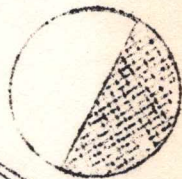


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SOLAR
READER

20¢



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MERCURY

ISSUE

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WELCOME

to the first issue of the SOLAR READER. The SOLAR READER is a fiction slanted amature science-fiction magazine. It will, we hope, appear sporadically throughout the year. Subscription rates are twenty cents an issue or six for a dollar. We welcome Letters Of Comment and Contributions and for each printed LOC or contrib you recieve the issue it was published in free.

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Please send subscriptions and contributions or LOCs to Dave Easlick. After Feb. 1 send them to Steve Fisher.

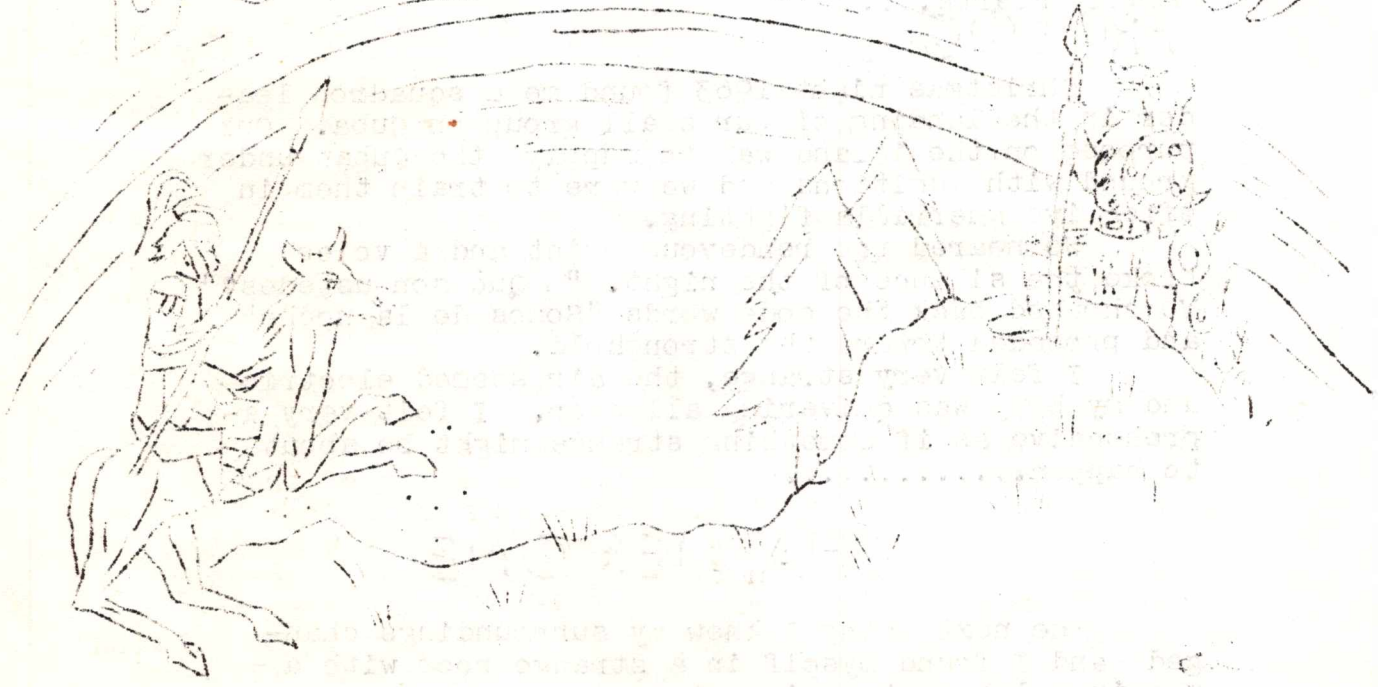
THE PLANET MERCURY facts on....

This being the SOLAR READER, we thought that maybe we should name each issue after a planet and write a short piece on the planet in each issue.

Mercury, named for the swift messenger of the early Roman gods, is the smallest planet in our solar system. It is the smallest, speediest moving, and closest to the sun of the nine planets. Mercury revolves about the sun once every 88 days which is also the length of Mercury's day. Mercury is 36 million miles from the sun, it takes the earth once in every 116 days in its orbit, and is 3,100 miles in diameter at its diameter.

INTRODUCTION
L.C.C.S.

DOME OF THE HEROES



INTRODUCTION

I was born. I guess that is about as good a place as any to start my story. My parents were a pair of right wing fanatics, so is it any wonder I was brought up a god fearing Communist hating Rightist?

When I was nineteen I departed from under my parents' wing, joined a group of soldiers of fortune and set out for Guatamala to train for an invasion of Cuba. This was where, I guess, my story really starts.....

PROLOGUE

Christmas night 1963 found me a squadron leader in the landing of our small group on Cuba. Our purpose on the island was to supply the Cuban underground with munitions and we were to train them in effective guerrilla fighting.

We neared the rendezvous point and a voice broke the silence of the night. "¿Qué son ustedes?" We shouted back the code words "Somos de la noche" and proceeded toward the stronghold.

I felt very strange, the air seemed electric and my body was quivering all over. I felt very apprehensive as if something strange might be about to happen.....

CHAPTER ONE

The next thing I knew my surroundings changed and I found myself in a strange room with a man in a lab coat gazing at me.

"Do'nt be alarmed," he said in heavily accented English. "You have nothing to fear." Noticing that I still had my gun in my hand, I started to raise it but it vanished into thin air! "I assure you that any further attempts will be just as fruitless." my captor said.

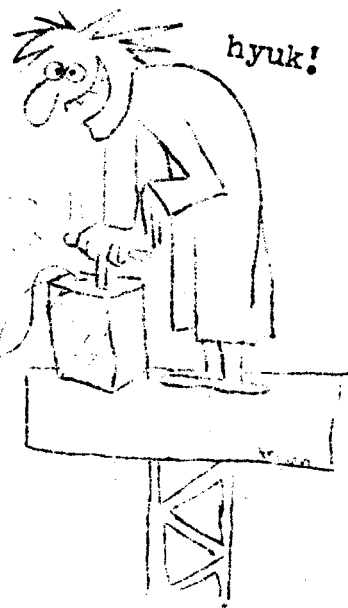
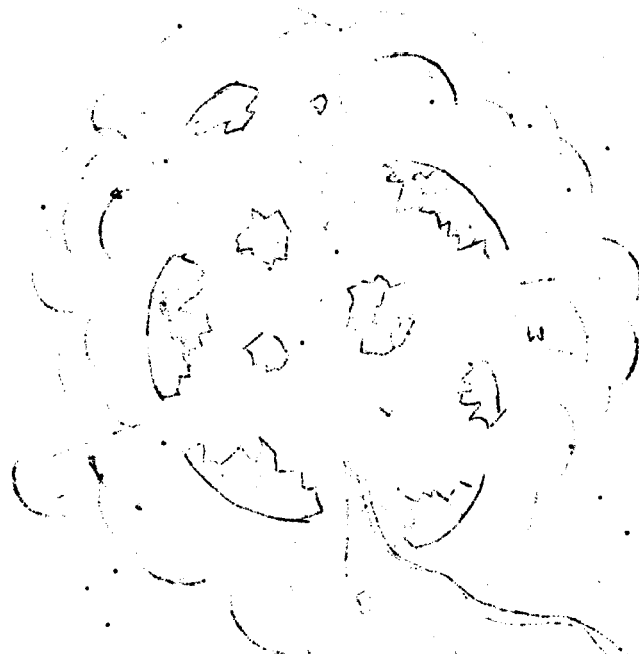
"Well where the Hell is this and who are you?"

"You are in the Dome of Heroes and that is all that I can tell you. Someone else will be around later to breif you. There is food on the table." With this he vanished.

Seeing in the corner of the room a window, I walked over to it and looked out. What I saw was a great surprise to me. Outside there was a multitude of men all dressed in the battle dresses of history. And women; WOW! I have never in my life seen such beautiful women.

One of the women particularly struck my eye she was a tall, sun-bronzed brunette, and she was the most beautiful woman of them all. As if sensing my eyes upon her, she turned her head in my direction and our eyes met in a glance that I hope I never forgot as long as I live. I stood transfixed, just taking in her beauty, when she blushed and vanished. By this time I was getting quite sick of having people vanish like that.

I watched the crowd on the street for any sign that they noticed her disappearance, but it looked as if they found nothing remarkable in her departure



I heard someone clear his throat behind me so I whirled away from the window startled. The sight of the street had scarce prepared me for the man who stood facing me. He was dressed in the garb of a Roman citizen and appeared to be carefully appraising me.

" My name is Garthus and I am here to tell you all I know of this place." he began his story, " I was a citizen of the Republic of Rome and a soldier in the service of my country when I arrived in this place many centuries ago speaking this strange language and finding myself in the midst of all manner of strange people.

I can give you no answer as to where you are since I don't know myself. The Dome of the Heroes as the opaque sky-like surface around this city is called, has been in existence since Gods know when.

All the laws of black magic and sorcery work on this world and the Dome is the only refuge from the sorcerers who abide outside. As new people appear they must first spend some time in the army of the Wizard of Oz who governs the outlying districts outside of the dome. Each new citizen must stay in the army until he either buys his freedom or distinguishes himself by some act of daring.

I hope you will not resist. I am going to take you to the barracks and get you instated in the army."

Some how sensing that resistance was impossible against the strange powers that these people had, I decided to go along peacefully. I was lead through the door of the room down some stairs to the street level. My guide made no attempt to use the strange means by which I had seen so many others vanish to-

day so I asked him about it and he informed me that this means of travel was impossible with an untrained person like me to guide. We soon came to a large arch apparently leading outward. The first thing I noticed upon leaving the Dome was a huge sign reading :

WELCOME TO OZ
(POP 3,456,001)

MELIN A. WIZARD, LORD MAYER

I think under any other circumstances that sign would have been highly comical but I was not in a mood to see anything funny in it. We walked along past signs proclaiming OH WHAT A WHIZ OUR WIZARD IS and SMOKE WIZZERS-HIZZONER'S CHOICE. We approached a red and white candy striped building which turned out to be a recruiting post for Wizard's army.

We entered and Garthus called out "Hey Joe here's another one for you. He came in an hour ago. "

I was hustled over to the desk told to stop and asked my name. As I stood there freezing a man in white who was obviously a doctor came in and began examining me. When he had finished he told the man whom Garthus had called Joe that I was fit for any kind of service that they would care to put me in. I was given a set of fatigues and ushered into a barrack where I was introduced to my sergeant, a man who looked like a bull dog and whose name was Sam Mother. It appeared that I was the last one to report for duty because he began addressing us immediately. His statement was the typical Sargeant's address to new recruits and left us telling us to prepare for dinner in twenty minutes. We all looked confused and asked each other questions. It appeared that no one knew anything about our circumstances. All of us had been one earth one minute and here the

next.

A bugle blew signifying dinner and we swarmed into the dining hall where we ate a rushed meal and then were hurried out to evening formation. I was surprised at the small number of men in our company, we only had twenty five in the company and were the only company in the whole camp.

In evening formation we were told that we would all have to forget our previous military training as it would be of little use to us here where the laws of science were not in effect, that is, gun powder wouldn't explode, etc. They told us that in the next few days we would be schooled in the use of the sword, bow and arrow, and other primitive weapons. We were also told that for the most part, we would be working alone on missions or quests for the Wizard of Oz.

Later that night as I lay in my bunk reviewing the events of the day, a soft woman's voice spoke to me out of thin air as it were. "Be silent" the voice said, "I will help you escape. Put this cloak of invisibility on and these goggles that will enable you to see me." The cloak and goggles materialized on the foot of my bed. The cloak was made of thick, well cured, skins with intricate symbols etched into the lining. I put the cloak on and was shocked to see that I couldn't see the parts of my body. I had been made invisible! Then I donned the goggles and everything came back into perspective except that the beautiful girl that I had seen from the window of the room in which I had first arrived in this crazy world, was standing beside me dressed in a robe which was exactly like

the one that I had on. I would have gladly just sat on the edge of my bunk and worshipped her beauty all night, but she broke the silence.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

Below is the first of Arnold Katz' fanzine review col's. This will, we hope, appear in each issue. (ED)

KATZ' KORNER

BY

-ARNOLD KATZ-

Quite a few good zines came in this month and I think I'll share some of them with you via these reviews. (RATINGS 1-10; 10 HIGHEST)

WITHIN #4 PAUL WILLIAMS 163 BRIGHTON ST., BELMONT MASS. 25¢ a copy, 6/1.50. FREE FOR LOC OR CONTRIB 60 PAGES Mimeo.

WITHIN is practically unbelievable. Paul is only 14, but he describes and discusses himself and Science Fiction with a maturity well beyond his years.

WITHIN is a fact slanted zine, but it ~~was~~ was interesting even though I, myself prefer more fiction.

The highlight of the fanzine is the letter column. It has letters by such as Pohl, Asimov and Bloch. Never have I seen such a group of letters from so many pros and bnfs.

Among the articles are numerous book reviews, an article by Mike Deckinger, and a piece by Bill Sarfill on LANCER BOOKS. The repro is good, the layout average, the art fair to good, and the contents are excellent.

RATING:9

CRY#170 WEBER AND THE BUSBYS, BOX 92, 507 1st AVE.
SEATTLE, WASH. 36 PAGES MINEO, 25¢/ish BIMONTHLY
6/\$1

This was the first issue of CRY that I've seen, but it won't be the last.

The best thing in the issue was the DISCON report by Wally Weber. Featuring the usual Weberish style, it nevertheless gives a good picture of the con. It also has the advantage of being the first such report that I've seen. Timeliness of this sort is always appreciated.

Elsewhere in the issue, Elinore Busby explains why cons are always held over Labor Day, this is because we can get a social rate for the weekend as it is a slow time for the hotels.

A CASE HISTORY OF A CORRESPONDENCE by Rob Williams is also a very good story, and will bring smiles to the knowing. Rob is a good writer but I don't think I care to correspond with him.

Naturally the letter col is the big deal in CRY. It is ably conducted by Wally TRASH CAN weber. I think I'll write Wally a letter now.

RATING:8

STRANGER THAN FACT#2 JIM HARKNESS, 112 W HARDING ST,
GREENWOOD, MISS. , QUARTERLY, 25¢ a copy 4/81

Jim is my good buddy but I'll try to give him a fair review.

Un fortunately , Jim had to give up his offset format. He got an A B DICK and this is his first time with it. Repro-wise, it was quite good for the first time.

Jim has good news for all professionals, theban on pro contribs has been lifted. How about that Isaac, Avram and Poul? Seriously though, Jim does have a story by David H. Keller M.D. which probably could make it into the MAGAZINE OF HORROR and STRANGE STORIES. A. K. Davids who is ME and C.L. Morris also have stories, Joe Staton did the art, and there is a column of book reviews by yourd truly.

RATING:7

KNOWABLE#5 JOHN BOARDMAN, BOX 22, N.Y.33, N.Y. IR*
REGULAR 25¢ each 5/\$1 FREE FOR TRADE OR LOC OR CON*
TRIB; MINEO 24 PAGES

This zine I like. It has good content and is getting better.

SCIENCE MADE EASY was, as usual a riot, this time John takes on Astronomy and wins in two falls.

The main feature is a serial called THE STORY that runs on and on in deCampish adventure. John also gives his ppinions on con and his comments were very much enjoyed by this reviewer. It seems that I missed a few things such as a membership card in the Flat Earth Society signed by John W. " GHOD" Jr . , the president. RATING:7

HYFHEN#34, SEPTEMBER WALTER A. VILLIS, 170 UPPER
WARDS ROAD, BELFAST 4, N. IRELAND. 15¢ each 7/£1
24 PAGES, MIMEO

This came in just as I was finishing the reviews so I thought I'd add it on. It is an excellent zine put out by one of fandom's greats.

This issue, originally intended to be included in AXE, the Shaws' now defunct fanzine, is composed of Willis' report on CHICOMIII, which he attended as part of his TAVE trip to America.

The report, written in the warm, humorous style which characterizes WAV, is informative as both for the facts of the con and the insight it gives into Willis himself.

I really would've liked to have met WAV. Maybe I'll get the chance someday....

RATING:8

(If you would possibly like to see your fanzines reviewed or have some deep secret comment intended only for Arnold, why not send them to him at 98 Patton Blvd., New Hyde Park, New York 11043 ED)

Next on the agenda we have a short-short story by Steve Fisher.

THE CREATURE

BY STEVE FISHER

The moon shot was successful. NASA headquarters was swamped with reporters, news agents, and camera-

men. The U.S. was electrified with excitement. The impact of the fantastic feat was felt all over the world. People were out in the streets from New York to Paris crying out for more information. It was a great victory over space, on the moon it was a different story.

" I never would have believed that this was possible!" exclaimed Major Thomas Thorsen USAF, captain of the expedition.

Captain Herbert Medford USMC, the navigations expert, was still staring at the moon landscape goggle-eyed. "Fantastic! I've never seen anything like it!"

The radio man, Lt. Charles Wickey US ARMY, was frantically trying to contact earth. " We've got to tell them, we've just got to!" he kept muttering to himself. It was no use, he couldn't raise earth, hidden behind the bulk of the moon which no radio transmitter can pass through.

The three men of the UNITED STATES APOLLO 7 rocket prepared to return to earth. Unknown to them, a creature entered the ship. Something not human.

The crew strapped down and Thorson began the countdown. A switch was thrown and the mighty Atomic engine burst into life. As the ship left the moon the same question was in the mind of all three earth creatures aboard. " How can we tell them? No one will ever believe us. "

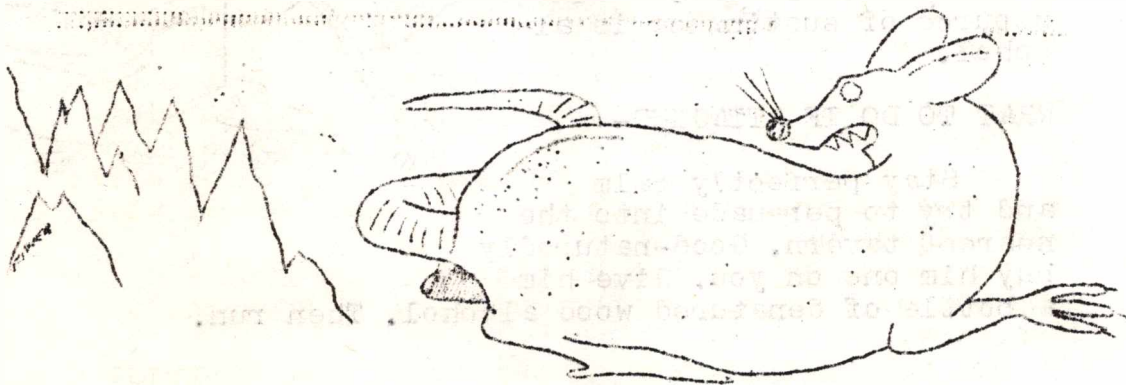
Meanwhile in the hatch, the creature from the moon was destroying all the evidence of the crew's discovery.

Not many people were at the salt flats to greet the rocket as it glided in.

The crash truck skidded to a halt a few feet from the vehicle. The crew emerged and ran babbling over to the crowd "The moon is made of green cheese!" they cried.

The rest of this ishitory the three man crew are now in seclusion in a mental hospital and the United States was made to look foolish in the eyes of the world. As a result of this several South American countries went Communistic and uprisings sprang up in Indonesia. The moon shot was a failure and no one will ever know. No one except....

The technicians were stripping the rocket down. One of them looked down a small hole in the inner wall and reached into it. He pulled out a large white rat with bits of chese on whiskers. The chese was of the green variety.



FREEN'S GUIDE TO INTERPLANETARY LIFE

Introducing from the planet
MERCURY...

The MERCURIAN ETHYLIAN
(Townium Drunkibus)

Height- 5 feet
Weight- 101 pounds
Color- Stoned Red
Disposition- Very congenial
if sober
Habitation- Gutters in the
"Twilight Zone"

Interesting Characteristics-

Hums the tune "For He's
a Jolly Good Fellow." Main
source of sustinance is al-
cohol.

WHAT TO DO IF ATTACKED-

Stay perfectly calm
and try to persuade into the
nearest tavern. Good-naturedly
buy him one on you. Give him
a bottle of denatured wood alcohol. Then run.



THE TYPICAL MAN, a short piece of Fantasy

by Dave Easlick.

The sign on the door read Dr. Abel Georgeson FHD, PSD, MD. It was a typical doctor's door in a typical office building. Mack pulled open the typical door and walked into a typical doctor's reception room complete with a typical receptionist. The receptionist uttered the typical waiting room spiel and made the typical motion for Mack to have a seat.

Mack felt typically pent up in the typical waiting room. He was agitated, nervous, wanted to scream. He couldn't though, it was 'nt typical.

After watching a typical stream of neurotics entering the doctor's inner office, he was told by the typical receptionist in a typical receptionistic manner that it was his turn to see the doctor. He was ushered into the typical inner office. It was a typical psychiatrist's typical inner office, complete with typical diplomas, couch and stool, desk, and psychiatrist. The psychiatrist was a typical balding professional man with a typical professional smile and he said in a typical pschiatrist's benign voice " Just how may I help you Mr. Jones?"

He beckoned that Mack was to take a seat and tell him all his problems. With a typical sigh Mack sat down and let fire with his typical story. " You see, it's like this, Doc, I've always felt my life is very typical. Everyone I see in my daily life seems to be typical too. No matter how I try I can't get away from the feeling. Even you, did you know that you are a typical psychiatrist?"

The psychiatrist then said " We'll see just what we can do about this." At that moment he turned into a demon and gobbled Mack up.

Now you might think that this is a happy ending but there is still room for irony. The demon was the most typical demon imaginable.

Overhead two cosmic chess players chuckled as they removed a pawn.

A very typical THE END

THE DEATH MACHINE

By

Steve Naslo and Dave Naslick

Helpan Thrasher faced the jury as the forman delivered the verdict of guilty and then turned to face the judge as he passed sentence.

" A verdict of guilty in a case of high treason against the United ~~Free~~ Free Nations requires a death sentence. " proclaimed the judge. " I here by sentence you to death by CAVAK."

A moan went through the court. No one knew exactly what CAVAK was but the rumors of hideous torture had circulated.

Two guards came forward and clamped hand cuffs on Helpan. He was led out the rear of the court room where a prison truck awaited him. He was shoved into the rear of the truck and the heavy steel door slammed shut behind him. It was completely dark in the rear of the truck and Helpan began to feel fear.

The truck started off on its long journey and drove along for some time before Helpan heard a crash and every thing went black. When he regained consciousness, he was lying on his side and the great steel door yawned open. Thinking only one thought, escape, he climbed out of the wrecked truck. Once outside, it was obvious what had happened. The truck had hit another car and everyone in the crash had died except Helpan.

His mind then turned to thoughts of escape. He must get back to his organization and then out of the country. He started running down the highway, hoping to get as much distance between himself and the scene of the crash as possible.

Helpan heard a car approaching so he darted out to the middle of the road and lay down. The driver of the car slammed on his brakes and jumped out of his car. He rushed over to Thrasher and asked " What's the matter Buddy?" Thrasher only groaned. The man bent down to help Thrasher up, when suddenly Helpan jumped up and knocked the man cold with a Judo chop. He lifted the man up and dumped him in a ditch. He turned back to the car and everything went black.....

" You see," said one guard to the other, " the machine makes the condemned man think he has escaped while it slowly kills him. It is a very efficient and humane way to die."

A STRANGE LOAD OF WATERMELON

By Jim Toren

It was late in December when the whole thing started. I remember how it was snowing, and traffic was slowed almost to a halt. I was coming home from work and I happened to be behind a stake truck with a tarp over its load though one end of the tarp was working loose and began flapping in the wind. I saw the truck was loaded with watermelons.

"Where the Hell would they get watermelons at this time of year?" I wondered aloud. My mouth began filling with saliva. I developed an overwhelming urge to have a slice of that fruit. And since I had nowhere to go that night I determined to follow that truck no matter where it was going...

But I was in luck. The truck pulled into an alley beside a small supermarket about three blocks away. Knowing it would take a while for them to unload the things and put them on the shelves, I went home for supper reluctantly. I didn't know why I felt reluctant.

"Ruth do you know what I saw on my way home?" I asked my wife just to make conversation.

"No, Bob, what did you see?" She replied but I could tell her mind was a million miles away.

"Watermelons, a whole truckload and I'm going to get one tonight."

"Very interesting, Bob." As if it was a big deal.

I went back to the store after supper but the store was closed. I wanted one of those watermelons for some reason I could not name and it was as though I'd blacked out. I found myself pulling on the

door in a vain attempt to get it opened. What brought me out of the trance was a policeman tapping me on the shoulder with his nightstick and asking what I was doing. Nothing, I'd said, as I'd slunk shame-facedly away.

That night I had nightmares. A black thing was pursuing me wanting to eat me. I was screaming when Ruth shook me awake.

Now the watermelon had become an obsession. I could hardly keep my mind on my work until five rolled around. Then I was out of the office like a flash and on my way to that small supermarket.

As I went by the store I could see the owner plugging one of the melons for a woman. I had to go down about half a block to find a place to park. As I was closing my car door I heard a scream like ^{oh my} on this earth. It turned my knees to water. Nothing human could have screamed like that---or could it? The scream had come from the store and I started at a run toward there.

I opened the door and saw two things. One looked like a deflated pink sack, the other was a melon but it was two or three times as big as it had any right to be. THE SACK, I saw wasn't really a sack, but a human skin looking as though it had been sucked dry.

"What the Hell did you do, Buddy?" I yelled at the shop keeper.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean." Came back the reply in a voice totally without inflection. It made me look into his eyes and what I saw made me shudder. The eyes were completely black with no irises or coloring, just deep non-reflecting puddles of night.

Then I found my voice. "How did you skin that woman and what did you do with the body?" I grabbed his arm. "Come on, I don't know what's going on but you're coming down to the police station."

"I'm sure I don't know what for. What proof do you have that any thing has happened."

"I've got this!" I nearly screamed as I grabbed at the skin sack, but it merely crumbled to dust in my hand.

I don't know what made me turn, probably the cold. I remember once reading about the Buddhist hell. It seems that half of their hell is a place of ice. Well, what was coming from behind me was twice as cold, colder than space. I turned. The cold was emanating

from the melon, if that was what it was. The thing was beginning to split and darkness was oozing out, darkness as black as the guy's eyes. I imagined I could see a hand reaching out, like the hand of the thing that had pursued me in my dream. There was a keening voice that seemed to curdle my brain. But I waited no longer. I was out of the shop with out opening the door---I just went out through the glass. I remembered nothing until I got home and Ruth was bandaging my cuts. She suggested I go to sleep and I went into the bedroom but not to rest. There were three objects in my room I wanted. Two of them were things I'd picked up during the war.

It was black as coal when I pulled to a stop three blocks away from the store. I was wearing an old pair of gym shoes and my feet were wet with slush but I'd managed to make less noise than an Indian scout on the prowl. Now I was standing on a box trying to get a look into the window in the back of the store. I could see nothing, but I could hear that brai curdling sound. I took the first object out of my pocket, pulled out the pin and heaved it through the window. It was an incendiary grenade I'd taken off a dead German soldier about two days before the war ended. I could hear it bouncing across the floor. The store owner let out a yell, then flame exploded under the window. I hurried around to the front--the only other way to get out of the store now that the back was blocke d. Sure enough, the owner came charging up to the door. Behind him I could see black shapes writhing and dissolving in the flames. For the first time his voice betrayed emotion, fear.

" Out of my way fool!"

I took the bible out from under my arm and brandished it in his face but he merely laughed at it. Oh well, you can't win them all, that just goes to show you, you can't believe in half the things you read in books. The bible was a heavy old brassbound family book I'd had for a long time, so I hit him over the head with it. That staggered him a little but what drove him back into the flames was the magazine full of slugs from the 45. (another war souvenir) I pumped into his chest. Acrid smoke choked me and I stumbled back. Looking up I saw something that could have

been smoke but wasn't- a great shape looming against the sky. Then that too was enveloped in white flames and I could hear the sound of fire engine sirens. I figured I'd better get out of there. How could I explain what happened? Who'd believe me? I turned to run.

" There he is, officer, arrest him--the murderer!" It was the high pitched hysterical whine of an old woman. She had a police officer in tow and she was pointing at me. I learned later that there'd been screams from the shop today and yesterday and she had called the police and had them out there four or five times but by the time they'd gotten to the shop the evidence had been cleaned up and they figured she was some sort of crank and had stopped coming. But tonight with someone else reporting a fire, the cops had believed her and come. And caught me.

Now they've got me in jail ready to face arson and murder charges but I'll probably be institutionalized. When I told them my story over and over, they thought I was insane. Here I save mankind and end up in jail!

But I also think of something else. There must probably be more of those watermelons somewhere. Something must have grown them and whoever it was is probably the same kind of thing as the store keeper...

THE END

PEACE

By Jim Toren

" Peace is one man alone," spoke the last man on earth aloud.

" WANT TO BE, YOU DUMB MOTHER LOVER!" Shrieked the voice inside his skull-- the other voice.

Two days ago the bombs had rained down during the last armageddon and when the smoke had cleared he'd crept out of the mine where he'd been trapped for four days. Wasn't it strange the bombs that killed everyone else on Earth spared him? He almost wished they hadn't, for in his heart he knew that he was the last living human being on Earth.

" THAT'S RIGHT, THE LAST, YOU FILTHY SON..." The voice screamed

on and on until his mind was filled with obscene garbage.

It was really a big joke, he thought. If there was no one around there'd be no fighting, no wars. How could you wage a war all by yourself? But it really was a monumental joke. For he was a schizophrenic, a split personality, and one half of him was at war with the other and now he could no longer stand it. He'd found a gun yesterday and now he stuck it in his mouth and pulled the trigger. His last thought just before the bullet tore into his brain was, "Now there will be peace."

The body lay half an hour when the two starving dogs skulked out and started to fight over it...

THE END

JETAN

We have good news for all you fans of JETAN, the Martian Chess game. Some fans within the National Fantasy Fan Federation are fighting to establish a JETAN bureau and would appreciate your help. If you want to get into a new game why not send your name to either Jim Toran or me and we can either pair you off or take you on ourselves.

Those of you who want to play but don't know how to, rules can be found in the CHESSMEN OF MARS By Edger Rice Burroughs. If you can't get ahold of that book then write to me and perhaps I can write out a copy of the rules for you.

A board marked with an easy code for playing Jetan by mail can be found on the next page.

JETAN CAN BE FUN!

Dave Easlick

