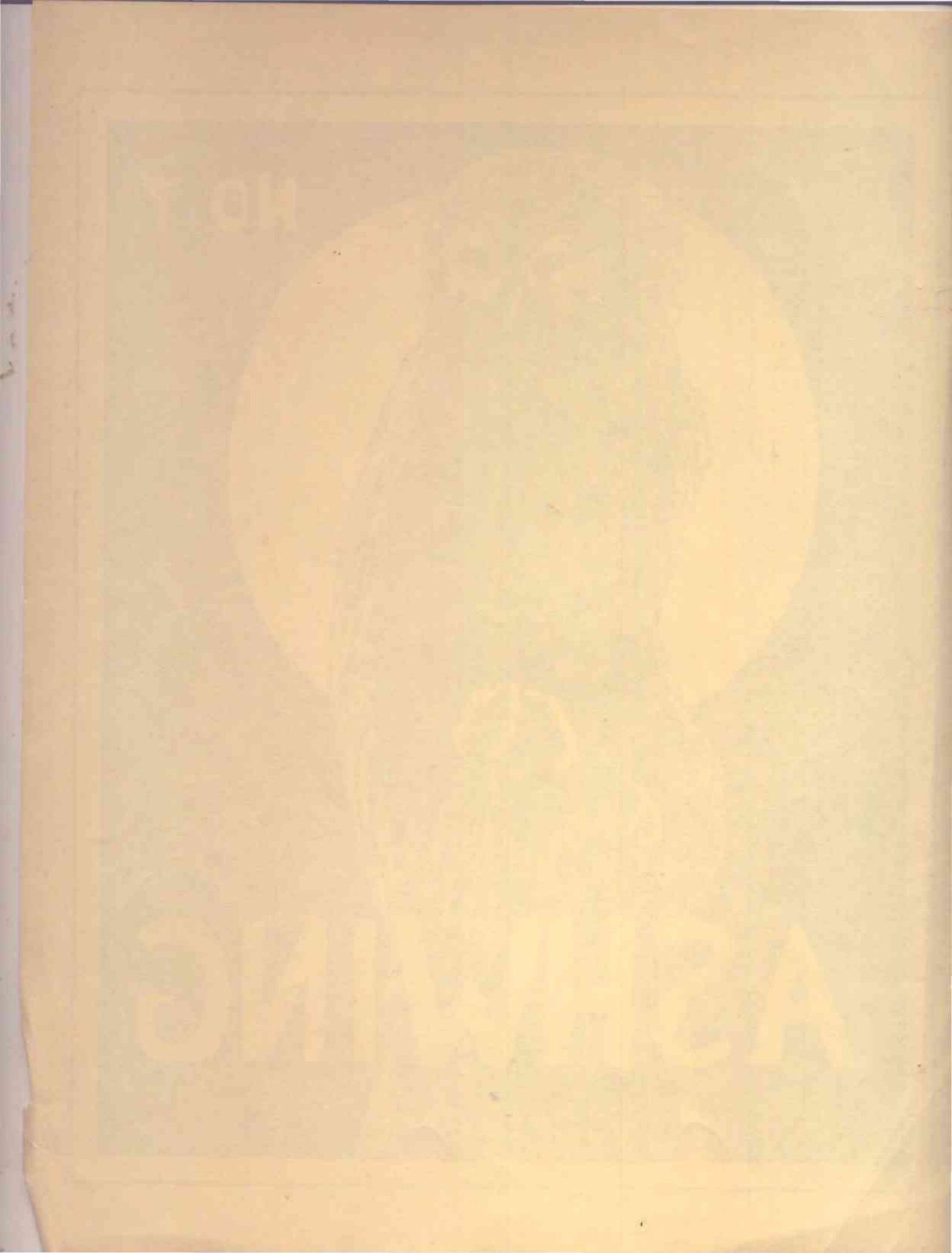


NO. 7



ASHWING



Published more or less, and someday I really am going to be quarterly, by the Bran and Skolawn Press. Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166..

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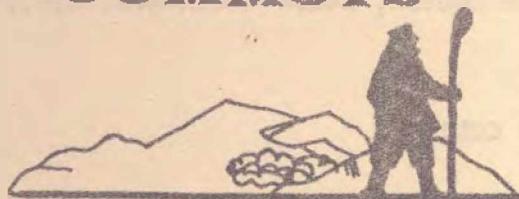
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Poetry, letters, articles, art work, short stories, book reviews and other items of interest should be submitted to Ash-Wing, % Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166

THE FREE COMMOTS



I'm going to try to write a bit of this down-home editorial column before I have all of the typing of this issue finished. You may recall that I complained last time of being all done in by the typing of that huge BEM and not being able to say anything clever and scintillating and like that. You watch and see; this one should be at least 1½% better, maybe even 2%.

You will also note that while, for the last two issues, I have complained about the size of this rag, it has continued to grow. To a whopping 50+ pages. I am beginning to feel a bit like Frank Lurney and I see that he has finally cut Beabohema down to size after a considerable internal struggle. Jerry Lapidus' fine magazine Tomorrow And...5 arrived just the other day and was his best issue yet. I read it through from cover to cover and said to myself, once and for all and finally, "This is the size a fanzine should be." So you are holding in your hand the last of the Ash-Wing biggies. It's too much of a job for one person, enjoyable as it is to see the finished product. From now on it will be 24-30 pages. I will have to return some of the fine contributions which come in; not because I don't want to run them, but because it is not fair to the contributors. After all, they do want to see their stuff in print someday. I hope this won't hurt anyone's feelings, but at least it will be honest. And I hope the magazine will not suffer from it. I rather suspect that it will not; that it will become once more a zine which can be read in one sitting and appreciated, then set aside as most zines are.

We have some of my favorite contributors for this issue. Judith Brownlee of Denver accepted the challenge of trying to write a sword-and-sorcery story for this issue. And I think she's done a pretty good job of it. She admits to some weaknesses in it; re-wrote one section of it extensively. She says that it sounds more like the opening chapter of an s&s novel, so perhaps we can expect more of Cirdith

Jeff May also came through with an s&s story. I don't know much about Jeff, but he shows promise. I'm sure there's more to the story of Hookhand and hope that the readers of Ash-Wing will see it.

Jess Stewart called me on the phone one day and later dropped by the college to visit me. He asked if I'd like to see the Dracula article. I would and did and it is found herein. Jess has made quite a study of the Dracula mythos and has corresponded with Bram Stoker's biographer, Harry Ludlam. It has been a pleasure to meet him and to feature his article this time.

Darrell Schweitzer writes a different kind of story this time. Both in style and content. I'm not sure that I like it as well as other stories which we have featured by Darrell. He always manages to send his own illustrations and I don't want to influence your opinion of them, but I've said before that Darrell should

stick to his writing. (Hi, Darrell.) Darrell will strike back next issue with an epic poem entitled "Knarf, the Barbarian". I think Knarf spelled backwards..... what do you suppose he means?

Doug Robillard is just a tad. I think he said he was 13 years old. Would that I could have written so well at that age. Hope to see more of his work.

And finally an unusually fine group of artists this time. Tim Kirk appears here for the first time. I finally worked up enough courage to contact him and beg a few drawings and he responded most kindly. I saw him at a distance last West-con but didn't have a chance to talk with him. I will certainly rectify that this coming con. Perhaps this will give you an idea of what kind of a person Tim is. With all of his own artistic talent, the beautiful stuff which he can turn out, his own letterhead stationery features a drawing by Roy Krenkel. Look for Tim's cover on the current issue of Forgotten Fantasy. Well done, Tim. And some interior illos in Bill Crawford's Witchcraft and Sorcery.

Jim McLeod, of Interplanetary Corn Chips fame, did the lovely cover. Jim's work is appearing in more and more zines and is finding a most deserving place. Lapidus' Tomorrow and...5 has some very fine McLeod work in it.

Two artists new to me are Mario Navarro and Dany Frolich. I don't know how they got to me, but I am grateful. This may be Mario's first appearance in a fanzine, and if this is so, I puff with pride. Nice clean lines, an interesting imagination. Frolich's lines also are clean, and there is certain similarity in approach between the two.

REG is here again and I hope will be here often. He seemed rather disappointed about the reception of his work lately; but I don't think that he should be. Seems that just because his style is not what is most popular at the moment, that is no reason for his work to be completely excluded. Note to faneds: If you like REG's work drop him a line and ask for some of it. I'm sure he'll be glad to oblige. And if you don't know his address, drop me a line, and I'll put you in touch.

And Dan Osterman. He never fails to come through in his own inimitable style. I absolutely didn't have anything which would go with the Dracula article, so I jotted off a note to Dan and he came through beautifully. Thanks, Dan.

Well, enough about our current contributors. Thank you one and all.

Lisa Tuttl'es "Child of My Kingdom" from A-W 6 was rewritten for submission to a writing class at Syracuse University and managed to win her a spot in a selected class of 15. We should expect improvement and the beginning of some pro sales soon. Ken St. Andre of Ken, Terry and Conan fame has opened a bookstore in the unlikely spot of Cottonwood, Arizona and I wish him success. Ken will be back next issue with a new



parody. I sent some of Ken's serious "Conan" work to George Scithers of AMRA and L. Sprague deCamp. They returned it, but with many kind workds of encouragement. Perhaps we will manage to see it into print some day.

It's Hugo nomination time again. I can't say that I have read all of the works which are likely to be nominated. This is probably one of the real hangups with the whole Hugo scene. I'm not sure that many people can really vote intelligently. For novel it would seem that the runners would be Compton's Chronocules, Russ' And Chaos Died, Silverberg's Tower of Glass, Tucker's Year of the Quiet Sun and Niven's Ringworld. Beyond that I really couldn't guess. I do intend to try to stay on top of this current year's novella output so that I can speak intelligently next time around. I think that this is a category which is really not given enough attention and I hope that I can give a decent critique in this category a year from now.

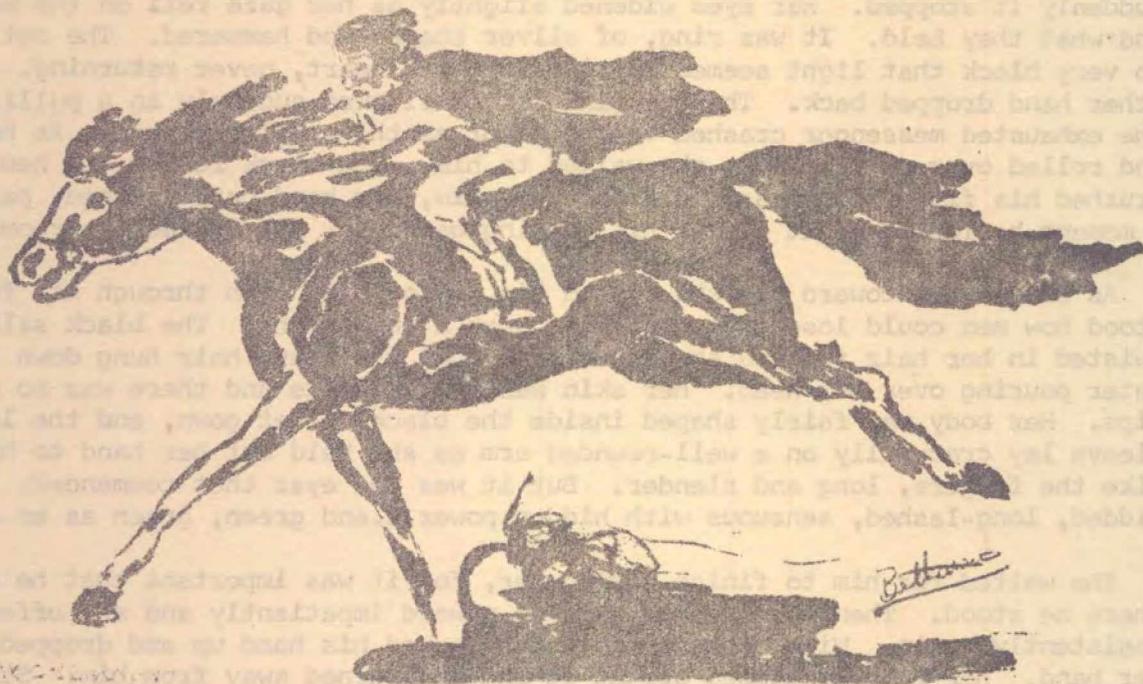
Meantime several very fine novels have appeared in the prozines already this year. Lloyd Biggle's The World Menders is appearing in Analog. Ursula LeGuin's The Lathe of Heaven has its second and final installment in the current Amazing. And I just picked up the March issue of Galazy which has the beginning of Silverberg's A Time of Changes. Good fare for the first three months of this year.

Good fannish news in this part of the country is that there will be a con held in Vancouver, B.C. on Easter weekend. April 9-10 to be exact. Ursula LeGuin will be Guest of Honor and I'm looking forward to seeing here again and to meeting all of the fen up Vancouver way. I suspect that some of my friends from Portland and the Society of Strangers will be there also. Speaking of sf groups, The Nameless Ones here in Seattle have sort of disbanded, or called a moratorium for a while. It seems that there were too many freeloaders and houses used for meetings were getting too messed up. Unfortunate, but the Nameless are currently lying doggo. Anyway, small con report next time.

Plans for the bigger trips are well under way in the Denton household. The bigger trip is to Westercon again. The biggest trip begins just a few days after the return from San Francisco. 36 days in England, primarily Devon, Cornwall, Wales, Cumberland, then on to Ireland. A couple of day on the Isle of Jersey and over to Amsterdam in time to catch the plane home. I hope to have one more issue of Ash-Wing out before we climb aboard the big bird.

Well, I begin to wander. I hope that you enjoy this issue and will write and let me know what you think of the works contained herein. The writers really do value your comments. They write to me between issues to find out if any comments have come in.





MAN OF POWER

by

Judith Brownlee

The only light in the castle that could be seen shone from an isolated tower room. A dark figure sat in that room studying a heavy, crumbling book with hand to forehead. The garments of the student were as dark as the pouring rain outside, but rich - silk, velvet, fur.

The clattering sound of hooves on stone echoed up from the distant courtyard. The moving eyes stopped. The dark head lifted slightly. Shouts distorted by unyielding stone drifted into the room, and a terrified horse screamed. The remembrance of the animal's bone-chilling protest belied the silence which now fell.

Long, black hair swung forward, shadowing the face as the student leaned intently again over the book. A fire crackled on the hearth, putting out waving streams of heat. A sound began to move in on the quietness of the room, the crashing, slithering sound of an exhausted man at a run up an evilly twisting flight of stairs. The figure looked up, finger on page, staring at the heavy wooden door, bound with iron, directly across the small room from the table where the book lay.

Suddenly the door burst open and a soldier, with ashen face, was on the threshold, his hands thrust before him.

The finger on the page now pointed at the man with a flash of movement, and he froze, his limbs pinned in position, panic mounting as he discovered that he no longer commanded his body.

Cirdith, the Witch of Dread Tower, smiled at the man lazily, and prepared herself to kill him, neatly, without fuss. Her other hand was already beginning to rise when suddenly it stopped. Her eyes widened slightly as her gaze fell on the man's hands and what they held. It was ring, of silver shaped and hammered. The set was black - so very black that light seemed to sink into its heart, never returning. Slowly the other hand dropped back. The pointing finger flicked suddenly in a pulling gesture. The exhausted messenger crashed to the floor as the spell vanished. As he groaned and rolled over on his back, she walked to him. The black fur on the hem of her gown brushed his filthy boots as she stood over him, her hand outstretched, palm up. For a moment he looked up at her as his rasping gasps for air filled the room.

As she leaned toward him she filled his vision, and even through his fear he understood how men could lose their souls to such a one as she. The black silk that was twisted in her hair floated about her head, but the heavy hair hung down like black water pouring over her head. Her skin was palely white and there was no color on her lips. Her body was fairly shaped inside the black velvet gown, and the long hanging sleeve lay gracefully on a well-rounded arm as she held out her hand to him, the nails, like the fingers, long and slender. But it was the eyes that commanded: large, heavy-lidded, long-lashed, sensuous with hidden power...and green, green as an emerald.

She waited for him to finish seeing her, for it was important that he understand where he stood. Then one eyebrow quirked upward impatiently and she offered her palm insistently again. With a start the man jerked his hand up and dropped the ring into her hand. Her fingers closed around it and she turned away from him. Still breathing hard he hauled himself up on one elbow.

She held the ring for a moment as though staring into the strange set. Then she put it on the ring finger of her left hand and turned to him again.

"Lord Horst needs my help." Her voice was low, almost inaudible, but he understood her perfectly. He nodded, panting.

"Milord..." he began, but was hushed by a wave of a white hand.

"Save your breath for necessary things. See my seneschal below for food and drink and a fresh mount when you are rested."

"But...Lord Horst --"

"--will be assisted. This need concern you no further."

The man thought to continue his protest, but one glance at the icy green eyes changed his mind. Wearily, he pulled himself to his feet and backed away to the doorway, dropping a brief bow as he went. Then he turned and stumbled down the narrow stairs.

Cirdith moved after him and pushed shut the heavy door. She stood for a moment by the door, her pale hands still laying on the solid, dark wood. Then she smiled and began preparations for her journey.

Horst, formerly of Benthold, now Lord Horst only by force of arms and will, paced slowly across the sodden turf of his camp, pausing occasionally to peer questioningly up at the dark sky which still poured dark water from its clouds. He was not actually a big man, but something about him gave observers that impression. He paused now, standing in the relentless rain to gaze around his camp, his grey eyes hard. His jaw clenched as he noted the small perimeter, and he remembered how vast his company had been such a short time ago. He dropped his blunt chin back into the shelter of the

cloak pulled across his shoulders and continued walking. He came to his own dark tent, guarded by two silent men-at-arms. The guards gave indifferent recognition of his identity by a slight shifting of posture, intended to be taken for a stance of attention. Anger flared in him momentarily, but damped down immediately, as though it could not flame in the constant and soaking rain. Dully he pushed aside the hanging and entered the cold tent. He threw his dripping cloak aside, and fumbled with the tinder-box as he tried to make alight. Cursing, he finally nursed a flame and fed it to a squat candle which cast a dim light. He moved to the back of the tent to fetch a brazier, intending to build a small fire to try to drive away, in some measure, the ever-present dampness and chill.

As his hands reached for the brass bowl, his eye fell on the shadows in the corner, and he halted all movement. In an instant his soldier's mind had analyzed what his eyes saw, and his body reacted. With a rasp his weary sword came from its hanger. With its point he began to slowly probe the shadowy corner. There was a flick of movement from the darkness and, before his mind could react, his nose detected a warm and familiar scent. There was a low, quiet laugh.

He dropped the sword and passed his wet hand over his equally wet face. The anger that would not come before, flared now.

"Cirdith!"

A pale white hand, adorned only by a coldly black and silver ring, pushed back the concealing hanging and a white and beautiful face seemed to float in the blackness of the tent.

"Aye, my lord."

He tossed the sword on his couch and began the awkward business of removing his stiff, cold leather armor and rusting mail. He kept his back to her.

"You took your time," he said harshly.

"Your messenger still bides at Dread Tower, blowing like a spent mount," she said as she advanced into the light. "None other would stand here now, and you know so, my lord."

Horst grunted in answer, still not looking at her. Finally, he had stripped down to his woolen tunic, which was streaked with wet and rust. Still silent, he dropped onto the cushioned couch and pulled a fur over his shoulders, shivering in the growing chill and damp.

Cirdith smiled a soft smile within the darkness of her hooded cloak and raised her hands. One hand arced over her dark head, finger pointed like a lance. The incessant patter of the rain on the tent fabric ceased and the cloth walls billowed and lightened in color as they dried. The ground inside steamed slightly as it gave up its moisture. She brought forward the brass brazier and placed it in the center of the room. She paused and looked at Horst. He still lay enigmatically on the couch, watching her with hooded eyes, but making no reaction. She turned again to the brazier, covering it with her outstretched hands. Light burst between her fingers and she drew them slowly back, revealing a leaping blaze in the bowl. A glance of the emerald eyes at the moping candle blazed it into life, filling the tent with light. A final gesture with the back of her hand filled the tent with warmth and pleasant scent. Then she stood quietly, still as a carven statue, still in her travel cloak, the hood falling again over her bent head.

The silence stretched between them as he stared at the slim, dark figure before him, his eyes bloodshot with fatigue, his rain-glued hair beginning to fluff into dryness

in the new atmosphere of the tent. Finally he grunted again, and gestured at the table. Silently Cirdith went to the table and poured two cups of wine. She gave one to Horst and settled with the other one on the end of the couch, throwing back her hood.

He looked at her over the cup as he drank. Her dark hair swung forward as she shifted position and he suddenly remembered that same dark rain covering his naked chest as she had kissed his rough mouth, while casting a magic which was not as unfamiliar to him as her other works. He looked at her small white hand pressed into the cushions of the couch, and reached out to cover it with his. But then he stopped and looked up at glimmering eyes, flashing with warning. Angry again, this time with himself, he turned away.

When he did not speak, she undid the fastening of her black woolen cloak and dropped it from her shoulders.

"You cannot expect to win any battle with the mantle of despair and gloom you have spread over this camp."

Confused, he stared back at her from under knotted brows.

She sighed and brushed away her words with her hand. "Let it not concern you now, my Lord. What is your position?"

"Untenable. If something doesn't change before light, I will have to surrender to Daka....and nothing is likely to change....not by my doing."

Cirdith sat silent, looking at him with accusing eyes.

He sat up suddenly, in anger. "You answered the ring. You said to send it when I needed help. Will you deny me th--"

A cutting gesture from a white hand tore the words from his lips. She leaned toward him over that hand.

"You will be helped," she hissed at him. "I will pay your lover's fee."

The rain was beginning to stop, though the sky was still ink-black. The two men-at-arms guarding Horst's tent shook themselves in relief and began to loosen the limbs that had been tightly drawn in against the weather. Suddenly the tent flap was raised by a dark figure that both men recognized--and both knew they had not seen enter the tent. They shuddered and sidled away from the witch-woman they knew was their lord's ally - and perhaps more.

Cirdith did not notice their fear and distaste. It was a common reaction that she had long grown used to. In fact, she was barely aware of their presence as she gazed into the distance at the barely discernible fires of daka's camp. She stood very still, holding back the flap with one hand, as her mind struggled with what course to take. She glanced over her shoulder at Horst who was sulking on the couch with his cup of wine. As she looked back again toward Daka's camp she sighed with disgust and fatigue. Horst had seemed like such a good prospect to become a man of power when she had allied herself with him. She had not even minded the necessary evil of seducing him to her bed, for that had gained her Dread Tower - and another prize he was yet ignorant of. It was not often that she bed-bonded to herself such a vigorous and attractive man. But she could see now that he had become rash and careless once her power had been promised him. She sighed again. It was a chance she had to take when choosing a man. Now this one had to be got rid of - without her breaking her bargain with him.

She dropped the tent flap and moved back inside, picking up her traveling cloak. Horst looked up at her with defiant eye.

"Where are you going?" he demanded hoarsely, his words already beginning to slur from the wine.

Her pale slender fingers worked quickly attaching the fastenings of the garment. "It is necessary that I do a little reconnoitering." He stared up at her with blank eyes and she was suddenly filled with a great disgust. She dropped her hands and glared at him with blazing green eyes. "That is a military term, my lord. Perhaps you may recall its meaning - if you are not beyond such trifling affairs as military art by now." She was slightly gratified to see the anger blaze up in his eyes at her words, but did not stay to hear his retort. She raised her arms and the shadows thickened around her, soon hiding her from sight.

Even before sight began to return to her, she knew something was wrong. When at last she could see her surroundings she was sure. Instead of the damp fabric of Daka's tent, she was surrounded by a dark, unknown landscape. With a sudden thrill of fear she realized that for the first time her magic had failed her - had sent her where she had not meant to go. Heart pounding with the thought of not being in control, but otherwise calm in the assurance that a quick adjustment could set everything right, she turned slowly, surveying her surroundings: nothing.

A low even voice came from behind her. "Greetings, my lady." She jerked around in time to see a tall, lean figure solidify. She raised her ring hand in precaution.

The warlock - she presumed him to be one, as no other would be in this time and place, whatever it was - smiled, white teeth flashing against a curiously dark skin. "That is not necessary, lady. Surely we can talk here for a moment or two, protected from interference, without threatening each other?" She felt uncomfortably that the humor that seemed to dance behind his curious eyes was somehow directed at her, and the thought made her embarrassed and angry. She turned her back on him and walked a short distance away, trying to control her reactions. She knew how dangerous uncontrolled emotions were when two magicians met and tested each other. So far all the points were going to him. When at last she was calm, she turned back to face him. He still stood as she had first seen him, having calmly waited while she composed herself. He nodded in approval as she paced slowly back to him.

"Good," he said, smiling. "You are young, my lady, and lacking in experience, but you have a good grasp of theory, and a certain flair in execution."

She refused to react to the condescending insolence of his remark, and merely smiled coolly back at him, filing this away in her head for future reference.

His smile grew broader. She looked at him slowly, and memorized every inch of his appearance, noting every detail. He had a narrow, bearded face with arching black brows that punctuated each expression with fluid mobility. His coal black hair curled crisply around his face, brushing his collar of white ruffled linen. His body was lean and sharp, clothed in a black leather jerkin and hose of the same color. His long dextrous fingers began to flip the edge of his dark cloak impatiently as she completed her catalog of him by taking in the uncommon fact that he wore black, polished riding boots, rather than the more conventional soft student's shoes worn by most warlocks. There were other inconsistencies, such as the sun-tanned complexion and the hip that seemed naked without a blade. Her gaze went back to his eyes, black over the high cheek bones, and she suddenly realized why she found them so strange. She raised her ring hand again, but this time to look again at the stone set in the ring and then at the pair of eyes, like a matched set of stones, all three.

He dismissed her inspection with a final impatient gesture. "If your curiosity is now satisfied, mistress, there is a purpose to our being here."

Mentally she stretched forth her powers, probing for the substance that was he, but she met nothing. Or else - was it something so shielded she could not even detect it, much less confront it?

Suddenly she found herself shaken, physically. Coming to herself, she was infuriated to find the man grasping her arms and shaking her violently. Rage bloomed within her that he would dare to touch her. The rage exploded into sparks that flashed from her flesh to his hands. Laughing he jerked his hands away.

"I shall consider my fingers slapped, my lady," he said, backing away. "Now, can we come to the matter I have brought you here to discuss?"

Still silent, but glaring at him, she seated herself on a hummock.

"That's better."

"Who are you?" she demanded.

He made a handsome leg and bowed his head. "Lhark - at your service, mistress."

"A warlock."

"Of course."

"And..."

"And...many things, lady, as you will soon see. Currently in the service of Lord Daka."

Cirdith looked at him. "Lord?"

Lhark shrugged. "He has as much right to the title as Horst, holding as he does now the same property Horst stole when he gained that title." Cirdith made no reply, and he went on. "I thought, perhaps, we might come to an understanding, lady. I know what Daka wants; we know what Horst wants; but no one knows what Cirdith of Dread Tower wants." She threw a hard glance at him as he used her name, and then looked away again. "It seems reasonable to me that my lady may have other purposes than the return of Benthold to ex-Lord Horst. When that is known, perhaps then it will be possible to come to a mutually benefiting agreement, which will save a great many lives and a great deal of gold."

"Since when has a warlock concerned himself with the lives of ordinary men?"

His dark brow knotted in a scowl. "I am not one of those, madam, who considers himself the only valuable being in the world."

Her pale cheeks flushed hotly under the whip and insinuation of his words.

"I say again," he repeated, "what does Cirdith want?"

She sighed and looked at her palms in her lap, and then clenched her fingers into small, impotent fists, and looked up at him. "I want a man of power."

"And Horst...?"

"Is not the one," she answered, shaking her head as she rose.

"Then perhaps we can agree -"

She turned on him fiercely. "I will not betray my promise to Horst - even if he is not the man I seek."

"Exactly what did you promise?"

"To help him when he needed help," she replied, tiredly pushing back her heavy hair from her wan face.

"Then help him - to escape. His life is really all you owe him, mistress, not his honor."

"But Daka -"

" - will never agree, I know. But if I choose not to prevent you with my arts, there is little he can do against yours."

"I see," whispered Cirdith, stung by his calm assurance that in a duel between them he would be the victor.

"I grant you Horst's life, then, lady. In return for your agreement not to press his attempt to regain Benthold."

"His company?"

"We cannot afford for Horst to have supporters, lady. Those who wish to pledge themselves to Lord Daka, will be allowed to do so. Any others will be executed."

It was a more than generous offer and Cirdith knew that Horst's discontented band would probably all desert him without a backward glance - another indication of his failure to qualify as a man of power. As for herself, it was only wise, now that she had decided to rid herself of Horst, to take this as a sensible way out. But somehow it rankled to have to back down to this insolent, out-of-character warlock with the mocking eyes. Well, no time now for the luxury of revenge.

"It is agreed," she replied, hating him.

"I am glad, my lady, that we have settled our business so amicably."

It was clearly time to part, but she suddenly realized with mounting frustration and rage, that she didn't know how to leave this strange place. She closed her eyes and visualized Horst's tent. When she opened them again she still saw the mocking face of Lhark. "Having trouble, lady?"

Her anger blazed again at this final insult. She raised her ring hand and threw a blast of power at him. He casually caught it as though it were a ball, rounded it in his palms and threw it skyward, where it exploded like a sky rocket, trailing light down the dark sky. He threw his head back to watch the display, and when it faded he looked at her once more.

"Witchcraft, lady, is a female thing, woven of the moon and the dark coolness of the earth. It has not the strength of warlock art, drawn from the fury of the sun, and the heat of the blood. It is more subtle sometimes, and, in that manner, often accomplishes more, but never prevails in direct conflict." He looked at her curiously. "I am surprised you do not know this."

She was shaking now with suppressed fury, her teeth bared at him.

Lhark raised his hands to send her back, and his mocking grin returned. "Perhaps the warlocks you have known until tonight have been lacking in fury and heat, madame." He laughed out loud now. "Mayhap you can learn from me mistress. I can teach you much!" The shadows whirled about her and she slipped away, his laughter fading in her ears.

Horst was slumped on the couch and the chill had returned to the tent. She stood looking at him for a moment and then stooped to rouse him. The sky outside was beginning to lighten with the first tentative streaks of dawn. He awakened slowly, feeling the effects of the wine. He blinked his bloodshot eyes at her. "Cirdith?"



"Yes, Horst. Awake now. It is time to go."

He shook himself and then bounded up from the couch, but stopped short, wincing at the pain in his head. As he massaged his temples he poured a fresh cup and gulped its contents. Then he began to buckle on his armor. Suddenly he laughed, a strained merriment that seemed to be an attempt to deny her lack of enthusiasm. He caught up

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his sword from the ground and brandished it. "Today I return to Benthold!" He looked toward her as though for confirmation.

Slowly she shook her hooded head. "No, Horst."

"Lord!" he cried, furious. "I am Lord Horst! He brandished the filthy blade at her.

"No, Horst," she said again. "From this day forward, only Horst, late of Benthold, knight-errant."

With a cry of rage he leapt at her. Warily she stopped him, holding his rage in check as she explained. "You will never rule Benthold again, Horst. Get used to the idea. Even if I took it for you, you could not keep it - you haven't the ability. I keep my bargain. You have your life. Your men have theirs - although they will go with Daka. This is more than you could bargain on if you had surrendered. Daka would have killed you - slowly." Flecks of white appeared on his lips and a madness flickered in his eyes. "Do not think you can touch me, Horst. In any manner." Her fingers slipped beneath her cloak and emerged again holding a small token in the shape of a ring. She held it up before his glazed eyes. "Take note of this, Horst, and remember it." She turned it slowly so he could see it clearly. "It is a love charm, Horst, twisted from your own hair and bound with spells. When a man and a woman share a bed they give each other portions of their being. If one knows how to use it, it can become a strong bond - either for good or evil. Know always that if you ever move against me, I can destroy you." She watched as fear drove the madness from his eyes. She knew also that after the fear would come hate. "Know also that you came to my bed to buy my power for yourself and this is the price you paid for that power, not the pleasuring of my body." She paused again, and watched the hate begin to grow in him and sought to soften it a little. "Thee did pleasure me, my lord," she whispered to him, and brushed his frozen lips with hers. "For that I promise thee this shall never be used against thee, but in self-defense. Its use is on thy head." She gestured once again and blackness swirled around them. Then they were standing on the high road beside a strong, chestnut gelding, packed and loaded for journeying. Horst stood at ease once more, warmly clad, with his sword belted to his side. She watched as he adjusted to the change. Then she held out her hand to him. Uncertainly he took it.

"God speed," she said.

"A strange benediction to fall from such a mouth," he said slowly.

"You know less of me than you think."

"I am beginning to understand that." His grip on her hand tightened and he pulled her close, muffling her in the folds of his rough soldier's cloak. "I beg the honor, my lady, as a true knight, to carry your favor with me into battle."

The ritual request sounded strangely out of place on the lonely, rain-swept high road, mouthed by a rough soldier to a black witch-woman, but she understood and raised her lips to his. For a moment she was caught by the stir of desire and when they parted, both breathed heavily in the growing dawn, spewing frosty plumes from their mouths. For a moment they stood together, and she saw hope beginning to dawn in him, and knew that she was cruel. Brusquely she pulled away, out of his arms.

"Good bye, Horst."

He looked at her for a moment and then took the reins of the horse and pulled himself into the saddle.

"Good bye, Cirdith," he said, spurring the horse to movement. He turned in the saddle with his hand raised as the animal carried him away. His words came faintly now, whipped by the rising morning breeze. "I'll carry your favor with honor." Then he was gone over a rise.

A familiar mocking laughter rang out in the morning air. "Cirdith of Dread Tower - a true knight's lady!" She swung around and saw a familiar dark figure bent with laughter within his swinging cloak.

"Lhark!" Her cheeks burned with indignation.

The tall warlock composed himself with difficulty. "You must admit that the picture of a witch-woman as Queen of Love and Beauty is a bit incongruous."

"You have a wicked tongue, you warlock scum!"

"Ah, the woman scorned. The fury of hell is much more in keeping with your image, mistress."

"What will you with me, Lhark?" she asked angrily. "I have kept my bargain. Have you come to break yours?"

"No," he replied quietly. "Lord Daka and his men even now break camp to return to Benthold - without pursuit."

"What then?"

"It occurred to me that we should meet again - for your own education. Obviously, your experience in men is limited - or rather, in warlocks, for we both know that Cirdith's bed is a warm, congenial spot for many."

With a cry of rage, she sprang at him, forgetting her power in her outrage, and raked his tanned cheek with her long nails. Too late he dodged and three red trails straggled down his cheek to his jaw. Astonished, he delicately touched the wound and stared in wonderment at the blood on his fingers. "Apparently, I have not done with learning, either, lady. I regret my thoughtless words, and beg forgiveness." He bowed his dark head before her.

Strangely, the rage in her disappeared at this contrite display. "Moonlight and earth, Lord Lhark, have their uses, as you yourself told me," she replied in sarcasm. He looked at her with an eyebrow quizzically arched. "I find myself fatigued from this business of Horst, my Lord. Let us postpone this game of lessons to a more agreeable time." She pulled her cloak about her and found herself in her room at Dread Tower.

As fatigue washed over her she dropped the heavy cloak to the floor and crossed to an alcove where her bed stood. Quickly she stripped the velvet gown from her perspiring body. She thought to wash herself, but decided to wait until she had slept. She sat before her mirror in her silken shift and began to brush her long, black hair.

The sound of a lute quivered in the air of the room and she jerked around. But saw no one. Her flesh crawled as she felt unseen eyes. She jumped up from the stool still holding the hair brush.

"Delightful!"

The voice came from behind her! Turning back to the mirror she saw an image in it not reflected from the room. Lhark lounged at ease on a pillowed couch, his slender



Birth of
Dread Tower

fingers caressing the strings of a lute. His long cloak was discarded and the lacings of his jerkin loosened. The image held out his hand to her.

"Come, and let us pass the time together, Cirdith!"

Furious, she flung the hair brush at him and the image shattered and disappeared as the precious glass splintered. Gasping for breath at the outrage of it, she dropped back down on the stool, shivering in the thin stuff of her shift. At least he was gone, and from now on she would strengthen the protection of her tower room. Then she would be safe from his presumption and mockery.

At least she hoped she would be. Her heart thudded with fear and a strange excitement as the room was filled with peals of masculine laughter.

THE END

MARTIAN LULLABY

by

M.L. Long

Moons in the sky
Know why I sigh.
Birds on the wing
Will soon bring spring.

Deimos and Phobos will smile on me
And hang in the sky o'er restless seas.
Lavender sky holds promise of rain
On silver flowers in the meadow lane.

The chatoyant light
Glimmers oft bright white,
But changes to blue
In the sky now new.

The amorphous days come and they go
They bring us the courage to want to know
What lives beyond the clouds of the world
Hanging all misty and featherlike swirled.

But now you must rest,
The knowledge best guessed
In the dreams of your mind
I know what you'll find.

You'll see gossamer butterflies
In the light of sun's rise,
And gossamer memories
All open with dream keys.

So lay now and dream
Of moonbeams that gleam,
So much to know,
Before you grow.





SOME SKELETONS IN DRACULA'S COFFIN

by Jess E. Stewart

The most famous horror story ever written -- who would deny that title to Bram Stoker's DRACULA?

No one can argue with a world-wide reputation, millions of readers, continuously in print for over seventy years, appearances in play form, television, scores of movies, film magazines, comic books, traditional Halloween masks and novelties, people who have made their careers by mere portrayal and identification, a character who has become a household word -- indeed, an immortal classic of the English language.

But how many of the millions of readers have noticed the frightful inconsistencies, weaknesses, misconceptions and errors abounding in the Dracula Canon?

None; not even Stoker's only biographer, Harry Ludlam. Actually Ludlam has written that the remarkable thing is not that DRACULA has discrepancies, but that it was written at all.

For twenty-seven years Stoker labored as Henry Irving's personal manager (great British actor of the nineteenth century), in which capacity he had to write about fifty letters daily, not including the endless, involved details of the actor's Lyceum Theater.

It was in the midst of this business hubbub that Stoker's books were created -- some eighteen in number. Owing to his frenetic activity in behalf of Irving, Stoker's works elicited such comments as Lovecraft's:

"....the development is so childish that I cannot imagine how the thing (LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM) ever got into print -- unless on the reputation of DRACULA. The rambling and unmotivated narration, the puerile and stagey characterization, the irrational propensity of everyone to do the most stupid possible thing at precisely the wrong moment

and for no cause at all, and the involved development of a personality afterward relegated to utter insignificance -- all this proves to me either that DRACULA... and THE JEWEL OF SEVEN STARS were touched up...by a superior hand which arranged all the details, or that by the end of his life....he trickled out in a pitiful and inept senility...."

In DRACULA the impact of the story which is never forgotten is the castle scenes in the first four chapters.

The Count, as the reader will recall, was moving from the old country to England and had needed legal assistance of an Englishman to make the papers "right." That man's experiences in the Count's lair are the most exciting part of the novel. Also they draw the lasting characterization of the Count with all of their misconceptions -- and highlight the seldom noticed weaknesses of the novel.

The Count's purpose is to get Harker, the Englishman, to put the legal papers in order, take care of the details of buying an old house in England, close out that sale, as well as learn, by observation of Harker, some of the language, mores, and etiquette of the English people -- he had been studying England for scores of years according to the books in his library -- all without arousing suspicion.

It is on the eve of St. George's Day that, at midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway, according to the people Harker has met in his travels to the Count's castle. When Harker is placed on the Count's carriage there is the ritual of the blue flame which appears along the road at various places. Even though it appeared on only this one night, the Count would have been better advised not to stop the carriage and erect a stone marker, thus arousing fears and suspicions of his very important passenger -- his only means of gaining England.

Why did he not arrange with those weird women back at the castle, his vampire companions, to come forth and do this menial task for him?

The blue flames, the reader will recall, burned over burial sites of Hungarian gold caches placed in the ground hundreds of years before during various wars -- these gold caches were the Count's main bank and a very rich one at that. The gold, naturally, was for the Count's travel and expenses to his new world.

Before arrival at the castle that hectic night, Harker had already witnessed several baffling experiences: the blue flames themselves, the apparent optical illusion of seeing the flames through the driver (the Count) as though his body were not solid, and the driver's supernatural power over the wolves and the horses -- not to mention the strange brightness of his large ruby-red eyes which strike terror in the beholder.

To allay suspicion, here again, the Count could have employed a Szgany to command the carriage lest he scare his visitor away.

At the castle, Harker find himself dropped from the carriage to wait, apprehensively, in front of the pitch-black, broken and deserted battlements of Castle Dracula. An hour passes. Then he is allowed entry where a roaring fire greets him and supper is waiting -- unknown to Harker, the Count has put the horses and carriage away, shaved, and finished cooking the meal which he must have started hours earlier.

Why not lighted lanterns within and without, The Count's wives acting as hostesses and family, all standing outside the door, and Harker ushered immediately to his dinner?

That could remove some of the suspicion on Harker's part, and (alas) possibly,

some of the interest in the story.

However, as it exists, Harker knows something is rotten in Transylvania almost from the start, and, by the end of Chapter Two, that he is Dracula's prisoner and that no humans other than himself exist in the castle.

The Count wishes to dispel any suspicions on Harker's part, at least until the legal red-tape is taken care of; instead the Count does everything wrong from the beginning, succeeding only in scaring the daylights out of Harker.

At the castle the Count appears only at night, habitually bolts out of his chair whenever the cock crows, food or drink never passes his lips, he doesn't smoke (the cancer scare, probably), pretends to have servants but actually lives alone, never indicates the location of his quarters, talks about century-old wars as though he were present at the battles himself, no mirrors in the rooms, and once, in a state of rage, makes the enigmatic statement, "....Take care of how you cut yourself -- it is more dangerous than you think in this country...."

Why this crudity when the Count, according to the powers Stoker bestowed upon his creature, could have been ingeniously clever?

There could have been human servants present as well as what would pass for a wife and two daughters -- the latter three, of course, being his vampire wives.

Szgary -- Gypsies, peculiar to that part of the world -- could have been employed as servants, caretakers, coachmen, maids, etc. The Count, with his apparently normal family, could have met with Harker, as people do, in the daylight hours.

Certainly such an arrangement would have been less interesting than the original, but it would have challenged the author with complications worthy of his novel.

The weakness of DRACULA is not that Stoker did not think of any other possible scenes for the opening, or of other possibilities, but that the powers of his creature develop continuously throughout the novel. Obviously Stoker, at this point in the story, hasn't the foggiest notion what powers his creature possesses.

Thus it is implied in these first chapters that daylight is fatal to Dracula. Never is the vampire seen in daylight. Harker feels safe only after sunrise.

Readers recall DRACULA as the vampire story where, at night, the monster seeks his victims. However, to thoughtful readers, a confusion has always existed in this regard. Herein is the weakness of DRACULA.

There is no direct statement in DRACULA saying sunlight destroys vampires. None are destroyed by being exposed to the rays of the sun as so many vampire movies have solved the villain's demise.



However, by these opening chapters Stoker left the impression that sunlight was dangerous to his creature. No small misconception, this.

If the sun's rays were harmful, Dracula could not leave his lair when the full moon shone because such light is reflected sunlight, as every school child knows. A street light, a lantern, a flashlight, yes, even a lighted candle would strike more terror in the vampire's heart than a crucifix. Therefore, does DRACULA refute the sun's rays later in the story?

For example, in Chapter Eleven, it is two hours after feeding time at the zoo, in the wolf area, where we read, "....wasn't much people about that day...." The Count appears, talks to the zoo keeper and is introduced to Bersicker, a great gray wolf. Later that night the Count bends open the bars of Bersicker's cage and orders the wolf to break in a window of Lucy Westenra's bedroom -- the sight of this gray wolf gives Lucy's mother a fatal heart attack.

Chapter Thirteen shows Harker and his wife leaving the funeral of Mr. Hawkins, Harker's employer. Note this sentence, "....It was a hot day for autumn and there was a comfortable seat in a shady place...." That seat is where Harker has to rest because of the shock of seeing the Count in broad daylight.

With reference to the above, give Stoker credit for seeking absolute truth. What happens when one meets a mental shock of overwhelming intensity? In some cases people merely black out -- their conscious minds shuts off in the hope that their unconscious mind can straighten things out -- other people could fall asleep in the face of a mental crisis which was beyond endurance or belief. Harker had such a shock. He reacts by sitting on the bench, resting his head on his wife's shoulder, and sleeping for twenty minutes. Upon awakening he appears not to have remembered seeing the Count.

In Chapter Twenty-three the Count is momentarily trapped by Harker and his friends who approach him with drawn knives.

The Count fails to turn into a bat, or a mist, or elemental dust since the time is between 12:45 and 5:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Harker and his friends have received a notice that the Count left a certain location at the former time, and the men decide that if the Count fails to show up where they are waiting by the latter time, they must get back -- they are afraid to leave Mrs. Harker alone after sunset.

The Count, in escaping, has shattered a large glass window by throwing his body against it and falling to the ground below the window.

"...He hurry at the last, lest we catch him before the sun go down...." words by Van Helsing, further substantiating that the Count is active during the day.

Finally, in Chapter Twenty-six we read, "....At sunrise the Count could appear in his own form...."

Contrary to this, in the same chapter, there is, "....confined as he is between dawn and sunset in his wooden box...."

Out of context the latter statement seems to worry the thesis put forth in regard to sunlight.

Not when one notices that at this point in the story the Count is making a strategic withdrawal in great secrecy. In traveling from country to country, crossing rivers and seas, he must be conveyed. In daylight he can cross water only at the changing of the tides. If he is carried over by others he can manage to move larger distances. With enemies tracking him the best plan is for him to remain in his coffin.

How many score of vampire movies, using DRACULA as their storehouse of knowledge of vampires, have sunlight destroying them?

For years practically all of them used this misconception. The result of which was a weak horror movie which somehow fails to come off. People unconsciously feel an error in judgment all along with the sunlight business.

Indeed, Richard Matheson wrote a complete novel about vampires, I AM LEGEND, revolving around the belief that sunlight is fatal to vampires.

Lately Dracula has been remade in several full color movies, brilliantly, except for one thing: they lacked the accouterments of the vampire. The modern screen writer -- the modern treatment -- has a curious belief: if you remove the supernatural from the supernatural you can achieve greater realism. That if the "heavy" has too much power the whole thing becomes like a myth or a fairy tale.



Dan C. Eberman

Oedipus was a myth, but psychoanalysis has made it a reality. The greater the fairy tale the greater the underlying truth. Myths and fairy tales have a way of being stronger than the dull life we all know. People have a child-like love of myths and fairy tales that will never die.

A so-called vampire who cannot change into a bat, a wolf, a mist or dust is not the true vampire; none such can ever represent Dracula -- even with the great Christopher Lee trying.

Florence Stoker, in 1914, had a posthumous collection of her husband's stories published, DRACULA'S GUEST, in the preface of which she mentions that the title piece was part of the original novel but had been excised "owing to the length of the book..."

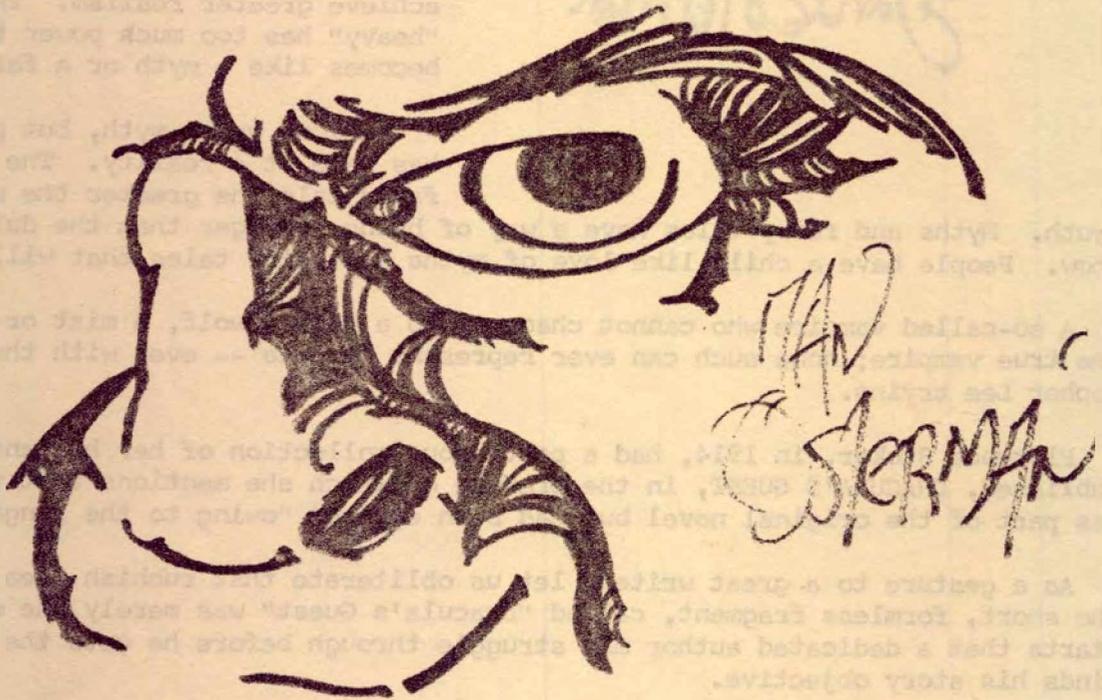
As a gesture to a great writer, let us obliterate that rubbish idea immediately. The short, formless fragment, called "Dracula's Guest" was merely one of many false starts that a dedicated author may struggle through before he gets the "wind up" and finds his story objective.

A close examination will reveal merely all of the ingredients actually used in the first few pages of the original novel. There is the device of the letter sent by the Count, the lines, "...for the dead travel fast..." and the evil night, Walpurgisnacht instead of St. George's Day as was actually used in the novel.

Thus the fragment, "Dracula's Guest" could not be returned to the original because there is no place for it to fit. Everything in the novel is part of someone's diary or record; the fragment rightly gives no such indication. It is not part of anything, but a beginning for it all. It is a germ out of which grew the final story -- how miraculous that, from almost nothing, a powerful classic was created.

If considered a myth, a universality exists by the fact that the Count represents an archetypal image of human terror. He becomes the Devil to the reader.

The myth shakes the reader a bit when he reads in his daily papers that recently a Prince Vlad Dracula's castle has been located in Romania. Moreover, Harry Ludlam states that Stoker based his character on a real person by the name of Voivode Dracula in the fifteenth century. Here, perhaps, is another myth that slowly smacks of reality.



SECOND CREATION

by

Elizabeth Fishman

I

The Light belongs to me!
I shall gather it all,
And to the depths of some angry sea,
Let the heap of it fall.

I will silence the raucous thunder,
And shrivel the laden cloud,
Then tear the sky asunder,
To one gaping wound!

Seizing all that is,
I shall smack it hard awry,
To send it hurtling away
Across the dark and ragged sky.

II

In Time
The Heavens are healed,
And there is no sun,
No moon, no star
To pierce the ebonied peace.

Rich is silence!
The feel and sound of it!
I lie in the lush of it
And drift in sensuous tranquility.

III

Deep, deep is silence.
No moon, no star,
No sun to warm the ebonied peace
Of an eternal, infinite
Tomb.

Thus,
I will begin again, as
In the Beginning.
But now cautiously,
Quietly, thoughtfully---
I will not let the passion
Of my loneliness goad me to hurl
Handfuls of light
Against the awful darkness.
I must create with care
The Life
That will people the Lights.

IV

The Silence belongs to me.
So I gather it all,
And to the depths of some icy sea
Let the heap of it fall.

I splash, sprinkle and
Trickle Lights here and there
Until,
I have only this one last sphere:
And remembering,
I will people this light
With care.

V

Serene are my valleys.
Breezes sway the trees
And blow the oceans to gentle waves.
The fish swarm again,
The fowl fly and roost,
And the lands abound with creatured life.

All is as once it was---
As planned when first I began.
Now,
I must people my valleys
With care.

VI

Stands Man.
Before me again
Tall, strong and straight.
He laughs in joy to live again,
Rejoicing in this newer fate.

Now Woman.
Turning from me,
She reaches her hand to his---
Two to create those to be,
And those to come after them.

(Sweet, serene
And lovely
Are my valleys.)

The crops rise high and
Gardens bloom---
Peace is the nature of Newer Man.

The children of the Woman's womb
Carry forth as planned.

All is as once it was,
When first that I began.

VII

Man!
Boundless, electric, infinite!
Reaching infinitely,
Hurriedly, hungrily
Beyond the boundaries
Of my valleys
(My sweet green valleys).
Furiously he reaches!
Furious with need
To touch,
To know.

(The lands and waters rage
With the clash and thunder
Of metal hurled
Against metal! The lands and waters
Moan and heave as he
Slashes, dredges, tears, gouges---
Now flings his roaring metallic probes
Among my Lights!)

Man!
The impatient, infinite imagination
Of him!
The quivering, intense,
Angry energy of him
That grows and grows beyond
My care and keep---
As if he knows there to be more,
So much more!

Yet,
My mysteries are my own.
How can he know?
How can he fathom their existence
When he cannot fathom his own?

I do not understand.
I taught him nothing except
To breathe. No more
Than handfuls of atoms is he,
Molded to clay
In the image of me.

Man.
In the image of me molded to clay
In the image of me melded to
The atoms of all that exists:
Then we,
In Unity,
Are the atoms of all that exists.



HOOKHAND

by

Jeffrey May

Commingled with the last silvery note of the valaka a horror-filled scream formed a hellish chord. Startled, the slight blond youth leaped from the side of the dark-haired girl he was wooing, his heart pounding. His hand groped for the dagger on the floor by their couch.

"V-Vladmir, what was that? What would scream like that?" Alenka's voice had a quaver in it.

"A man." Vladimir opened the window's bolted shutters and peered out cautiously. His mouth was dry and his heart seemed likely to tear itself loose in his chest, so madly was it pounding. Somewhat reassured by the torches that were flickering now all over the village, he leaned out farther.

A second scream sounded! Vladimir started back in frightened surprise. This cry was weaker, but it served to locate the victim in the dense forest on the hillslope above the town. A line of torches began to bob up the path winding among the trees and underbrush there. Vladimir, peering anxiously into the night, thought he saw a flicker of light that was not a torch among the trees, but when he squinted to see better it was gone.

Alenka shouldered past him to the window, pushing back her long black hair to see better. "Here! If you're not going to look, let me see! Is he on the hill? Don't just stand there, go and look! Go on! Oh, you minstrel!" Before the withering scorn in her black eyes, Vladimir had little choice but to go. A few moments later he puffed into the circle of men who were gathered around something on the ground.

They made way for him, one or two looking at him with surprise that a foppish minstrel would want to see such a thing. Vladmir looked at what all were staring at, and suddenly his mouth was no longer dry but was filled with foulness that leaked between his clenched teeth. He turned away and cleared his mouth and steeled himself to look again. The wounds - mutilations, rather - were utterly strange. The rents in the man's body seemed to have been made by something that burned with searing heat and froze with searing cold and stirred the tissues of the body, all at once.

Vladmir was only too glad to draw away from the body with the other men and gather around the headman of the village.

"Ivann, you are the greatest hunter in any village within three hundred ast'a. Have you ever seen marks such as these, or have you ever heard of any animal that attacks thus?"

"No, headman," grunted the bearded hunter. "The only beast that I know of which can burn its victims is the firesnake of the Smoking Mountains, which lie away to the southeast. But such a creature cannot live here - it is too cold. But - " and then he stopped.

"But what, Master Ivann?" The grey-headed headman's manner denoted impatience. The others looked at Ivann curiously. "Well?"

"There is a sort of thing which might kill its victims with fire and ice," said Ivann in a low voice, one filled with hesitation.

"But you said no animal kills thus!" The headman was now angry.

"That is true, headman. But I did not say that this was an animal. Yet it is alive after a fashion. It is - "

"A demon!" The words popped from Vladmir's mouth without thinking.

Ivann nodded slowly. "The young minstrel is right. Only a demon could slay a man in this manner." A ripple seemed to pass through the men gathered near the corpse.

"A demon! But who would send a demon here? This is only a village! We are so small that we are not even worth seizing for the taxes we might pay! Not even the Dictator wants us! What is more, there are none here who would arouse the anger of a sorcerer or demonologist! It is nonsense!"

Vladmir spoke. "Your pardon, headman, but in the hills south of here lives one who might help you. He is a hermit with great skill in divination. Take him those things which he needs, such as dried meat, vegetables, and thick cloth, and he may well aid you."

"That is an idea of merit," proclaimed the headman. "Who will go and see this hermit?"

Two men nudged one another and then came forward. "We will go, headman. Arld was our friend."

"Good. Collect those things of which the troubador spoke and depart at once." The group broke apart and made its way down the hillside, bearing with them Arld's mangled body.

The following morning dawned cold and gloomy, with the Luminary riding reddish in the northern sky. Arld's body had to be cremated immediately, for it had commenced to putrify with unnatural rapidity. However, the fire would not burn, but sputtered and smoked and went out as if the good dry wood with which the fire was kindled were wet. The people muttered and whispered to one another, and not until a man who had lived for a time in Gorada Mazi, the largest center for studies of magic and white sorcery that was in all the world of Tsuriiin, a man who had learned something of that city's arts, cast a Powder of Banishment over the body and fire and pronounced some words in an uncouth tongue did the ceremony go rightly. At this many people were afraid, for they were now certain that demon-employing sorcery had had a hand in Arld's death.

With the coming of night, the people of the village gathered in the tavern of Zor-osz, the father of Alenka, as was their nightly wont. Vladmir was one of the first ones there, for he had no stomach for danger, and he found the cheery interior of the great hall much preferable to the darkness outside with its nameless denizen that burned and froze and slew.

Before the open fireplace caroused the bravos of the town, the young men responsible for all the pranks and most of the seductions that occur in any rustic village. Among

them and among the villagers who sat away from the bright light passed a score of young women-slaves whose task it was to serve the guests with wine and other comforts.

Partly to cheer himself from the sight of Alenka, who sat with the bravos at the fire talking and laughing and telling of Vladimir's reluctance to investigate the screams, and partly to earn his keep, for he was a travelling minstrel who played for bread and a place to sleep, Vladimir began to play a merry tune on his valaka, a light dance from the emerald green forests of the Voilse Islands in the exact center of the Central Sea that was the hub of the world of Tsuriiin. The people in the room brightened considerably, and one young couple who were betrothed even commenced to dance to the music, at the cost of a frown from the priest of Melkota, most strait-laced of gods. Even the revellers before the fire were seized by a more romantic mood, and when the tune ceased, the loudest of them all slipped his arm around one of the more comely slave girls and pulled her toward the stairs that led to the sleeping rooms above. After receiving a discreet nod from Zorosz she went willingly, and the twain disappeared amid much ribald encouragement. Scarcely had they gone when the whole crowd was brought to its feet by a voice shouting, "Innkeeper! Ho, innkeeper! I've a caravan to quarter and no innkeeper!"

Zorosz leaped to his feet and clutched a fur robe around his fat frame.. "The bread and the wine! Quickly! Where is the bread and wine?" Seizing the proffered ritual tray, he hurried outside into the well-lit village square closely followed by the throng from the tavern.

Puffing up to the leader of the caravan, a tall man who was green-eyed and black-haired after the manner of the Surena away to the northeast across the Central Sea, he gasped, "Thrice welcome, noble sir, thrice welcome, thrice welcome. Here are bread and wine and shelter under my roof. Alight and refresh yourselves."

Having nibbled the bread and sipped the wine, the caravan master bowed from the saddle of his mount, a shaggy grey krystam from the mountainous interior of Sartad. He said warmly, "My thanks to you. Hast room for us all?"

"Aye, even unto the least, be that one man or beast."

"Then we shall pass the night." The formalities completed, the caravan master signaled his scouts to lead the main body of the caravan to the camping-place just outside the town. Then he dismounted and extended a hand to Zorosz. "True greetings, innkeeper. I am Tharrien, adventuring out of the Surena Empire. I am master of this caravan, which is bound from Stetlof to Khurov-on-the-Northern-Coast. Is your lords-room ready? We have with us a don of the colleges of the City of Learning, who possesses great skill in medicine and the magical arts, and he must have your best accommodations." Lowering his voice, he said, "We have another thing here also. Our illustrious passenger divined we could learn more in this village. Come with me."

Tharrien led the way to a small wagon whose top and sides were tightly lashed down. Opening the flap in back, he held a torch for Zorosz to look into the wagon.

Inside were the bodies of the two who had gone to find the hermit, mutilated as had been the body of Arld.

"Yes," Zorosz said heavily. "I know much of this. Yestereve a man was slain upon that hiss in the same fash - "

A horrible bass scream of agony interrupted his words! A second scream came, that was cut off in the middle. Mingled with it was a girl's shrill cry of fright that changed into a shriek of pain. Tharrien and Zorosz whirled in time to see a body crash through a many-paned window onto the roof of the covered gallery below and fall heavily to the ground. In an instant the victim was surrounded by the crowd from the tavern.

Upon the ground lay the slave girl who had gone upstairs with the bravo in the tavern. She lay naked, her beauty disfigured by the great wound that ran from the inside of her left thigh across her belly and up between her breasts to her right collarbone, a wound that might have been made by a great claw that burned and tore at the same time. She was conscious, and as she lay there, she gasped out broken words.

"We - we were in the bedHe started to.... to kiss me and it -" Her voice broke and she began to moan, but she was coaxed back to coherence by a short, fat man in a dark green lounging robe, who had seemingly appeared from nowhere. "It camein through the window....He turned and it - tore him it grabbed him and tore him I - oh gods help me it hurts!" The man in green dropped two red trickles from a tiny

vial into her mouth; instantly she relaxed and began to breathe more easily. "I - I screamed and I tried to run and ithit me with its claw and I fell...." The girl's head lolled limply to one side as two men trotted up carrying a wide plank about one-and-a-half rhua long.

"Good. Place the girl on the plank and bear her to my caravan wagon," ordered the green-clad stranger. "I have rare and precious medicines of the greatest potency there." He looked at Zorosz and asked, "Could this be the thing which killed those two men we found?" At the latter's nod he said, "I thought so. Such a monster can be naught but a sorcerer's sending. Had you sent for advice from anyone?"

"The two men you found were from this village. They sought a learned hermit in the hills to the south of here."

"I see. When I have treated the girl's injury, I will employ the Principle of the Solidified Past to try and divine the reason for the sending and the monster's exact nature. Set a guard on the room where the couple were and let no one disturb it for any reason until I come."

About a glass later, the short man in green, whose name was Tsistor, stood in the room where the act of love had been so terribly interrupted. With a piece of what appeared to be chalk (but was more likely ground and compressed bone powder) Tsistor drew a complex asymmetrical design with many circles and triangles on the floor, round and about the blood stains. Within a circle at one of its points he placed a flat golden disc with an exotic and obscene symbol engraved into its surfaces. At another point, he poured into a shallow silver dish some of Zorosz' ver y best wine and placed it upon a conjunction of nine lines. Within a circle Tsistor drew a triangle that gave a disturbing impression of having four sides, and within the triangle he poured a thin trickle of a powder that sparkled like diamonds in the candlelight; the thin line of powder spelled out a Name. Last, in what was evidently the focal point of the design, Tsistor placed a large bowl carven from a single crystal into a million faceted designs: a Bowl of Seeing. This he filled with the clearest water obtainable, being extremely careful not to spill any. He sat some drab-looking clay bottles on the floor, making the sign painted on each bottle in the air before him as he did so. Lastly he turned to Zorosz and asked, "Is there a young girl here, a virgin, from whose arm I may draw a little blood. It would be best for the divination, though another's blood would suffice."

Zorosz replied, "My chief cook has a daughter of thirteen. She is a quiet child and very modest. If she will come to no harm and you can get her father's agreement, I am certain that she would be suitable."

"Indeed she would. Go and fetch her, my dear," said Tsistor to the young slave who was assisting him.

The slave was back shortly. With her was the girl, a pretty, shy-looking creature very awed at being summoned by a magician, though somewhat dubious as to his motives. Tsistor explained what was happening and how she could help. Hesitantly the girl agreed, and a tenth-glass later she was being led back to bed with a bandaged arm; in her hand she held a Keridan tsyre - a golden one! - clutched tightly. Meanwhile Tsistor placed the silver cup of bright red blood beside the clay bottles and ordered the door to be bolted.

"Merely stand against the wall, gentlemen, and concentrate on the business at hand. You," Tsistor said to the slave girl, "stand here beside me." He ordred the candles to be snuffed except for the three which stood at the Cardinal Points of the divination figure. Then he threw off his robe and entirely naked, began to chant in a monotone.

Almost immediately the room became filled with a swirling mist which was pink around the candleflames. Save for the slave girl, who could be seen to shiver frequently, no one seemed to notice. As he recited the divination spell from memory, Tsistor added various potions and ingredients - an ylistrom hawk's eyes, a tiny bit of the skull of a great sage, a special incense, and others - to the water in the Bowl, giving the holders of these objects to the slave, who put them aside gingerly. The magician's voice swelled to a shout: "...And by the Powers of the Surrounding Chaos and by the virtues of those things here provided I do command the Solid Past to take life from this life" he poured the blood into the bowl - "and live for us!" Instantly the candles went out and the Bowl filled with a pale white light. (In her narrow, cool bed-



chamber under the shingled roof, the cook's daughter experienced an eerie whirling, draining sensation. She cried out in terror, but the feeling was gone as quickly as it had come.) Tsistor called the watchers. "Now come and look."

Zorosz and Tharrien came as he had bid, and looking into the Bowl, they saw the back door of Zorosz' inn. As they watched, the innkeeper himself came down the steps dragging a ragged figure by the scruff of the neck. Having gained the street, he threw the figure into the mud and shouted something after him. The ragged figure picked itself up and stumbled away down the street. At the point where the road disappeared over the hill, the creature turned around and made a peculiar gesture. Then it hobbled off out of sight.

"Behold! I sought the cause of the sending, and the Bowl shows this! Remember you this happening, Zorosz?"

"Yes, I remember. A tatterdemalion rogue marched into my public hall a week ago as if he owned my inn and demanded the best fare I could offer. Then he sat and eyed my daughter as if she were his bed-slave. When I asked to see the color of his gold and suggested that he direct his gaze elsewhere, he puffed and swelled and began to curse. At that, I did with him even as you have seen."

Tsistor drew his breath in between his teeth in a long hissing inhalation. "I begin to understand. I am no sorcerer, but I recognize the gesture which that one made as being often employed by those who practice the foul art of sorcery and converse with malignant demons and baleful wraiths. But I must be certain. Let us see

more of his doings." Tsistor tapped the surface of the water in the Bowl with his finger; the image dissolved and a new picture appeared.

Revealed in the Bowl was a small forest clearing lit by many large candles; these burned with a tall, unwavering flame even though the trees and bushes surrounding the clearing were evidently being lashed by strong winds. To one side stood a round stone hut of the sort charcoal makers build to watch their fire. Crouched before its door was the ragged man of the inn. Open before him on the ground was a great parchment book with many jewels visible on its binding. Piled behind the sorcerer were other books and scrolls, some old and worn. Zorosz was astonished to see that a couple of them actually glowed with a pale light. A marble and jet rack held row on row of boxes, tubes, phials, and little bags. Before the book was an expanse of white sand with a design drawn painstakingly upon it in fine-grained, colored powders. This consisted of nine precisely overlapped equilateral triangles, each a different color, the whole being surrounded by a circle of black. At the twenty-seven points were strange hieroglyphs that only Tsistor recognized (but this through no act of his own.). Ancient coins, grotesque images, a tiny book, and other less obvious items, each having its own significance to the demons of Surrounding Chaos, reposed within the spaces between the lines. At the center, in a little brazier, an amorphous lump of a blue substance glowed softly. Beside it, in a second brazier, a dull red glow surrounded a substance similar in shape but red in color. The watchers noted that the blue-containing brazier was thickly coated with ice, and that the iron of the other brazier glowed an angry cherry-red. After sitting still for a time, the ragged figure crouching in the midst of this paraphernalia bent over the book and began to read. His face tisted into a bestial grimace, and Tsistor erased the picture with a wave of his hand.

Suddenly the candles relighted themselves, seemingly of their own volition. Zorosz opened his mouth in astonishment and gaped at the Bowl of Seeing, whose water stood as clear as ever, with no trace of the ingredients that had been added to it. His amazement was jolted away by Tsistor's voice.

"Zorosz innkeeper, it is as I feared. You have offended a practitioner of the foul art of sorcery, and what is worse, he is an ascetic, who turns away from the pleasures of the flesh to heighten and concentrate his abilities. That figure is commonly employed in the summoning of elemental spritis. This killer-creature which stalks the village is such a spirit, given a physical form."

"A physical form?" mused Tharrien. "Surely if the beast has a physical form then it can be killed?"

"Oh, certainly, but one must first get close enough, and in all likelihood it has only one vital spot." Tsistor's voice was deprecating. "Killing it would be difficult in the extreme, and probably as harmful to he who killed it as to the monster itself."

"Is it then possible to send away the monster?" asked Tharrien.

"Possible, but not for any of us. Only a sorcerer of equivalent power could do so," replied Tsistor.

"Will it come again?" asked Zorosz.

"Surely," replied Tsistor. "The creature was sent here to destroy you and all that you value most, and it will not depart until it has done so."

There was heard a scuffling noise overhead and then muffled footfalls above their heads. "Who was that?" Zorosz gasped. "An eavesdropper?"

"It surely was, good Zorosz," Tharrien said heavily. "Some inquisitive lout could not restrain his curiosity. It is a vain hope that he will keep what he has heard to himself."

Below in the public room, in an obscure corner, sat Vladimir. He was pretending to exercise his hands, of which he took such care, but actually he was recounting his fears to himself and quaking at each. Ah Gods! If the thing could come inside then no one was safe!

In a rattle of footsteps a man rushed downstairs and out the door. Vladimir clutched the valaka in momentary panic. Was it inside? But nothing appeared, and at last Vladimir slept.

The second morning of terror dawned as cold and gloomy as had the first, and what

was worse, there was a pall of fog over the forested hills. Just as the sky grew light, there were screams of horror and grief from the house of a farmer just outside the village. Word quickly spread that the demon had killed three children in their beds. They had not even had a chance to cry out.

As the day wore on, some of the villagers thronged the two tiny temples of Melkota and Grroni. The caravan people remained in their camp, some grumbling about being forced to wait. Many villagers gathered in little groups and talked, and more and more was one bit of news passed along. As the glasses passed so did the excitement and stir seem to grow. Men commenced to avoid Zorosz' eye and began to cast dark glances at the inn. When evening came the streets around the inn were deserted and the public room was empty, save for Zorosz, Tsistor, Tharrien and (unnoticed in his corner) Vladimir.

Shortly before the turning of the eleventh glass, some time after the setting of the Luminary, the four heard a great cry from the far end of the village. Then there was silence. Zorosz grimaced and said in a dull voice, "Another victim. But sooner or later it will come back here, and then with my death it will go away."

Tsistor took from around his throat an elaborate necklace. "Here, good Zorosz. Perhaps I am unable to drive away this sorcerer's sending, but I can give you this. Put it on. It was used by the ancient demonologist and sorcerer Nyrildhrin to guard against the fell and foul creatures that he summoned. Surely it will guard you."

"No, Tsistor, but I would choose rather to die. With my death its anger will be appeased, and my neighbors will have peace again." Zorosz' fatalism was a cold thing and they sat in depressed silence for a while. Vladimir was so preoccupied with the thought of danger that he felt numb in all his limbs. Presently all became aware of a growing sound, a muffled rumble of many voices mingled with a shuffling of feet.

From without came a cry, "Open to us, Zorosz! We will have no more of this killing! We mean to give the monster what it wants."

Zorosz shouted through the door, "Go home, you great fools. I await the demon's pleasure. Go and hide by your hearths!"

"Open to us, Zorosz. That which you prize most is not your life."

Zorosz gave a start. "Grroni's Word! They mean to take - " He got no further. The door burst inwards and Zorosz went down before the mob, felled by a club. Tsistor and Tharrien sprang to their feet, and Tharrien whipped out his short, double-edged Surena broadsword.

"Away, you sons of whores! There'll be no sacrifice here!" Tharrien advanced menacingly, but suddenly the mob swept over him. His sword rose and fell twice, splattering sticky red drops, and then he crashed to the floor senseless. Tsistor was knocked down as he tried to summon a spell and the mob swarmed upstairs. Vladimir tried to slip out past the stragglers, but the flat of a wood-ax crashed into his skull and he fell stunned to the floor. Dimly he was aware of the mob rushing past him, dragging Zorosz' struggling daughter with them. As his head cleared her screams dwindled off up the hill.

Though Vladimir stood in the silent taproom but a moment, it seemed like an eternity. He knew what he must do, yet he strained away from it to the very depths of his soul. He lurched over to Tsistor and took from him the talismanic necklace, which he put on. Then he stumbled to the door; for a moment he trembled, torn between the path leading up the hill and the road running south. Then with a great sob of fear he turned and stumbled blindly up the trail toward the forest.

Vladimir crashed through the brush that grew between the trees, never trying to avoid holes, logs, or the vines that tripped him. He burst into the midst of the crowd of villagers and never noticed. (The townspeople panicked and fled howling) Vladimir knew not where he ran; he knew not where the villagers had left Alenka. He only ran, and Zoas the Fortune-Bringer ran with him, for he suddenly stumbled and half-fell into a small clearing.

A shrill scream of fright snapped Vladimir out of his daze. On the other side of the clearing Alenka stood facing a tree, her wrists encircling it and bound together on the other side. Vladimir ran to her and began sawing at the ropes that held her while she watched around the tree and gasped out broken words. The ropes resisted stubbornly and the first loop was only half-severed when his spine prickled and he

realized that he and Alenka were not alone.

It stood on the far side of the clearing, watching them, its misty body thin, with a suggestion of organs and muscles wrapped in cloudy flesh. It had no neck, only a wide froglike head and two round, white, self-luminous eyes; between these and higher was a fist-sized lump that glowed red and blue but never purple. At its sides were two long spidery arms. One had a single red claw that smoked; the other had a single blue claw that steamed. It did not seem to have legs.

It glided toward him across the long grass, its internal lights dimming the radiance of the Lesser Luminary that rode overhead. Vladimir started to back away, but it turned its head somehow and stared at Alenka; she gave a great shudder and slumped to the ground, crying like a small child who cannot escape some great terror. Vladimir returned to her side and faced the thing, which stood only a lance-length away.

He faced it a moment only, yet as it had been in the tavern this moment stretched into eternity. The fear which had roiled his stomach drained away and left only a strange, cold desire to kill. The demon barely moved, but this broke the spell, and Vladimir sprang at it with a speed which rivalled the thing's own!

He tackled it beneath the claw of coldness, feeling his hand sink into the misty flesh. With a great writhing and heave it threw him off.. It advanced and he sprang again, ripping his dagger into the shadowy organs beneath its hazy skin. It struggled free and slapped him aside. Vladimir felt a streak of coldness that burned into his vitals and seared along his back. He backed away and regarded it for a second time, and it stared back at him.

Vladimir and the thing came to the same realization at once: It stood between Vladimir and Alenka. It turned and glided toward her, and Vladimir charged! With a great leap he landed on the monster's back. It whirled madly and flailed its claws wildly, straining to dislodge him. Groping in blind agony he seized the creature's arm just behind the claw of fire. His right hand squeezed through the misty flesh and closed upon the flickering organ in the thing's head. He clenched his fist, and the world exploded in flame and frost....

It was dark and quiet, and Vladimir felt nothing, but he was awake. With a great effort he opened his eyes. He lay in a tent, and Tsistor sat on a carved stool beside the bed watching him. He tried to sit up and Tsistor heaved a sigh of relief. "For a moment, young sir, I feared you had left us altogether. Now lie quietly and I shall send someone to feed you."

Tsistor left and immediately a slave entered with a dish of stew. She extended it to him and reached out to take it....and moaned in horror: His left hand was a twisted claw, encrusted with brown burn scabs. Slowly he lifted his right hand, which ached beneath the covers, to his eyes; he looked, and fainted: His hand was gone.

He was awakened this time by the slave girl bathing his face with cold water. "My - my hands. What happened?"

"You killed the demon, my lord."

"And Alenka? Is she all right?"

"Yes, my lord. But my master will be in soon. He will tell you more. Now you must eat, and then sleep."

When Vladimir awoke the third time, he was in a larger tent. A pretty girl reclined in a chair across the room from him. A faint scar ran diagonally across the uncovered upper part of her body. "Sir, he is awake," she called out.

Tsistor entered. "Good. Now see if you are strong enough to walk for an entire glass today." The girl gave Tsistor a happy smile, drew a robe around herself, and departed. "She is recovering from the attack of the demon you slew. When she is fully recovered she will accompany me to Khurov along with my half of the caravan."

"But won't Zorosz care?"

"No. He sold her to me ere he and his daughter went with Lord Tharrien and the rest of the caravan a week ago."

"Alenka and Zorosz are....gone?"

"Yes. They could not stay after what happened, and Zorosz was certain you would die. Though Alenka cried and argued, she went with her father."

"So I lost my hands for nothing."

"It is not so. You saved the girl's life, and you conquered your fear. Do not think of these as nothing."

"But to be a cripple is a fearsome thing."

"You shall not be too much of a cripple. Your left hand will heal; there will not even be scars. And I have a remedy for your other hand as well. But now you must rest again."

There came another waking, days later, when he lifted his ruined hands from beneath his blankets. Incredibly, he felt weight upon his right wrist, that by now seemed naturally handless. Upon his forearm was a metal cylinder a little longer than his hand had been, and extending from its end were two metal jaws. He flexed his muscles and the jaws opened and closed. Behind him Tsistor asked, "Do you find the device satisfactory?" Vladimir nodded and regarded his "hand" with wonder.

The steel jaws met at the tip, and their flat gripping surfaces were scored with criss-crossed grooves for a better grasp. Tsistor demonstrated how the device could be removed and put on and how the jaws were connected to the stubs of Vladimir's finger and thumb bones. Vladimir found he could work it even better than he had thought.

"Let me show you this." Tsistor pressed a small rivet on the side of the cylinder. With a click! a curved steel blade almost as long as the "hand" sprang out from a slot between the jaws. Its inside edge was razor-sharp. "It is hard to see in its slot, and someday it might save your life."

"With - with this new hand you have given me a new life," Vladimir said slowly. "I may still be a man and not a cripple. But I think my life will be greatly changed now."

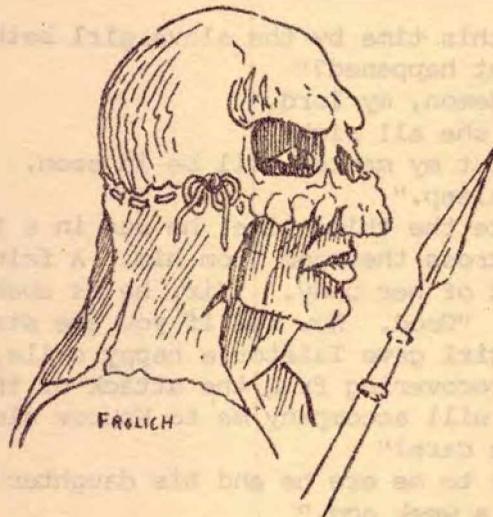
"That is so, Vladimir. You must become a warrior. No other life is possible for you now, for the guilds would call you a cripple and deny you the right to earn a living. Your training with arms begins this afternoon."

"So be it, then. I shall become a warrior. But it is the custom of my people to change one's name upon treading a new life-path. What shall my name be?"

"We shall see when the time comes. Now let us eat."

There followed some half-year's training with weapons and krystam. Finally there came a day when Hookhand rode away from the camp of Tsistor.

* FINIS *



SCIENTISTS SAY

by

Lauralee Best

Scientists say

that matter cannot be destroyed.

Scientists also say

that when we die,

we become a part of the soil,

and our atoms join together

to form substances

such as

a tree,

or even the air we breathe.

Therefore,

could we be

breathing our ancestors,

and

engaging in a little,

very indirect,

cannibalism?



BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

by Darrell Schweitzer

Push a little harder now. There. Almost made it. It's sticking on the upper right. Concentrate your effort there. You only have to give it one more push. It's giving. The stone is moving out of your way. You're free.

You clamber weakly onto the peat. You stop to rest a moment. But then you remember what is about to happen and what you, Secret Agent Donald Fish - correction; ex-Secret Agent Donald Fish and now the late Donald Fish, now three weeks dead - must do about it.

You curse the undertakers, ironically. They certainly did a good job of burying

you It took you three weeks to pound, scratch and dig your way out of that grave. And you realize that you now have very little time left. The conspirators planned to kill the President on the 14th of July as he went secretly to meet with Premier Sung. That should be today or tomorrow. You pray silently that your rotten carcass will last that long.

You stagger through the fog towards the cemetery gate, not quite able to accept the fact that you are dead and half expecting to feel a cold chill from your ragged clothing which hangs loosely from your putrid flesh.

You see someone coming in the mist - you cannot hear him for your ears are not functioning. You approach him. It is the aged caretaker, shivering in his heavy coat, about ready to lock up for the night.

You raise your hand in greeting, a stupid gesture; you curse yourself but it is now too late.

"Who's that?" he whispers apprehensively. He shines his flashlight in your face. You do not shield your eyes because they are no longer very sensitive.

He stares in disbelief for a second. Then he screams like all the devils in hell are after him - one of them is, you laugh bitterly - and drops to the ground in a faint.

He lies still. Looks dead, but you can't tell because your fingers are too insensitive to detect a pulse, even if there was one. Poor fellow's heart must've given out. You reflect for a moment. Would you have reacted any differently?

No time for that. You must find a phone.

There's a house about a hundred yards from the cemetery gate which now swings loosely open.

It seems like it was hours before you reach the porch. Maybe it was. Your legs are getting very weak. You don't see how you are going to last long enough. You hope for something you've never seemed to have before - luck.

You press the doorbell. Your rotten finger smears into the impression of the button, but your bones are hard. It rings.

An old woman comes to the door. You seize her before she can scream. One hand around her throat, the other over her face you push her to the floor. Blood from the crushed skull stains the rug.

You get up and stare down at her. Why did you do that? You can't really be sure. Some fury possessed you. Frustration?

You've got to find the phone. You make your way into the kitchen. There is a newspaper on the sink - apparently today's. You glance at the date - July 14, 1970. You look around for a clock. There's one on the top of the refrigerator. It's 11:45. You have a little time.

You grasp a pencil in your fist - your fingers are too uncoordinated - and dial the number you want on the phone by the stove. Your skin cracks and the pencil drops to the floor in a shower of flakes from your palm. You curse and pick up the pencil. You successfully dial this time.

"Hello, this is the White House." the answering service says.

You try to speak. Try to speak. You can't. All you can make is a gurgling sound.

Your vocal chords have decayed.

In despair you hang up, shutting of the tiny voice crying, "Who is this? Who is this?"

You're frantic now. You've got to get the warning through somehow.

You'll write a note. Hastily you seize the pencil and rummage around for some paper. All you can find is a brown paper bag. That will have to do.

Firmly you grasp the pencil and try to write. No good. It slips from your feeble fingers. You try again. Your wrist can't make the necessary motions. You've produced nothing but a few erratic marks on the paper. You throw it down in disgust.

You curse those who killed you, admiring their skill at preventing you from interfering with their plans at the same time. You curse yourself for having blown your cover after having gotten all that information about the assassination. You had a brilliant disguise. They really did think that you were a student radical who wanted the revolution in Indonesia to go through at all costs even if you had to murder the president of the United States to prevent the Indonesian government from receiving U.S. aid. They believed you and even let you take part in the conspiracy. You were supposed to shoot up the decoy car and create a distraction while they went after the President. But you never expected them to put a truth crug in your coffee and find out who you really were and kill you, cleverly getting you involved in a traffic "accident".

Right now it looks like those agents of the Indonesian rebels are going to succeed. You've failed in your mission. Or you will, unless something extraordinary happens. You obviously can't walk to Washington and warn the President. It's twenty miles away and you'll fall apart - literally - before you get there. Besides you've only got a half an hour before it is too late.

You see a car pull into the driveway. Hastily you turn out the lights and slip out the back door. You sneak around front and watch from the bushes as an old man fumbles with keys at the door. He goes in.

"Mary " you hear him whisper. Or to you it is a whisper. He's really shouting. "My God, you can't be dead I've got to get you to a hospital "

You realize that you are in luck. The nearest hospital is in Washington. As quickly as your decaying legs can carry you, you slip into the back trunk of his car. You don't have to worry about suffocating in there. Dead men don't breathe.

From the darkness of your hiding place you hear the car door slam. You feel a jolt as he pulls out of the driveway doing at least 60. You feel a rumble a few minutes later as he speeds across a bridge on the Patomac. You try to estimate where you are from how long he keeps driving after the bridge. He stops at a red light where you think you are one block from the Pres-



A. Schwartz

ident's route and you slip out of the car.

You walk a block. You guessed wrong. Your destination is six blocks away. You glance at a clock over the bank. You have five minutes left. Better run.

It seems to you like it must have taken you an hour to get to the street you wanted but it obviously didn't for as soon as you get there you see the headlights of a car surrounded by those five or six motorcycles turning the corner. It's the President.

You glance at the sporting goods shop across the street. Almost imperceptibly a rifle pokes out of an upstairs window. Those assassins have everything worked out. This way the F.B.I. can't trace the murder weapon anywhere. The getaway car parked around back is stolen too, of course.

But you can't stand there now, admiring some skillful planning. In just a few seconds the President will be dead. And only you can save him. It's the most vital moment of your career.

You run out into the street waving your arms and trying to shout. You only make gurgling sounds again and a little mucous drips from your chin. But you have succeeded.

The men on the motorcycles are waving frantically for you to get out of the way. The presidential limousine brakes sharply. The hidden assassin fires and the bullet blows the top of your head off. You feel the impact driving you forward, but nothing more.

The car is on top of you now. As you feel the wheel crushing your chest and you slide into what you hope will be your final sleep, you wonder whimsically how the papers are going to treat this.

THE END



OUR FAIR CITY

by

Doug Robillard



Over the glittering towers of the City, the sun rose. Power levels soared, and like a person waking up, the City became active. And this, this roused the people out of their nightly oblivion. The upsurge in power brought everyone to full awareness.

John Smith and his family emerged from their cubicles as all the other John Smiths and their families did the same all over the city. Everyone looked the same, with the same brownish hair, the same features, the same blank faces. As usual, their minds were as blank as their faces. That was the Law. No knowledge. Knowledge led to dangerous things, as the City had told its inhabitants many times. That was the reason there were the huge radiation scars outside the City's glass dome.

Smith went out of his home to pick up the morning paper, as all the other John Smiths around the City did the same. He wondered briefly why all of the homes in the City (including his) were painted yellow. He reminded himself that it was the Law, that no one may have any advantage over anyone else. As the City said, that was the reason for the radioactive gashes, the craters, the desert that stretched as far as the eye could see. The City had

made the Law, just after the Time of Chaos. There was no dissent, no protest in any shape or form. It was forbidden. Even to think the wrong thoughts was forbidden...

Why? Smith asked himself. But reflex took over, and he forgot the passing thought. Such thoughts were forbidden by the Law. John Smith (or any other John Smith and their families) never questioned the Law. True, there had been malcontents, but they had been dealt with. He went back into the yellow-painted house. After all, it wouldn't do to bother the City by lingering outside your house.

He looked at the face of his wife. (How odd, she looks exactly like me.) was another of his passing thoughts. "What's in the paper today?" she asked, taking it from him. She took the blank piece of newsprint and scanned it briefly with her vacant eyes. "Everything in the news today is just great, John," she said after completing the survey of the gray hunk of paper. "Nothing new, everything as it should be," she went on, in an almost robotic tone of voice. She handed him the morning newspaper.

Smith merely flicked his eyes over it as he had always done. "Yes," he chimed in, "everything is exactly the way it should be." He grinned. But only his mouth grinned. The rest of the face remained totally expressionless. His wife got their breakfast

ready. Toasted yeast bread, nothing else. This was all the City was able to manufacture in the way of foodstuffs. All the plant life, and all of the animal life (excluding man) had been destroyed during the Time of Chaos. And the food, being synthetic, was tasteless. But why...? He caught himself again. He'd almost thought a forbidden thought. He had nearly questioned the City. He had better be careful. The penalty for thinking forbidden thoughts was... He shook his mind clear of the conflicting thoughts that clouded it. He came out of his reverie, his wife watching him expectantly.

"John, isn't it time for you to go to work? You can't afford to be late."

Saying nothing, John Smith left the house. Above the City's glass dome lay nothing but the blue sky dotted here and there with clouds. He reached his car, got into it, as all the other John Smiths all over the City did the same. The car started itself, pulling out of the driveway, heading off in the direction of his "work". (Work isn't the right word. You see, the City was self-sustaining and required no human to help. All the John Smiths sat around in a sort of a trance after they had entered their buildings. The City then input to them images of them doing some sort of work. This is not unlike dreaming, though more like hypnosis. And there was also the same sort of thing for the women who stayed home; they were fed images of themselves doing housework.) Smith sat back in his seat as the car steered itself. He wondered if people ever drove cars by themselves...back in the Time of Chaos. Involuntarily he found himself thinking about the Time of Chaos. It might have been better than the City...Smith was startled by the defiance of this thought. It was one of the forbidden thoughts. He covered it up as fast as he could. He had been thinking a forbidden thought, one condemned by the City as being dangerous. John Smith knew the penalty for forbidden thoughts. It had been drummed at him ever since he could remember. The penalty was expulsion. He would be put outside the City and into the desert to fend for himself. He once again attempted to cover the forbidden thoughts and substitute blank ones. Perhaps they wouldn't notice. But they already had.

The forbidden thoughts triggered a mechanism that lurked beneath the shiny metal streets of the City. Here was the brain, the guiding intelligence of the City, the thing that had lain dormant for three hundred years. Or almost three hundred years. There had been others who had roused the mechanism - they had been dealt with. This was the...intelligence that had built the City during the Time of Chaos. It left its creation to fend for itself, to take care of the inhabitants. The mind beneath the City awoke only to get rid of malcontents, the City being unable to do so. And no this mind was awake again. It would take vengeance.

The cars stopped all around him. Smith wondered what had happened. Everything in the City capable of movement was immobile. Everything except John Smith and the City's guardians. He climbed out of the car, stared at the grotesque unmoving statues - people stopped in mid-step. He saw something moving, a metal being. One of the City's guardians. Though he'd never seen one he knew what it was almost instinctively. Smith ran, squeezing past the unmoving bodies of humans and cars. He ran past the immobile figures of the people who all had his face. He almost collided with two more guardians. Turning he sped in the other direction. It was no use; the metallic ones were everywhere, boxing him in.

"No," he implored the unhearing metal one, "don't make me go out there. Please, I'll die out there. Don't ..." It was no good, of course. The guardians prodded him on with mild jolts of electricity. They pushed him to the entrance of the City.

The entity under the streets was aware of this. It would manufacture another John Smith when it had the time, one to take the place of the old one. This would be very easy.

The entrance irised open and the machines shoved Smith outside into the desert. Then the entrance closed. John Smith took one last look at the City and began to walk away. There was nothing else to do. He was sure that the radiation was strong enough to kill him in a matter of hours. The City had gotten rid of an offender, one who was very dangerous. Now the mechanism below the City could become dormant once more. It switched the power on once more, and the people and cars began moving again, beneath the glittering towers, the dome and the bright sun overhead.

THE END





THE RED BOOK OF WESTMARCH or, A Gaggle of Book Reviews by Various and Sundry.

Computer World by Mack Reynolds. Curtis Books 123-07098-075 \$.75

Computer World is set in the 21st Century, Ultra-Welfare, computerized state that is familiar country to those that have read much of Mack Reynolds' previous work. Like many of Reynolds' offerings, this novel is a spy story spun out against the intrigues flourishing within and between the three gigantic socio-economic blocs that the author extrapolates as ruling over this planet's next century.

The hero of this futuristic spy-opera is a Slavic languages professor who at the outset of it all is doing his pedagogic thing over National Tri Vision, which is both the prevailing entertainment medium and the prime educational means of the era. He is not just an ordinary professor but a genius in the manifold arts of hand-to-hand combat which makes for an asset even in the 21st Century hero-types.

The plot hinges on the tapping of the National Data Banks, the huge, computerized complex located in Denver. Therein is stored all the nation's knowledge, the very cultural guts of the entire Ultra-Welfare State, the United States of the Americas. In addition to the tapping the authorities strongly suspect a plot is underway to effect a wipeout of all the information stored in the computer banks. This would constitute a national disaster since the society is in a state of utter dependency upon them. To help foil the suspicioned sabotage by the agents of Common Eur-Asia, another of the dominating World power blocs, the Inter American Bureau of Investigation calls in the professor, Paul Kosloff, deemed by the labor draft computers as the most suitable citizen in the realm for the sticky counter-espionage task.

After some initial reluctance, Kosloff accepts the assignment, and allied with agents of the IABI and help from the Common Europe Intelligence forces seeks out the black hatters in an itinerary that takes in a riot-wasted Manhattan Island, Paris and Budapest, with double-dealing, Biff!, Bop! and Bang! all along the route. Eventually, of course, with the aid of a super-cool intuition computer and the author's nudging plotting, the security of the data banks is re-established and the baddies get irrevocably stomped.

If the plotting of this novel is somewhat sparse, forced and a tad illogical, and the hero a bit of a fugghead, there is some redemption in the fact that the setting is well worked out, plausibly extrapolated from the more evident cultural trends of the present and gratingly convincing as a probably fairly near future.

Some accuse Mack Reynolds of frequent re-plowing of the same old fictional past-ure, year after year, story after story. This doesn't bother me too much. always

feel an almost ritualistic sense of identity and empathy with Reynolds' lame-brained heroes, and find the accompanying philosophical insights and lectures on sociology, economics, history and political science that encrustate a Reynolds' novel are always entertainingly instructive despite repetition.

If you like Mack Reynolds novels, this is good Mack Reynolds. If you are a disciple of Faith Lincoln or generally nit-picking concerning your reading fare, forget it.

---Reviewed by Bill Marsh---

Thirteen O'Clock and Other Zero Hours by C.M. Kornbluth, ed. by James Blish.
Dell #8731 \$.75

This book contains nine or ten (depending upon how you look at it) stories by the late C.M. Kornbluth, under his pen-name of "Cecil Corwin". Ranging from pure fantasy to humorous, but straight, stf, these are all well-written, in a devastatingly funny style, though some allowances for the 30-year-old topical references must be made. Despite these, however, this book is a must.

---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

Star Rogue by Lin Carter. Lancer Books #74649-075 \$.75

This book is listed as "A Lancer Science Fiction Original". Whatever it is, this book is not original...it's pure van Vogt (an immortal man starts an interstellar imperium and an opposing organization to make sure that the Emperor doesn't get too powerful), with a touch of Zelazny thrown in (the immortal was apparently born in the 20th Century, and is fantastically wealthy). Despite the fact that the plot is purely derivative, the writing is surprisingly good, with reasonable characterization and without the loose ends and needless complexity that van Vogt loves. It isn't Hugo quality, but it is a pleasant hour's reading.

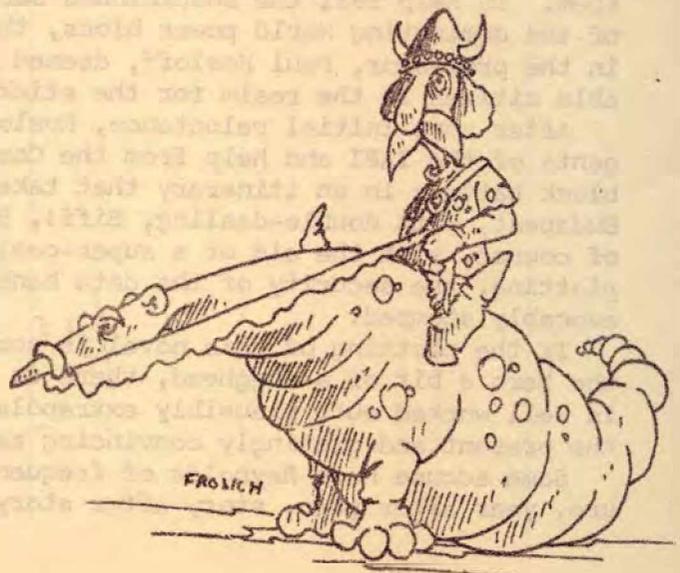
Dwellers of the Deep by K.M. O'Donnell (Barry N. Malzberg)
The Gates of Time by Neal Barrett, Jr. Ace Double #27400 \$.75

I really don't know how Dwellers... got into print. It is nothing more than a parody of fanfiction, containing, with slight name changes, just about every fandom cliché that you can think of from John W. Campbell and Dianetics to fanclub politics and personalities. This story has no ending, and a rather poor beginning. The middle is fun, but only to someone in fandom, since no one else would believe it.

As for Gates..., this too has no real beginning, though the middle and end consist of a great interstellar chase scene. The plot has great mucking holes that you could pilot the Enterprise through, but moves with such speed that you really don't notice them. Both of these stories are worth an hour's time...but only once.

The Traveller in Black by John Brunner
Ace Science Fiction Special #82210 \$.75

Generally tales of magic beings that go around granting wishes are fairy tales, but Brunner has written four stories of such a being that display human folly and childishness to their fullest extent in such an interesting manner that the meaning even gets to me...and I hate to read a book for meaning. Yet the surface story is engrossing, if at times slightly confusing. The story takes place in the distant past, though this statement



is misleading since it is a universe of chaos instead of the straight-forward progression of time. Various beings exist, mostly confined to a particular area, and the traveller in black of the title periodically goes around to make his appointed rounds, checking to make sure that everything is alright while he waits for the realm of time to extend far enough to cover his domains and free him of his task. All-in-all, an excellent book. ---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

The Tomb and Other Tales by H.P. Lovecraft. Beagle Books, The Arkham Edition of H.P. Lovecraft. #95032 \$.95

This book of Lovecraft's work is composed of stories from the collection Dagon and Other Macabre Tales, presumably the best. These stories are not part of the Cthulhu Mythos, though several of them show early elements that were later to reach full maturity in the Mythos. Also in this book are four fragments of uncompleted stories, thought to have been taken from his dreams. Last, comes a chronology of Lovecraft's work written by Lovecraft himself...interesting, but essentially useless except to the researcher and collector, since his stories have been coming out regularly since he died. Needless to say, if you are a Lovecraft fan...or simply a fan of the arcane horror school of fiction, these are a must; if not, forget it. ---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

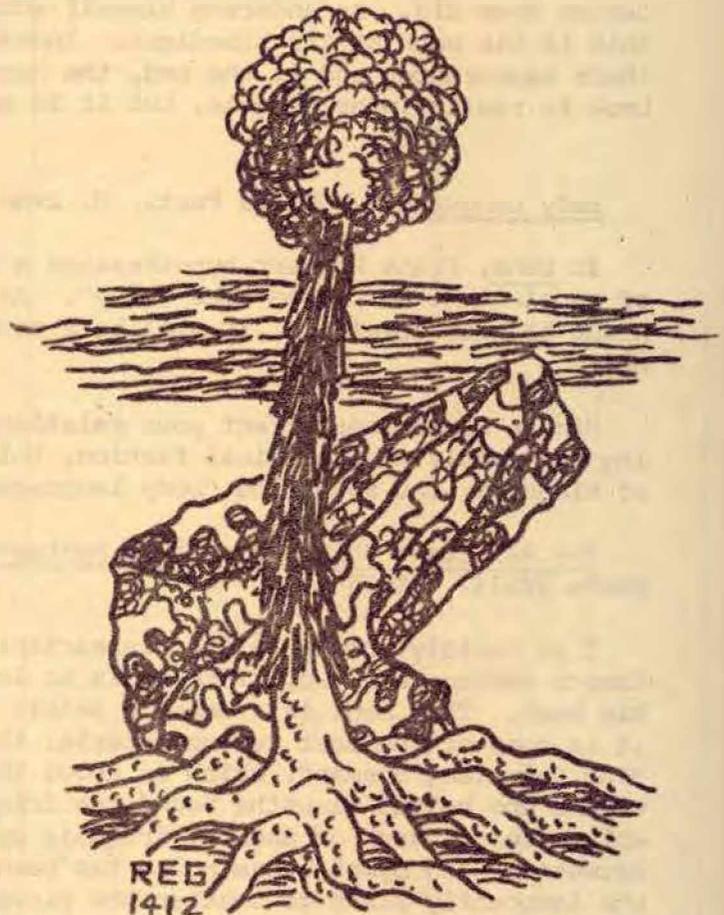
Anita by Keith Roberts. Ace 02295 \$.75

What happens when a sexy young witch starts stretching her powers? Here, in a series of stories, we find out. Anita is young...late teens and early twenties in human terms. She lives with Granny Thompson, an ancient witch of the old school who complains about the high cost of familiars and has witchcraft duels with her neighbors. Between the two of them, they manage to come up with some of the funniest supernatural hijinks I've read in years. If supernatural comedy is your bag, this is for you.

---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

Transmission Error by Michael Kurland Pyramid Books #T2379 \$.75

Here's a book that's really fun: it has adventure enough to satisfy a swords and sorcery fan (both of which it has), loose ends enough for a van Vogtian, esping, murder and mayhem. Dan Godfrey is a convicted murderer; he didn't commit the murder (and didn't know who did), but even he admits that given similar evidence, he'd vote guilty. He and two others, crimes unknown, are sentenced to transportation, which, in this case, means being sent by matter-transmitter to some hell-hole as an involuntary member of humanity's great effort to populate the galaxy. Just as he and two



partners step through the transmitter, some sort of malfunction takes place and the three of them find themselves in an arena, fighting a giant two-headed lizard. In the course of the story, they rescue a beautiful princess, get picked up by a giant talking bird that keeps addressing them as "food", fight off boarders who board by teleportation and much, much more. This book will never win a Hugo...but it should be read by all.

---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

The Broken Sword by Poul Anderson. Ballantine Books Adult Fantasy 02107-X-095 \$1.95

Without a doubt, The Broken Sword is the best piece of adventure-fantasy that Anderson ever did. As Anderson himself admits, his style has changed considerably, and this is his work at its bloodiest. Incest, torture, rape, enslavement...all make their appearance, and at the end, the hero dies and the heroine goes insane. This book is really indescribable, but it is an absolute must for swords and sorcery fan.

---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

Body Language by Julius Fast. M. Evans and Co., Inc. 1970 \$4.95

In Dune, Frank Herbert hypothesizes a method of unconscious influencing and control of people that he called "The Voice". As of now, it can be said that if such a technique is ever developed, it will be a combination of both verbal and non-verbal signals.

Minute mannerisms effect your relationships with other people, and in an interesting and mostly non-technical fashion, this book introduces us to the fledgling science of kinesics: the so-called "body language".

---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

The Reluctant Shaman and Other Fantastic Tales by L. Sprague deCamp. Pyramid Books #T2347 \$.75

I am rapidly coming to two disheartening conclusions. One, the short story is de Camp's medium, and two, since he is no longer writing short stories, his old stuff is his best. This book is a case in point: filled with stories from 12 to 30 years old, it is some of the best deCamp material that I've seen in years. The stories are: "The Reluctant Shaman", which is about the trouble that a modern descendant of the wizard who helped Hiawatha found the Iriquois Confederacy gets into when he is suddenly given a bunch of ancient Iriquois spirits; "The Hardwood Pile", about a fight between a wood nymph whose house has been sawn into lumber and the lumber yard owner who innocently plans to scatter the pieces of her home by selling the wood; "The Ghost of Melvin Pye", in which a landlord asks the question, "What happens if your houses are not only haunted...but haunted by two different ghosts who both claim to be the ghost of the same man?"; "The Wisdom of the East", about the problems that a man and a woman have when they start fooling around with a black magic yogi; "Mr. Arson", about the problems that occur when you take a mail-order course in witchcraft; and "Ka the Appalling", a silly swords and sorcery tale in the Conan tradition, but with a few satirical extras.

---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

Also out by deCamp is The Wheels of If (Berkeley Medallion Book #S1893) \$.75 This includes his classic alternate worlds story of the same name, and six other short stories, including his equally classic "The Gnarly Man". I wish his latest stuff were as good.

Mutants by Gordon R. Dickson. The Macmillan Co, 1970. \$4.95

Unlike deCamp, the novel is Dickson's element...but with a few exceptions, these are very good stories. Unfortunately, they have a certain sameness that precludes reading the 11 stories in this book at one sitting...they all appear to have been written for Analog, and while I consider Analog the best prozine around, 11 stories in the same style by the same author (even stories as good as these) are just too

much. Nevertheless, if you like Dickson and you are willing to read only one or two a day, this is an excellent collection. ---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

quark/ #1 edited by Samuel R. Delany and Marilyn Hacker. Paperback Library
#66-480 \$1.25

I don't really know if this should be called a book or a prozine in pocketbook form, since the subtitle is "a quarterly of speculative fiction". At any rate, for the lack of a better phrase, I will say that it consists of experimental writings... and that it just doesn't make it. No...let's say that it's made up of experimental fiction (which I don't like and don't pretend to understand), and more readable stf which is remarkable for its complete unremarkability. The names in the ToC sound interesting, just about everyone from Disch and Delany to van Vogt, but the names can't cover the disappointing lack of content. In a monthly prozine for half the price, we'd shrug it off...even the best zines have off ish...but in a pb anthology for \$1.25 it's unforgivable. ---Reviewed by Ken Scher---

By the time you read this quark/2 is on the stands. Again, with names like Farmer, Disch, Emshwiller, Lieber, Brunner and Bryant, one expects a bit more than one gets. Perhaps our minds are conditioned to the prozines which we read each month. The works are generally short, and that throws the reader. They are, indeed, experimental and the frames of reference are not always there. One wonders whether the writing is really as sloppy (read "without form") as one suspects, or is the reader missing the whole point. I think that some readers will enjoy this approach. Most died-in-the-wool sf fans will not, I'm afraid. fdd

Behind the Walls of Terra by Philip Jose Farmer. Ace 71135 \$.75

Philip Jose Farmer recently gained fame as a writer of dirty science fiction novels. With this book Farmer proves he can write fantastic science fiction with or without sex.

The plot of this story is multi-leveled; it is both simple and complex. The basic situation is that a homicidal maniac from an alternate universe has escaped into our world and the protagonists are out to find and kill him before he enslaves and destroys the human race.

For a fast paced excitement and adventure, a hundred thrills a page, I have never seen anything like this book. It never lets up for a moment. In fact, it isn't even divided into chapter, episodes or segments. It is straight, uninterrupted prose all the way through. The descriptions of the World of Tier are almost poetic with their beauty and word power. The ending of the book is weird. I can't say anything more than that about it. Hickaha and Anna are superbly developed characters. Even the stereotypes are interesting. Most of the dialogue is very hip and modern.

This yarn will keep you awake nights in wonder long after you have finished reading it. It's the best book I've come across in a long time. I can't recommend it highly enough. ---Reviewed by Jack West---

Outworlder by Lin Carter. Lancer Science Fiction Original 74722-075 \$.75

Sometimes Lin Carter writes a darn good yarn and sometimes he doesn't. This time he has. I don't think that there's much quarrel when I say that Carter isn't our best s&s writer. But he can entertain and that's what s&s fans are after. This is one of Carter's "Imperium" novels, set approximately 250 years before The Man Without a Planet and several thousand years before Star Rogue, the other two published novels in this series.

Carter uses an old and trusted device for the opening of this novel of quest, or odyssey, as someone recently called it. He quotes from Diocolba's The First Thousand Years and Folker's Guide to the Sierra Stars, 9th edition. This lends credence to the story about to be told. For some reason, this has always turned me on.

Our hero is Morgan, known as Outworlder on the planet Bargelix, since he had been born on Centaurus and fled from there after involvement in the Freedom Riots. Little motivation is given for the quest, other than the arrival of Sodaspes, the young magician, telling that it is time to fulfill the prophecy of the Lissandur-lay. Well-drawn companions are gathered along the way: Conyin, rhapsode or Singer; Othgrim, strong but not too bright yeoman; Argyra, pulchritudinous Warrior-Maiden; Korlix Bowman, archer. Adventures aplenty await them upon the way to Taradon to close a gate to an alternate world through which aliens are expected. Beset by gnomes, they retreat under ground and find their way into the cave of one of the most delightful dragons I have discovered in s&s literature. Dzarmungzung must indeed be the father of all dragons, and the portrayal of his caves with all of the treasures of the ancients is well done. Highly recommended for sword-and-sorcery freaks like myself.

---Reviewed by Frank Denton---

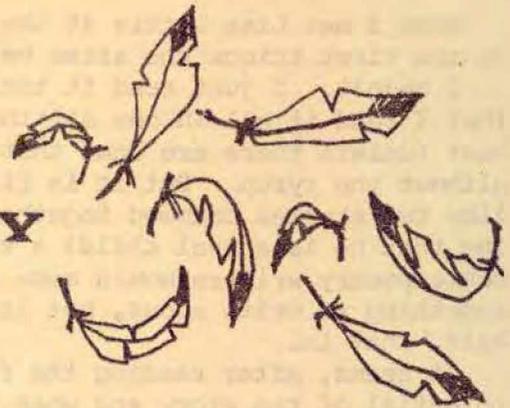
Saltflower by Sydney Van Scyoc. Avon Science Fiction Original V2386 \$.75

How often do you hooked by the comments on the back cover of a pb? "The three ships materialized over Puget Sound one evening at year's end. They appeared in the skies of Tacoma with a roar that shattered windows and stopped hearts." Now Tacoma is just a spit down the road, and the place of my birth. Who wouldn't be hooked? Don't you be! For the life of me, I can't tell you much about the plot. Some other space creatures, left crystals like salt in the desert near Salt Lake, some gal ate one, bore this half-human daughter. There's a revivalist tent-city on the desert, the girl goes there. There's a super police force dinking around trying to save something or other. Oh, hell, you get the idea. Don't read it. Who is Van Scyoc?

---Reviewed by Frank Denton---



THE FEATHERS FLY



Jack West, 711 West Spring, Covington, Kentucky 41016

Sorry for the long delay in responding to Ash-Wing 6. With school and several other things, I've been gafiating as of late.

Lisa Tuttle's story was interesting. It portrayed an unusual situation with great skill. "Uncle Stirg" didn't do much for me. I consider the Conan yarn a heresy. Howard would turn in his grave over such sacrilege. In the future I feel "writers" should leave the Cimmerian alone. Let them create their own characters and stop stealing from other people. The poetry was o.k., but not very inspiring. You are the first one to complain about Ken and Terry's parodies. They tell me that they may begin to pick on someone else for a change, perhaps Gray Mouser and Fafhrd. /

Jan Slavin, now Mrs. Earl Evers, 1406 Leavenworth, San Francisco, CA

I've been meaning to write to you ever since I received Ash-Wing 6. That is a very good zine and I really think you are doing a great job with it. I don't know where you find your contributors because I've seen little fanac of this quality recently, especially the fiction. I wish I had time to write a full-fledged LOC, but I have exams in two weeks, thanks to Washburn U's crazy calendar - exams before Christmas so we can have a peaceful vacation - and hell before.

You expressed interest in Celtic stuff; I found a very comprehensive book, Celtic Pagan Britain by Ross, pubbed by Columbia Univ. Press. It is more a factual, anthropological study, but the absolute detail and precision is beautiful, no romance or belief, of course, but one could reconstruct many of the Druid ceremonies from the bits and pieces. Also, Israel Regardie's description of the Golden Dawn rituals are considered more accurate and definitely less b.s. than Crowley. The Druids were based on an entirely oral tradition - runes were for ceremonial inscriptions by and large, not records. If there were records they have never been found. Yeats and others have collected oral traditions as best they could; these are valuable for the spirit, pardon the pun.

By the way, are you of Celtic origin? Or what? I ask because I've heard it's often best, easiest or something like that to practice whatever you would do traditionally - cabala and some gypsy magic for me, though I dabble in everything. /Yes, I'm afraid that I am Celtic in origin; half-Irish and half-Welsh. We'll be touring in both of these countries this summer and I'll let you know if I feel vibrations / For a good article on Druids, send for Tamlacht 7 & 8, 25¢ apiece from Vic Boruta, 11 W. Linden Ave., Linden, NJ 07036

Darrell Schweitzer, 113 Deepdale Rd., Strafford, PA 19087

When I met Lisa Tuttle at the Philcon (she's a charming person, I assure you), one of the first things she asked me was "Did you read CHILD OF MY KINGDOM yet?"

I hadn't. I just read it tonight (and found the zine so compulsively readable that I read it all in one sitting.) CHILD is indeed a good story, probably Lisa's best (unless there are some that I haven't seen.) It reminds me of Zenna Henderson without the syrup. But it is flawed in that it is underdeveloped and almost reads like two stories crammed together. On the relationship between Ellen and Hal (assuming that he is a real child) a very powerful mainstream story could be written. Most contemporary writers would make a novel out of it because they're always hard up for something to write about, but it would make a good novelette. The first page and a half, that is.

It seems, after reading the first part, that Lisa broke away from the greatest potential of the story and when it is explained that Hal is an alien it seems like a copout. On the other hand, the story is a very good exploration of the old fantasy idea of the child who never grows up. This theme has been rather neglected and the only other story I can think of along these lines is Bradbury's "Hail and Farewell", which does little more than say there's this kid who doesn't grow up and he has to leave home every year or so and find another one. That was about it. Nobody has really ever delved into the emotional and sexual problems of such a person, especially the adult in a child's body. Wouldn't it look odd for a nine-year-old to rape an adult woman?

I think the story is still potentially saleable, though something must be done about the conflict between the two potential stories in the single piece. The first page is fine, the introduction of the characters well handled, the sense of mystery about Hal brought forward in just the right way, but from this point, the relationship between them must be developed more thoroughly and more time spent on it, so that the revelation of Hal's true nature doesn't seem like a sudden leap into left field. Also characterization must be more consistent in order to be believable. For example, I don't think that it is proper for Hal to say something in a "mocking" manner, as he does on p. 9. Why should he abandon his polite, solemn veneer just then? If there is a reason we should know about it.

Also it is not wise to make constant references to "gossips" and "old biddies" (that being a trite term to start with) without mentioning names and including a couple of short scenes of these people gossiping. This would serve to add another point of view to the story, which is always a good idea. / Yes, more pennies per word/

Of course, all this would lengthen the story considerably. But this is necessary. Look at the length of the average short story in a prozine. A pro might have taken 30 pages to tell this story (a good pro, that is). Development is what's needed here. /Not in my magazine, it isn't; a 30 p. story would put me out of business. Both Judith's and Jeff's stories this time run around 5500 words. One takes 11 pages and the other 9 pages./

I'm becoming more and more fond of Dan Osterman's art work. He is one of the few new artists today who is distinctly his own man and doesn't try to imitate anyone. His work is completely unique. I can't think of a single artist whose work resembles Dan's even vaguely.

"Uncle Stirg" was a reasonably good story, though it, like Lisa's, tends to build towards something and then back away. The whole focus of the story is on the uncle and his mysterious activities and then we find out nothing really important. This should be the story of Stirg, not the narrator (whose sole function in this tale is to provide a point of view and an emotional reaction to the subject) but we see much too little of him.

"The Elf Prince" should have been a short story. It seems that Miss Brownlee can't really write poetry. Her words clash with each other and the whole poem sounds like a machine gun. In poetry words are supposed to flow into each other, and be vaguely harmonious (even if they don't rhyme) but here they don't. In prose they don't have to. /Well, see what you think of Judith's prose in this issue./

"Jeweled Thrones of Phoenix" is perhaps the best of the Ballard/St. Andre Conan tales. But I really can't picture Conan in medieval armor such as the Creative Anachronists wear. Remember, they're promoting the customs of an era tens of thousands of years after the end of the Hyborean age. I wish we could have heard more of Conan's lecture on civilization.

"The Mind's Mind" is quite impressive, except for pt. 3 which communicates little. Pt. 1 is especially noteworthy for its incredible use of words to give an almost kaleidoscopic effect, and pt. 4 because it says so much in so few words.

My only comment on Chris Wohler's drawing is that if he can't do much better than this he'd better get back to his typer and start writing stories again as fast as he can. In his fiction he showed some talent. In this drawing he shows nothing. /As I recall, Darrell knows Chris so may feel a bit brave about doing this. Chris had a story in our second issue and I, too, would like to see another of his stories./

Leon Taylor seems to be one of the few people around who can actually write an interesting column about fanzines. He's actually succeeded in what I was trying to do in PEGASUS, and his isn't so forced, either. He's also managed to come quite a ways in ten months. I joined fandom when I was fifteen, but I was nearly sixteen before anything of mine began to appear in any numbers, and a lot of my really good stuff has yet to appear. (You see, due to faned delays, I seldom get anything to print in less than a year. I only started to produce large quantities of acceptable material around the Spring and Summer of 1969 and a lot of that hasn't come out yet, even though a lot of it was accepted rather quickly. The story you have for AW 7, for example, was one of my first decent efforts, dating from the Winter of 68/69. "The Magic of Glooscap" was from August 1969. "Just Business" got into print surprisingly fast.) I found, contrary to Leon, that I couldn't produce "a thick volume of history" from my experiences in my first year of fandom. I sort of went in toe first, cautiously, first contributing to a few fanzines (I believe Manticore was the first) getting more and more until I started that column in Pegasus (which will continue if dand when the zine does) and got more than I could read.

My own impression of Riverside Quarterly was that it is what it ways, a serious scholarly publication, and the problem with being such is that it is nearly incomprehensible to anyone not familiar with all of the material being discussed. I gave up on the Williamson Master's Thesis because I wasn't that well-versed in Wells. But I do like the zine and I've even contributed to it (a series of articles, accepted pending re-writing), even if I've never managed to read one issue completely before the next one comes out. The zine does have a sense of humor, too. Take a look at the article on rape-scenes in ERB in the current issue.

Sandra Meisel has written some excellent articles - in John Ayotte's now defunct Kallikanzaros.

The illos on page 26 is pretty bad (did the sword belt on the guy's leg cause it to be deformed or was he born that way?) but I think it important that Mitch has realized something that very few people have; i.e., that Conan (and his imitations) is just plain ugly and it's incredible that any woman would go near him. No wonder he has to abduct them. /Guess what Darrell thinks of Barry Smith's Conan in the new comic book./

Re: peoples comments on "Glooscap". I think Leon Taylor is right and I am myself unsatisfied with the characters in the tale. Jake and the professor are unquestionably stereotypes. (General rule: when reading comments on fanfiction, pick out those that are unfavorable; they're the only ones that will do anyone any good). I intended the story to be a gag story, sort of a "tall tale" which was to start out in a realistic manner and move slowly into nonsense. But I find conflicts between serious and comical passages.

In answer to Ned Brooks' comment, I can't really say why the wizard changed a moose into an island. I suspect that it was out of sympathy for the animal's plight, but I really don't know. You see, I didn't write the legend; it's genuine. Haven't you ever had an utterly irresistible urge to go out and turn a moose into an island? You just can't control yourself. I can't. But for lack of mooses I usually go around turning dogs and cats into clumps of mud.

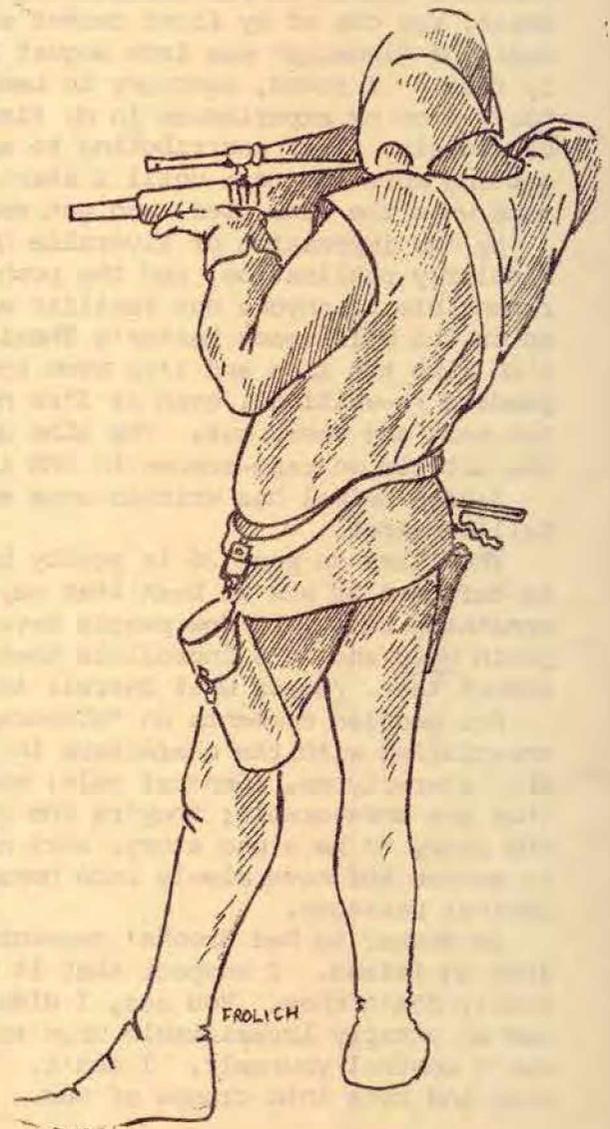
Ned says that Theodore Sturgeon can handle the most bizarre themes, etc. I suspect I'm showing my critical ignorance, but Sturgeon is one of the few real giants in the field that has never been able to interest me. I usually get bored quite fast with the guy, though I am rather fond of something in a 1946 Astounding called "Mwe-ju's Jet". I have a Fantastic Adventures lying around with "The Dreaming Jewels" in it and I suppose I'll read it someday, but what Sturgeon material I have encountered (and I haven't been actively seeking it) hasn't gone over too well with me, with very few exceptions. An example of a bizarre theme that goes over like wet mud in Sturgeon's hands is something like "The Sex Opposite".

In case anyone's interested, the story to which I was referring in my letter (which creates a "new type of ship" etc. for a Universe situation) was "The Death of the Sky Dragon" in Canticles From Labowitz #6. It is the last of a series and will have several prequels. (My Muse is mixed up, you see, and I'm writing the whole saga backwards.) /Typical, Darrell. I hope that last issue's contributors will appreciate Darrell's rather extended remarks. I know that I always profit by them and appreciate his time and effort, even though it is a demented attempt to take over Ash-Wing by sheer wordery (I coined a new word). I figure that I've known Darrell long enough now to joust with him, but can vouch for his sincerity. Thanks, Darrell./

Harry Warner: 423 Summit Avenue: Hagerstown,
MD 21740

....So to Ash-Wing in which I particularly liked the introductions of contributors. This procedure is missing from most fanzines, and it turns up so frequently in the fancy, big-circulation fanzines on its rare appearances that I suspect a misconception on the part of most fanzine editors, that a small reader circle will automatically know all about anything in that small-circulation fanzine, even when it's written by someone totally unknown to anyone in fandom except the editor.

"Child of My Kingdom" sounded as if it would be too much like "In Hiding" during its first couple of pages. Then it gradually veered off into a couple of gratifyingly different twists. It shows real progress in the art of characterization for Lisa Tuttle, who makes the librarian a real-seeming person. The story might have been a great one if Lisa could have gotten inside the small hero and filled out his fears and aspirations in fuller manner. One objection that didn't occur to me when I read the story, and therefore might not be valid because how many readers will think again about a story they read several days ago upon preparing a loc? is: the whole problem for the principal characters really needn't have existed because neither had anything to keep them in that town and it would have been simple enough to agree to set up a household in some distant city as aunt and nephew or some similar arrangement. Wouldn't Ellen and



Hal have thought of that instead of ending up almost by accident in a similar situation after much heartache?

I have a curious feeling that "Uncle Sturg" is a slightly magnified telling of some unhappy experience or dream of the author. It reads just about like the first fiction I tried to write, and it's probably a very early try at fiction writing. I hope she keeps trying after getting some diplomatic advice from someone or other on the difference between a short story and a short summary of a series of adventures.

"Jewelled Thrones of Phoenix" gets off to a very bad, unrealistic start, with that newspaper paragraph. Where will you find a newspaper, in Arizona or elsewhere, that would spell correctly Conan and Cimmerian, state accurately the type of metal in the sword, and recognize a loin-cloth when its writer, rewrite man, editor, proofreader, and printer's devil all saw it so the term wouldn't be changed by one of them to washcloth? Outside of that, I enjoyed the story. /For those of you who might not know, this is tongue-in-cheek, as who should know better than Harry Warner, newspaper man./

Leon Taylor is a brave fan, if he stuck out his hobby after Riverside Quarterly formed an introduction to it. I yield to nobody in my admiration for that fanzine, but I can't imagine myself hanging on as a fan if it had been my first fanzine; I just wasn't the kind of a person to see its excellences when I was coming into fandom. I got a couple of fanzines before I really entered fandom actively, including an issue of Fantasy Magazine and a copy of Tesseract, and didn't react to them in any strong way, then obtained the Los Angeles club publication, Imagination! and that did it. It was the kind of fanzine that would pass almost unnoticed today but it was exceptional for its time and had just the right mixture of levity and information to make me want to publish a fanzine and to read many other fanzines of the same nature.

The book reviews are good in general, although some are really too short to have a fair chance of conveying much information or judgment. I suspect that Andrew Phillips had some of his facts mixed up about the relationship of Dawn of Flame to The Black Flame, but it's still impressive, how Weinbaum's two fantasy novels are continuing to get pretty good reviews after so many years. I wish someone would dig into the Library of Congress or somewhere and attempt to exhume his non-fantasy fiction, just in case it's as superior to the bulk of pulp mundane fiction as his fantasies were to the majority of stuff the prozines were publishing in the 1930's.

Keep trying for the material by Mrs. LeGuin that you speak of in the letter section. I have a theory that there's hardly a pro anywhere who wouldn't be writing for the fanzines regularly if the pro received the right fanzines that seem likely to continue to appear, then was given to understand that fanzines will publish pro-written materials on almost any topic including opinions which the pro might not want his next door neighbor to overhear, and finally understood clearly and completely that even though the fanzines don't pay for material, they also don't expect that material to be polished until it gleams in the sunshine after weeks of reworking and re-writing. It's so hard to find an audience that won't bite back at ideas with which it disagrees, and I can't imagine anyone who likes to write failing to take occasional advantage of the soapbox that fanzines provide.

Even though it doesn't contain any owls, I thought the drawing on page 34 so excellent that it should have received one of the cover spots. The perspective seems to have been thrown deliberately out of kilter and this creates a different, fantasy appearance to the sketch that I like very much. But, in general, your big pictures are better than the small ones, and this is a switch from the situation in most fanzines, where i'm constantly griping about artists who lost too much effectiveness by making a sketch filler-size when it needed a whole page to spread out on. Your typography is very satisfactory, although I keep wondering why readers include such statements in their locs when obviously the editor knew all about that matter before anyone else saw the fanzine and doesn't need confirmation of how good or bad it may have been. The postal system is guilty of many things but I don't think it causes fanzine production to degenerate or improve en route.

Cuyler Warnell Brooks, Jr.
713 Paul St., Newport News,
VA 23605

Lovely Ash-Wing 6... The story by Lisa Tuttle is really professional quality - you should have sent it back and told her to try F&SF. The idea has been used before, of course, but this is very well done. I met Lisa at Philcon a couple of weeks ago; she looks more like she should than anyone I know.

"Uncle Stirg" is well written for fan fiction, but the plot is thin and there is no proper end to the story. There is such a thing as making the horror too obscure, though most new writers go too far the other way. The story, "The School Friend" in a recent F&SF, though well-written, suffered from this same fault - the horror was too obscure and the reader couldn't find it at all. The name "Stirg" provided, for me at least, irritation rather than any sense of alienness. The only other name in the story is common enough, and the story is apparently set in the actual present or thereabouts, so why 'Stirg'? 'Grits' spelled backward maybe, if Carol likes grits as little as I do!

"The Elf-Prince", I'm afraid, is mere prose in a poem suit; it has not got a single good line. I know that sounds harsh, but I have had it with fannish non-poetry. The line "I'll have you know my glory does not piddle" in the Conan farce is better than anything in the "Elf-Prince".

The Conan thing by Ballard and St. Andre is fun! I hope you will collect these in a book one day.

I am very doubtful whether I understand Lawton's poem, "The Mind's Mind", but at least it is a poem.

I like Taylor's fanzine reviews, but I'm sure that I believe he is only 17 and has been in fandom less than a year...

If that thing on p. 26 wasn't good enough for a cover, then it wasn't good enough. Looks like something from a Marvel Comic. What is that on the shoulder of the sword arm? / It was plenty good enough for a cover; but it wasn't an owl. I've got to be true to myself. Watch for a very strange owl cover on A-W 9./

Good book reviews. The business about "Rollo Ahmed" having warm hands after a 4-mile walk in the winter doesn't seem particularly impressive. I don't think Pumilia's idea that he had been indulging in spiritus frumenti is correct - alcohol would increase the circulation to the skin and thus increase the heat loss. But the exercise alone would keep him warm, and if he kept his hands under his arms for the last few minutes of the walk, they would be warm when he arrived. And, of course, there are winters nights and there are Winter's Nights...

Merwin's House of Many Worlds did not exactly come out in the 'last few years' - it appeared first in 1951. One of these days I'll have to get around to reading it.



I agree with your reviewer about Citadel of Fear; I think it's better than much of Merritt. It would be odd if "Francis Stevens" turned up after all these years! Lin Carter told me at Philcon that when Ballantine published Evangeline Walton's Island of the Mighty, their research department had told them that she was dead and/or the copyright had expired - turned out that she was and is alive and the copyright still in force. She was so delighted to see it in print again that she sent them a sequel to it that has never been published, and says that she has a third volume as well.

I agree with Sample about Deryni Rising, but I don't think I am quite so optimistic about Katherine Kurz ever writing anything really good. Depends on how old she is, I suppose. Looking back of Deryni Rising, it seems much like a comic book plot without the pictures. /I guess that tells you something about my mentality; I enjoyed the hell out of that book./

If you are a Tim Kirk fan, he is to have a strip in Jeff Smith's PHANTASMICOM, based on one of F.W. Bain's Hindu mythology tales! It croggles my mind... I would give you Smith's address in Baltimore, but I don't seem to have it. I paid him for the issue and gave him my address at Philcon. /Tim appears in these pages for the first time with this issue and I'm awfully pleased to have him. If we treat him right perhaps he'll pay us a visit again./

Bill Marsh: 1119 Cedar Street: Carson City, NV 89701

I think that that is a good gesture you made in your commentary in the current A-W, giving an introduction and background on some of your contributors. It is too bad we don't see more of this on the part of faneds. A reader, this reader at any rate, always has a curiosity about those whose work he encounters in fanzines, and unless one is very peripatetic in convention attendance too many of these people remain as unknown to him.

The way you explained it the Bob Shaw Fund sounds like a worthy project. Even a neo dum-dum like myself has learned to appreciate that worthy Irish talent as both a pro and fanwriter and he is certainly deserving of the trip. (I didn't say exactly what I meant in that preceding sentence. I am not a neo dum-dum. I am a neo-fan, but a long-time dum-dum.) You have convinced me. Here is my moldy buck...lolling around somewhere in the confines of the envelope. Just think, if your other one hundred and ninety-nine free-loading subscribers do likewise, Ash-Wing can be the instrument of raising one-fifth of the needed grand. (I hope I calculated that correctly. There is a dead sandflea lodged under the leafspring of my sliderule and my answers aren't always too precise or late.) / Very disappointing. Would you believe a lousy \$4.25. Makes you wonder why you continue to put out a zine./

Lisa's story was excellently told, though pretty predictable as far as plot after the first few paragraphs. Miss Blalock's story attempts a little too much within its length, I think, but as a first published effort she can take some pride in it. I admire any amateur writer that can stay with a story idea through to a completed effort. I have a drawerful of unfinished attempts at fiction, the residue of what was left after the idea cooled and I was left with the work of hammering a story out of it. The Ballard and St. Andre piece scored high again with me. You are very fortunate to have attracted their talents to your zine. I hope that Ken is successful in getting his 'serious' Conan work published, in A-W or wherever, and I look forward to reading it. I hope you keep us posted upon the state of his efforts in this regard. It was a pleasant surprise to encounter Judith's poem among the contents this time. I didn't know she was a poetess among her many other talents. I share your desire that she might favor A-W with a story in a future issue. Leon Taylor does a good job with his fanzine review column and it is a definite asset to the zine. He is certainly adept at needling with one hand while applying the salve with the other as witnessed by his discussion of the Meisel piece in RQ. He did tend to take a slightly over-patronizing tone toward Leland's zine, I thought. But such is the nature of reviewers, I suppose, especially young ones in this revolutionary era.

I derived a couple of good tips on books that looked interesting in the book review section. I find that I am relying more and more upon reviews these days in book purchasing. Ghu! The output in sf and fantasy pubs lately is really astonish-

ing. I was tempted to buy the Van Arnam book you reviewed when I first encountered it on the pb racks, but couldn't quite see the parsimonious wordage adding up to 75¢ worth of pb reading. So I am a cheapie. But I calculated at the time that the thing wouldn't have gone over twenty-five to thirty thousand words. I passed up buying it as an anti-inflation measure.

Doug Robillard : 230 Gulf St. : Milford, CT 06460

Thanks for the free issue of Ash-Wing. Now this is the type of fanzine I really enjoy; one with stories, book reviews, and little bits of fannish humor. I thought Lisa Tuttle's story was excellent - this was the first one I've read by her, even though I do correspond with her. A very interesting issue indeed.

About myself: I am 13 years old, have been in fandom and N3F about a year now. I'm in my last year of grammar school, will start high school sometime in the distant future. In the mainstream my favorite author is Norman Mailer; his books Miami and the Seige of Chicago (about the Republican and Democratic Conventions of 1968) and The Armies of the Night (which told of his experiences during a peace rally at the Pentagon) are great. As for sf, I have three favorite authors: Bob Silverberg, Samuel Delany and, of course, Harlan Ellison. I daresay that any of these could be the greatest sf writer of all time. But it would be hard to choose. /Those will probably be fighting words that you will wish had not slipped. You'll be defending yourself for the rest of your life./

One book that should get the Nebula or Hugo in '71 is Silverberg's Downward to the Earth, which first appeared in magazine form as a four-parter in Galaxy last year, December '69 to March '70, I think.

As for world affairs, I think this planet is coming apart at the seams. I don't think that a war, any war, no matter who fights it, is justified. Especially the Viet Nam War. I think we ought to pull out right now, no matter what Nixon has to say. Oh, well, the sermon is over. /A little more insight into one of this issue's authors. Not bad for a person still in grade school, well, junior high really. I don't think I would have been capable of reading Sherwood's Roosevelt and Hopkins, which might have been an equivalent for my age. And I know I couldn't write like his story when I was that age./

WAHF: Rose Hogue, who has taken over the Welcommittee for NFFF; Steve Riley, who has been forced to quit with his zine, Return To Wonder, Richard Dix, who has a marvelous collection of Arthur Rackham books; Larry Paschelke, who with his lovely wife, Judy, have put me up twice within a months time when I was in Portland; George Willick, who says he's writing very little (get with it, George); Earl Evers, who upped and married Jan Slavin (starting their own slan shack); Alpajpuri, who has gone back to school in Eugene and promises Carandaith soon (hope the stencils work, Paj); Poindexter, who will have a scene in A-W 8; scads of new fen who somehow or other wrote for copies, and my father, not a fan, but a neat 78-year old man. I'm sure I've forgotten others but the brain is weary after 56 pages.

Did you know that Dean Koontz's Beast-child is dedicated partly to our own Lisa Tuttle?



IN MEMORIAM

Virgil Finlay

C.C. MacApp

ASH-WING



Montechelin