft when they thought that they would be among the first to take advantage of the scientific horn of plenty. The controversy completely distracted people from the reports of dead fish washing up on the Chinese and California coasts.

Gradually, however, people began to put two and two together and it was realized that the fish were being killed by the radioactivity in the water. The dying of fish reached epidemic proportions before it began to be noticed anywhere but on the back pages of the newspaper.

People of Earth: We have watched with strong interest as you built and tested your craft Galaxie. We were sorry to see the failure of your craft and the death of the brave men who manned her. By this time, you will have noticed that the engines of the Galaxie are still operating. If action is not taken soon, the radioactivity from the engines will destroy all life in your seas. After that it will be only a matter of time before all life on your planet has been destroyed. Having foreseen this possibility, we are capable of screening off the menace that you yourselves have put in your own waters. It is a difficult project and

will take many years which could be spent in taking word of our society to other civilizations. As a result, we are forced to ask for a small payment in the form of some of the natural resources in which your planet is so rich. We have much use for these resources and will consider them as payment for the labor of our people in protecting life on your planet. We warn you that if this labor is not completed, it will mean death for all life on your planet, though you will be safe while the work goes on. We strongly suggest that you consider our proposition.

It has been twenty-two years that the people of Earth have slaved for the Purveyors. Our iron and petroleum resources are gone. The majority of mankind lives in extreme poverty as we slave to pay the Purveyors' blackmail. I fear the day when the resources are gone and we can pay no more. Still the Purveyors' project to seal off the Galaxie drags on and on. I, for one, think that the Galaxie did just exactly what the Purveyors designed it to do. No one has ever actually seen a Purveyor and I think I now know why. I think they were afraid we would find out that they are exactly like us, human in every respect. All over the universe, there ain't no such thing as a free lunch.

WILD ROSES ARE HELPFUL (continued from page 19)

"But please be careful, Mr. Ashley. I've got a stake in this too." I had him lie down in his coffin. What else could make a better operating table? I took my handkerchief out of my pocket, got the small bottle out of oil of garlic out of the little black case that all WOCCV agents carry, and poured some into the handkerchief, gagging on the smell. Poor devil. I didn't envy him.

I quickly placed the cloth over the vampire's nose and mouth. He gasped, choked, and retched a bit, but he finally passed out.

I then took out my trusty silver crucifix, beginning the delicate and tedious process of burning the vampire's fangs back to their proper length. I had to be very careful not to slip. I might end up burning the flesh on his lips and face, which would definitely scar him for, uh, life. I sweated blood over my task, but, at last, it was over. The vampire's canines were back to their normal length without any indication that they had ever been different. I was proud of myself. I don't think any dentist could have done a better job. (If you could ever persuade one to make a coffin call.) I was a bit shaky after the intense concentration required for so delicate an operation, but I was, otherwise, none the worse for wear.

I picked up my equipment, and left the vampire sleeping peacefully. He looked quite innocent there in his coffin. Now that this assignment was just so much water over the dam, I could pack up and take the next plane out of Bucharest to London.

THE HOLE-UNIVERSE CATALOG

by Prof. Thomas Army

We all know about black holes. They occur (allegedly) when a mass of material (say a star) becomes so compressed that its gravity pulls it in on itself. Physically this occurs when the escape velocity from the surface ($v = \sqrt{GM/R}$) equals the velocity of light. For any mass M , this defines a critical radius, R_g called the Schwarzschild radius. For the sun this is about .2 kilometers. Material that falls into a black hole vanishes from the observable universe. Where does it go?

Recently it has been suggested that what goes in must come out, but elsewhere. There may therefore be places in the universe from which material spews forth. They are tentatively called white holes because of their opposite character to black holes. They have not been observed, but conceivably they lie at the centers of some galaxies, either Seyfert galaxies or Quasi-stellar objects.

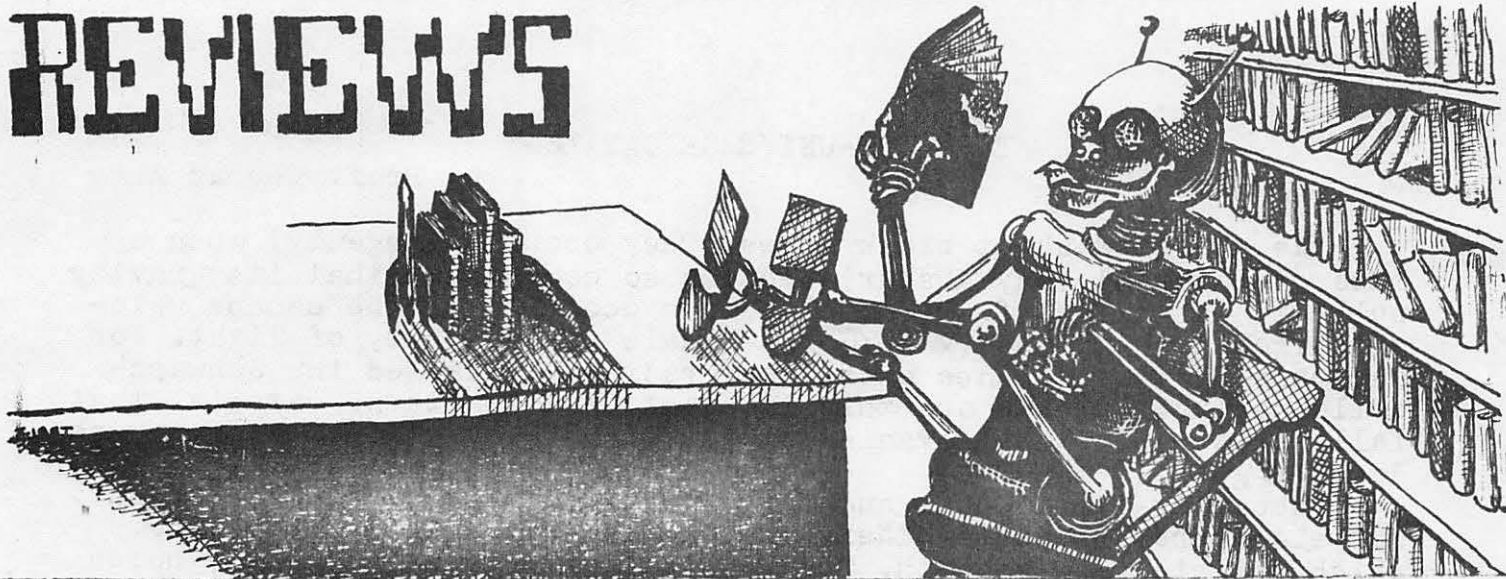
Suppose now that we develop interstellar travel. Could we use black and white holes (assuming either exist)? One possibility would be to imagine jumping into a black hole and seeing if you came out of a white hole someplace else. I think I would ask one of my students to be the first to achieve this glory. Suppose he did come out of a white hole (you might imagine he was imbedded in a concrete slab to enable him to withstand the tidal forces of the black hole). While we have no idea what really happens in the black-hole-white-hole "subterranean" tunnel, one might be able to "navigate" without any limitations on one's "velocity." Such passages might be analogous to the ever-popular space warps of the sci-fi pulps. We can imagine some future Cabot searching for the Galactic Passage leading across the galaxy in one leap.

There are other uses one could make of B and W holes. They'd be dandy garbage disposals. In goes the refuse, out comes new matter (an additional reason to use a student in the experiment described above). One could imagine mining such holes. If, as has been suggested, material which falls into black holes is spewed out at the galactic center, then the galactic center would be a veritable mother lode. We can imagine the future miner and his faithful burro carried from Earth to the nearest black hole, dumped in, and later climbing out laden with riches beyond the wildest dreams. (You of course need a pretty strong burro to climb back out of a black hole. Also one with lead hair to protect him from the X-radiation.)

The technology of exploring black holes is not easy to extrapolate from present knowledge. It has been suggested that navigation in a black hole might be radically different from that in regular space as relativistic effects are enormous. It is even conceivable that time will be the dominant coordinate. You might imagine entering a hole in the ice in a frozen lake and searching for another hole out of which to emerge (the white hole). Rather than measuring how many parsecs you've gone, you measure the elapsed time. Other problems that might complicate navigation are: Are all black and white holes in the universe linked, or only those in the same galaxy? What happens if you meet someone (thing?--the Loch Ness Monster?) coming the other way? How long does it take to fall into the singularity? How do you protect yourself against the high temperatures likely to exist at the boundary (and maybe elsewhere)? While matter may come out in white holes, does light? If light is trapped in black holes, could they be used as cameras into the past? After all, the hole gathers

(continued on page 40)

REVIEWS



THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN

There's a new breed of science fiction movie that has reached fruition with The Andromeda Strain. I would call it the Grand Tour school of science fiction film making. The philosophy is that the wonders of modern-day science give a real spectacle and are something that people really want to see. So we have large sections of the movie devoid of plot but devoted to scientific spectacle or a reasonable facsimile thereof created by the special effects department. There are traces of this trend as far back as Destination Moon, or perhaps even King Kong or uncountably many laboratories of deranged scientists in as many films. But a few recent films have carried this to extremes and I would classify these as Grand Tour films. The first three Grand Tour films were, I believe, Fantastic Voyage, 2001, and Marooned.

The most recent entry in the Grand Tour category is The Andromeda Strain, based on the novel of the same title by Michael Crichton. This is the novel that has the unfortunate distinction of being that 20th Century science fiction novel which has been treated most unjustly by science fiction fans. Perhaps the reason is that few of us want to admit that if the general public likes it, it might still be good science fiction--despite the "best-selling" of Fail-Safe as well as other pieces that were well-received in the literary community. Both film and book are primarily tours of a top-secret laboratory and accounts of the type of research done in a particular crisis. I think the film's strongest points were the development of the characters, and the credibility and simplicity of understanding the work that was done. Most of us feel, I think that the technical work of a scientist is beyond our comprehension. The step-by-step study of the microorganism was not really too difficult to understand and was described with a minimum of technical language.

As for the film's weaknesses, I for one am getting a little bored with Grand Tour films. The spectacle is the kind of thing you used to get to see free on Twenty-First Century and still see fairly often on television. Why spend \$2.50 to see it on the wide screen? Particularly in films like The Andromeda Strain and 2001 that rely on the Grand Tour for so much of the screen time. And one more complaint: why is the world always saved at the last possible second?

--Mark R. Leeper

MINI-REVIEWS

THX-1138 (88 min.--Warner Brothers, 1971)

Having read a good review of this film in the October 1971 issue of Castle of Frankenstein, I re-evaluated the movie. My conclusion remained the same. It is almost plotless, incomprehensible in many parts, and quite boring. It may well be that this 1934-like look at the future has some saving graces, but I must confess as to being unaware of them. The sets were far too colorful, most of them were white. The script was so bad that all the actors lost their hair worrying over it.

HORROR OF FRANKENSTEIN (95 min.--Hammer, 1970)

The newest Hammer Frankenstein film is another remake of the original idea. Hammer has, unfortunately, substituted Ralph Bates for Peter Cushing in the role of the doctor, and despite some good touches, and the presence of the beautiful Veronica Carlson, the film is a rather plodding attempt. Hammer seems to have lost some of the imagination the studio used to show. Jimmy Sangster's script, consisting of many humorous touches (a dismembered arm giving the finger), is a disappointment. Let's hope Hammer hasn't started downhill!

SCARS OF DRACULA (96 min.--Hammer, 1970)

Co-featured with Horror of Frankenstein, Hammer's newest Christopher Lee Dracula picks up where Taste the Blood of Dracula left off. The Count is restored to life as blood from the mouth of a large bat drips onto his lust. Unfortunately, Hammer fails to make much of the restoration. Chris Lee seems to have gotten up on the wrong side of his coffin. His performance just isn't that inspiring. Though the film has several good touches, it is not in the same league as Horror of Dracula and Dracula Has Risen from the Grave, the two best in the series. I am also at a loss as to why these two newest Hammer's got R ratings.

THE VAMPIRE LOVERS (88 min.--Hammer-American International, 1970)

As far as I know this is the only Hammer-AIP co-production, and Hammer has lent distinction to this well-made, faithful adaptation of J. Sheridan LeFanu's Carmilla. Ingrid Pitt as the lesbian vampire is superb. Peter Cushing lends his talents in a smaller role, as most of the action revolves around the female stars. There is plenty of flesh, sex, and lesbianism to spice up the action, in what I found to be an excellent and enjoyable movie.

--David E. Bara

JOHN WOOD CAMPBELL, JR.

1910-1971

"Who Goes There?" Astounding. Dianetics. Analog. The Dean Drive.

"There is no genius without a mixture of madness."

--Seneca (the Younger)
De Tranquillitate Animi

CAVE DWELLER

by Evelyn Chimelis

Hunger.

It needed food, or it would soon be dead. But there was so little left. It slithered over the rocks, searching each crevice, each cranny in hopes of finding some slight bit of nourishment, just enough to give some strength.

Nothing. No, wait! The cache!

The thought gave it new strength, new hope. It oozed through the cracks in the rocks toward the supply. There was enough there to last for fourteen days; that should be long enough to find more. As it moved, it remembered how it had thought it useless to store food for the future. There was so much there, more than enough to last a lifetime. But that was so long ago and gradually the great supply lessened and shrunk until it found itself crawling desperately towards the cache. After it ate, there would be time to think of where to move.

It rounded the final corner and reached into the dark crevice. Empty!!

What could have happened? Despairingly, it turned around, knowing that it must go to the exit, the one place where it should not go. But hunger overcame fear and it headed for the outside.

"Where'd you get this ore anyway?"

"I found it in the old Crawford mine. Why?"

Tom looked at the sample on his desk. It was high-grade ore, no doubt about that. But that Crawford mine had been closed for years. No more tin, they said. Just a lot of junk.

"Jeb, you know as well as I do that mine's been closed for years. It's been mined out, and besides that, folks say it's haunted. Said they heard noises and all that. So what were you doing messing around in there?"

"Heard a noise in there. Figgered it might be a jackrabbit or somethin'. Ya know, grub. So's I got my lantern and went to check. What a godawful mess! Damn near broke my neck tripping over loose rocks. That's how I found it. Tripped one time and grabbed ahold of the wall. Rock came right out of the wall, it did. So I picked myself up and looked--and there it was, jest sittin' there waiting to be picked out. Loose, jest like I brung ya. I know good ore when I see it. I got me a sack and started filling it. I jest brung a few pieces to check--not that I'm not sure, mind ya--and left most of it in my cabin."

"I'll send this on to the lab to make sure, but I'd say you're right about this ore."

"Thanks. I'm going over to the store to git me some stuff I need, an' then I'm goin' back and cel-ee-brate. I'll be back in 'bout a week..."

"That's fine with me. See you then."

At least it was getting dark, it thought. That would be some help. It crept across the bottom of the ditch towards the building it had spotted earlier. It hadn't been there the first time, of course, but that had been so long ago that it was not surprising. In fact, everything looked different. Maybe it was just that its memory was failing.

There was food in the building; it could sense it. Not by something as tenuous as intuition, but something else--something definite, something indefinable.

As it edged up the wall of the ditch, it became more and more certain. There was food here, and lots of it. Perhaps almost as much as it had lost.

There it was! A huge mound of it, sitting there, waiting for it. It moved as fast as it could now, trying to overcome the weakness that was gnawing away at it. As it reached the mound, it hesitated. There was something familiar there--but what?

The marker! But that had been left with the cache, to reserve it. So this was where it went! But how?

Never mind, it thought. Eat now, worry about it when there is more strength. It could feel the hunger slowing ebbing away as it devoured the food. Wait! Noise?

It crawled behind the pile and lay there, hidden. The noise was coming closer now. With some of its hunger gone, it could at last think clearly. A shape appeared in the entrance, large, frightening. It started towards the pile, then stopped.

"Hey, what's goin' on? Who's been messin' around here? You come out here, you godamn thief!"

The shape rushed toward the mound of food and grabbed part of it--trying to steal the food? Of course! This was how the cache got here--this being was trying to take its food. Hunger and revenge overcame fear and it darted out of its hiding place to regain its food that this "being" had stolen.

"I don't see what you're so worried about, Tom. After all, maybe he forgot or something."

"No, Sheriff. He needs the money too bad--and that was high-grade ore he brought in, that's for sure. He's lived alone up there for a long time, shooting rabbits and such for food. He used to bring in some real low-grade stuff--not much better than dirt--and trade it for supplies at the store, that is, till the new owner told him it wasn't worth nothing. That was a year or two ago. He hadn't bought much since then, until last week, when he stocked up on credit. Showed the owner some of his samples and said he'd pay him after he sold them. Said he'd be back for more stuff this week. No, he wouldn't forget. Maybe he's sick or something. Getting old, you know."

"Okay, I'll take you up there in the jeep, though Lord knows, it'll just be another fool errand. He's probably drunk or something."

"Thanks, Sheriff. Let's go."

Shouldn't have done it. After hiding all these years, to come out like this. But there was hunger and the food was here. It regretted the incident, but its food had been taken.

It lay in the ditch and looked at the stars. Even they seemed different now than they did then. Similar, but different, warped somehow. Failure of memory, or maybe they were warped. It couldn't remember if they should be. Unimportant. Must find more food soon. Supply half gone. What happens when there is no more? Who cares? The mission had been a total failure. It had been abandoned here. All these years and no help had come. Might as well die now as keep searching. What difference?

It rested.

"It's just around the hill now. There it is."

The jeep sputtered to a stop next to the cabin. There was no sign of Jeb.

"Jeb! You in there?" Tom called. No answer.

"Hey, maybe he's dead." The sheriff looked somewhat worried at this thought. "We'd better check."

They entered the cabin. There was the ore, but not nearly as much as Jeb had said. And in the corner--

"My God! What could have done that to him?!"

There was a noise. They turned, nauseous, suddenly terrified. Tom seized a rock to protect himself. Then they saw it.

The sheriff had time to scream; Tom didn't even have that.

If only it hadn't had to kill them. But one of them had grabbed some of its food, had tried to steal it, just like the first one. And it was all so pointless. There was no more food around anywhere. It had hoped that when it was stronger, it would be able to find more food, but there was none. Food gone, strength gone, hope gone, it crept back to the cave to die.

MORNING BECOMES ELECTRIC

by Mark R. Leeper

I suppose that my first sign that anything was wrong was when my car opened up its eye and started watching me. It was about the size of a human eye, with a brown iris. It was not particularly bloodshot, a fact for which I can claim credit since I do very little night driving. It had long artistic eyelashes and was situated a little over the left front fender. Of course, I immediately started wondering whether there was another eye over the right front fender. When I started to walk around to the other side of the car, the eye watched me until I was out of its field of vision.

As far as I could tell, There was no eye on the right side of my car, but then I had never noticed the eye on the left side before. I took a quarter that had been part of my change from a twenty-dollar bill when I had bought groceries the evening before. With the quarter I tried to pry open what would have been the eye on this side of the car. To my surprise, it would not open, if it was there, and I only scratched the freshly waxed finish. After a few minutes of struggle I gave up. The obvious conclusion was that there was no eye there after all. Somehow, when I had bought the car, they had palmed off on me an asymmetric cyclops. I would have gone right inside the house and written Henry Ford that his company had sold me a cycloptic Mustang, but I was not sure that the car did not have two eyes on one side like a flounder or one of those brats in Miss Peach.

My neighbor is a mechanic, so he would probably be able to find out for sure if the car was cycloptic or not. I saw him pulling out of his driveway so I called for him to come over. I showed him the eye. After a few minutes of examining the eye it closed and neither of us could get it open.

"It must have some sort of an optic nerve," he said sagely. "I suggest we pick up the hood and look for it." When the hood was up, sure enough there were wires running from the back of the eye to the carburetor. Since these were the only wires running from the carburetor, the logical conclusion was that the car was indeed a cyclops.

"You're a mechanic," I said truthfully. "How much would it cost to have that eye moved to the center of the hood, under the statue of the horse?"

"Well, Jeez, eye transplants don't come cheap, you know. Now if we consider...."

And up above, the garage listened and chuckled to itself.

AUGUST STORM

by Mark R. Leeper

He heard a pickup truck stop outside the garage and the horn honked twice. This was the girl. He walked to the side door, cursing as his leather heels slipped on a spot of grease on the floor. The dirty garage was far from the best place for this sort of thing, but he needed his privacy. The smile. He might as well seem cheerful, it was the least he owed the girl.

He opened the door and went out to meet the truck. First a look up and down the road to make sure they had privacy. That's the way he wanted it, just him and the girl. If there were any complications during the operation and the girl died, he either had to get away or face a murder rap. But there was no one on the road. As far as he could see it was just dirt road, fence, cornfield, and black sky. Funny. The day had started clear. Those storm-clouds pile up fast in this part of the country. The wind was suddenly cold and he shivered a little. Funny weather for August.

The girl sat behind the wheel of the red Chevy pickup truck. The truck was mud-splattered and ugly rusted. Must have been fifteen years old, at least. He walked over and opened the truck door for her. She just sat there staring through the windshield for a few seconds and then slowly turned her head and looked at him.

"You're the man I talked to on the phone?"

"That's me." He smiled for her and she seemed to come out of her haze a little.

"Here's your money," she said, handing him a thick dog-eared envelope. In the bottom coins jingled. Most of the thickness was old wrinkled one dollar bills. "It's all there. Hundred and fifty dollars." He folded the envelope in half and stuffed it into his pants pocket.

His hand grasped hers and he helped her out of the truck. He saw with some relief that her figure had not started to change yet. Too many of these girls wait until it's too late. "How many weeks is it?" he asked. She looked at him with a blank expression. "Since you and your boyfriend..."

"I ain't got no boyfriend," she interrupted. "I never had a boyfriend. Anyway, it's about six weeks, I guess. I don't know for sure."

He decided not to press the matter. "Six weeks," he repeated. "That's good. Shouldn't be any problem at all."

"I'm scared of what you're going to do, but I guess I'm more scared not to have it done. This thing inside me scares me and I want to get rid of it. I don't want to be what it will make me. I



just want to be like I was." He helped her through the doorway into the garage. She stared at the blanket spread out on the floor and the doctor bag beside it. "You're a doctor, ain't ya?"

"Sure am." At least I used to be, he thought. "Are you ready to go ahead?"

"I think so. I dunno. I'm so scared. But I just want to get that thing out of me."

"There's nothing to worry about. Really. You're just going to go to sleep and when you wake up it will be all over." He walked her over to the blanket and helped her down. Out of the doctor bag he pulled a tea strainer and a bottle of clear liquid. He put the strainer over her mouth. "Now just breathe deeply." He dropped a few drops of the clear liquid onto the strainer and her eyes fell slowly shut.

When she woke up the first thing she could hear was rain on the roof. He was kneeling by her head, looking at her. "You missed a real storm. Came up real quickly. Thunder and lightning and hailstones."

"I..." It took her a second to find her voice. "I was afraid of that."

"Will you tell me something?"

"I guess so."

"Who was the father?"

"There wasn't no father. I told you. I don't got no boyfriend. I never known a man. Not like that. Only this big loud voice. Like thunder. I couldn't be what that thing inside of me would have made me. I couldn't be what the voice wanted me to be."

"I had to cut the hymen to work, you know. You can't prove what you were. You're not a virgin anymore."

"Would you want to prove what you were if you had a thing like that inside of you and you killed it?"

It was raining harder now. He wondered if it was ever going to stop.

DOGBONE

by Mark R. Leeper

The dog sat at the base of the time machine and, having killed the beast that he was eating, was eating the beast he killed. How else could he live? Master gone. Gone in a puff of time paradox. Beast meat gone too. Eaten. These bones left. These were his bones now and ever. He felt the bones crack between his teeth. His tongue swept the splinters for brown sugar-marrow. He knew these were his bones. His bones.

It is told that a farmer, for lack of food, was forced to eat his canine companion. After the feast he mused to himself, "Pity I killed the dog when I did. He sure would have loved these bones."

The dog sat at the base of the time machine eating his bones. His bones.

IS THIS ANY WAY TO RUN A LIBRARY?

by Evelyn Chimelis

Since the most important aspect of UMassSFS is its library, it seems only sensible that UMassSFS members (and Betelgeuse readers) should be kept informed as to its progress.

For those who are unacquainted with it, The Library is located in Student Union Room 328B, which despite the number is on the main floor. During the academic year, the Library is open Monday through Friday from 7pm to 9pm, as well as various other times (a complete schedule is posted on the door).

The Library is open to anyone who wishes to use it. Non-members may either read the books there when the Library is open or check them out by paying 5¢/day. Members are entitled to take out books free of charge--membership is \$1.25 for the fall or spring semesters, 50¢ for the summer. In the fall and spring, membership includes a subscription to Betelgeuse and free admission to the movie (or movies) that we show. Both members and non-members are limited to five books at any one time. Books are checked out for one week, renewable for another. Overdue fines are 5¢/day; fines and membership dues may be paid by donations of books. Membership is open to anyone--you don't have to be a student.

As to the contents of the Library, we have at present approximately 2500 books (between 1500 and 2000 different titles). We are in the process of completing a twenty-year collection of the six major magazines--Amazing, Analog, Fantastic, Galaxy, If, and The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. (At the present time we need less than 200 to complete it; we may have those by the time this is being read.) We also have a few of the older pulps as a sample of that era.

For "serious" students of science fiction, we have several reference books, including the MIT SFS Index to Science Fiction Magazines: 1951-1965 and its supplements, and Clarens' An Illustrated History of the Horror Film, as well as many other books on both the literature and the film. On the lighter side, we have an extensive collection of comic books.

If you have any special interest, we can probably help you. While we lack anyone fluent in High Martian, we do have several ERB experts, two film experts (Read their reviews in this issue, an art expert (look at the artwork in this issue), and, of course, the usual vampire, werewolf, and ghoul.

Anyone interested in finding out more about us is invited to drop by any evening or write to us (see contents page for address).

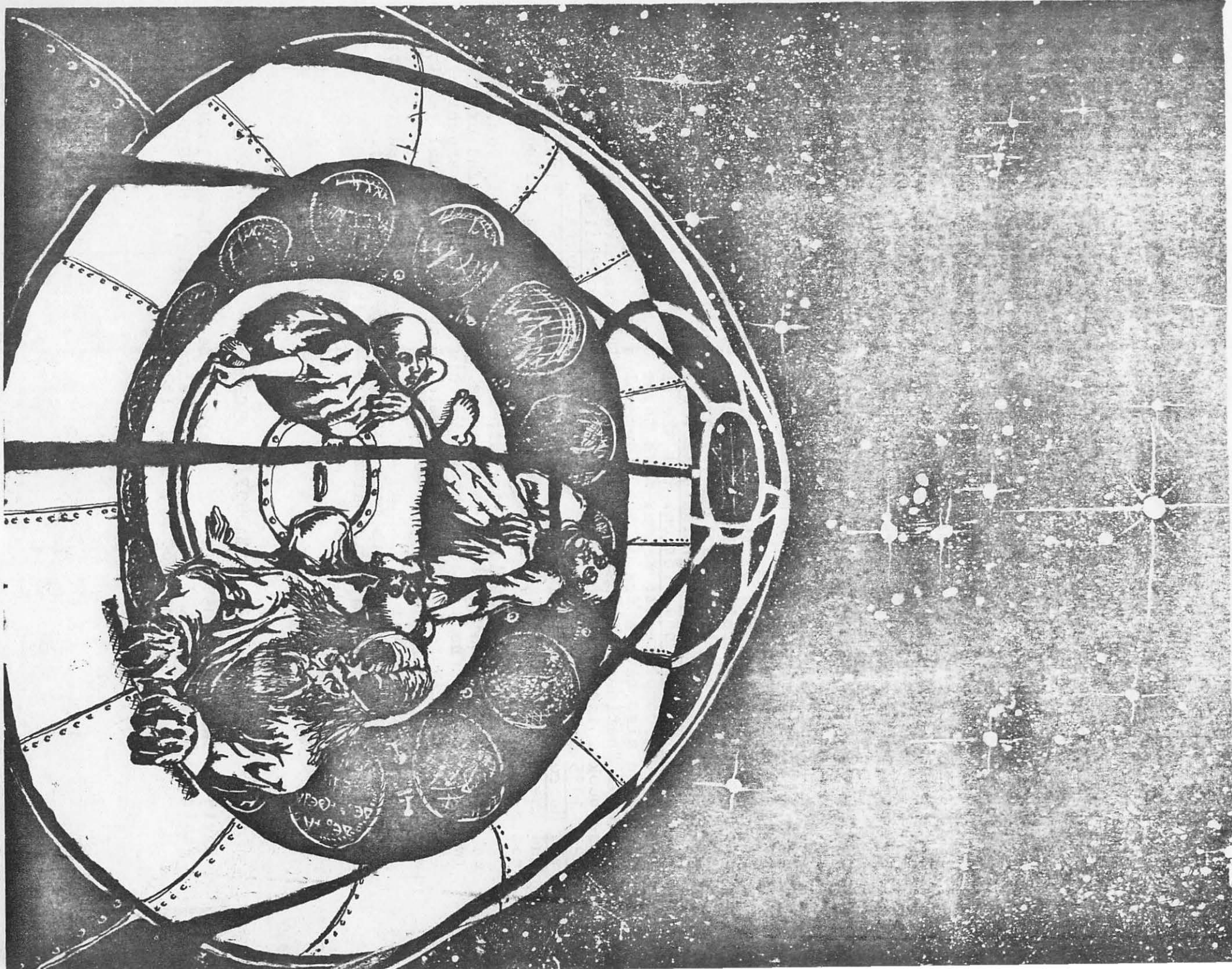
And in answer to my original question--we think so!

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VIGIL

by Mark R. Leeper

The priest walked the half-lit, circular floor of the dome room. But the light was not artificial. Through the glass dome of the room, one bright star lit the room. No longer just a silver point, but a yellow glowing ball. It got bigger and brighter every day. The Journey was almost over.

In the center of the room was a circle that had been worn away and repainted and worn away and painted again. The center of the circle was the center of a wheel and around the wheel, crosslegged, sat three boys staring silently at the glowing ball of the Homestar. Sil. Silent. The priest could remember the days of his boyhood. Those duties he himself spent in the circle, his hands on the wheel, his eyes on the point of light in the center of the dome. The Chant.

The Homestar is light.
The Homestar is bright.
The Homestar will end
Our endless night.
The Homestar must stay
At the top of the dome
For if it does not
We will never get home.

There were parts of the Chant he did not understand then. What was "endless night"? Every morning the panels on the wall glowed and ended the night. How could night be endless? Perhaps if the reactor broke down the night would last longer, but it would be repaired. Miles below there were those who kept the reactors going. And the reactors made the Homestar get brighter and bigger just as they made the walls glow during the day.

What was meant by "home" in the Chant? There is no place but home. Home and outside. And only the repairmen go outside. Yet the books talk of a Journey Home. It was only now that he started to understand.

"Father, I don't want to watch any more. The light hurts my eyes." One of the boys had left the circle, had taken his hands off the wheel.

When the priest was a boy, he would have been flogged for leaving the circle before he was relieved. Six eyes had to be on the Homestar at all times.

The Homestar must stay
At the top of the dome
For if it does not
We will never get home.

But now there was no problem. The Homestar was big and yellow. It would not be lost. "It's all right, boy. The Journey is almost over."

"What is the Journey, Father? Is somebody going someplace?"

"Not somebody. Something. Homestar is making a journey to meet us. To warm our home. The Homestar, like the Prodigal Son, is returning home. Do you remember the story of the Prodigal Son?"

"Yes, Father. But how can Homestar return? Was it home once and went away?"

"Yes, the stories say that once a long time ago the Homestar went away and another star called Centaur came. Then the Centaur went away and now Homestar is coming back. And as long as you don't lose Homestar and you keep concentrating on it, keeping it at the very top of the dome, it comes to you. It's almost here now."

"What will we do when the Homestar comes?"

"There are balls that spin around Homestar. We have to find the

seventh ball in and put it at the top of the dome. When it comes, we will all be able to go outside without suits. And everyone will be able to look at Homestar."

I don't want everyone to be able to see Homestar, Father. It's the Domeboys that brought it. We should be the only ones who get to see it. Besides why...?"

"Boy! That will be enough of that. Go back to the wheel and watch the Homestar. And let's have no more talk about not letting people see the Homestar."

The boy went back to his seat in the circle and watched the Homestar come. The priest stood watching the boys' silent vigil. When he was a boy it was different. They used to joke and laugh. Often they would turn the wheel and watch the Homestar bob in the dome and feel the floor shake. But eyes on the Homestar. No other star but the Homestar must ever go to the top of the dome. And for countless years there were always at least six eyes on that dome. They would tell stories of how the reactor used to watch the Homestar and keep it in the center of the dome. But something went wrong and the Domeboys had to watch the Homestar. It would have been nice to have the reactor do the work. After an eight-hour watch, from your back to your neck to your eyes you are nothing but pain. But when the next shift comes to replace you, you know that the Homestar is still safe at the top of the dome. And you chant.

The Homestar is light.
The Homestar is bright.
The Homestar will end
Our endless night.
The Homestar must stay
At the top of the dome
For if it does not
We will never get home.

He considered telling the boys now, but decided to put it off another day. What had gone wrong? Had somebody started staring at the wrong star at a change of shift? Perhaps Homestar had changed since it left home, but five of the balls! This star had only four balls circling it. He made up his mind that it would not matter. One of the four balls would have to be the new home. This star would have to be Homestar. He made up his mind that the Journey had to be over.

DOLLAR DAY

by Mark R. Leeper

On the day that Topeka's population reached 98 million, Tommy stole a dollar and wandered away from the Day Care center. Mrs. Kellogg saw him go and hoped he would not be back. Tommy went straight to the toy store where he looked at toy guns that really killed and Practical Joke brand street masks with cyanine instead of oxygen in the canisters. He stopped to look at a toy doctor's kit with suicide pills that really worked. Then he wandered into the park where he picked a flower. As it happened, it was one of the last flowers in Topeka so a policeman shot him.

SECOND ANNUAL SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY AUTHOR POLL

by David E. Bara

Over the past year, the UMass Science Fiction Society conducted a poll of the Society membership on their favorite authors. The list of authors included approximately two hundred different names. Each voter marked his ballot on the following basis: 7 (Superior), 6 (Excellent), 5 (Good), 4 (Fair), 3 (Haven't Read), 2 (Haven't Heard Of), 1 (Poor), 0 (Putrid). Thus, in tabulating the results, a perfect score would be 7.00. Because of space limitations, the entire results will not be published here. The highest-rated authors will be listed as space permits, and, for those who enjoy the opposite side of the picture, the bottom twelve authors will also be included. After all, they deserve some kind of recognition. When you write that badly, it's good to know you're succeeding at it.

RATING	AUTHOR	AVG.	RATING	AUTHOR	AVG.
1	Heinlein, Robert A.	6.43	37	Bradbury, Ray	4.33
2	Clarke, Arthur C.	6.03		Bester, Alfred	4.33
3	Niven, Larry	5.47		Kornbluth, C.M.	4.33
4	Simak, Clifford D.	5.43		Harrison, Harry	4.33
5	Asimov, Isaac	5.40		Verne, Jules	4.33
6	Silverberg, Robert	5.17	42	Conklin, Groff	4.30
7	Anderson, Poul	5.07		Lewis, C.S.	4.30
8	Anthony, Piers	5.03	44	Norton, Andre	4.27
	Sturgeon, Theodore	5.03		Stapleton, Claf	4.27
10	Tolkien, J.R.R.	5.00		Dickson, Gordon R.	4.27
	Laumer, Keith	5.00		Del Rey, Lester	4.27
12	Leiber, Fritz	4.97	48	Norman, John	4.13
13	Wells, H.G.	4.90		Lovecraft, H.P.	4.13
14	Vance, Jack	4.87		Herbert, Frank	4.13
	Zelazny, Roger	4.87		Dick, Philip K.	4.13
	Poe, Edgar Allan	4.87	52	Aldias, Brian	4.07
17	Burroughs, Edgar Rice	4.83		Brunner, John	4.07
18	Doyle, Arthur Conan	4.80		Vonnegut, Kurt, Jr.	4.07
19	Lafferty, R.A.	4.70	55	McCaffrey, Anne	4.03
20	Farmer, Philip Jose	4.67			
	DeCamp, L. Sprague	4.67			
	Knight, Damon	4.67			
23	Van Vogt, A.E.	4.60			
	Orwell, George	4.60			
	Blish, James	4.60			
	Davidson, Avram	4.60			
27	Keyes, Daniel	4.57			
	Pohl, Frederik	4.57			
29	Delany, Samuel R.	4.53			
30	Ellison, Harlan	4.47			
	Huxley, Aldous	4.47			
	Clement, Hal	4.47			
33	Henderson, Zenna	4.43			
34	Panshin, Alexei	4.40			
	Serling, Rod	4.40			
	Wyndham, John	4.40			

And now, from the bottom up....

1	Robeson, Kenneth	1.97
2	Munn, H. Warner	2.13
3	Appleton, Victor, Jr.	2.20
	Gordon, Rex	2.20
	Geston, Mark S.	2.20
6	Werper, Barton	2.27
	Faucette, John	2.27
	Sherrad, T.L.	2.27
9	Kelly, Leo P.	2.33
	Howard, Hayden	2.33
	Tiger, John	2.33
12	Brown, Rosel George	2.37

(As an afterword, it should be mentioned that lesser-known authors tended not to rate too highly, in many cases, whether or not they were good writers.)

HOME AND THE HIGHWAY

by David E. Manriques

Like his grandfather said, everyone had seen it coming; cars were just getting too homelike and the population too big. To raise property taxes was a simple matter, for the land was needed for farming and there wasn't anybody who couldn't live in a homecar. Dimly, he recalled living in a real house with grandpa and everybody, but that had been long, long ago. Their house had been condemned, and he had been exiled from his family to go to the Schooling Lanes. He remembered his grandfather saying that more people had been killed on the highways than in all the wars combined. Obviously, somebody else had heard that too.

It wasn't that he was afraid to drive a car, he had been taught, but already he had seen some of the trainees smash into each other. The cars were ridiculously fragile at speeds over ninety, but they were comfortable. Buying the best, he had put armour plating on it, and he felt reasonably safe. His family had been very rich, so he was spared the years of labour most people went through to get a car, and, for that, he was thankful.

The car ahead of him sped up the ramp onto the Adult Road. He was next, and his palms grew moist on the steering wheel. As the light flashed green, he put his foot on the accelerator. When he topped the rise, he saw it. Like a hoard of hungry animals, he saw masses of cars, stretching out in all directions as far as the eye could see. Automatically, his reflexes eased his car into the space for him. Slowly, he eased up the speed indicator until it read a hundred and six.

As the sea of metal closed about him, his pulse rate soared, and sweat drenched his body. Sweat continued to pour from him as he was surrounded by other vehicles scant inches away from his car. When a rest stop appeared, he pulled to the side and gratefully turned off the engine. He had three hours of peace, so he darkened the windows and went into the shower.

Feeling much more at ease, he cleared the windows and looked out at the sea of cars whizzing by at tremendous speeds. As he watched, he saw at least seven fatal accidents and the clearing planes hover over the wreckage, cleaning it like so much garbage, like his mother swept the hallway.

After drinking a little liquor, he turned on his engine and nosed into the hoard. Seeing other cars moved aside when his approached let his hand stop shaking. His confidence grew when he jockeyed his car into a position where it was surrounded by a bunch of little welfare cars. If they ran into him, they wouldn't even leave a dent.

Years passed like that. He spent his rest time sleeping and bathing; then placed his vehicle amidst a group of the little welfare cars. They sponged off him, but they were like a protective wall against anything as big as his own car, so he didn't mind. There were accidents, but he never felt them. He knew about them of course. The police had to notify him, and they always made remarks on the strength of his car, as they told him how some little welfare car had side-swiped him to crumple on his armour plating, but he didn't know the people, and he never saw the accidents; still he had much rather not be told, since the idea of killing someone was not pleasant, but they had to.

The only people he saw were other chess players on the televiewer. He did not even remember actually touching anybody, but then, there

was no need to, and that was part of the idea. If you did not meet anyone, you certainly could not get married and have children. It was done though. If you met someone, someone nice, you could connect cars and go as a couple until she had to turn off on Maternity Lane. Chances were you would never see her again, but you could try to catch her.

There were a lot of stories like the one about a couple who had met by televiewer. Unfortunately, one was in New York and the other was in California. It had taken twenty-five years for them to get together, and a day later they were involved in a fatal accident. There were a lot like that, about couples who tried to get together and failed.

A lot of women, who were sterilized, were allowed to remain at the rest stops, and they could be bought along with food and water, if he really wanted to, so that wasn't the reason he was so attracted to Jeannie.

Thirty miles from Chicago, the cars had ground to a halt. Helicopters flew overhead and announced one of those huge multi-laned accidents, in which hundreds die. It would take two days for cleanup procedures, and they were requested to turn off their engines until further notice.

That day passed easily, for he was able to devote himself almost entirely to games of chess or bridge. He slept late and fixed himself an extra good meal, so he was in extremely good spirits when Jeannie walked up and knocked on his car. Clearing the window, he was surprised to see a beautiful blond looking back at him, but that did not stop him from opening the hatch to speak to her.

"What do you want?"

She smiled and threw back her long blond hair.

"Do you have some cream? I ran short, and I like my coffee with cream."

He nodded and began to fumble with the refrigerator door, as he felt his heartbeat increase and a sort of confusion spread over him.

"You really have a nice car."

"Thank you."

He got the cream out and handed it to her.

"I really don't need that much, besides it will spoil, since I don't have a refrigerator."

"All right."

He poured some in a plastic container and handed it to her.

"Is this enough?"

She nodded.

"Do you mind if I attach my car to yours?"

He thought for a moment and shrugged.

"I don't mind, but if there should be an accident your car will be crushed."

"Ever Have an accident?"

"No."

"Then, I'll have only one side exposed instead of four, right?"

"I guess so."

"And then I can save my money from gas and batteries and won't run out of cream."

She closed the hatch, and he watched as she walked back to her car. It was one of the little welfare cars that moved against his and attached itself. His car ran on atomic power and was good for another hundred years; her car was solar power and battery charged. He certainly could spare the energy to supply the little thing, and, as they were heading north, she might be stranded come some cloudy days. As a

matter of fact, probably all the little cars would want to use his atomic engine, but he didn't mind.

The day was hot, hotter than it should be, and he had to keep the air conditioning on all day. It helped, but by nightfall, he felt clammy and he was about to step into a warm tub when he heard a knock on the door. Slipping on a robe, he went and opened the hatch.

"Yes?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. Say, you don't have a shower, do you?"

"I have a bathtub with a shower head."

"Really? I never had a shower all to myself. At the rest stops they have community showers, but they're either scalding or freezing."

"I know, that's why I got my own."

"Your own shower. I really shouldn't ask you, but...."

"That's all right, any day you want, but it's not exactly private. No one can see inside from outside, because the glass is one-way, but the glass will be crystal clear for someone inside."

Her face lit up, and he remembered his mother and how she held him ~~there~~ when the bee had stung him.

"You won't look will you?"

"On my honor, I wouldn't, but I thought you just had to know."

"Well, I don't expect you to keep your eyes closed, I just don't want you gaping at me."

"I wouldn't do that, I would never do that to a lady."

She smiled again, and he felt the same warmth until her brow curled in worry.

"You can regulate the temperature can't you?"

"Oh, yes."

She clapped her hands and gave a little cry of joy. This time, he saw the whole family sitting around the big table. It was his birthday and all his favorite dishes and a great big cake were on the table. Uncle Louis and Aunt Martha were there, and everyone was smiling at him, and he knew he was very, very special that day.

"Well, I came to ask if I could hook my televiewer to your antenna. I can barely get a hundred miles away."

"All right. My name is William Carlson the Third. You can call me Bill."

"Oh, isn't that funny," she laughed, "we forgot, and here we are almost living together. My name is Jeannie."

She didn't have a last name, of course. She had probably been born on Maternity Lane and didn't even know her mother and father.

She left, and he returned to the warm tub. She was a nice girl, very nice.

After he got out of the bath, he dressed and sat before the televiewer. The call numbers soon brought to life his mother, who was many miles away. Father was the only one who died so far, but that was to be expected, since they all had cars like his.

"Oh, Billy, how are you?"

"I'm fine, mother. Mother, I met a girl."

His mother's face lit up immediately, and he knew that he had made her happy. It had always been very hard to make her happy after Father's death.

"And the first thing you did was call your mother, how sweet, how thoughtful."

He blushed under her praise.

"I wanted to know if there was a minister, maybe the family minister, someone you would want to conduct the wedding?"

"Always my boy, so thoughtful. Yes, there is a Reverend Tillney, his number is 36-18-24-35-666-7215."

"Thank you."

"Is she pretty?"

"Yes, mother, she is very beautiful."

"Do you know her well?"

"We have our cars attached, she's very nice, she's like laying on the grass with sun streaming down on you."

"Just like home, I miss home very much. Our family had lived in that house for thirteen generations."

"Mother, be careful."

"Thank you son. God bless you."

The communication was broken, and he heard the blare of loud-speakers telling him to start his engine. Snapping his lights on, he saw that the cars were slowly moving forward, and he started his engine to join them. He didn't notice the weight of the other car, but memories of his boyhood pressed down on him.

He had had a little brown dog that he had played with in the grass. He remembered throwing sticks for Rusty to catch, and, with his tail wagging, he brought them back to him. He remembered swimming in a little pool with his brothers and sisters as the grownups swam in the big one, and he saw the big room with all his model boats that had been his, all for himself.

A knock on the door sounded, and he watched as the side plating fell inward and Jeannie emerged with curlers, a towel, and other personal articles.

"Can I take that shower now?"

"Yes, of course."

She smiled and walked into the tub's clear plastic enclosure. She managed to hang towels on all the towel racks, and when she began to undress, he turned his head away, but he had to look at the rear view mirror occasionally, and the bathroom had been lined up with that, in case he had to make some quick maneuvers with the auxiliary controls. She had a superb figure.

An hour later, she emerged to take the controls away from him. Her hair was all curled and pushed to the top of her head, and she wore a beautiful evening dress, like his older sister in Georgia, before they had been forced to leave. She smelled nice too, real nice.

"Do you like it? I never had a chance to really wear it before, or anyone to wear it for."

"It's beautiful," he stammered.

She smiled and bobbed the big curl on the back of her neck. He thought he remembered a whole bunch of girls doing that with their boyfriends on the veranda when there had been a summer barbecue. They rode horses then, cars were for going to town, until the big highway came.

"Would you like something to eat?"

"If it wouldn't be any trouble."

He got up and headed for the grill. As he threw the steaks on the steel, he imagined that he was roasting a whole pig like his father and grandfather. Using big brushes to put the barbecue sauce on. Even then there were whispers of the damn highway and talk of building great walls to keep it out as they drank their mint juleps. At fifteen, he had been thrust among boys years younger than himself to learn how to drive a car.

"Is that a steak?"

"Why, yes, haven't you ever had one?"

She shook her head, and he watched the pony tail curl wiggle. With both of them watching the dials, they were able to keep some attention on their food and each other. Her presence was like a smile,

and he felt glad, very happy, all over.

They talked a lot, and he shared all his memories with her, and she brought them alive with her rapt attention. She thought he was telling her about a fairy land, and maybe he was.

She stayed more and more in his car, but she slept in her own, of course. A week later he proposed, and they called up all his relatives and the Reverend Tillney. A special cake was baked, a wedding cake, like the one his mother had had. They were in a rest stop and had multi-view. A friend of Jeannie's was best man, and they even had a wedding ring. Jeannie was thrilled to pieces and spread more happiness than ever before. She said no one hardly ever got a real wedding any more. She was his sisters and mother, his dog and the old house, she was everybody and everything he had ever loved, and she was always smiling even when other people were tense or worried. They both felt very fortunate to get each other, and they knew their marriage would last, for they were very much in love.

They said their I dos, and he slipped the ring on her finger and kissed her. They passed the cake and wine out to everyone at the rest stop. Some people even threw rice when he carried her over the threshold of the car.

As a last tribute to their marriage, Jeannie went to get her things out of the little car as he set the big one onto the freeway. That was when the other car hit his and crushed the little welfare car, just like he had said it would. He felt Jeannie's blood all over him.

They chased him for five hours. He had pressed the accelerator to the floor mowing down all before him, crushing all the little cars. The chase ended when the car careened over the wall onto the Schooling Lanes, which detonated the atomic motor. Detroit became a radioactive crater.

THE HOLE-UNIVERSE CATALOG (continued from page 23)

the light and the singularity stores it. Maybe Kodak could develop a camera on this principle--"Einstimatic." If light is trapped, what a wealth of information is there for the unscrambling!

Black holes are surely intriguing objects. Speculation is cheap, however. Their true nature remains unknown. The mathematics (assuming the basic ideas are right) is very hard but even a lot of work has revealed very little. What we really need is a good Black hole calculator.

