

LOKI





L O K I

An amateur publication of science fiction and fantasy

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FRONT COVER BY RUSS MANNING. INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN GROSSMAN AND WILLIAM ROTSLER.

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION --

THIS is Loki, a magazine of fantasy and science fiction devoted to the works of professionals and amateurs alike. This, the first issue, brings you a healthy helping of both.

On the professional side of the picture we present Otto "Eando" Binder, Richard S. Shaver, Stanley G. Weinbaum, David H. Keller, and Dorothy Quick.

Leading off the issue is Binder's "The Earth Trap", a previously unpublished 3,000 worder. Otto hasn't been too active in the stf field for the past seven years and this is his latest contribution. Ten years ago Binder was the most prolific writer in the field and has over 100 published stories to his credit. Richard S. Shaver, author of the famed "Shaver Mystery" series in Amazing and the center of more controversy than any other writer in the history of science fiction, is represented in Loki by a prose pastel entitled "Life," and a poem, "The Monstrance."

Dorothy Quick, who had several poems published in August Derleth's recent anthology, "Dark of the Moon", has contributed a poem, "The Ghost." David H. Keller, a pioneer in the stf field, also is represented by a poem. We're also glad to present two unpublished poems from Weinbaum's novel, "The Mad Brain."

Among the amateurs represented are Joe Kennedy, Jack Zatt, Albert Toth, Lin Carter, Mari-Jane Nuttall, Robert Lee Farnsworth, Stephanie Grace, and the editors, Genevieve Stephens and Gerry de la Ree.

We're on the lookout for more short fiction or prose pastels, as well as good poetry. We're pretty well stocked with artwork from such fan artists as John Grossman, Joe Gross, Frances Laubs, Bill Rotsler, John Cockroft, Russ Manning, and Jerri Bullock, but if you have something to contribute we'll be glad to look it over.

The ever-increasing cost of paper forces us to make a change for the second issue of Loki, which will appear before the Torcon. This current number comes to you free of any charge, but starting with the next issue it'll cost you 10¢ a copy. We're not asking for long-term subscriptions. If you want to remain on the mailing list, just send along 10¢. Contributions of stamps or cash will be gratefully accepted and acknowledged. Address all correspondence to 9 Bogert Place, Westwood, N. J.

All readers are urged to send along their comments on this issue. Tell us your likes and dislikes and perhaps future issues will be more to your liking.

THE EDITORS

THE EARTH TRAP

By EANDO BINDER

LONG and sleek, the Smithton Rocket upreared into the sky, pointing symbolically toward the stars. It was 98 feet from tail fins to reinforced nose, and rested in a cradle of steel supports. Atomic power would feed the tubes, and hurl it away from Earth. It was designed to reach the moon -- and come back.

And it would carry passengers. Two human souls. The world was at the threshold of interplanetary travel. Rumors flew thick and fast of other ships being readied for the great venture, in other countries.

Who would be the first to burst the prison of Earth?

"I hope we're the first," said Don Lomax fervently. "Only half a day to L-Hour -- Launching Hour. You know, Lorna, I'm almost afraid to listen to radio news reports, for fear any moment an announcement comes -- Rocket Ship Returns from Moon! Other groups are pushing their projects as hard as we are."

Lorna Paine nodded. "But I think we're ahead of schedule. Smithton spared no expense, and I think we've got the jump on any foreign outfit. We're going to bring home the bacon for Smithton and the good old U. S. A.!"

Don Lomax and Lorna Paine had been chosen by Smithton Foundation to man the rocket to the moon. Don, a war pilot, had flown jets and even the post-war rocket planes. He knew as much as any man about the new propulsion.

But not as much as any woman. Lorna Paine's brilliant mind knew rockets from A to Z. She had been a key member of the technical corps which had feverishly worked out the designs of the moon ship. Sex to the side, she had been the logical one to accompany the pilot, as his relief.

And it was logical too that these two, in the past six months of association on the project, should have found their relationship not simply that of pilot and expert. They were more to each other now. . .

Don's arm stole around her shoulder, as he pointed up to the beckoning stars. "I warn you," he murmured. "I'm going to propose to you on the way to the moon. And if you turn me down, out you go, through the garbage-lock."

Lorna laughed and sighed at the same time. "And if you don't propose to me, mister, I'll put fissionable uranium in your scup. So there!"

Their laughter floated up to the enigmatic suns of space.

Don sobered. "Lorna, there's danger too. Let's face it. We may not reach the moon."

"Granted," Lorna returned quickly. "But there's this consolation: if we go out, we go out together. That's the important thing, dear. We can't lose. We come back together. Or we don't come back, together."

Their lips touched, but only for a moment. A footstep sounded behind them. A slight man, owlshly peering through glasses, stepped out of shadow.

"Please pardon me," he said apologetically. "I didn't mean to interrupt. But I have something very important to tell you." He paused to take a deep breath and then -- "Don't go on this trip!"

Don tensed. "Is that a threat? Who sent you --"

"No, no!" The little man waved a hand. "I'm not some foreign agent, sent to sabotage your plan. I'm Dr. Ira Swanne. Perhaps you've heard of me?"

"The rocket expert!" Don and Lorna exclaimed together. Don continued. "But you've been working on moon rockets yourself, privately. Why should you, of all people, tell us not to make this trip?"

The little man spoke in a bleak voice. "I'll be blunt. Because I don't think you'll ever reach the moon!"

Don grinned. "If I didn't know you and your reputation, I'd put you down as a crackpot. A wild-eyed man came to us just yesterday and said his crystal-ball showed him the time was wrong for us to go and . . ."

"Please," Dr. Swanne sounded hurt. "My warning has a scientific basis. Look, in the past year, I've sent three rockets to the moon. Unmanned of course -- experimental. All three exploded in space!"

Don and Lorna looked at each other, soberly.

"Smithton didn't try sending unmanned rockets to the moon." Don said slowly. "Too much waste of time in the race to be first. They concentrated on building the manned ship. But why did your rockets explode?"

It was Lorna who spoke next. "Cosmic rays?" she guessed. "Cosmic rays could well set off the atomic fuel. But this ship of ours is shielded against cosmic rays."

"My last rocket, too," muttered the scientist, "was shielded. Still it exploded."

"Then what's the answer?" demanded Don.

The scientist spread his hands. "I don't know -- yet. It must be some new, unknown factor about space travel. Some danger or hazard we know nothing about. As a matter of fact, I have a theory---" He broke off, shaking his grey head, with a sheepish look. "No, I won't go into that. It's such a wild theory that I don't believe it myself."

Don laughed suddenly. "So three of your experimental rockets exploded in space. So what? So a dozen rocket-planes exploded too, before they got the know-how. As far as this moon rocket is concerned, Smithton put in all the know-how available. And I, for one, think we're going to reach the moon."

"But I say you won't reach the moon!" Dr. Swanne's voice became a little shrill. "You must listen to me, for your own sake. If you two young people make the try, and never come back, I'll feel as if your blood is on my hands."

Lorna patted his shoulder, winking at Don.

"Go home and forget it, Dr. Swanne," she said kindly. "We're going through with this thing no matter what you or anybody says."

The little scientist's mouth worked for another moment, with a desperate look in his eyes, but no words came out. He seemed to slump inwardly, then. Without a word he turned and left.

"Poor old fellow," murmured Lorna. "Just his imagination. His rockets were defective, naturally. But it preyed on his mind, thinking of us going to the moon."

Don and Lorna dismissed the matter. They were young, vibrant, full of life and courage. They looked challengingly up at the stars. . .

HE next day, at his private laboratory, Dr. Swanne was a bundle of nerves. "Those two young fools," he muttered. "They're going to throw away their lives, despite my warning."

"They wouldn't listen to you?" asked Dirk, his assistant.

"No. The worst of it is, I couldn't give them any concrete reason. I told them about my three rockets. But after all, that was no proof. The rockets, they would say to themselves, might have been defective."

"But those rockets were not defective," Dirk said firmly. "I'm sure of it. Yet they didn't reach the moon. They exploded in space."

Dr. Swanne was thoughtful. "They didn't exactly explode, Dirk. You remember? We watched them in the radar screen. They sort of puffed apart. As if they had turned to gas!"

Dirk's face showed sudden awe. "What did it, Doc? What happens when you leave the Earth and go into space?"

"I wish I knew," the little scientist exploded. "Then I could tell them -- stop them." He calmed himself and went on in a dreamy voice. "Dirk, there's one thing that almost proves my theory. Astronomers estimate that there are at least 100 billion stars, in our Milky Way Galaxy alone, ignoring all other remote galaxies. They estimate also that perhaps one out of a million stars has a family of planets. This means that there are, say, 100 thousand suns with planets!

Dirk listened without comment. He had heard this before.

"Therefore, there must be other planets, around other suns, which are inhabited by intelligent races. And by the law of averages alone, some of those races must be much older than the human race. And more scientific."

The scientist paused.

"Why is it, then, that no other race achieved space travel?" The words hung in the room, echoing, challenging. Dr. Swanne went on. "Think of it. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other races became scientific. They all tried space travel. Yet no space ship has ever reached Earth! The only logical answer is that space travel has defied their best efforts!"

Dirk nodded, reluctantly. "But why? What is there about space travel that can't be solved?"

"That's the thing we don't know." Dr. Swanne jumped up. "But maybe we can find the answer today. Is the new rocket ready? Come on, no time to waste!"

They went outside, to the rocket launching pit. A steel framework held a rocket, pointing skyward, ready to go.

"We're only sending it up 5000 miles," said Dr. Swanne. "The moon rockets all exploded beyond 10,000 miles. This rocket will come back, after going 5000 miles. And maybe. . . maybe it will tell us a secret."

After a final check, they went behind the concrete shield some distance off, and Dirk pressed the button. A belching roar

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came from the tubes. The rocket trembled, rose slowly, and then suddenly shot upward with tremendous acceleration. Soon it was out of sight.

Dr. Swanne and Dirk ran back to the laboratory and tuned the radar set they had developed to follow their rockets. They picked up its moving image. They watched tensely.

The rocket reached a speed of 10,000 miles an hour. It was toned down in power, not meant to achieve the escape velocity and leave Earth's gravitational field. At 5660 miles above Earth, it slowed to a stop, turned, and came down again.

An hour later it landed in the fields, only a mile from the lab. Dr. Swanne had installed his own "homing" device, which kept the rocket from landing too far away. They drove to it in a jeep. It lay on the ground, almost unscratched. Another device had automatically set off a burst of rocket charges, when nearing the ground, thus easing its fall.

Dr. Swanne handed Dirk one end of a flexible tape-measure. "We're going to measure it."

Dirk was mystified. "Measure it?"

"Yes," the scientist said shortly. He didn't add that he hoped now to confirm his new theory. The new theory was something even Dirk didn't know a out. The scientist had kept it to himself, because it was so utterly fantastic. . .

"Length, 40 feet and 3 inches," Dr. Swanne announced, taking the reading. They made a belly measurement -- "Circumference, 10 feet, 2 inches."

Dirk suddenly caught on, gasping. "But Doc, the rocket was exactly 40 feet, and 10 feet, when we built it, and sent it up. How can it be bigger now?"

Dr. Swanne was staring up in the sky, his eyes strangely sorrowful. His voice was a croak. "Now I know the truth, the real truth. No rocket can reach the moon!"

Dirk wanted to ask more questions, but the scientist hustled him into the jeep and sped for the laboratory. Dr. Swanne rushed into his office and returned some minutes later, with a slip of paper in his hand. A formula was written on it.

"Dirk," he said hoarsely. "This formula proves my theory now. I've been working on this for months, but today's results gave me the final equation. This formula shows that all things en-
large as they leave a gravitational field."

Dirk could only stare. "But I never heard of such a thing!"

"Nor did anybody," returned Dr. Swanne, without any boastful elation. "This is something entirely new to science. Look, Dirk. We know that the higher you go, the weaker gravity becomes. And the weaker gravity becomes, the weaker becomes the cohesive force that holds all material objects together! That's my new principle."

"You mean that as things move away from Earth, and its gravitational field, they expand?"

"Exactly. Gravity not only holds things down -- it also holds things together! Nobody suspected it before. Because nobody went far enough away from Earth to find out. We all live from birth to death in Earth's gravitational field. All our science and all our instruments work only in this field. And I say that when you leave Earth's gravity field, it all changes.

"The rocket we sent up proves it. The expanding effect is almost unnoticeable at low altitudes. For instance, the formula shows that any rocket sent up 100 miles will only expand one millimeter in length. You couldn't even measure it.

"But the further from Earth you go, the more the expanding effect works! It's the usual square-of-the-distance equation. At 5000 miles, as we noticed, a 40-foot rocket gains three inches in length. At 10,000 miles it will gain a few feet. At 20,000 miles it will double its length. And then, beyond that. . ."

"It explodes!" cried Dirk. "Exactly as our rockets did, when we tried to send them to the moon."

"Not explodes," corrected Dr. Swanne. "It simply expands and expands until. . ."

He broke off with a sharp cry. "Good Lord! I almost forgot. I've got to stop that moon rocket. Those two young people, heading for doom. . ."

He leaped to the phone, putting through a call to Smithton frantically. "The moon rocket," he yelled to the answering party. "It must not leave."

The voice came back firmly. "The moon rocket has gone, sir. It took off an hour ago."

Dr. Swanne dropped the phone from his nerveless fingers. "I didn't notice the time," he groaned. "They left on schedule, an hour ago. It was too late to stop them in any case. They're already a few thousand miles up, piling on acceleration, heading for . . . the end. . ."

"And there's no way to reach them," said Dirk in a low voice. "Radio contact only goes a few hundred miles up, to the

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ionosphere. Radar contact works, but it doesn't transmit words. The moon rocket is already out of contact with Earth."

IN the moon rocket, Don Lomax sat at the controls and listened to the steady drumming of the rockets behind him. He was building up acceleration to the escape velocity.

He turned to smile at Lorna Paine, busily checking instruments. "All's going according to Hoyle, kid," he said exultantly. "We're up 5000 miles and going strong. We'll reach the moon."

Lorna smiled back. "I just happened to think of that little scientist, Dr. Swanne. I sometimes wonder what that 'theory' of his was, that he wouldn't tell? He seemed to think space travel was practically suicide!"

"Forget it," Don said easily.

At 10,000 miles, Lorna first spoke of it. "Don! Do you have a funny feeling in your hands? Do your fingers feel as if they're big and clumsy?"

"Funny," said Don. "I've been feeling for a while as if somehow we're getting . . uh . . bigger. Oh, rubbish. Just my imagination."

But at 15,000 miles, Lorna gave a little frightened shriek! "Don! Look! Things are becoming transparent. Something is happening, Don. . . something awful!"

Don didn't have to be told. He could see faint star images now, right through the solid walls of their ship.

"Lorna, we're going back!" he yelled. "I'm going to turn the ship and decelerate."

But when he tried to grasp the control lever, it felt soft, like rubber. And his fingers couldn't make a solid grip. It was like trying to grab smoke.

It all happened rapidly then, for they were roaring out into space at seven miles a second. Don leaped and took Lorna in his arms. Or tried to take Lorna in his arms. She was almost wraith-like, misty, like a genie out of a bottle.

And with a soundless POOF, the moon rocket turned into a mass of loose gaseous atoms. For a moment two huge forms of mist, bearing the vague shape of a man and woman, clung to each other. and then they, too, puffed apart into scattered molecules. . .

R. Swanne turned away from his radar screen, pityingly,

shaken to the bottom of his soul.

"Gone," he moaned. "Their ship puffed apart, just like my rockets did. Poor kids. . ."

He dragged himself to a chair and slumped heavily.

"Dirk," he said in a dead voice. "I wish to Heaven I'd been wrong -- but I'm right. Think of it -- all those other worlds -- other people. We're all trapped! Trapped on our own worlds. None of us can escape beyond our gravitational fields. Only nebulous comets, and broken meteors, can journey through gravitationless space. The human race may go on a million years -- and never reach even the moon. Other races never did conquer space, even though they must have tried in countless ways."

Dr. Swanne looked out of his window, as night brought out the stars. Time had passed rapidly, almost unnoticed.

"I wonder what the world will say when I tell it the truth -- the bitter truth -- that space travel is impossible!"

The End

MONEY!

RUSSELL HAROLD WOODMAN of Portland, Maine, has made the following offer:

To the author of the outstanding piece of fiction or poetry in this issue of LOKI, he will present a prize of \$5. Mr. Woodman will be the sole judge of the material and the winner will receive his prize within two weeks after LOKI is published. The editors of this magazine and Mr. Woodman are not eligible for the prize.

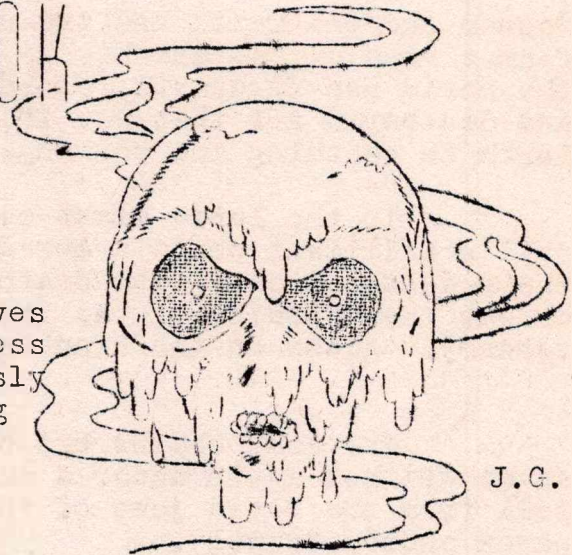
WRITE A LETTER COMMENTING ON THIS ISSUE. THE NEXT ISSUE OF LOKI WILL HAVE A COMPLETE LETTER SECTION.

DREAM OF RAGNAROK

By GERRY de la REE

---**---

OUT of the mouldering archives of time, echoing through the fathomless void of space, and beating relentlessly on the brain of Loki was the taunting word, Ragnarok! -- Twilight of the Gods. . .



J.G.

Looming before the glorious Bifrost Bridge, Heimdall the Guardian raised high the great Gjallar-horn and sounded the final shrill blast that shook the very roots of the world-tree Yggdrasil and warned human and Aesir alike that fate-ordained Ragnarok was at hand.

Loki, together with the Hel-dog, Garm, and Fenris the wolf, rose up and snapped the bonds that had held them captive for eons beyond count, and set forth to join the splendid forces of Surtr and the grim frost giants as they marched on Asgard.

O day of judgement, how long thou wast in coming, but how complete shall be thy fury. . .

Forward went Loki, the pent-up vengeance of centuries deeply outlined on his palid face, and behind him trailed Garm, Fenris, and Iomungandr, a trio unmatched in the annals of fear. Smoke and clouds of deathly vapours belched forth from the japing jaws of Fenris and Iomungandr and filled the vast vault of Heaven with their poisonous breath.

And down went the mighty Bridge of Rainbows -- famed Bifrost which linked Heaven and Earth -- beneath the hammering hoofbeats of the horses, astride which rode the legions of the invaders. Undaunted, they reassembled and faced the Aesir upon the plain of Vigrid.

One by one the Gods fell. Mighty Odin, his single eye blazing, was swallowed up by Fenris; Thor, his hammer flailing, slew the famed Midgard Serpent, only to succumb to the poisonous venom that streamed from the jaws of the dead monster. Tyr -- he of the one arm -- perished in a mortal struggle with Garm, while Surtr's flaming blade cut down Frey. . .

Finally, all others save Loki, Heimdall, and himself having perished, Surtr suddenly flung his fiery brands throughout the

Heaven and the Earth and the nine kingdoms of Hel. The raging flames rose higher and higher, curled around the stalwart stem of the world ash Yggdrasil, consumed the golden palaces of the Gods, and destroyed all that was in its path, setting even the waters of Earth to seething and boiling.

In the lurid light cast by the burning vegetation, Heimdall's brilliant white armor gleamed as he and Loki closed in for their destined date with death. Loki, determined that he would defeat the Guardian of the Bridge, lunged forward to slay his adversary. Alone on the blackened plain of Vigrid they met. . .

* * *

The cold chains bit brutally into the flesh of his wrists as he writhed again under a nerve-piercing drop of warm venom that fell from the fetid jaws of the giant reptile. His dream of Ragnarok ended abruptly.

A few seconds of torturous waiting and then a second drop oozed from the gaping mouth, crashed with a seemingly thunderous impact on his upturned forehead, and cascaded slowly across the bridge of his nose and into his eyes. The pain seared his brain, but he knew that when he re-opened his burning eyes she would be back with the cup and he would again enjoy a few hours of comparative rest; until the cup was filled and must again be emptied.

He felt rather than saw her return, as she noiselessly took her accustomed place beside him on the cavern floor just in time to receive in the vessel another drop of foul venom.

Lying prostrate on his back, fettered to the cold stone by ten chains, the once-powerful Loki reflected on his sorry fate. Doomed to remain thus manacled he was, ere the arrival of Ragnarok. Only then would he be allowed to snap his bonds.

His proud face gazed upward into the shadowy extremities of his underground prison -- mausoleum of the living. His heavy mane of ebon hair cushioned his head from the cruel rock which had served him as a pillow for countless years. His ever-youthful body -- that of a God forsaken and exiled to Earth by his fellow Gods -- remained still as the faithful Sigyn placed one cool hand on his burning brow, soothing away the lingering effects of those last two poisonous drops. . . The God of Strife and Spirit of Evil again let his mind relax, and . . .

OUT of the mouldering archives of time, echoing through the fathomless void of space, and beating relentlessly on the brain of Loki was the taunting word, Ragnarok! -- Twilight of the Gods. .

THE FLAME MAKER

By Joe Kennedy

MEMORY fades, but the image of the Flame Maker and his cavern of wonderful secrets is burned unforgettably into my brain. He was ancient and white-haired when I was but a youth, and the children of the tribe went often to his hillside cave far across the valley. Sparkling tubes of crystal, surrounded by coils of glistening stone, gleamed in the darkness of the cavern.

"You are the last children of the Earth, small ones," he would say, his huge, questioning eyes peering at us from his shrivelled, leathery face. "Someday I shall die, but my cave will preserve the secrets of the dead past. Someday men will be ready to learn these things."

He would talk to us for hours, his grizzled fingers turning the pages of mouldering books. The things he told us made our heads ache to think about, so we did not attempt to understand them. Sometimes the Flame Maker would take a stick and trace a series of circles and dots on the dirt floor. "This is an atom," he would pronounce gravely. "Everything. . .the trees in the jungle, the twinkling stars in the sky, even your body. . . is made up of atoms. Repeat the word after me."

"A-a-tum," we would stammer.

Occasionally some boy, bolder than the rest, would scratch his head and inquire, "But what is the atom made of -- the places in it where there aren't any little dots?"

"Nothing!" the flame maker would reply.

"Nothing! Our bodies, the stars, the jungle are made of nothing!" the boy would yelp gleefully. "If we are made of nothing, then maybe we aren't here!" And at this we would sputter into laughter and roll on the ground, laughing until our bellies ached. The old Flame Maker would frown deeply, but he would start explaining all over again.

We would bring him hard stones which we dug out of the mountainside, and he would praise us highly; then, as we clustered about him, he would insert the little pile of metal into the cave-like opening of a shining white box. We watched the glowing, bursting rush of flames that crackled within the chamber, flaring brighter than the autumn sun. After a few moments, cautioning the swarming children to stay back, he would open a little window in the box, and reveal glowing gold where common rock had been before!

Then he would tell us of times long past -- of pearl-en-

crusted towers of ebony that jabbed into the sky. . . of strange bird-like things that crossed the skies, constructed on gleaming stone, carrying men in their bellies -- birds that flew beyond the clouds, beyond even the sun and moon.

"When I was young, men spanned bridges of light between the stars," he would whisper. "They could disintergrate atoms. . . change the beds of oceans. . . but they could not destroy the beast that lived inside themselves." And when he talked of these things his eyes would shine with a far-off light, brighter than the embers of the fire glowing on the cavern floor.

Sometimes, when we pretended to listen to him very carefully, he would show us pictures of the things he talked about -- of man-made hills higher than Aarg, the Mountain Whose Hair is Snow; pictures of fire-spitting birds that whirled through blackness, darting amongst the mazes of stars. Yet these were not pictures like those which Kraol, the arrow maker, drew with orange clay on the walls of his cave. These were pictures so real that one could almost touch the things in them; pictures full of more color than the edge of the sea when the sun is going to sleep.

But the hunters of the tribe were afraid. Fear sparkled in their eyes when they watched the flames which the old man made. They grumbled between themselves that the Flame Maker was the ally of dreaded Gnorr, the Demon of Ice and Snow. When winter lengthened into the sharp, bitter days of greyness, there was no game in the valley, and the hunters, their faces lean with hunger, said that spring would not come until the Flame Maker was dead. They talked of smashing his crystal tubes, and uprooting the silver coils that filled his cavern.

And so, one night that winter, when I was a boy of twelve hunts, I woke to the thunder of a mountain falling in, and saw my mother tense in the darkness, drawing the blanket of hides tighter across her breasts. Fear stood stark and white in her eyes. The earth rumbled and roared its pain; the skies looked as if the Star Men were toppling from the pinnacles of their invisible mountains. Dust choked the air as I staggered to the cave mouth, strained my gaze through the seething blackness, and looked out upon a lurid scene. The head of the mountain was cut off, and the crater, flaring scarlet, gaped like a bloody neck. A long tower of smoke curled into the night sky. . .

We stayed in the valley until spring, but the hunters said the dying Flame Maker had invoked a curse on the region, for green shoots grew no more in the scorched blackness of the earth. Half of the tribe died. They would wither and shrivel like rotted fruit, their eyes would turn cold, and they would topple to the ground to rise no more. The animals did not return. In the summer we moved across the jungle to a stream where fish were plentiful, and leopards came to drink.

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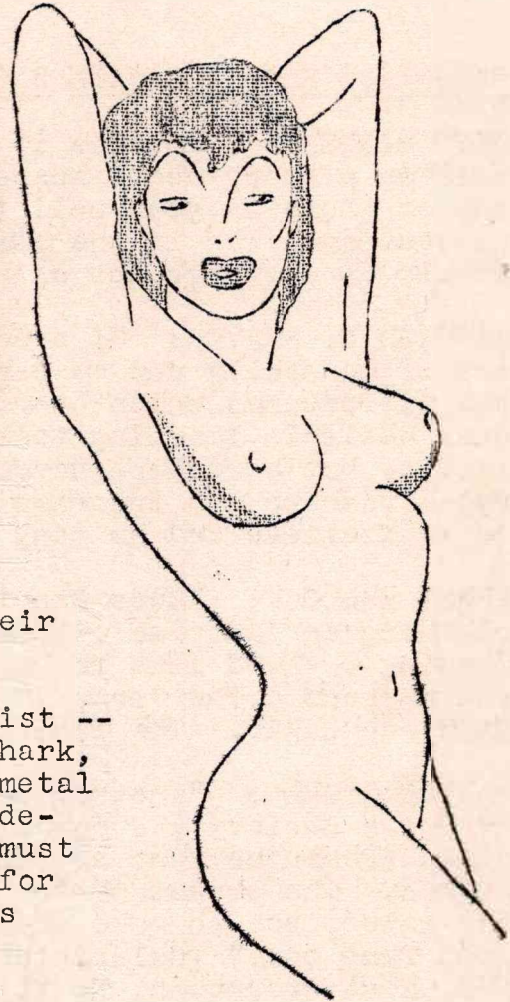
LIFE

By Richard S. Shaver

LIFE is a beefsteak hanging on the wall -- a red, beaten, mangled slice of meat from a bull's buttock. Or life is a long sigh, like a sick violin would make if it were dying; or life is two mounds of flesh with redskinned tops that mesmerize a man's eyes; or life is two buttocks that repeat the motif of the swelling breasts in reverse, augmented and inverted; and the cheekbones repeat the soft sound of two breasts with sweet red flowers on their summits.

But still I am no sentimentalist -- life is a brutal business of shark eat shark, a behemoth of rocking, rolling, roaring metal that crushes man beneath its wheels and devours him with flaming jaws. And a man must be mad to fight back. There is no room for soft sentiment or sick violins or women's breasts, for life is a brutally beaten beefsteak. Let us eat.

The End



THE FLAME MAKER (Concluded)

Now I am a man of twenty hunts. There have been no other Flame Makers in the tribe. On the long nights of winter I look into the sky, and a great sadness grips me. I must go back to the valley and search among the ruins of the cavern. I must learn the secrets of the Flame Maker, for I know that I cannot rest until I do.

The End

GLEANINGS FROM THE MAIL BAG

-- By The Readers

OTTO BINDER: "I imagine it will strike you as pretty odd, my having written a story about space travel being impossible, after being one of those in your poll (Beowulf Poll, 1947) who believed that space-travel was in the offing. The story was written, of course, purely as a story, not as my personal belief."

RICHARD S. SHAVER: "I used to be a pretty prolific poet; it ran out of me orally and on paper all the time, but at that time, before the misfortunes which overtook me took ten years from me, I was head over heels in learning to be a painter. I was a painter, I still insist, but hardships have taken the gift from me, as also my poetry; hardships and injuries such as I talk of in my stories, which so many believe and so many resent."

JERRI BULLOCK: "Russ Manning and I, along with a few others, are planning an 'Artzine', to consist of drawings, drawings, and more drawings. We'd like to have as many amateurs in this as possible, and mayhaps a few 'pros'." (Jerri's address is 22200 Lemon Avenue, Hayward, Calif. The line forms on the right).

MARION ZIMMER: "Another object of this letter is to plug the 'Vampyre Society', a new organization now being formed for fantasettes (Feminine fantasy fans) -- the only group of its kind in the States. The object of the Vampyre Society would not be to 'fight' the males, but to make them realize that women are capable of being good fans too." (Gals interested can reach Marion care of R. F. D. # 1, East Greenbush, N. Y.).

JAMES D. BRECKENRIDGE: "The character of Loki has always appealed to me. I think once I was all set to write a one-act play or something about him. He stands out as the great rebel of the Nordic mythos, so that his equivalent in the Greek field is rather Prometheus than Hermes. And the differences between Prometheus and Loki, I think, reveal most strongly the differences between the Greeks' way of thinking and that of the Northerners. While Prometheus rebelled for the sake of the ideal good of the human race, Loki rebelled simply because he wanted to, because, being himself, he had to. How much more horrible was Loki's torture than Prometheus'!"

RUSSELL H. WOODMAN: "There is only one thing I demand from Loki, and that is off-trail material; let it be the Country of the Unusual; let all the warm wealth of vivacity be published; let the new writers be given room enough to develop an original style or a suddenly brilliant idea or a random harvest of thought."

REDD BOGGS: "I am about ready to launch a new fanzine -- Chronoscope, a mag to be seriously slanted, along the lines of your Sun Spots and Henry Elsnor's Stfist. Chronoscope is being planned as a major fanzine, and if I fill out my grandiose plans it should be the best mag in the field!"

SECOND COMING OF GOD

-- By JACK ZATT

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THE tiny planet known as Earth spun on through the void. Cool winds ravished its surface -- the surface of a barren world without life or death.

This was the year three thousand after the birth of a man called Christ.

Earth was more desolate than it had been since the Creation. Cold torrents of rain gushed down on its blackened surface. Rain that was no longer needed, for all life had long since vanished.

Just the four elements remained, slowly deminishing. A bitter, ceaseless wind raged over terrain and ocean. And there was darkness; silent darkness that changed into dull light as the fiery sun filtered through dense cloud banks.

Abruptly, God appeared from the Cosmos. He walked through the charred wilderness, his head lowered in sorrow. It was a familiar sight, one he had seen on other worlds all too often. Would man never learn?

The Lord loomed over the fabulous Grand Canyon of America. He noticed a human skeleton huddled in a cave. It was a small skeleton, that of a mere child. A pawn of war!

Atomic war! God knew the pattern well. One country against another, race against race, and, above all, man against fellow man. The great destructive power of the atomic bomb, and following in its wake disease, suicide, murder, and rape. Man gone mad with power. Total war!

The Lord shook his head in agony. He had created man and willed to him the millions of bodily defenses and protective mechanisms. He had breathed life into His clay image, given man a companion, warned him of carnal lust and other grievous wrongs. Then he had given the little fellow freedom of choice.

"And I was proud when his sciences multiplied and his knowledge became great. But something went wrong. It always does. He tried to do too much, to possess too much. It forced him to disregard the realities of clean living and high morals. Towards the last one out of every two marriages failed because man and woman could no longer tolerate one another.

"And he fought so desperately instead of using the mental ability I gave him. His lust for violence and pain and depravity were the root of this evil. Selfishness was the food of this misery."

Then God arose and moved to the ocean, ordering it to be still for a moment. And He reached into the depths of the quiet waters and brought forth a single cell which did not move.

God smiled at it in His hand and said in a stern voice, "I command thee to live and to be fruitful and multiply."

And the cell did stir with the first dawn of intelligence and God returned it to the waters of the deep and saw that it was good.

As the Lord returned to the outer Cosmos, he spoke aloud: "Things must begin again. Man has failed me in the past, but perhaps I also failed him. We must try again, allowing evolution to once more run its course."

The dark clouds lifted and the great sun shone forth in its true glory. And the brilliant rays of the mighty orb fell on a tiny speck of life, causing it to move forward.

And God saw that it was good. . .

The End

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Toronto, Canada

July 3, 4, 5, 1948

* * *

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LOKI



JOHN GROSSMAN - '42

THE BURNING OF THE WITCH

'And yonder burns the sorry witch
Who claimed a love for thee.
And thou shouldst bless the curling flame
That thou art live and free.'

"The slim white body scorching there,
Ah, it was fair to see!"

'The shrieking mouth, keep thou in mind,
Did curse good Normandy.'

"But those red lips that kissed mine own,
Beseeching call to me,
The holy God who loves us all
May he have charity,
I can not let her go alone
Into eternity.

"Well may they say she hath bewitched
Body and soul of me.
The epithet upon the grave
Be writ for all to see:
'Here lies a wicked witch with one
Who loved unwillingly.
Not every witch is old and sear,
This one was lovely who lies here.'"

--Genevieve K. Stephens

NIGHT SPAWN

If the door is open
Things come in at night,
Treading heels of shadows
Fearing the light.

Friar's Lantern,
Astral sigh,
Dank mist
Choking and sly.

Better that a door is locked
And the shutters drawn
When darkness looses on the Earth
Its foul sunless spawn.

-- Genevieve K. Stephens

THE PAINTING

An artist has gone mysteriously
 And left a painting for a legacy.
 Crazy, they said, and his dreams a crime
 (Dreamer of dreams born out of his time).
 He spent his life and sold his soul
 To paint a picture of the glimpse he stole --
 A glimpse of land from a terrible dream,
 An aura of horror about the scene.
 Something formless, shadowed unchoately;
 A crimson sky, a twisted tree.
 And I wonder -- did he gaze too long
 On that tortured scene, and does he now belong
 To that twisted land of crimson light? . . .

And now I cannot sleep at night.
 I ask, recalling that nightmare scene --
 Which world is real, and which a dream?

-- Albert Toth

THE STRANGE HOURS

They say Sin lies quietly in the shadows
 And becomes loud as a Day draws near,
 Loathing all things not evil,
 The Thing does soon appear.

They say some passage in some dark cavern,
 Leads down and around and still further down
 Through ashes and purple haze,
 Down where the Thing is ever-breathing.
 Down where his hideous deeds are created,
 And the souls of stolen youths cremated.

They say it won't be long,
 A mere million years or so,
 Until the sun which keeps mankind alive
 Shall cease --
 And leave only these Things. . .
 Whispering in the breeze.

-- Jack Zatt

THE MONSTRANCE

The temple floor was emerald,
And sapphire was the roof.

The altar was a ruby heart
And stretched before it was
My heart - quite straight -
And she - was dead.

In that red altar was a fire
That flickered evilly
And far away -
An all consuming flame.

The priest - in an embroidered gown
Intoned -- endlessly -
That evil service - and I let be.

Her robes were white
Embroidered o'er with golden sickles
And black arabesques -

Her hands were dead birds
Limpily curled.
Dead white birds
That never more would sing
Their fluttering song of grace
Or touch my face.

The floor was emerald
From above a red light fell
And lay like blood
Turned black upon the green.

She was stretched
Before the altar - and He
The fat white grub
Was holding up that horror -
The Monstrance.

Her lips were closed
And heavy with a loaden kiss -
Her hair lay coiled
And still.

She was beauty
Long and white
Still
And robed with death -
And I was doomed to live.

The floor was emerald
 Cut and laid in many patternings -
 And all of them were evil !

The roof was vaulted sapphire
 And the light
 Was lambent flame.

--Richard S. Shaver

FRAGMENTS FROM "THE MAD BRAIN"

The grief that is too faint for tears,
 And scarcely breathes of pain,
 May linger on a hundred years
 Ere it creep forth again.
 But I, who love you now too well
 To suffer your disdain,
 Must try tonight that love to quell --
 And try in vain!

* * *

When mornings you attire yourself
 For riding in the city,
 You're such a lovely little elf,
 Extravagantly pretty!

And when at noon you deign to wear
 The habit of the town,
 I cannot call to mind as fair
 A symphony in brown.

Then evenings you blithely don
 A daintiness of white,
 To flash a very paragon
 Of lightness -- and light!

But when the rounds of pleasure cease,
 And you retire at night,
 The Godling on your mantelpiece
 Must know a fairer sight!

--Stanley G. Weinbaum

HELEN OF TROY

Helen of Troy! You are not dead.
Only one of you lived in Troy.
Millions of Helens have lived since then,
Capturing men by their sweet deploy.
 We ask release from your restrain;
 Give us the right to be free again.

Ages ago old Homer wrote;
Dreams of your beauty seduced his pen.
Since then we launched a thousand ships --
Sunk are the ships and dead are the men,
 Who, searching thy beauty, sailed the sea,
 To fail in their quest for love and thee.

Wax in our ears and ropes to the mast,
Useless our efforts when blue eyes gleam.
We would forget you, but at long last,
Backward we drift in our helpless dreams.
 Better to die in Neptune's arms,
 Than live a prisoner to your charms.

Helen of Troy! We ask release;
Long you have held us in your heart;
Hopeless and helpless when you smile,
Now comes the time when we should part!
 Surely the Huntress should tire of her quest,
 Loosen our bonds and give us our rest.

-- David H. Keller

MY LOVE WILL COME

My love will come where the willows lean
And the grass is soft and lush and green
From her house of mold that is crumbling stone
Where she lies in dreaded state alone.
I wept on her bier and saw her laid
In a vault that human hands had made,
But she will walk in the silvery dusk
With naught of mold or the odor of musk.
Come to me where the willows lean
And the grass is soft and lush and green.

-- Stephanie Grace

A WHITE BIRD FLYING

My soul is a soaring thing
 Night-winged,
 White-winged,
 It follows the wind in the mist-robed skies
 And comes upon a city, high in the starry vastness,
 Resting on high-piled clouds.

Fairy towers mantled in moonfire,
 Starlight glittering on dim battlements
 Will o' the wisp. . .
 City of mist. . .

My soul is a soaring thing
 It follows the lark to the dawn-kissed skies,
 Hovers in the rosy splendor,
 Sings in the dewy dawn
 My soul is a soaring thing
 A mist-blue sky,
 And a white bird flying. . .

-- Lin Carter

DRAGON TEETH

That first gigantic toadstool stepping upward
 With its poisons must have left the sky aghast;
 Where the shuddering radiance swept the hill sward
 On winds like harpies screaming: All Things Pass!

Yes, all things do pass, but pass within their season;
 There destruction reaped wholesale, and without precedence.
 There happened something bigger than Man's reason:
 There he sewed Dragon Teeth, in mutest evidence.

And when, full armed, the nations spring to battle;
 And when, by such, each greater city falls. . .
 Here, too, will Death, himself protesting, leave
 Life's writing shadow pressed on ruined walls.

-- M. J. Nuttall

SHARD

Within a dream I walked in woodland glens
 Where the moonlight fell in slanted silver bars
 And a fount of crystal splashed in silent song
 And a milk-white unicorn dipped his head to drink. . .

-- Lin Carter

RETROSPECT

Stone and steel, paper and glass,
hold us now as slaves, alas!
But once we dwelt on Scottish shores
and defied the power of Rome of yore!

You were the prize they sought to gain,
I gave them instead brave warriors slain!
As from Roman Legions the Eagles we tore
with battle axe and bloody claymore!

But further; back further, remember the Dias?
From which you ruled that ancient place!
Where coldly now churns a northern sea,
Atlantis! Where you, the Queen, loved me!

Or dream yet deeper as we sit and quaff,
how a planet lay dying as we danced and laughed!
So taking sages and slaves, to Earth we fled,
as drifting sands covered Martian dead!

Then wantons, we burned the only ship,
as scarred it lay in the monstrous slip
our homesick workers had formed of stone,
and marooned forever we ruled the Earth alone!

This world was rich and I dyed it red
with good Cro-Magnon blood,
while you, who on excitement fed,
with Neanderthal men made love!

Now the slaves and sages have a day,
and all men are reckoned in terms of pay!
Yet we again, in future time,
Shall rule together a world sublime!

-- R. L. Farnsworth

THE WAITERS

There are those who wait in the outer cold,
Shadowy ones in an ancient mold;
With lidless eyes that see everything,
And lipless mouths that can not sing.
Waiting with loathsome, dripping jowl,
The curious but foolhardy soul!

-- Stephanie Grace

THE GHOST

I saw the ghost on Monday,
 Pale and gaunt and grim;
 But he would not be staying,
 According to his whim.

I saw the ghost on Tuesday
 And Wednesday too.
 I saw that he was handsome;
 I whispered "I like you."

I saw the ghost on Friday,
 He lingered quite a while;
 He looked upon me fairly,
 He smiled a little smile.

I saw the ghost on Sunday,
 For Saturday he missed;
 But, oh, it was on Sunday
 That my two lips he kissed.

And now it's really no day,
 For I am by his side,
 Lost in utter timelessness
 Wherever ghosts abide.

-- Dorothy Quick

HOME TO FAMILIAR EARTH

The bloated red moon burns
 To ashy white,
 A gluttoned weasle
 Veers in sudden fright.

Reflection grosser than a bat's
 Passes low and late,
 Home to familiar Earth
 The vampire calls his mate.

-- Stephanie Grace

POETRY

Poetry is a business of adding beauty to beauty until a sounding whole is ringing in completion; poetry is a business of fitting truthful meaning with words that contain thought truth. The poet is the man with an emotion bigger than himself; he must pour it out, in words, in music, in painted forms. The poet is the man who truthfully feels his own emotions and expresses them, painful as the process may be. -- R. S. Shaver