

# The Bleary Eyes vol. 5

selected by John Berry





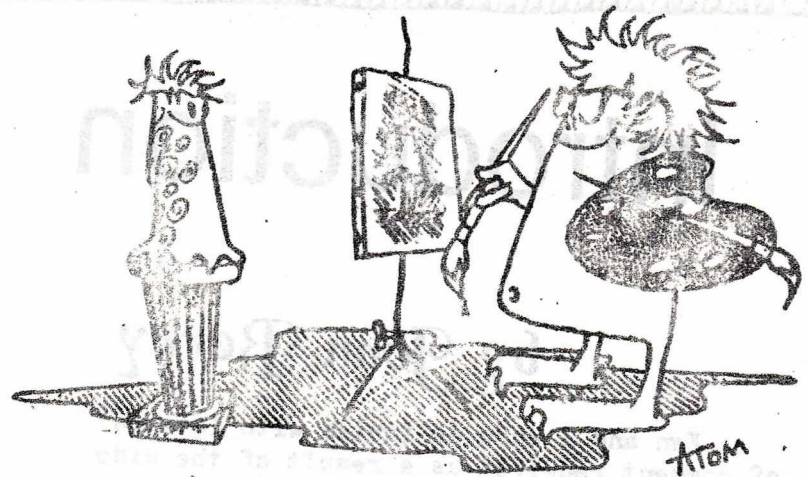


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# introduction

by John Berry

Ken and I were delighted with letters of comment received as a result of the wide circulation of *The Bleary Eyes* 4 ... no wonder, because the contents were written by the cream of fan writers of the fifties, the celebrated members of Irish Fandom, Bob Shaw, James White and Walt Willis. Also, as most writers pointed out, the ATOM illos were also superb, complementing the stories to perfection.

One other point was pursued by numerous correspondents, concerning the scope of writers in these days, over four decades ago, when prose was free from the inhibitions of the present day political correctness, "making everyone paranoid" Andy Robson shrewdly pointed out that "...in the Good Old Days, people only had to worry about four-letter words and full-frontal nudity. Now it's the other way round."

In those days you could call a spade a spade!

So here we have the fifth and definitely final issue of *The Bleary Eyes*, the contents falling roughly between issues 2 and 3. This may seem to represent a haphazard filing system, but Ken thought that issue number 3 would be the finale, then encouragement, throbbing material, many ATOM illos, and the fannish urge to publish gave Ken the excuse to produce issues 4 and 5.

I wish to thank Ken, Ving Clarke, Steve Jeffery, and all the many fans who wrote appreciative letters requesting the publication of the remaining *Bleary Eye* manuscripts.

John Berry,

1996.

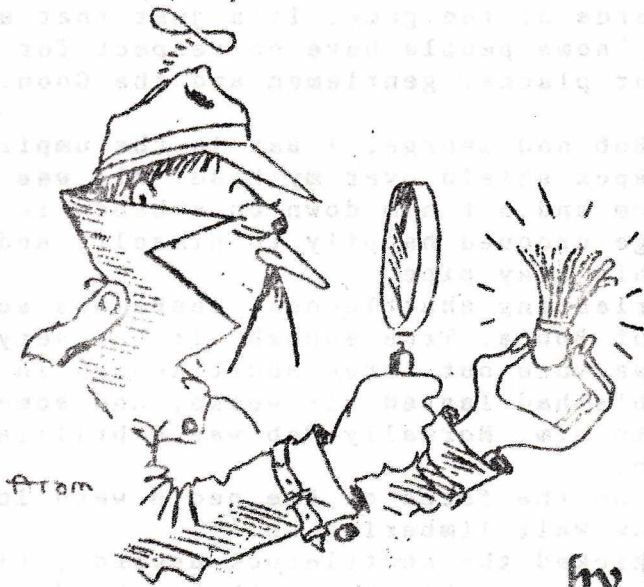
I'm regarded by those who know me, I'm sure, as a miserable pessimist. But I must confess to a stubborn streak of optimism. John writes, above, that this is the final TBE collection, and by all that's sensible it is. I'd love to reprint all the GDA stories, by all the various hands, but I can't manage the finance. However I still cling to the hope, against all logic, that I might be able to continue the project at some future time.

My thanks go to John primarily, of course, but also to Mrs. Thompson, to Ving, whose help has been incalculable, and to Steve Jeffery, who, relatively unsung, has ably supplemented the ATOM illos with drawings of his own.

Ken Cheslin.  
1996.







# CRISIS AT OBLIQUE HOUSE

by John Berry

Walt cleared his throat loudly, so we respectfully looked up. "I have an announcement to make," he said, "I have invited three potential neo-fen to come up next Sunday afternoon... Sam Patterson, Sheila Butler and Leslie McConnell. Leslie works in my office, and I am most anxious to make a good impression. In particular, the three of them have expressed a desire to see a game of ghoddminton. Bob has been playing very well since he introduced his new everlastin shuttle-cock, so, to make the sides even, I suggest George partners Bob, against James and myself. I don't want Goon to play, because our visitors seem to be very respectable people, and I don't want to scare them away."

We nodded obediently. Sure I was disappointed, but heck, Willis is the boss.

"I presume," said Charters, gnashing his gums hopefully, "that I shall be allowed to have my usual rest between services?"

Walt nodded. "Don't forget now, Sunday."

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My stiff white collar hurt my neck, and I don't go for this bow-tie racket, but heck, Walt had stated that he wanted to create a favourable impression, so what else could I do?

I was rather late, and the potential neo's were already there. Sheila Butler was a good-looker, about 25 years old, and she seemed to have formed an attachment with George. I noticed she listened attentively as he mumbled about his operation... Patterson already had a large bundle of prozines under his arm, and seemed rather bewildered with the speed of his purchase. McConnell, the Perfect Civil Servant, emulated Walt with his striped trousers and spats... All three of them were looking at Walt with awe in their bulging optics.

As I entered they looked at me.

"The Goon," said Walt, pointing at me.

They shook their heads, fluttered their eyebrows unbelievably shuddered, and turned back to Walt.

Something told me I shouldn't have worn the top hat. Still...

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," said Walt. "I want you to witness a ghoddminton bout. Ghoddminton is a game I invented myself. I would like to point out that the floorboards have not been



removed to add to the hazards of the game. It's just that some people" - glaring at me - "some people have no respect for other people's property...To your places, gentlemen and the Goon. Bob, er, give George a hand."

Walt and James faced Bob and George. I sat in the umpire's chair, and pulled the perspex shield over my head. All was ready. I saw Bob grab George's arm and sit him down on a bench in the corner of the court. George crooned happily to himself, and seemed quite satisfied, and lit his clay pipe.

Bob withdrew his everlasting shuttlecock. There was something queer about this shuttle of Bob's. True enough, it was very economical, as sometimes we wore out three shuttlecocks in one night. This special of Bob's had lasted six weeks, and somehow it seemed specially attuned to him. Normally Bob was a brilliant player. Now, he was superb.

The game commenced. On the faces of the neo's were looks of sheer adulation as they saw Walt limbering up.

Bob served first. He kicked the shuttlecock upwards, tipped it with his elbow, tapped it on to his bat with his head, and smacked it across the table.

"Bob's service!" I shouted.

It was uncanny. He won the set 21 - 1. They changed ends. Bob won the next game 21 - 2.

Walt and James, on their hands and knees and gasping for breath, sank prostrate before the neo-fen. Completely and utterly exhausted.

I liked the way Bob sportingly woke George up, and thanked him for his assistance in the victory. Typical of Bob.

The neo's crowded round Bob, asking him to autograph their prozines.

"I thought Willis was Ghod," I heard McConnell say as he shook Bob by the hand.

Walt crawled to a chair. He looked very annoyed. It came as no surprise to me, therefore, when he called me over after the others had left.

"Goon," he said to me, biting his lip. "you've carried out two investigations for me so far. The fanzine affair was handled in a masterly fashion. You slipped up with the Cedric business. Now here is your chance to regain some of your lost prestige."

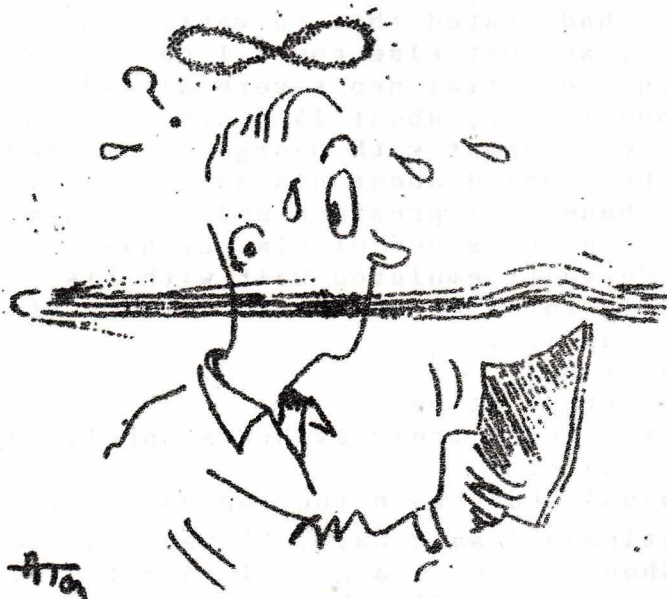
Walt must have his little joke, see.

"I'll accept the job, Walt," I mouthed, "but...er... my fee?"

He looked round.

"How about a dozen or so untouched nude photographs that Harris left behind after his last visit?, he whispered."

I nodded. Heck, I was commanding a higher fee already. Walt obviously thought I was improving.





"And the job is?" I asked, although I already knew the answer.  
"I want you to investigate Bob Shaw's shuttlecock," he hissed.  
"I told McConnell that I was the big noise around here, and now he is downstairs having tea with the Shaws. If this gets any worse BoSh will probably take over Irish Fandom en bloc. He has always been a good player, but this afternoon one of his feats was incredible. He actually swore at the shuttlecock, and it came back over the table so fast that it went right through James's bat. It's uncanny."

I could see Walt was worried.

"So O.K. Walt," I said, "I'll start work immediately."

As I went out I saw Walt looking at a ragged hole in a square of cardboard.

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I had already arranged to take a few days leave from my office so I was able to call tound at 170 the following morning. I wanted to see Madeleine.

I sneaked round to the back of the house and kicked the kitchen door open.

"Hold everything," I gritted. "I'm working for Walt again and I want to ask you a few questions."

"Sit down, Goon," she smiled in her friendly way. "Have a couple of Coffee Kisses. I'll help you all I can. In fact I'm glad you came. Walt hasn't been the same since that degrading exhibition yesterday afternoon..Take this morning for instance. A very serious lapse occurred. Do you know, he forgot to leave me the key for the shutter of the prozine kiosk?!"

"No," I muttered. Them Coffee Kisses are good.

"Yes," said Madeleine. "But more than that. Bob called to see us this morning before he went to work, and he actually ordered Walt to hold up Hyphen for a couple of weeks because he is too busy at the moment to write his column."

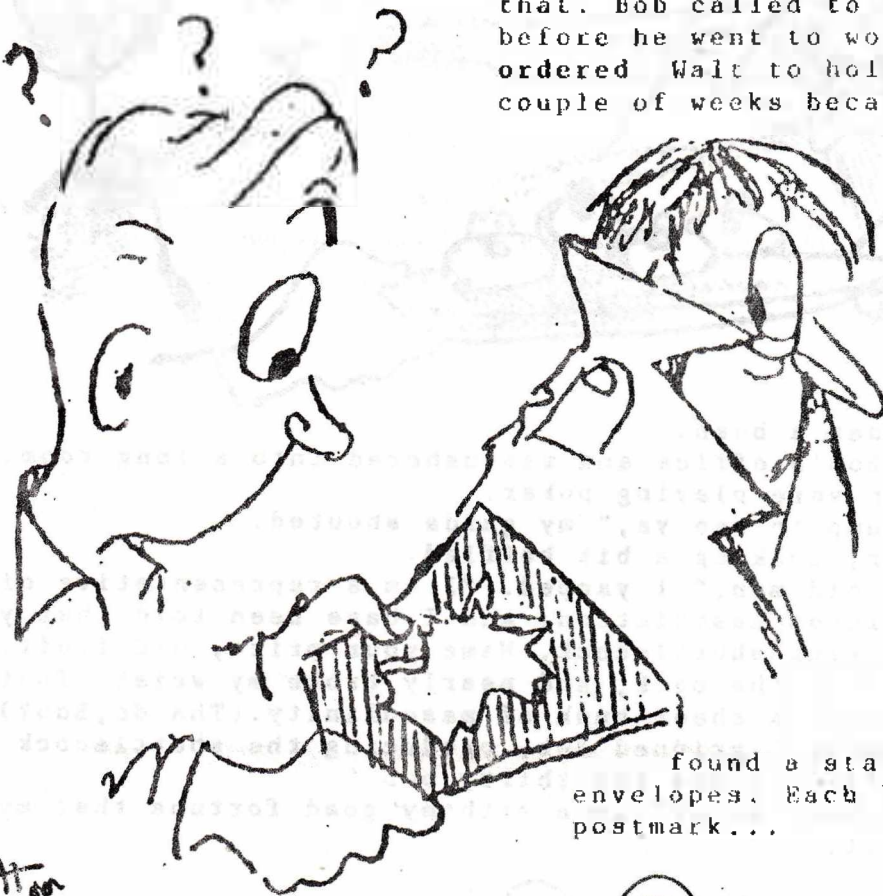
I felt sorta tense, like when I first saw THE CALENDAR.

"Bob or Sadie in?" I asked.

Madeleine shook her head.

I opened the Shaw's door and tiptoed inside. I searched every inch of the room, and finally, behind a dozen or so full tins of chocolate-marshmallows, I

found a stack of thick manilla envelopes. Each bore the Rainham postmark...





Oh no! Not that! Not Harris again....his Cedric hoax still caused me pangs of remorse.

I examined the envelopes...no letters...no nothing. I let myself out and raced home. This was obviously another job for the London branch of The Goon Defective Agency...

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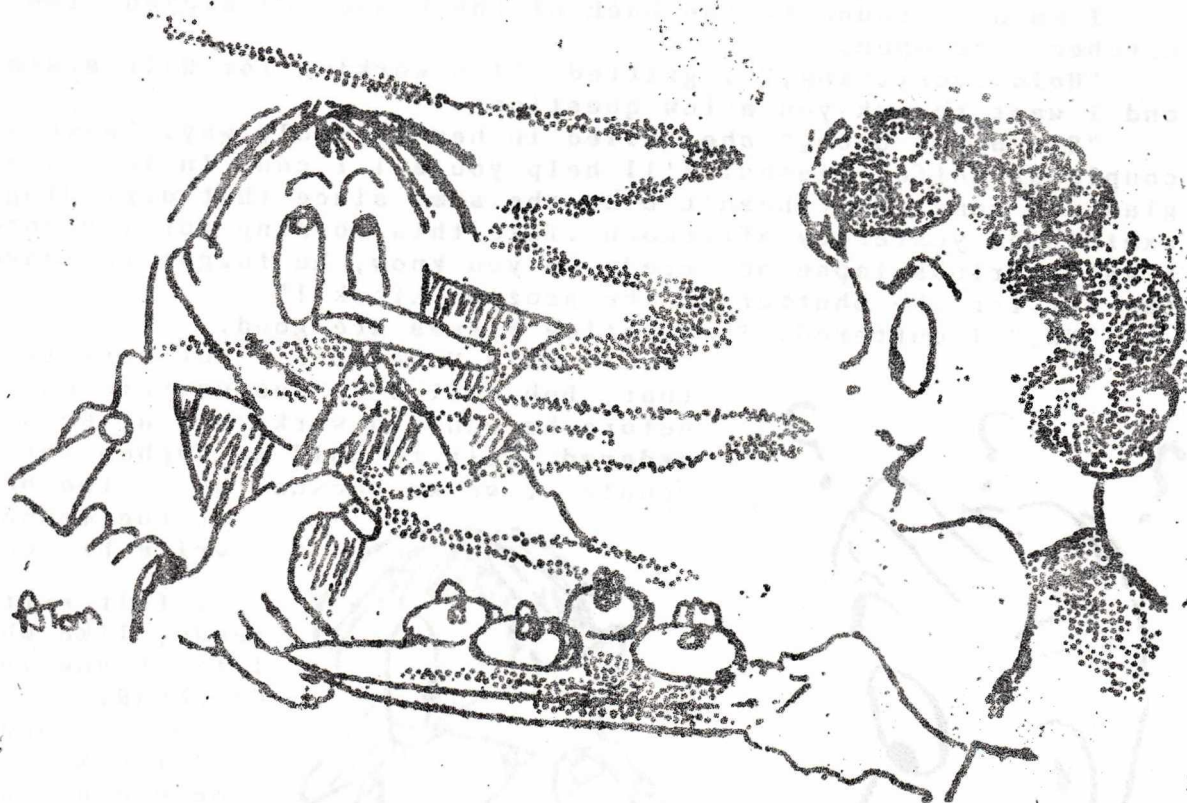
My instructions to Art Thomson were very brief;-

....."and something queer is going on between Chuck Harris and Bob Shaw...see if you can discover exactly what...."

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Whilst waiting for Art's reply I decided to get to the root of the mystery myself. That called for a disguise, plus a little subtlety, in which I specialise.

For this venture I dressed myself in my brother-in-law's cricket outfit and school blazer. I parted my hair in the middle, brushed my moustache, and inserted two buck teeth. I resembled a



rabbit looking under a bush.

I called at Bob's office and was ushered into a long room. A group of young men were playing poker.

"Robert, a gump to see ya," my guide shouted.

Bob came over, looking a bit baffled.

"Haw, I say, old man," I yapped. "I am a representative of the British Badminton Association, and I have been told that you possess an everlasting shuttlecock. Name your price, old fruit."

I slapped him on the back, and nearly broke my wrist. That boy is solid, strong, a sheer hunk of masculinity. (The do, Bob?)

"Made of plastic," grinned Bob, producing the shuttlecock from his pocket, "it's yours for thirty bob."

"Haw," I croaked, so overcome with my good fortune that my monocle dropped off.



I counted out three crisp ten shilling notes and he gave me his secret shuttle.

Goon was there again! The job was much easier than I had anticipated. I had fixed up Walt, and held the secret of Bob's success.

When I got home Art's report was waiting. I had managed to complete the job, but I read what Art had written, in case it was interesting...it was.

"...and I have found evidence that Chuck is posting an envelope to BoSh every day, but with no letter inside. I cannot find what the contents are. I looked through Chuck's Irish Fandom file, and found the remains of a letter from Bob. Most of the letter had been burned, but I did manage to decipher the words.... proceeds....send me....a factual account.... I reckon it's daft....

Heck. Art had certainly discovered something queer. But what had it got to do with a shuttlecock?

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Walt was at home that evening. He was sitting in his chair, arms hanging over the sides, legs akimbo, hair erect, eyes sunk behind droopy lids.

"Thank Ghod you've come, Goon," he croaked.

"Suffering Catfish, Walt, what gives?" I gritted. He looked all washed up.

"Shaw has asked me to get the balance of the Transfund transferred to his account," groaned Walt. "As I feared, the rest of Irish Fandom now regard him as Ghod, because of his lately acquired Ghoodminton prowess...all except you, Goon. You're with me, aren't you?"

Heck, Willis owed me thirty bob for the plastic shuttle.

"Sure, Walt," I breathed, "and don't think it's because you owe me three pounds for expenses."

His body twitched, as if racked with pain.

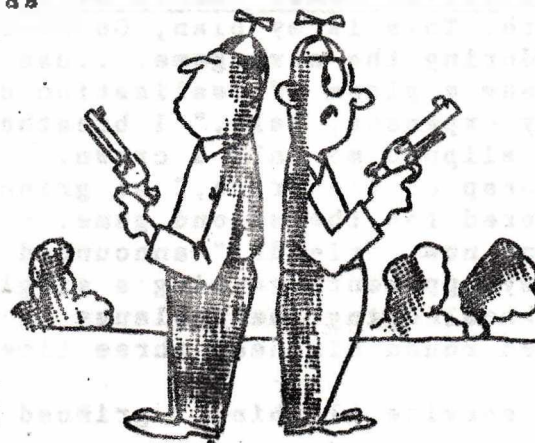
"Explain," he whispered.

"I've discovered the secret of Bob's success," I crowed. "He uses a plastic shuttlecock, which makes the game much faster than what we are used to. I suggest we now play twenty or thirty singles matches, so as to gauge the new speed to perfection. Then you can get the neofen to attend another Ghoodminton contest next Sunday...you and me against Bob and George.

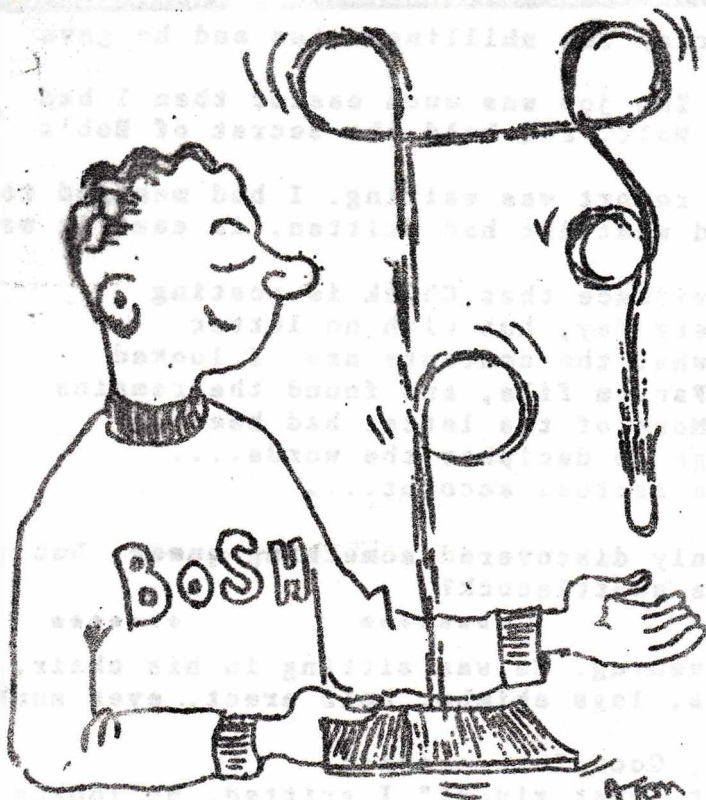
Walt got up off the floor.

"You're a genius, Goon," he crooned, selecting his bat.

Sometimes I think Walt is very perceptive..



"There should be something in the rules about ties in a TAPP election"



The neofan were sitting in a semi-circle, looking at Bob. Sheila had - BOSH IS GHOD - embroidered on her sweater...Patterson was handing out quote-cards inscribed - THE SHAWNS ARE GIANTS - , and McConnell was peeling Bob's banana.

"Attention folks," said Bob, "the contest will now begin. Willis, you take the Goon...I'll have George.. No, don't wake him up Peggy, just wheel him into the corner of the court, and put a bat in his lap. He likes to think he's helping me."

I winked at Walt. Bosh was now going to witness the power of The Goon Defective Agency.

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Bob produced another gleaming white shuttlecock. He balanced it on

his nose, nodded it over his head behind his back, and it reappeared out of his shirt sleeve.

Real clever, folks. Almost as good as that chap Hoodunit, or Dick Eney, or something.

After we lost the first game 21 - 1 I sensed I had made a blunder...a fact brought home to me only too clearly by Walt hammering me on the back of the head with The Immortal Storm.

The neos jumped up, trampled over me and Walt, and cheered Bob to an echo. Peggy wiped a slight bead of sweat off Bob's brow, and James and Sadie made a show of massaging his batting arm.

Walt dragged me to a corner of the room.

"Goon, did you see what happened during the game?" he asked. "I knocked the shuttle into Bob's court, the only time I managed to hit it during the game. As Bob went to return it he slipped... I actually saw the shuttlecock suspend itself several inches off the floor for at least twenty seconds, until Bob slipped his bat underneath. This is my plan, Goon. I want you to keep Bob out of the way during the next game...use force if you have to."

I saw a gleam of realisation on Walt's kisser.

"My expenses, Walt," I breathed.

He slipped me half a crown.

"Cheap at the price," he grinned, as we staggered to our feet and prepared for the second game.

"And now, friends," announced Bob, "I shall win this game without my opponents gaining a single point!"

Acknowledging the applause he hit the shuttle a delicate tap, it whirled round his head three times, and thumped to the floor on our side.

"My service, I think," grinned Bob.



Listen folks, I know I'm brutal, but I didn't want to use force on Bob, because he's bigger than me. But when the score got 2020-0, I realised I had to do something pretty quick. As Bob came forward to make his last service I lifted up Walt's waste paper basket and dumped it over Bob's head. This may not seem so serious to the uninitiated, but you must know that the said basket is made of very thick cardboard, and originally held an armchair. It completely covered Bob.

"Come and look at this shuttlecock, folks," said Walt, his old authority returning.

Everyone crowded round.

The shuttlecock was three inches above the floorboards. For two minutes we watched, entranced, at this anti-gravity device. Then it began to wobble. Walt knelt down and eased his bat under the wilting shuttle, and lifted it.



A squeaky sigh reached our ears as the shuttle sort of reclined on the bat.

"Thought you were never coming," we heard the shuttle say.

My mind changed from neutral to bottom gear. The words Art had deciphered ran through my mind.... proceeds... send me... a factual account.

Oh, the cunning of Shaw! The message obviously meant... Send me the proceeds of a TRUE BILL.

((See note below))  
HARRIS WAS SENDING MILLET TO SHAW.

THE SHUTTLECOCK WAS REALLY A BUDGERIGAR!

"Bob planned it very well," observed Walt.

"And it would've worked except for me," I lied coyly as I saw Walt count out the twelve photos and put them in a plain envelope. Walt sniffed as he flung the envelope at me.

"Your fee, Goon," he said, "I liked the paper basket ploy."

"Part of the service," I grinned. "But, heck, Walt, Bob must have worked for a long time on his attempt to take over Irish Pandom. I mean, look how he has continually claimed to hate

NOTE:- This allusion to Chuck Harris sending Bob Shaw bird seed springs from an idea mentioned in a one-shot entitled... A TRUE BILL... sent out by Eric Bentcliffe and John Berry in August 1955. The basic plot was that whilst visiting Berry's house Chuck was seen to assault Berry's budgerigar, and ten to whom the one-shot was sent were asked to send copious quantities of bird seed to Chuck, as a sort of fund to build up a supply of food in case of developments.....



budgies."

"Yes," mused Walt, "he has maintained an inbred aversion to such birds. Did I tell you that Bob has confessed all? He has secretly reared a budgie for years, in an old orange box under his bed. He's spent many hours training it. It can talk exceptionally well. Bob now admits it has a vocabulary bigger than yours. It's very intelligent too. Where did you imagine that Bob got the plot for his story that was printed in THE NEW YORK POST? For some time past Bob has trained the bird to act like a shuttlecock. The only trouble was that he had to whitewash it after every session. The clever part of the scheme was that he didn't produce it until he sensed that the time was ripe. The idea in writing to Chuck was to get some free birdseed, and at the same time try to convince Irish Fandom that he was a more important BNF than me, because of his bigger mail."

"Yeah, that's how I worked it out," I bluffed. "Art, my London contact, put me on to that. What baffles me is how Bob knew it was me when I called at his office. My disguises are usually foolproof."

"Bob explained that," grinned Walt. "You forgot to take your beanie off."

Heck, I'd slipped up!. Just then the door opened and Bob shuffled in.

"I've polished the kitchen floor, sir," he said to Walt, with blatant humility. "all the wood has been chopped up, and I've cleaned all the silver. What's next?"

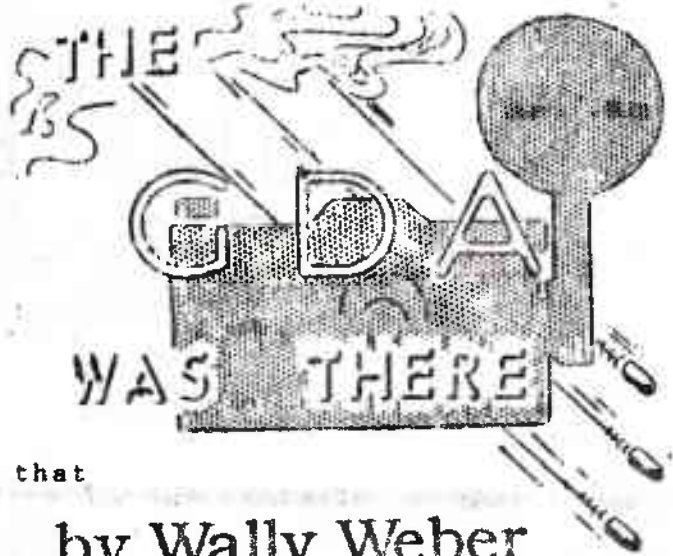
See folks?!

WILLIS IS THE ONLY TRUE GHOD!





THE GOON DEFECTIVE AGENCY is not to be taken lightly however, they too were at the Convention in force. And, as it turned out, it was a fortunate thing they were. It was after the very first session had taken place during which the gavel had changed hands. By sheer chance my image happened to be occupying the same room with Art Thomson when Steven Schultheis burst into the room to announce that the gavel had been stolen, and that the G.D.A. had been put on the case to recover it. In a moment Art Thomson disappeared from the group to discuss strategy with other members of the G.D.A.



by Wally Weber

The next afternoon, at the luncheon, James White asked my image whether it was for or against the G.D.A. Now I don't mind admitting from a distance of 6,000 miles that I am pro-Goon, and that I have been a character in a Goon story (as yet unpublished) written by F.M. Busby, but you must understand that my very image was standing there, within easy reaching distance of White's powerful hands.

Crossing its fingers, my image answered, "Goon? What's that?" The tension in the atmosphere lightened and the fans all the way down the table relaxed. White then informed me he was anti-Goon. Even then, my image could have made a great contribution to the G.D.A. had it put a few simple facts together, but unfortunately all it could think about was the roast duck that never came. I sometimes feel that if the roast duck had arrived when it should have the terrible scene that was to come about later that evening could have been avoided.

It was at the 8.30 pm session, during which the achievement awards were to be given out that the dreadful thing happened. The time for the meeting to start had come and passed, the audience was assembled and waiting, but no action occurred on the stage. Finally Ted Carnell appeared and regretfully announced the theft of the gavel, and that the presentation of the achievement awards would have to wait, for they would have no official standing without the official opening, with the official gavel. But just as he was about to leave the stage, the voice of the G.D.A. came from the rear of the room... "Don't move. We've got you covered!"

It was James White who started out of his seat clutching a briefcase and wearing a panicky look as only a person like James White can wear. Gunfire sounded from the rear of the room and White bolted for a side exit. Schultheis suddenly appeared in it, cutting off his escape. White tried the only avenue of escape left to him - the stage exit. But he was caught in Thomson's and Schultheis's cross-fire. In a tragic moment he expired, at the feet of Ted Carnell.

Triumphantly the G.D.A. opened White's briefcase, handed its contents to Mr. Carnell, and withdrew from the scene taking their left-over corpse with them... After Ted Carnell had unwrapped enough paper to supply London's newsprint requirements for a week, the precious gavel was at last uncovered and the presentation of the achievement awards could go on...

ATOM

# GOONGUN

My  
Goon  
gun  
is  
the  
best

by Greg Benford

The Goon Defective Agency works all over the world. The Goon has agents in every large fan area, and you will find throughout these areas that one of The Goon's men is always to be recognised by one important thing, a thing that singles him out from all the rest...and that one thing is the G.D.A. Zapgun.

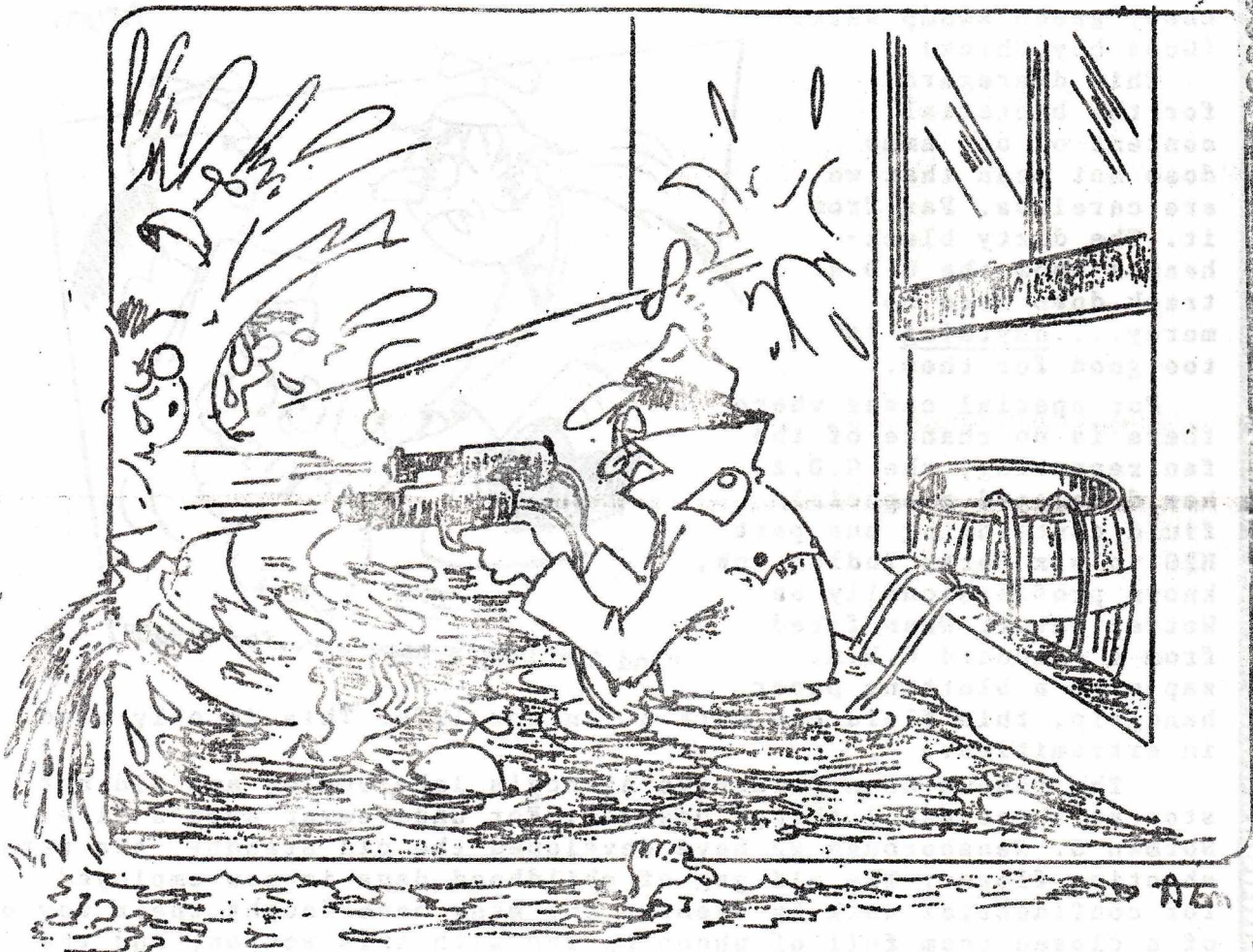
It would be a very difficult task to list all of the fannish crimes that have been solved with the aid of the ol' faithful zap. Many a Goon agent has crashed out of a convention with his zap dripping to bring the truth to fandom. Who, indeed, can list the times he has seen a real G.D.A. man at work in a fierce gun battle and thought it a mere fannish fight? Remember those minor wars which were fought down the halls of The George at Kettering? Remember the horrifying scenes of fen crouching in corners and wringing themselves out, victims of the G.D.A. zap? Indeed, have you ever closely examined what you believed to be a bheer can and found it was actually a discarded Goon hip flask? And remember the dark, sinister character in the stained trench coat, with a slouch hat jammed over his eyes, who sat off in a corner of The Globe gazing at you through his bleary eyes? It may have been a G.D.A. man.

The zapgun itself is a wonderful piece of modern engineering, and is the product of years of work on the part of scientists the world over, under the strict supervision of Bert Campbell.

The ordinary zap which may be purchased at any toy store has a fixed barrel shape of smooth interior plastic. Not so the G.D.A. zap. The special design of the G.D.A. gun lies in the barrel, which is moulded in a rifled shape on the inside. This has the effect of causing the water to spin on it's own axis as it rushes down the barrel, and by the time it has reached the air it possesses some moderate amount of artificial gravity. Natch, this causes a solid rod of water, which strikes the target with more force than any other contemporary weapon. It is this sort of superior craftsmanship which enables the G.D.A. to overcome all odds.

Picture this in your mind. A special G.D.A. agent is backed against the wall, and seven fans are rushing at him at once, knowing that he cannot hit every one of them before their withering fire brings the agent down. What can he do? The answer is quite simple, you might say. He gets drowned in the line of duty? No, never fear. The agent reaches into his pocket, pulls out his sprinkler device, attaches it with chewing gum to the nozzle of his zap, and mows them down.





The sprinkler I speak of is a simple but effective mechanism which is attached to the G.D.A. zapgun to widen the range quickly and easily. The attachment widens out to a flat area dotted with holes. This permits a scythe-like blast of H<sub>2</sub>O which enables the G.D.A. man to fight his way out of a situation where an ordinary zap would be useless.

Naturally, the Goon agent needs the best in equipment, down to the smallest possible item. So that the agent can be quicker on the draw and won't get his pants wet by a possible leak in the zap, the G.D.A. labs have developed a special water-proof holster made of rubber. This is a dual purpose item. If the leak is considerable, and the Goon operative is in a position of observation, he can pull the holster away from his dripping clothing, attach it over one of his boots like an over-boot, and, by the simple expedient of standing on one leg, can manage to keep both feet dry during his long vigil. In case any potential recruit should be reading this, please note that, as you can see, the comfort of the operative is our main concern.

The ammunition for the zap is too large a subject to be covered in this shortened version of the G.D.A. Handbook, but I will go over the more well-used liquids used around the fan world by the Goon's men.

The most easily obtainable fluid is water..and remember, our agents are not careful as to where they obtain their ammo, and several cases are on the G.D.A. files in which men have



resorted to gutter-water and rivers, and in at least one well authenticated case, green swamp water! (Good boy, Chick)

This disregard for the bacterial content of our ammo does not mean that we are careless. Far from it. The dirty black-hearts whom the G.D.A. track down need no mercy....anything is too good for them.

For special cases where there is no chance of the fan repenting, the G.D.A. has developed a special fluid containing one part H2O to six parts Indian ink, known professionally as Wetzel Water. When fired from a standard G.D.A. zap with a blotting paper handgrip, this fluid can mark a fan for life. This is only used in extremities.

The famous Goon Defective Agency's labs would, and did not, stop at these usual things however. For undercover agents like Norman G. Wansborough we have developed the old standby, the water shooting flower. The old gag of childhood days is now employed for confidential work by agents, and many have fought their way out of a closed room full of whooping fen with this weapon, and the element of surprise. So if Norman G. Wansborough asks you to sniff his buttercup....beware!

These few extracts from the G.D.A. Handbook are merely a slight skimming of the surface of the great arsenal of the G.D.A. If the contents as a whole were not restricted, the full knowledge of the zap, and similar weapons displayed by Mr. Benford, would leave the reader flabberghasted. Besides collating information from every available source Mr. Benford has also carried out a series of involved experiments himself, whilst on vacation from high school, although we publicly wish to refute the allegation that he and his family were forced to move from 5 Chapel Street, Lahn, because he flooded three-quarters of the town.

Mr. Benford writes from a hospital in Frankfurt, where he is recovering from pneumonia, to state that he has prepared a new chapter for the Handbook, detailing secret weapons to be employed for clearing fen from convention halls. Unfortunately he left it at his old address....but he is confident that the mss., will be forwarded when the water has subsided.

It's the obvious keenness that makes our agents stand out.



"And the lady's name sir...for PANAC"



# CONFUSION

by John Berry



"See if you can find one of the committee... He says it's an A-Bomb, and that he intends to set it off during the Banquet if the food is lousy".

Although Art and myself gave our all to make the G.D.A. a practical help to fandom the full staggering impact of our prestige didn't strike me until the arrival of the 47th telegram.

Before dumping it on the Pending file - a nail file inserted into one of the cracks on the top of my ~~desk~~ desk - I took a cursory perusal of it. It was from an American BNF who shall be nameless, (he also sent a sub for the G.D.A. Immunity Badge). It said:-

TO THE GOON.

DISCOVERED I AM SHARING A ROOM WITH WANSE AT WORLDCON. STOP. PLEASE AMEND. STOP. THREE YEARS SUB TO PLAYBOY IN YOUR NAME. STOP.

I had a feeling about those 47 requests to change rooms at the King's Court Hotel, the site of the 1957 WorldCon. I could appreciate the fact that Miss Roberts Wild had a very difficult job to arrange the hotel accomodation to everyone's satisfaction. It was also a fact that at the beginning of July, by which time those 47 telegrams had arrived, no official announcement had been made as to whom was sharing a room with whom. Rumours had started however, and it was obvious that quite a lot of fan didn't relish the thought of spending a few days in the close proximity of certain other fan. As I mentioned, it was egobooful for the agency to be asked to arrange amendments..to be considered even capable of being able to do so...but I secretly felt a little depressed that over two thirds of the requests, 38 to be exact, had asked the agency to ensure that they wouldn't have to share a room with the Goon.

However, the sum of the fees promised amounted to sufficient semi-pornography to keep me tabulating for some considerable time. So having made up my mind to act - to try and re-arrange the hotel accomodation to suit my clients - I set the wheels of the G.D.A. into grinding ACTION.

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I had to go to London anyway, Art had advised me that if I went to Petticoat Lane and gave a certain password, I could get a banned series of studies of...well...I had to go to London anyway, so I decided to do the adjustments myself.

It was simple really. A mind like mine, which is capable of such astounding powers of deduction as displayed in the famous Goon case, *FISSION IN TROUBLED WATERS*, needed very little impetus to evolve a plan. I merely went to a shop that sold army surplus clothing, and purchased an old busby. I cut two eye holes in it, rammed it over my head, and groped my way to 204 Wellmeadow Road. In fact I met Roberts on the front steps, and she merely smiled and said, "I'll be away for about half an hour, Ken."

So. My disguise was complete. And with the house empty, the next move was even more simple.

In Roberta's room I found that she had separate maps made of each floor of the King's Court Hotel. On each map, in the appropriate bedroom, were little numbered pins, which agreed with a list of fens names on the wall. I just pulled all the pins out, and put them back again in a different order.

Any order....I felt it was a good chance to prove my faith in the Law of Averages...Then I went to Petticoat Lane.

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Just had a letter in from Art. It worried me. I shall certainly have to do something to improve the efficiency of the G.D.A. initiative 's all right in it's place, but...weeel, see for yourself what Art says:-

".....and I had 63 telegrams asking for changes, Goon, but I wont tell you who most of them didn't want to share a room with, in



case I have your inferiority complex. Anyway, I knew you were busy, so I went along to the hotel and changed all the room numbers. Yuk, yuk. I put number 33 on the toilet on the second floor, and...."

That's enough to give you a general idea of the confusion the G.D.A. have caused. Keep it quiet though. Don't want Roberta to find out. Hope her insurance premiums are up to date....Conventioneers like Schultheis can be mean.

I don't want to be obtuse, or to be accused of rumour-mongering, but I've made a few hasty calculations..I can't be sure of my facts, mind, but it seems that Eva Firestone, Rory Faulkner and G.M.Carr have room 33. Hope they don't get locked in..or if it does happen..let's hope someone knows they are there. I also think that most probably Eric Bentcliffe is sharing a room with Stumac, George Charters is with honeymooner Dave Kyle..James White is with Pete Reaney..DeMuth is with Moonaw..Chuck Harris is with the Rev. Moorhead...Forry is with NGW...Raeburn is with the Liverpool Group, etc and etc..

As I say, I ain't certain.

Don't look for the Goon though.

He'll be travelling incognito.....





# WE ALL

# KILLED BRADBURY

by Ron Bennett

She was the starry night in spring and the toffee of baked apples and a sunny afternoon by a lazy river, and as she opened the door of the manor her smile was a Christmas tree and candy for the baby and a stroll in the park.

I followed her through the hall, which might have been borrowed for the interiors of THE PRINCE AND THE SHOWGIRL, and moved past her as she held open the door to Sir Hubert's study.

"Mr. Bennett?" he asked, waving me to a well-padded chair while he dug around inside a desk drawer for

brandy and cigars. The cigars were on the small side and the brandy had been watered. He didn't offer a second helping of either.

"What can I do for you, Sir Hubert?" I asked him after we'd exchanged a few pleasantries on the weather's health. Outside the French windows it was beginning to rain.

"Mr. Bennett. I won't waste your time. I'll come straight to the point."

I silently wished he would. He went on...

"Mr. Bennett, you're the only person I know who can help me.."

"Why do you say that, Sir Hubert? The only time we've met is at that Literary Club meeting when you spoke of your experiences in the Punjab. Surely if you're wanting to get a ghost-writer for a book there are others who..."

He interrupted. "Mr. Bennett. It's not that at all." He looked around cautiously, as though he might be overheard, then leaned forward. I had to ask him to repeat his whisper. He did.

"Someone is trying to kill me."

"Do you know who, and why?"

"Mr. Bennett, I've had three threatening 'phone calls..."

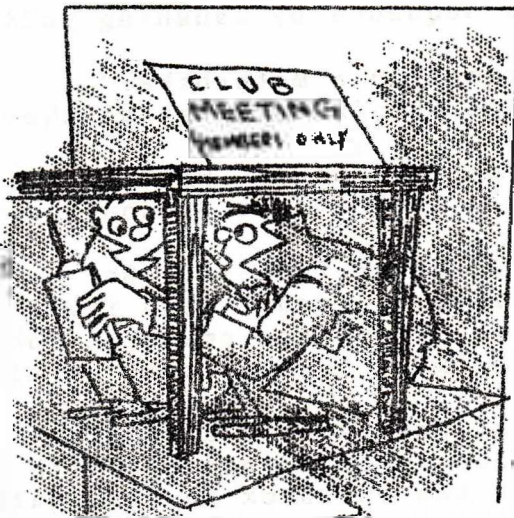
"From the same person? What did he say?"

"He said...he was a Martian."

"What?! Are you trying to tell me, Sir Hubert, that your life has been threatened by Martians?!"

"Yes, Mr. Bennett. You see now why I've contacted you. I dare not go to the police. Quite apart from thinking me crazy the affair would be sure to come out in the papers and the scandal would ruin me. I know that you're interested in detective stories, and science





"I'm from SKYRACK...who you?"

fiction, so I thought that you might like to undertake the case for me."

I thought it over. The telephone bell brought me out of the world of dark thoughts I had fallen in to. Sir Hubert's face grew excited as he signalled me over to the phone. I took the receiver from his visibly shaking hand and was just in time to hear the line go dead with a final click.

I turned to Sir Hubert.

"What was all that about?" I asked.

"That was the Martian again. He said I hadn't to leave the house and that I had to call you off the case."

"He certainly gets his facts fast," I had to admit.

I still didn't see what good I could do him, but I asked him about his background.

"Have you any ideas on what someone might use to blackmail you?"

"Oh, I don't think it's blackmail. My record's perfectly clean. And the Martian who phoned said that I'd been chosen as a contact between them and the people of the Earth. He said I had to stay on hand for the next few days and wait for a message. Mr. Bennett, he said that if I left the house, I'd be killed! I'm frightened to move. Find this killer, and then we can turn him over to the police. I'll see that it's worth your while. I can't promise you any monetary consideration, but I have something here which might interest you."

He drew a quarto envelope from his desk drawer, and took from it a sheaf of widely-spaced typed papers. It was a manuscript of one of Bradbury's MARTIAN CHRONICLES stories. I took the case.

We shook hands and I showed myself out. I didn't see the girl who had let me in, but at the end of the long drive I found a gardener scrubbing round some roots with well soiled hands. I flashed him the phoney Police Courtesy card that Bob Pavlat had sent me.

"Nothing to worry about," I assured him. "Just a few routine questions."

After about ten minutes I'd got out of him that Sir Hubert now lived alone. There was a house-keeper who came up every morning to potter about in the mansion. Sir Hubert's daughter, his only child, had married and had moved away over a year ago, but she was visiting the old man at present. Her description fitted the girl who'd let me in...There was something which didn't quite fit. Sir Hubert had gone to a nice show to let me know that he was a) scared, and b), broke.

I took a bus into Leeds and called on the Ashworths. Shelia answered my knock.

"Oh, it's you," she said, "I was hoping it was someone nice."

I completed the traditional sequence by laughing politely.  
"Mal'in?" I asked.

"No, he's gone out with a friend on a motorbike."

"Good, they can be very dangerous in this wet weather. When will he be back?"

"I don't know. He might be out all night. What did you want?"

"I wondered if I could have a look at the Bradbury manuscript he's always boasting about?"

"Yes, certainly. I'll see if I can find it." She returned after a few moments, looking puzzled. "I can't find it. I'm sure it was amongst Mal's fanzines - you know, the one's he doesn't throw out - but it's not there. He must have it over at his mother's in Bradford."

I said, yes, that must be it, and swapped a couple of news items with her. Then I left. Shelia waved me goodbye with a gay, "Don't come again.", and I caught the bus back to Harrogate.

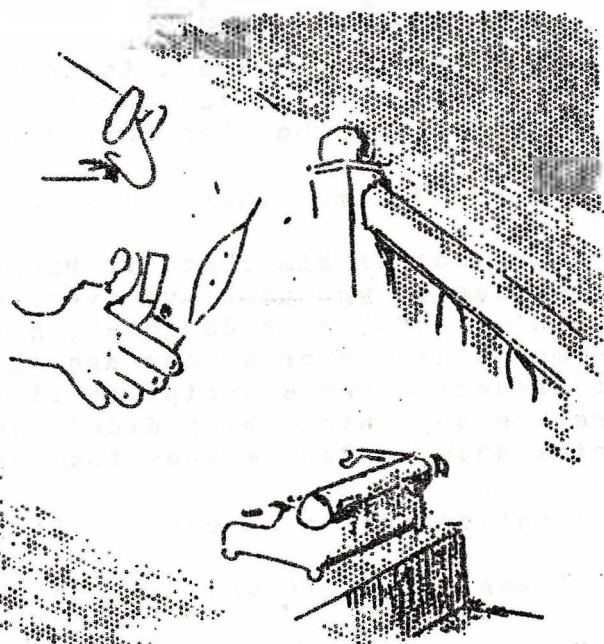
I went straight home, had some tea, cut a few stencils for PLOY, and went to bed.

.....There was a man, a tall man, so tall his head went through the ceiling. He was leering down at me. 'Stay indoors' he was saying, 'or the Martians will kill you'. He changed into a little green man who stepped out of the room and went downstairs.

He began to ring the door-bell. I half got up to answer it when I realised it was a dream, and woke up. Something was wrong. The ringing hadn't stopped. I got out of bed and moved towards the door. The ringing stopped. Footsteps sounded on the path outside, hurrying away. I rushed to the window and threw back the curtains. A shadowy figure was running out of the gateway and down the street. Moments later I heard a motor start up and roar away into the night. I went over to the doorway and worked the switch, but the light didn't work. I went back to bed. But I couldn't sleep. Hell, I thought. Two people can play at this game. I got out of bed again, groped for my cigarette lighter, and between flicks to tell where my clothes were, I got dressed. Then with the lighter guiding me I went downstairs.

The first thing I noticed on leaving my bedroom was the fact that my typewriter was standing innocently at the top of the stairs. I stepped round it and went down. The downstairs lights were working and I found the bulbs which should have fitted in my room and on the stairway resting on a plate on the kitchen table. I went back upstairs and fitted them in their respective sockets, then took another look at the typewriter, while some coffee brewed itself on the stove.

My visitor had placed it practically at the top of the stairs; but a little to one side. Even without my glasses I'd have had to be coked up, with rum to trip over that



from



in the dark. 'I don't know who you are, friend, but you bungled that one', I thought. I swallowed a couple of cups of coffee, picked up a flash-light and gum-shoed it to Sir Hubert's.

I didn't go up the drive, but went through the grounds of the adjoining estate, vaulting the low fence. I waited there until I'd counted a hundred slowly and then went round to a back window. I fished out a small glass cutter from my pocket and cut open a window. I put my hand through the small hole I'd made and unfastened the catch. I climbed through the window and had a look round the downstairs rooms.

I took my time with Sir Hubert's study. The Bradbury manuscript wasn't in the drawer it had occupied on my previous visit. But another drawer offered a pocket notebook. I flashed my light on an inside page, recognised a couple of names and addresses written there, and pushed it inside my jacket.

I left by the front door and went back home. I peeled a couple of 1935 Silver Jubilee stamps from my collection and stuck them on an envelope. I addressed the envelope to Norman Shorrocks, pencilled 'Please Hold For Me' on the flyleaf of the notebook, slipped it in the envelope and sealed down the flap. I flipped a coin around inside my mind and decided I didn't have time to have another coffee. I pocketed the envelope and went to find a post box.

As I turned the street corner I heard a motor-bike approaching and dodged into a gateway. The bike went past, bearing two riders I noticed. It turned into Southway, and I heard it stop. I walked along to the post box and dropped the letter in. I lit a cigarette and waited. After a while I threw the cigarette away and lit another. I leaned against the post box.



"All I did was write and ask when he was putting out his next issue, and I got this lot by return post".



I was a few drags into my fourth cigarette when the bike started up again. I cupped the cigarette in my palm and moved back into the shadow of a tree. The bike turned out of Southway, its headlamp cutting into the night's blackness. It came slowly past me. I might have been imagining that I recognised it's two rider. The machine picked up speed and roared away. I went back home.

They'd entered and left by the front door. Nothing was missing as far as I could see but they'd made a good job of going through my desk and bookshelves. Everything had been replaced, but I could tell just what they had been through. All looked too tidy. I laughed and went back to the kitchen. More coffee and a little light was beginning to show outside. I washed away a little of my tiredness by rinsing my face in cold water and put in a few downtown phone calls, checking hotels, asking for lists of their registered guests. Pay-dirt at the fifth try.

I got down to the Grand Hotel around eight-ten, flashed a name and a courtesy card at the desk clerk and was shown up to the second floor room. I knocked, and got a 'come in' from inside. I went in.

Goon Bleary was shaving at the wash basin in the corner.

"Hello, Ron," he said when he saw me.

I wasn't looking too pleased. "You can call your Martians off now," I said.

He grinned. "What made you tumble, Ron?" he asked.

"It was all too phoney," I said. "First the Martian angle and then the typewriter at the top of the stairs. Both straight out of a couple of Fredric Brown books, DEATH HAS MANY DOORS, and THE DEEP END, and the typewriter gimmick specially hooked up not to work. That put it straight to OMPA because that was



"Keep watching. By all accounts something pretty sharp is supposed to rise from the ashes".



the only place I'd mentioned my liking Fredric Brown's detective stories. And then Ashworth's missing manuscript. He'd lent it to Sir Hubert, before he began careering around with Arthur Thomson all night, first planting my typewriter where I was sure not to trip over it, and then coming round to look for the notebook I'd taken from Sir Hubert's desk. The reason they were so long finding the notebook was missing and coming round to look for it was that they were reporting here to you. I've checked that with the clerk.

Which brings us to Sir Hubert. His daughter married a couple of years ago. She married your brother!"

The Goon looked up from his shaving. "Very good, Ron. Right on every score."

"But what I don't understand is...why?"

"Well," said the Goon, brandishing his safety razor, "the G.D.A. needs men, and we have to be sure that we..."

"You mean it was a test?!" I exclaimed. "I lose a night's sleep and don't even get my manuscript just so you boys could have your fun."

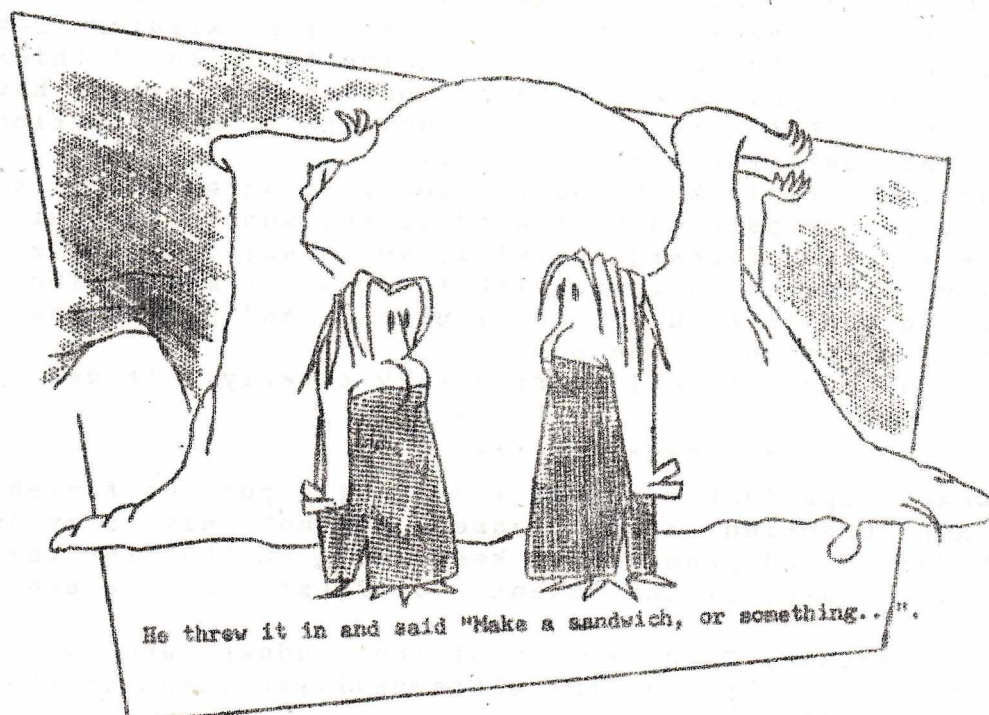
He shrugged. "You'd better have your door key back, Ron. You dropped it at the Convention."

I picked it up from the dresser top. "The pocket book's with Norman Shorrocks. You can get it on the way back to Belfast." I said.

"Clever," said the Goon. "You're just the type we've been looking for. A special job. Complicated, y'know. Too difficult for me and Art to...I mean, me and Art are busy at the moment. We'll let you know what it's all about later."

I moved towards the door, pausing to look back at the Goon finishing his shave.

"I hope you ruddy well shave off your moustache," I breathed. And slammed the door behind me.





# ROCKET RACKET

Atom

by John Berry

I don't want to boast - and my long-standing clients amongst you know that boastfulness isn't a part of my make-up - but I do have strongly developed powers of deduction. Although I have carried out many investigations into fannish activities over the past few years - and my thought processes have oft been severely tested - I really shone in one particular case. Up to now an official veil of secrecy has been drawn over this investigation, and even though I still haven't got the necessary permission from The Authorities to give the details - I'm going to do so. I think the plot will interest you. Another thing, one or two critics have complained that the G.D.A. has no connection with science fiction. This story changes that little complaint...

So put the cat out, lock the doors, throw a log on the fire, draw up a chair, and prepare to be amazed at the superb forensic example of intelligence, foresight, skill, verve and initiative...

Modesty forbids me to continue with the rest of my attributes, but as you read on you'll find out for yourself. And please bear in mind that you too can hire the G.D.A.

I remember the night it all started very clearly...it was only a few months ago.

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After a weeks impatient research I'd finally put the finishing touches to my new invention. I was pleased, and not only on my own account. Chuck Harris had promised to keep me in PLAYBOY for the next ten years if I gave him the patent. But first I had to see if it worked.

I pulled the sacking down over my office windows, and switched on the 4-battery torch. I played the ultra-brilliant beam on the picture on the far wall.





There were two pictures, actually...3D pictures of Diana Dors. Slowly, with pounding heart, I lifted my invention and tested it...Oh...brilliant...magnificent...wonderful!

It was a 100% unqualified success.

I had invented 3D binoculars!

Look, fellahs, the result was so realistic that I instinctively reached out my hand - and suddenly Diana Dors wasn't there.

Perplexed, I put down the 3D binoculars and switched on the electric light.

A big man stood facing me. Tough. Mean. But worried. He took a quick whiff out of a benzedrine inhaler. His eyes bore a haunted expression. I had seen his face before, that I knew. He started to look all over the floor of my office...he peered under the chairs, bookcases, my desk...and then I knew.

"Blaze McKendrick of M.I.5.?" I said. "You can relax. I got rid of the ducks some time ago. I can certify this office as being entirely duck-free. (This referred to the Fission in Troubled Waters case).

McKendrick wiped his brow, and following my polite indication, sat down nervously on the edge of the chair---actually it was an old curtain stapled onto an orange box. But it was essential to keep up appearances, see. Sometimes it's necessary to impress our clients. Like now.

"Something I can do for the British Government?" I hinted.

"So I'm told," he announced. He didn't seem to place much confidence in what he'd been told.

"I won't press for the fee yet," I told him. Clients have to be handled with kid-gloves, I've found. There is such a thing as professional decorum in our racket.

"Look," he grimaced. A twitch had developed at the side of his mouth since I'd seen him last. "It's like this. By some miracle you managed to solve the last case we hired you to investigate. Now something else has occurred, and we believe that it also has a connection with this strange sect...SF fandom...in which circles you operate."

I didn't like the way he sneered when he said, 'by some miracle'. The G.D.A. was in it's third year of service, and had some great triumphs to it's credit. I decided I would have to impress him...



I stood up, with a transfixed expression in my eyes. I turned away from him. I moved forward in a half crouching gait to the far wall.

Suddenly I turned. My hands dropped like Wyatt Earp's, and gripped the plastic butts of the two plonker guns Bulmer had given me.

I drew and fired.

The two rubber suckers landed side by side on McKendrick's forehead, just above his nose.

I'll never forget the look on his face. I like to think it was awe at my marksmanship, but one's hair doesn't normally stand on end when one is awestruck, does it?

I walked back over to him and pulled the suckers from his forehead. He winced with each plop. I put them back down the barrels of my guns, and replaced them in my belt. I sat down and crossed my feet on the desk top, and allowed the worn studs of my size 12 hobnails to seduce his trenchcoat lapels.

I could see I had him guessing. He rammed the benzedrine inhaler up his left nostril so far that I expected to see the other end come out of the top of his head.

"I'll accept the case," I announced, "but my fee will be high. No less than an hours freedom in the Supply department of H.M. Stationery Office, and you supply the three ton lorry."

He rose to his feet. His jaw hung down by his belt.

"Let me get out of here!" he screamed. He rushed for the door.

I drew and fired, and a sucker quivered between his thumb and forefinger, just above the door knob.

"Calm down, McKendrick," I soothed, "I just want the facts."

He seemed to take a grip on himself. His prestige as a top M.I.5. operative gradually inspired him. He took a deep breath.

"Alright. Listen. Take the boat to Liverpool tonight. One of our agents will contact you when you get off the boat tomorrow morning."

He turned to go.

"Wait." I shouted, "I must have Art with me. Contact him at 17 Brockham House, Brockham Drive, London S.W.2. and make sure he's transported to Liverpool too. I can't give my all without him"

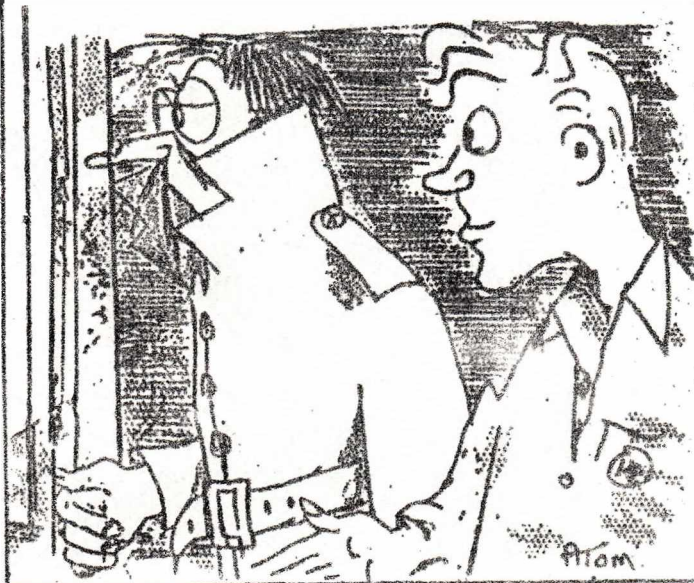
McKendrick sagged. He'd obviously heard about Art.

I presumed his answer to be in the affirmative, although he didn't say anything. His athletic prowess was revealed by the way he discarded the stairs en route to the front door. Or, it could have been the torn stair carpet... I followed him downstairs in a more conventional manner. (via the bannister) and re-screwed the door hinges in place.

So.

Another SF faaaan was worrying the top men in British Security again.

I wondered who it was this time.....'





Art was waiting for me at the bottom of the gang plank in Liverpool. We greeted each other as old G.D.A. campaigners always greet each other.

I asked him how much money he had; he asked me how much I had.

He suggested we pool our resources, and I gave him all I had. ...four 5 cent pieces, ninepence worth of Belfast Corporation Tram tokens, and 3/9d.

He did some quick calculations and gave me back two 5 cent pieces, 4½d worth of tram tokens, and 1/10½ in British currency.

That's the way we work folks. All for one, and one for all.

Someone tapped my arm. I turned round. A man stood looking at me. He wore a leather overcoat and a soft cap.

"The Goon?"

I nodded.

He pointed to a Morris 10 h.p. van. We followed him over to it, and he opened the rear doors and ushered us inside.

It was dark. Light filtered grudgingly through a few nail holes in the sides of the van. We felt round, discovered some dry straw, and made ourselves comfortable.

"A mite degrading for two major G.D.A. operatives to travel thisaway," Art complained much later.

"I wouldn't worry so much if it wasn't for this pig," I agreed, "but you must remember this is M.I.5. we're working for, and they go to extreme lengths to camouflage their activities. Let's just the three of us sit here quietly until we arrive at our destination."

We travelled for hours, and to pass the time Art regaled me with stories of the Worldcon in London in '57... especially his successful investigation into the identity of the faaan who sent the false telegram asking for the Benfords to be met at LondonAirport.

"How soon do you think we should publish the full story, Art." I asked...

"I'm sure everyone would like to know that it was...."





A screech of brakes, a murmured conversation, two clangs denoting the opening and closing of heavy metal gates, a short drive, we stopped, and the rear doors swung open.

"Out," yapped leather coat.

We got out, streeseetched, and surveyed the place.

Big sheds,...10 feet high wire fences surrounding the whole place...armed guards...and us.

A guard signalled us to follow him into a brick building. He opened an inside door, pulled bolts out of their sockets and opened a further heavy iron-wrought door.

In the middle of a large workroom I saw a cone-shaped structure about eight feet high, which, taken in conjunction with the rest of the equipment lying around, I guessed to be the top of a multi-stage rocket.

Men were lovingly clustered around it. One detached himself from the group and crossed to us.

He looked searchingly at me, then at Art.

"The two new ablution cleaners, I presume," he said. "You'll find the buckets and brushes in that room over there. Pay particular attention to the seat in the second...."

"We're from M.I.5." I growled. I kicked Art's ankle, and he stuck his chest out.

"From M...I...5!?" gasped the man. "I just cannot believe it...."

"Well, actually," said Art, "we're only seconded to M.I.5. We're sort of specialists."

"I just can't take your word for it, can I?" said the man.

His eyes were opened rather wide. People coming into contact with us always seem to have their eyes open wide.

"You could be anyone, couldn't you. You'll have to identify yourselves."

I gritted my teeth. I looked round desperately. I saw a length of broken chalk under a work bench. I picked it up and walked casually over to the cone, and drew a rough circle on it, about three inches in diameter.

The others backed away, looking warily at us.

I walked back to Art, a matter of about ten yards from the cone...."OK, Art, show em." I said.

We both drew with lightening speed, and four suckers plunged home in the target area.

"That's good enough for me," observed the man who had spoken to us. "No wonder the Russians got our atom bomb secrets so easily. I've been worried about it for years, and now I know. I'm perfectly satisfied that you're in M.I.5..... Come with me."

We crossed to the cone.





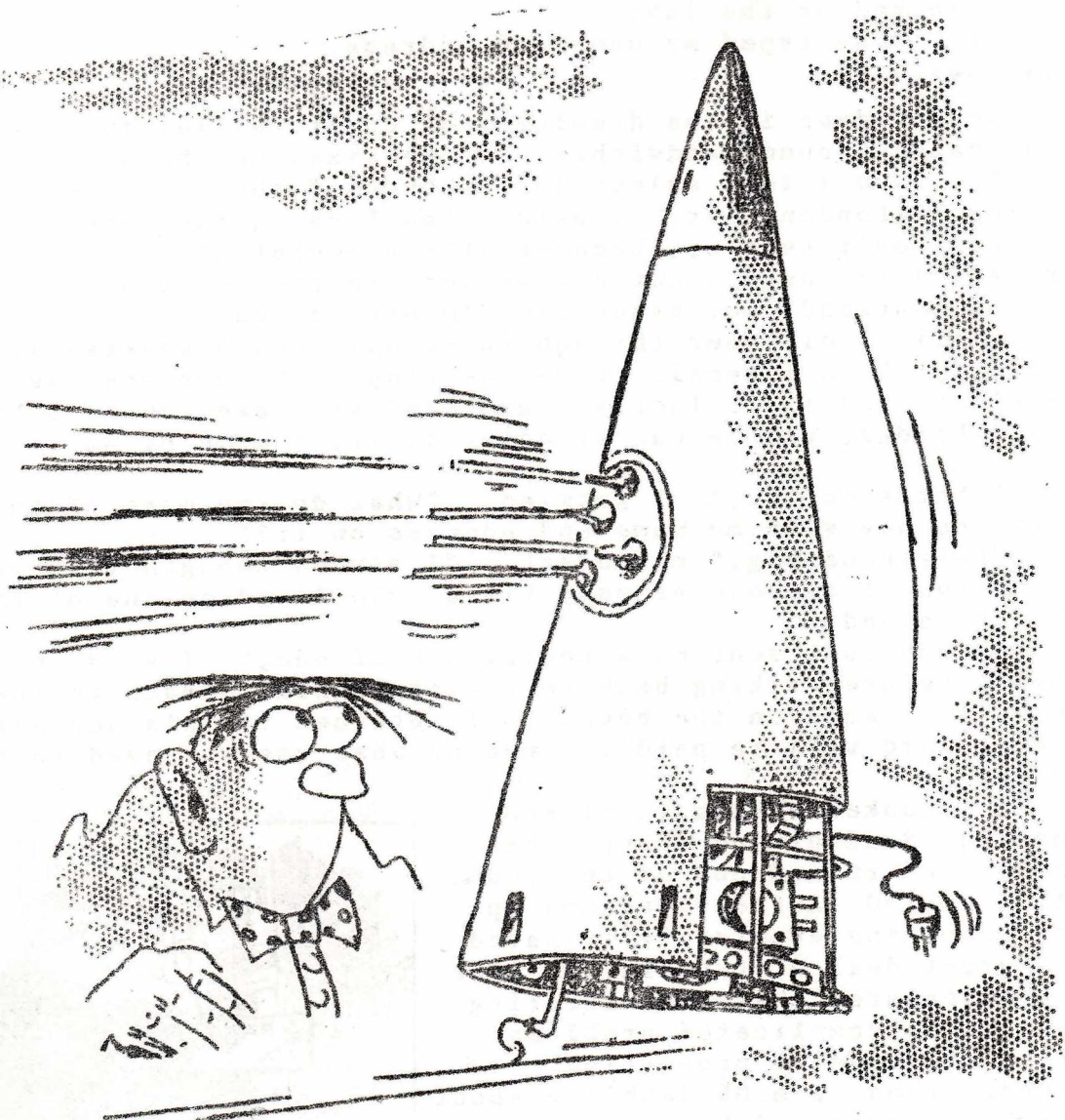
"I'm in charge here," said the man. "and I'll tell you all about this, although it's Top Secret."

This is the upper stage of Britain's three stage rocket, with which we hope to launch a satellite in the near future. You'll no doubt have already noticed outside that this site is surrounded by a high wire fence, through which a strong electric current is circulated. Someone got over the wire, into this building, and spent some considerable time examining this last stage. We want to know who did it, and why?"

I got a magnifying glass and examined the cone. Especially the underside where it joined the second and larger stage. I noticed very minute scratches on the underside of the rim. They were all half an inch long. I showed the marks to Art, who scribbled industriously on his illo pad.

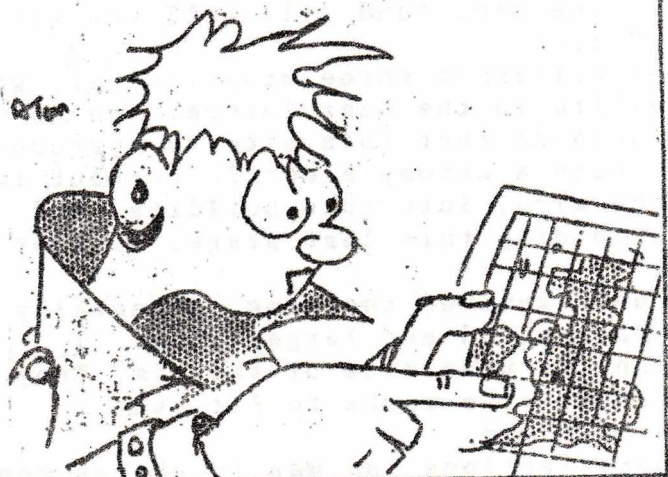
When we'd finished our investigations the man in charge took us back to his office.

"That's just about everything," he said. "It was I who discovered the fact that the cone had been tampered with."



fitam





I went in yesterday morning and noticed those scratches whilst I was examining the release mechanism."

I mused. Art continued scribbling.

"There is just one thing I can't understand," I said pensively. "You say we've been told everything, yet I cannot possibly see how anyone could possibly connect this incident with a member of SF fandom."

The man bit his lip, then seemed to make a

monumental decision. He opened a drawer in his desk, and threw a length of polythene across to me. It was made into a bag about one foot long. It had a label attached to it.

"This was found just inside the wire," he said.

I looked at the label.

On it was typed my name and address.

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We sat down in the drawing room of Art's flat in London. Olive handed round sandwiches, and we sized up the situation.

"...and I fell asleep in the back of the van as we were driving to London, Art," I said, "so I've no idea where we were, and they won't tell us, because it's a secret site. Whilst we were actually there I noticed we were in the heart of bracken covered moorland, but otherwise I'm bewildered."

"Well, I did peer through those nail holes several times," said Art, "and I recall it was getting dark just when we left the place, and I distinctly remembered we passed under a hump backed bridge, with a man standing on it, a mile or so from the site."

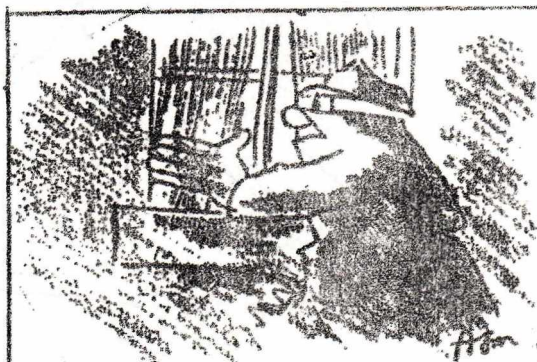
"That's no use," I growled. "What do you make of this polythene bag with my name and address on it?"

"Polythene bag," mused Art. "I always thought that was the definition of a woman of easy virtue who lived on one of those Pacific islands."

"Bruce Burn sent me a photograph of one," I said, half to myself, before jerking back to reality again..."Back to the label. See what it said on the back..."If returned to this address a token reward will be paid'. I wonder what was supposed to be in the bag?"

Art looked at the label and pondered. Suddenly he snapped his fingers and rushed out of the room. I felt elated. Art always came up with something eventually. It saved me a great deal of trouble, because I've discovered that concentrating too much on complicated problems upsets my sense of proportion.

Understand, I'm OK dabbling about with 3D glasses and Binoculars, and PLAYBOY and suchlike, but





complications....

But I pondered too. It would be brilliant if, for once, I could work out a problem by myself. I grabbed Art's illo pad and scribbled down all I knew about the case;-

- a)...the site was a few hours drive from Liverpool, and a much longer drive to London.
- b)...it was on moorland.
- c)...it was surrounded by a ten foot high fence, which had been somehow negotiated.
- d)...the underside of the third stage of a satellite-bearing rocket had been carefully examined, resulting in the half-inch long scratches.
- e)...a polythene bag had been found inside the wire.
- f)...a label attached to it bore my name and address.
- g)...a few moments after we'd left the site we'd passed under a small hump-backed bridge with a man standing on it.

I looked down the list several times, then, suddenly, brilliantly, I saw a possible connection with c) and g).

I thought about it, and the more I thought the more certain I became that I knew the answer.

The next question was motive...wee! If my theory was correct, d), e), and f) covered that aspect perfectly, especially bearing in mind a recent piece of legislation and an unfortunate item of accountancy a year or so previously.

There was no doubt about it, the culprit was definately....

Art burst into the room, his eyes like goose eggs.

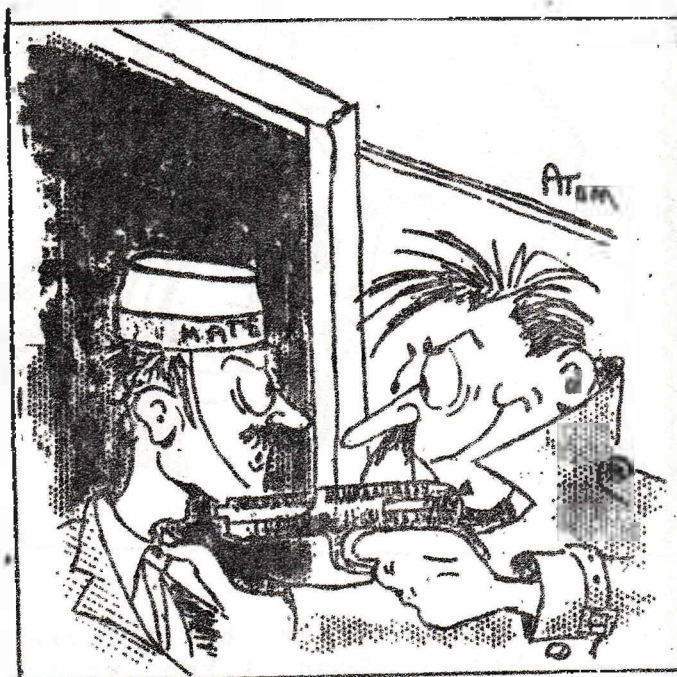
"I've got it, Goon!" he screamed in delight. "I compared the type-written label with the printing of the fanzines in my collection, and found a direct comparison. The fanzine was..."

"Wait, Art," I shouted, holding up my hand. You see, folks, as the head of the G.D.A. it's important that I should try and assert my intellect as often as possible in front of my operatives. It's good for morale.... Trouble is it's only on very rare occasions that I'm able to do so. So I grabbed this opportunity with both grimy hands.

"Tell you what, Art," I smiled. "You write down the name of the faned on a slip of paper and pass it to Olive. I'll do the same."

He looked a mite surprised, but complied. I did likewise. Olive looked at both papers.

"You've both written down the same name," she said in awe.



We got off Art's motorcycle some hours later and both rushed up the puddle strewn drive.

Art pressed the bell. A BNF came to the door.

"Well, hello Goon - and Art," he mouthed. "How nice to see you. Coming in?"

"We're coming in anyway," I gritted, "The G.D.A. . . . ON

OFFICIAL BIZ."

He made a slight movement with his right hand towards his hip pocket.

"Don't reach for that zap," I seethed in a menacing voice, struggling to find my plonker guns.

"I say, this isn't cricket," he bleated.

We pushed in.

With two suckers staring him in the face, (I don't mean me and Art) the B.N.F. stood gasping in amazement as Art locked through cupboards, under chairs, in drawers, and then yelled with triumph at something he found draped artistically over a coat hanging behind a door.

He passed it to me and I examined both ends of the tape measure.

"This completes the case, Art," I said, "We've got all the evidence we need."

I turned to go, but Art grabbed my arm.

"Listen, Goon, I know you've commanded a huge fee for this job, but what about him? He'll likely get about twelve years in solitary if the full story gets out."

I leered, and folk tell me it's devastating.

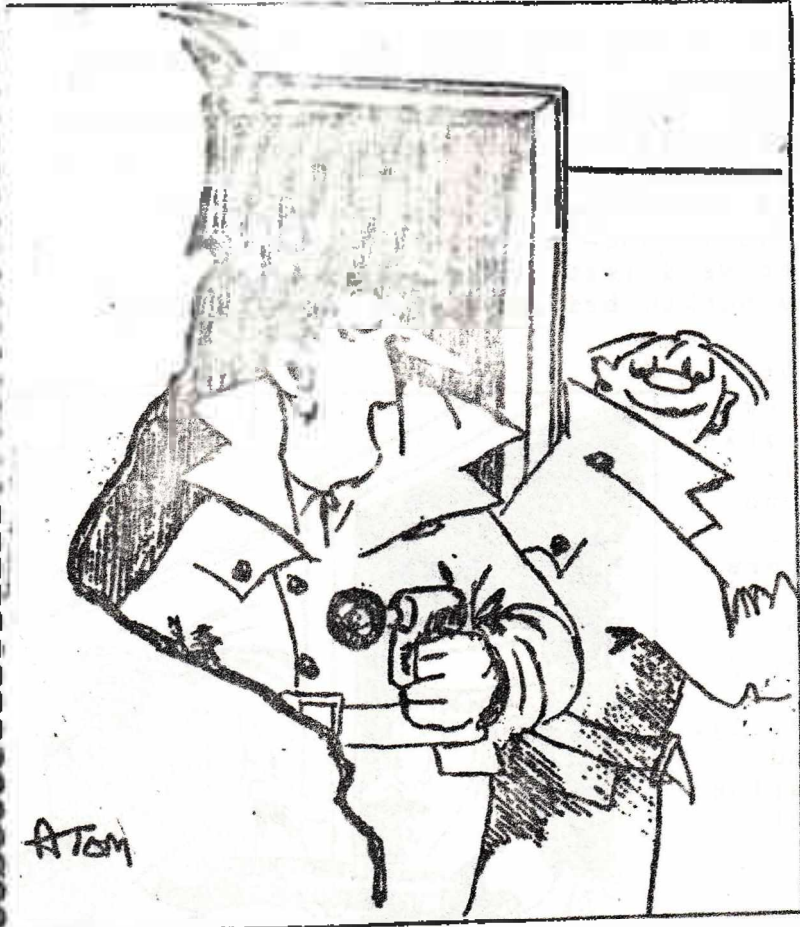
"I'm always open to bribery," I said. "I can always blame blame all this on NGW, and get an extra fee from FAPA at the same time. And, this id off the record, I think you had a wonderful idea. It's but definitely YOU."

The BNF beamed. "Yes," he said. "Modesty forbids me to mention how original it is, and how in keeping with the modern trend it is. As for bribery....well, I've a pretty extensive pornography collection, and I'm sure that we can come to some arrangment..Would you like to see it?"

I vaulted the table and shook him warmly by the hand.

THE END...really....

Well folks, that's my greatest triumph to date. And bhox, that pornography collection made my own miserable items look like a Sunday School teacher's rejects.





Of course I'm quite aware that most of you worked out all the clues, and discovered who the culprit was even before Art and myself got on the trail.

But in case one or two of you are still puzzled I'll run over a few pointers with you.

You see, the BNF concerned decided that the new Postal Rates which came into operation back in the October of 1957 were far too extortionate - and he had a point. So he heard about the satellite project, living locally, and decided to circulate his fanzine per satellite. His idea was to stuff the fanzines under the rim of the third stage, and when the second stage dropped away, the fanzines would also be released. He put them in the polythene bags in case some fell in the sea, or remained exposed for some time.

He had to make a preliminary reconnaissance to see how much room he had, so as to know how to parcel them up together in the correct shape. He used a tape measure for this purpose, and the metal clips at the end of the tape scratched the rim as he held the tape against it.

Inadvertently he dropped the specimen bag (with my name and address on the label) as he was getting over the wire.

All this deduction, of course, became easy once I discovered how he got over the ten foot wire fence. This occurred to me, (and to the rest of you too, no doubt) when I remembered that Art had mentioned that we'd passed under a small hump-backed bridge with a man on it.

In the middle of a desolate moorland...A small hump-backed bridge!?

Add to that Art's confessed difficulty in being able to see properly through the small nail holes in the side of the van.

Q.E.D....And, shure, the man standing on the aforesaid small hump-backed bridge would just about be at the correct height to get over the high wire fence...especially if it looked like a small hump-backed bridge...but wasn't!

Weeee! I ask you.  
I'm telling you.

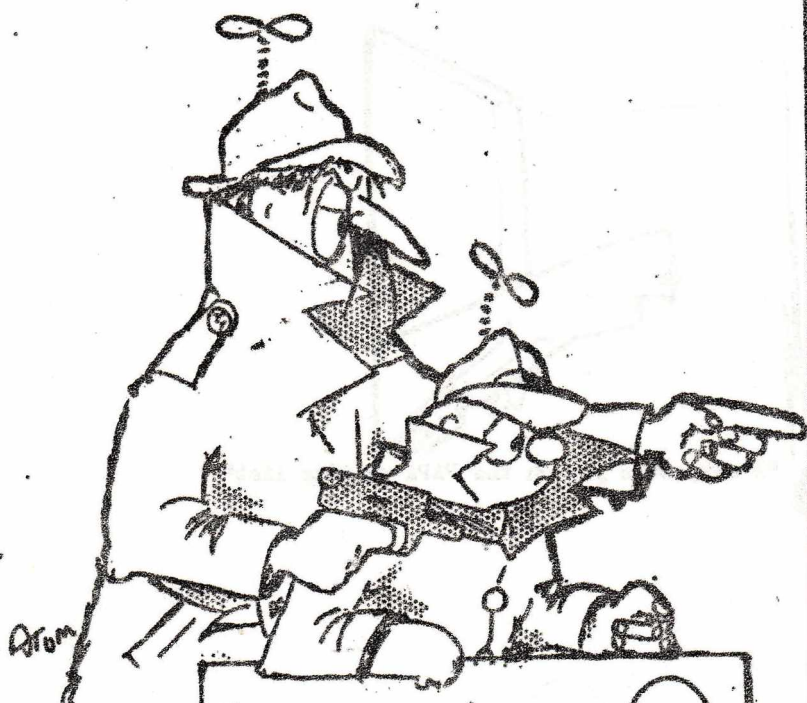
And for the sake of that neofan about to step out of that tenth storey window, I'll give it to you straight.

The culprit was,  
Mr. Ploy himself....  
Ronald Bennett.

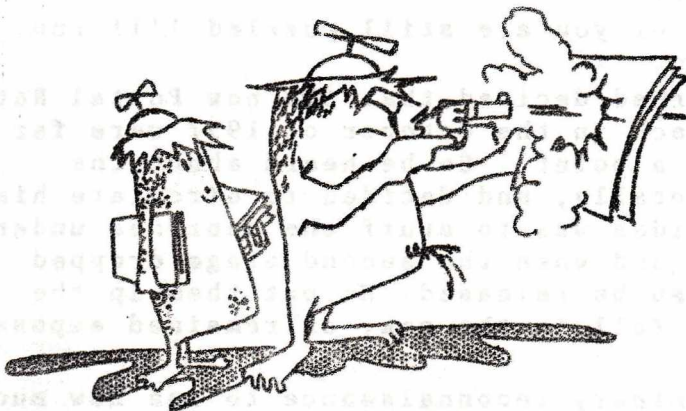
For why?  
Heck.

Art didn't see a small hump-backed bridge with a man on it.

He saw Ron Bennett astride Cecil, his elephant!



HMSO



"Doncha like it?"

Think of the ease with which he could be dropped over the fence by Cecil. And picked up again.

Ponder about Bennett's unfortunate item of accountancy some time ago, when a lot of PLOY subbers, (including the Goon) had to pay "Postage Due".

Then, on top of that, the big increase in postage costs from the October of 1957.

Yorkshire is one big moor, anyway, and it's only a few hours

drive from Liverpool....and,....say....I was just thinking...

It was a dammed fine idea.

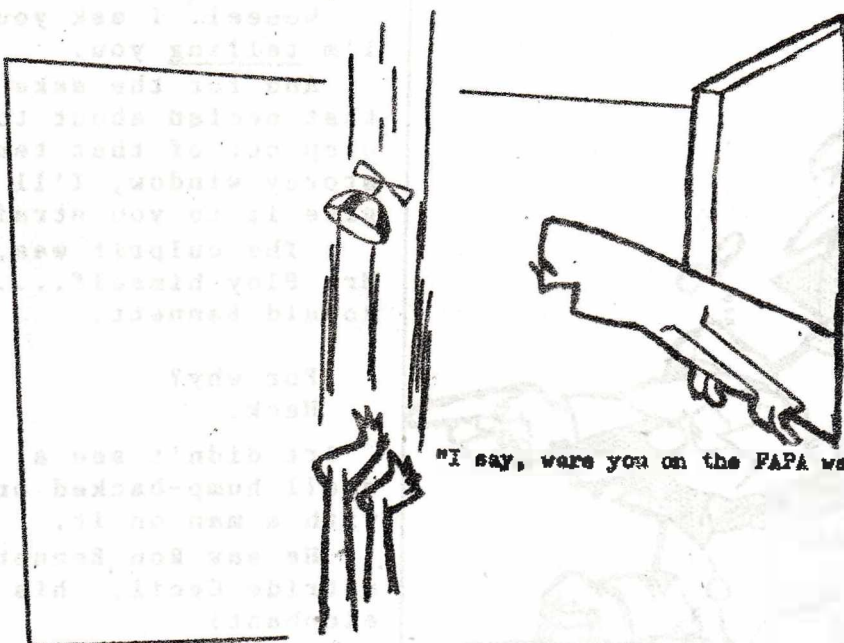
And sort of symbolic too.

Sending fanzines per satellite....

Hammummm.....

If future copies of RETRIBUTION fail to turn up on schedule...don't worry about it too much...they'll arrive, .....eventually.

JOHN BERRY.



"I say, were you on the FAPA waiting list?"



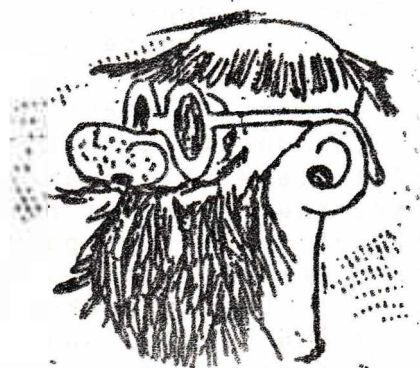
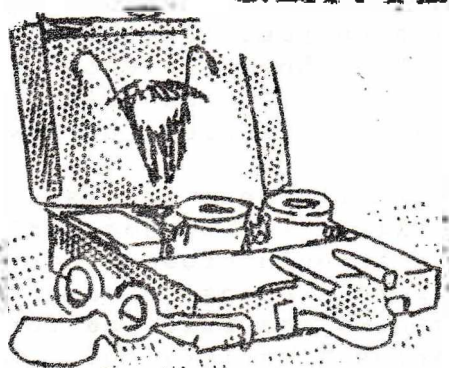
# THE

# GENTLE

# ART OF

# DISGUISE

by Terry Jeeves



Many people are under the impression that the art of disguise involves tedious hours playing with grease paint, false whiskers and black eye patches. In actual fact very few slight touches are required to transform the expert beyond recognition. All Goon operatives are well trained in this art, so the next time you suspect you are being followed, do not dodge the man with the whiskers, that will probably only be Ken Bulmer in search of a plot. Instead you should beware of the insignificant little Scotsman, wearing kilt, tartan, and carrying bagpipes. Such is the art of the Goon operative, always subtle and completely normal. The world is full of Scotchmen, but there are not so many beards around.

Naturally methods vary with different duties, and hard and fast rules should be avoided. The main point being to alter your appearance from your normal one, to something different, but still normal to the surroundings. Many a Goon operative has used this principle to good advantage when in a tight corner. One operator was following his quarry down a lonely street when the victim turned and began to retrace his steps. The Goon man did not panic, but, with lightning rapidity, took a deep breath, held it until red in the face, shoved an old envelope in his mouth till only the corner and the stamp were showing, and stood to attention. The suspect walked past this impromptu 'post box' without a second glance, and even a passing dog was deceived. Tall, thin operatives often take up positions in hotel lounges, wearing only a lampshade for disguise, though at night, it is wiser to hold a pocket torch in the mouth to complete the illusion of a standard lamp. Portable plonths are also very useful when posing as statues, and the deception is improved by the use of quick-drying cement.

These are but quick-witted improvisations however. For more routine work the G.D.A operative always takes with him a special disguise kit containing many invaluable items; such as:-

- Item. Motor car inner tube. Varying air pressure allows the detective's waist line to be varied at will.
- Item. One white jacket. The victim may enter a hospital.
- Item. One shovel and portable hole. If taken unawares the G.D.A. man merely drops the hole, leans on the shovel, and becomes a corporation workman.

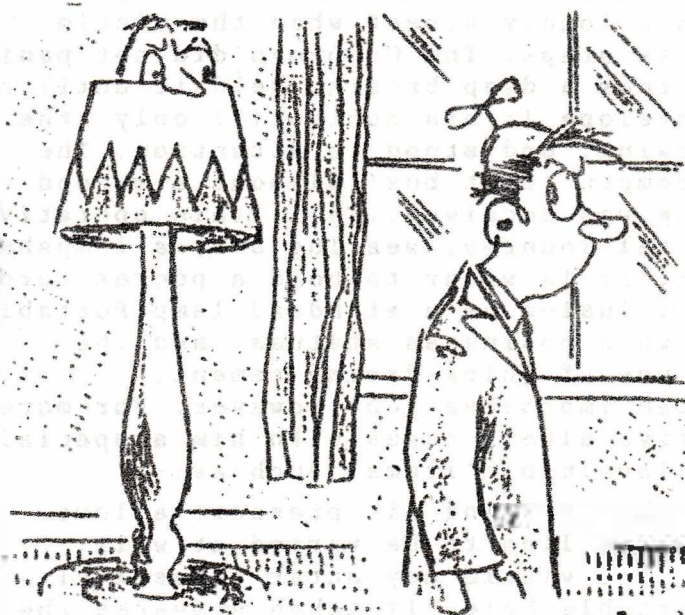
Item. One programme sailer's outfit, complete with programmes. This is invaluable should the quarry enter a cinema, theatre, or other place of entertainment.

In addition to the above items the kit also contains such useful items as, three sets of false teeth, in varying stages of decay, four pairs of shoes, two suits, (one business, one diving) a tin of camouflage paint, a set of sandwich boards, together with a set of suitable posters and a collecting box. The whole outfit is neatly packed into a small packing case fitted with wheels and handle, and closely resembling a costermongers barrow, thus adding one more disguise to the range.

Experienced operatives tend to add to their range of disguises with such gimmicks as the portable plinth (mentioned earlier) and wooden stilts for following people through crowds. Many rely entirely on their mobile features, a simple change of expression completely fooling the quarry. One victim was followed for three hours, the Goon agent merely registering a variety of expressions, ranging from acute anguish, utter boredom, insane merriment and heartbreaking sorrow, to blind drunkenness and complete nausea. At no time was he suspected, not even when he actually assisted his quarry (a blind man) across the street.

On the other hand, one operator used a multitude of disguises in quick succession. Starting as a school-boy he became, in turn, an old clergyman, a young airman, a beautiful girl, and an old lady. At each change the quarry became more agitated, until finally he accosted the G.D.A. man (then in the garb of a Catholic nun) and said, "Look, chum, I've just got to know this. Why do you have such a ridiculous handlebar moustache?"

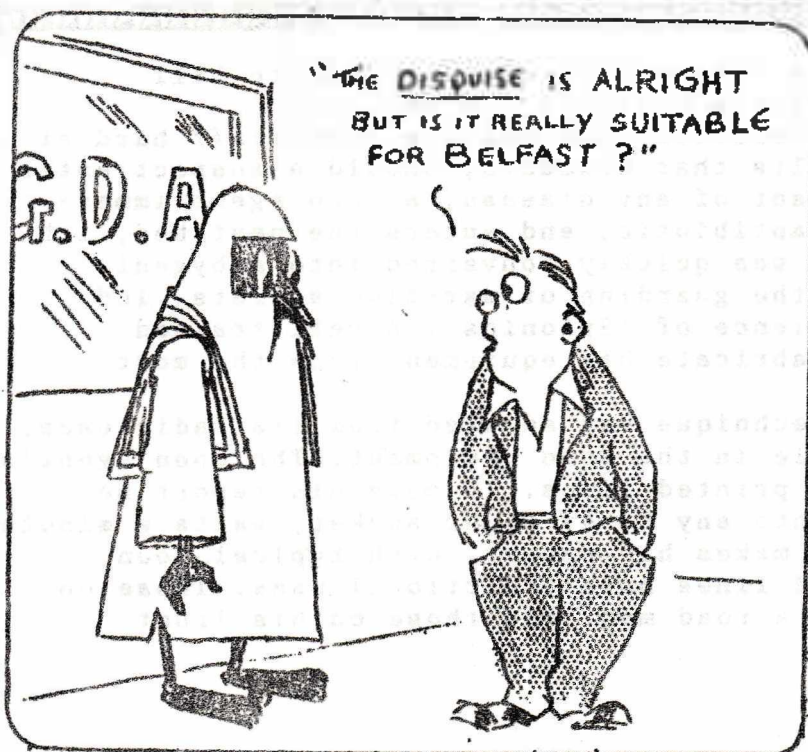
It is by attention to detail that the Goon operative succeeds, where others fail. If following a quarry in the rain the G.D.A. man not only looks wet, he is wet. Goon-men are not infallible, only 99.99% so. But if you're under suspicion the only safe way is to lock yourself in an empty room, and then begin to suspect the aspidochelone in the corner. Even then you may not be certain...there's always the carpet...



Allen

Like many other ancient Arts, (no reflection on Mr. Thomson), modern disguises owe a great deal to the march of science, some of the more familiar items being the replacement of false whiskers with hair made of nylon, thus reducing the fire hazard. Handcuffs are now made of a flexible plastic, which stretches to accommodate any size of wrist, and even the lowly fingerprint powder can now be obtained in shades to match any female agent's lipstick.





Atomic science has also played it's part in disguise. Today the well trained G.D.A. man can drink a glass of radioactive liquid, and by carrying a small suitcase of uranium, he is able survey any city street secure in the knowledge that he closely resembles a neon sign. A further refinement is to smear the shoe soles of his quarry with U235, (easily done on the pretext of looking for a lost sixpence) and then follow the fellow's movements with the aid of a geiger counter.

Radioactive powder rubbed into the scalp enables the Goon operative to appear realistically half. Half an hour in an atomic pile, and the addition of a banjo, and the operative passes for a nigger minstrel. Another hour, and the loss of teeth, and he becomes an old man. In extreme cases Goon agents have stayed in the pile for six hours, knowing that their pall-bearers will be seasoned Goon men, who will follow their quarry into any cemetery without exciting suspicion.

The war-time measure of de-hydrating milk has led to the pocket kit carried by all Goon operatives. Measuring less than two and a half cubic feet this kit contains a large flask of water, two hundred assorted de-hydrated pills, and two reams of blotting paper. The best way to appreciate this kit is to consider an actual case.

Goon Agent Bleary is tailing Anti-goon Gina, (a spirited wench), when she turns into a cinema, (Gina is also a disguise expert). Bleary immediately opens his kit. A few dehydrated pills are dropped into the water, and by the time he has rolled up his trouser legs and fashioned an old skirt from a newspaper, the pills have swollen into a wooden tray, and several cartons of ice cream. Disguised as an icecream saleswoman, Bleary is free to roam the cinema. Should Gina leave the theatre the blotting paper quickly re-de-hydrates the stock, and the pills are replaced in the kit.

Among the many dehydrated items available the following items are of particular interest, as they show the great ingenuity of the selection committee. A dehydrated taxi...a dehydrated driver, (for the previous item) a dehydrated clarinet, (for casing theatre queues), a dehydrated bucket of water (for use in case of fire), Naturally there are certain precautions to be observed by the operatives. In the early days one G.D.A. agent carelessly opened his case in a rain storm. The resulting upheaval is believed to have been the origin of the Caledonian Market. Another G.D.A. man inadvertently mistook a dehydrated omnibus for an aspirin. The



ensuing disaster is always referred to as 'The Ludgate Hill Affair', after the destination board of the omnibus.

The discovery of anti-biotics soon had the Goon staff hard at work, with such good results that nowadays, should a suspect enter a hospital for the treatment of any disease, a Goon agent immediately takes the correct antibiotic, and enters the next bed, with the same complaint. DDT was quickly converted into a hygienic finger-print powder, and the guarding of war-time secrets led directly to the modern science of 'Spionics'. A well trained Spionics man is able to fabricate his equipment from the most unlikely odds and ends.

The printed circuit technique was adapted from its radio uses, and now plays a triple role in the Goon equipment. The Goon agent's skin is a fine network of printed lines. To make his report he merely plugs his finger into any handy power socket, waits a minute for the warm up, and then makes his report. With typical Goon ingenuity even the printed lines have additional uses. Those on his back closely resemble a road map, and those on his front represent an aged marble.

Should the suspect enter a nudist camp the G.D.A. operative has merely to roll over to change his appearance from map to statue. It is even on record that one fannish suspect worked out an escape route on the back of a Goon agent, and was astounded to find the Goons waiting for him at the other end.

Goon researchers are constantly at work improving and expanding their devices, and with such forces as these arrayed on their side, there can be little doubt as to the outcome of any clash between Goon and anti-goon.

For this we must give our thanks to science!

Terry Jeeves.



"Sometimes I wonder why we bother with deadlines".



# Oh, Calcutta

by John Berry

I consider that approaching old age, and the instances of forgetfulness sometimes associated with incipient senile dementia, bring on a final realisation that all one's remaining mental and physical facilities should be accumulatively forced to function in top gear to try and prolong the period before the inevitable denouement which comes to everyone...the final click in the last link in the mortal coil. Authorities state that this can be delayed if the mind and body are fully exercised.

So one day in late 1988, as the thought struck me, I reluctantly emerged from my Salvation Army digs, and followed my old route along the central London pavements, trying to shuffle two or three miles a day, only taking money if it was offered to me, hoping that this would take care of the physical requirement which the Doc urged me to do whilst slipping me a prescription for heart and blood pressure tablets.

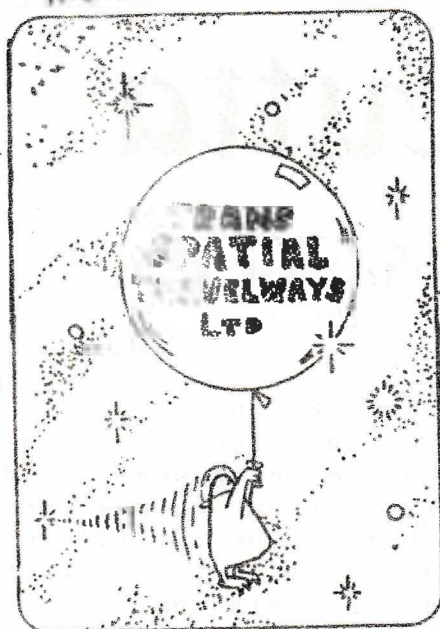
Every night I lay with the blankets tucked under my chin, vigorously trying to flex my fingers and toes which felt as though they were going to fuse into solid formations...to tax my brain, I wanted to research some subject, give it my entire time and enthusiasm...something to leave to posterity, to be even more intellectually erudite than the accounts of my Bleary Eye adventures.

One morning in November I was huddled against the warm radiator in the Research Section of Westminster library, and I picked up a copy of the NEW SCIENTIST because it had a photograph of Saturn on the front cover. I liked to keep up with the latest developments in space research...I glanced through the pages, and saw a heavily printed paragraph headed JAPANESE SCIENTIST THEORISES HOW TO TRAVEL FASTER THAN LIGHT.

I excitedly breathed on my glasses and rubbed off the offending blobs, the source of which I will not divulge to safeguard the sensibilities of a certain female fanzine reviewer, and read the feature.

I reached quickly inside a jacket pocket for and quickly gobbled a heart tablet...the bloody idiot proposed building a tunnel between two black holes, and, he opined, if one travelled along the tunnel, one could exceed the speed of light, 182,000 miles per second.

from



Truth to tell I was getting extremely exasperated with constant media references to black holes as if they were existing entities...these huge areas of space, supposedly at the centre of galaxies which consumed matter at a frightening rate, rather like Bob Shaw in the fifties...also, matter could not escape from a black hole. One authority considered that the matter in the black hole was transmitted to another universe.

I realised that the profound cosmological considerations which I intend to thrust upon you will not surprise those appreciative fans, who, from reading my past writings, will readily appreciate the vast range of my reflective thought-processes, and I am sure that new readers will be extremely surprised to know that I did not have a scientific or classical education.

I tell you, any grubby boy at Pitmaston Road School, Hall Green, Birmingham, who demonstrated the slightest interest in the Arts would become the target of every clenched fist in the playground.

In 1938 I collected cigarette cards, and only required one more to complete my set of ballerinas. During lunch time, after I had eaten my sausage sandwich, I joined the other boys at cigarette card swapping...one boy was actually trying to get rid of a card showing Pavlova doing a chuff-splitting entrechant.... Suffering Catfish...I hadn't got it...the prize card of the set! Obviously I couldn't ask to exchange it for one of mine, so I encouraged the boy to flick cards against the wall, and the boy who got one of his cards to land on top of any other card won all of them.

His first flicked card was Pavlova, he launched it with obvious distaste. Brilliant. When there were about fifteen cards lying on the ground, I utilised a technique my father had taught me...you licked spittle on the corner of the card you were flicking...you held the card tightly between bent right and middle fingers, and launched it forward, stopping the right hand suddenly, and releasing the card. I performed this special flick, with promised accuracy, and it landed on top of Pavlova. I must point out that if my card had landed on any other card I would have collected all of them, but this streak of persistence I have inherited from my Bleary forebears once more asserted itself.

Triumphantly I scooped up all the cards, and the school bell rang (followed by an unearthly scream as the teacher tolling the bell was physically attacked) so there wasn't time for a replay.



Why the hell am I telling you all this? Ah yes, my lack of formal education. But being an ardent science fiction fan I was always terribly interested in space matters. I had read and was suitably stunned by Fred. Hoyle's FRONTIERS OF SPACE in the early fifties, postulating the Steady State Theory...that matter existed, and always would exist...there was no start and no finish.

Then, in the late seventies, the Big Bang Theory was announced...briefly put, everything sprung from a mysterious miniscular object eventually forming galaxies, black holes and mysterious bulky dark matter, necessary to control gravity.

And then, like a flash of realisation, I had my mental inspiration...in my waning years I would research all the cosmological theories such as the Big Bang, black holes, and other things which I considered to be absolute balderdash...now I could exude myself over the lovely radiators all winter, and the library staff couldn't throw me out, as they had done many times previously, because I was doing precisely what the premises were open for...unlimited research!

In the late twenties Edwin Powell Hubble, (born 1889 in Marshfield, Missouri, USA), produced HUBBLE'S LAW, which stated that there is a direct connection between a galaxy and its 'red shift'. The red-shift indicated that each galaxy was travelling away from an observer on Earth at tremendous velocity...this meant that the Universe was rapidly expanding. In fact every galaxy was

moving away from every other galaxy...well, almost. A few galaxies had blue-shift, which meant they were speeding towards the Milky Way, such as Andromeda, which will eventually collide with the Milky Way.(ooh, way after CRITICAL WAVE has folded).

However, hold onto your beanies. Both galaxies, and others, are in a local cluster. By the way Einstein, who had proven by equation that nothing can travel faster than light, was absolutely stunned to discover absolute proof of an expanding universe.

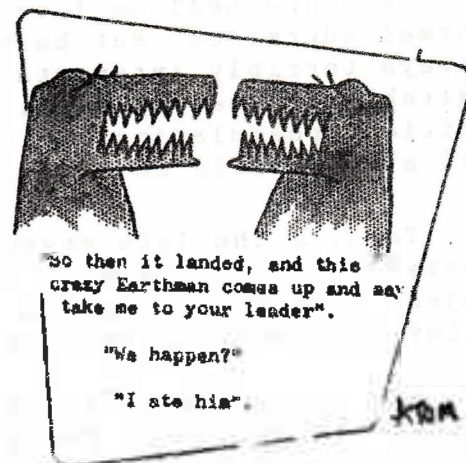
From that moment onwards, cosmologists mentally attuned the expanding Universe to make it go into reverse...they figured that if everything was moving away from everything else, obviously,



"It was intended to be a hilarious cartoon about the significance of the burning into a burst of Milky Way."

Alan

at one time, probably billions of years ago, there was a central focal point which had exploded.



I was becoming quite popular at the library. Weeell, accepted...the staff realised that I was an old but dedicated researcher. One day a young, well-stacked, female, gave me a parcel when I left at closing time.

"It's a sweater, I made it myself," she cooed.

"Are you trying to pull my eyes over your wool?" I quipped..(James White, 1954).

I opened the parcel in my Sally Ann room...it was a thick grey chunky jumper. I had patched holes in my old one with different coloured wool...I threw it away and donned the new one.

One of the men slyly gave me an underarm deodorant spray.

"Et tu, Brut," I smiled.

A latent sense alerted me to the slight possibility that there was an undercurrent amongst the staff and other researchers that I might possibly have body odour, and I put myself on the Sally Ann list to have an extra bath every month...a step in the right direction, I thought.

I met Art once a week, between 7pm and 8pm, on a seat on the right, facing south, at Trafalgar Square. I knew he was in ill health, but he still made the taxing effort to come and see me. We talked about old times. He had a bad cough but refused a sip from my hip flask. I told him I intended to put out a oneshot about controversial space matters, and he said he would illo it for me.

His visits became less frequent.

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"I've got the READER'S DIGEST ATLAS OF THE WORLD you ordered, Mr. Bleary," said the sweater girl.

"Ah, tremendous, just what I've been waiting for," I enthused.

I was impressed with this publication, quite a thick tome, because, besides featuring maps of the entire world, the first twenty pages dealt with astronomy...I had been told that it began with a detailed account of the Big Bang. I was fascinated by this, because various accounts that I had studied indicated that the 'starting point' of the Universe, if I may put it that way, was extremely small..."the new Readers Digest atlas explains it all very simply," I had been informed.



My place at the radiator was sacrosanct. Librarians moved people away from my seat if I wasn't there...usually poor old devils who wanted to keep warm all day but hadn't presented a substantial excuse for remaining there, as I had.

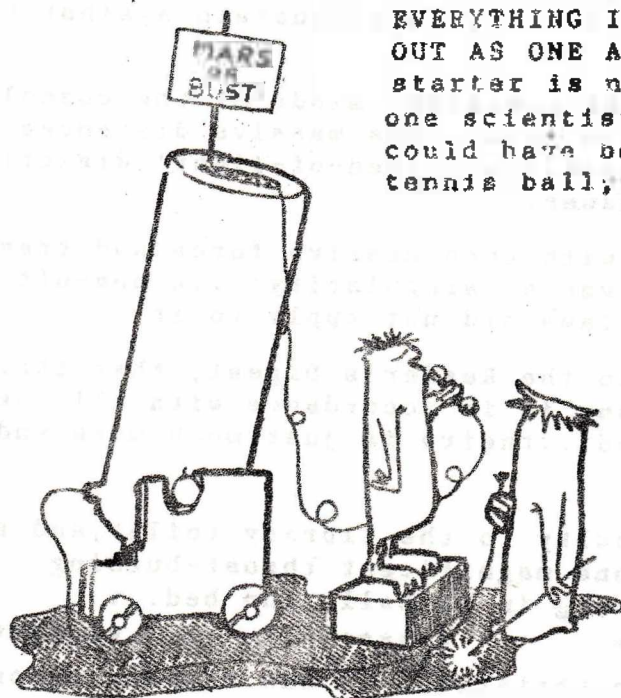
I took off my worn trench coat to reveal my lovely jumper. I hurriedly scraped away a dried porridge stain before Helen, the benefactress, noted the decoration.

I opened the book...there was the hypnotic chapter heading; THE UNIVERSE: FROM THE BIG BANG, etc.

I read it, and studied the accompanying illustrations with complete amazement and incredulity.

Look. Although people have variously attributed to me the adjectives 'naive' and 'gauche', I do not consider such assessments to be accurate. Personally, I think I am extremely shrewd, but a bland, innocent visage can deflect criticism...I've always found that to be the case, and have always taken advantage of it. But that Reader's Digest article stressed me to the limit. "What sort of bloody fools do they think we are?" I asked myself. In fact, I think I had stated my comment quite loudly, because Helen, the sweater girl, looked at me with a slight frown, forefinger pressed to her gorgeous red lips.

Another heart tablet...and I re-read the incredible revelation...we have one atom, see...now the dot on the 'i' is made up of a countless number of atoms...millions of the blasted things, and the Reader's Digest scientific theorists have chosen just one. But consider, everything we see...the long line of the Milky Way in the night sky, unencumbered by artificial city lights...the limitless number of galaxies, each containing probably a billion stars...the invisible dark matter...



"He says he's quite comfortable, and yes, he wishes to go through with it".

EVERYTHING IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE STARTED OUT AS ONE ATOM. The Reader's Digest atom-starter is not unique...I have read that one scientist thinks the original charge could have been about as big as a table tennis ball; another reckons it was a proton, another a basketball. But all this drivel is merely a small curtain raiser. Would you think that. ( I quote )..."during the first billionth of a second the Universe goes through a brief expansion, going from the size of an atomic nucleus to the size of a volley ball"? And that after a millionth of a second...

"the primeval Universe is about ten billion miles in radius"

I mean, you don't require me to tell you the

atom has enlarged  
to an entity  
twenty billion  
miles from one  
side to the other  
...AFTER A  
MILLIONTH OF  
A SECOND?

Now, mathematics  
is most certainly  
not one of my  
skills, but,  
breathing  
heavily, I  
rapidly filled  
several A4  
pages with  
calculations...

according to my tally, although I'm probably way out, but I reckon when the fireball expanded from an atom in one millionth of a second to a twenty billion diameter entity, light was travelling at around forty five billions time faster than Einstein had calculated...and subsequent scientific research has shown the figure to be correct. 186,000 miles per second.

I'm sure several smiling cynics are now rushing to their computers to check my figures...I worked with a chewed pencil stub...but I don't care what the exact figure is, it is definitely billions of times faster than Einstein's figure.

To complete the initial Reader's Digest report, I merely add the statement that after one minute the Universe is one million, billion miles across. No, I will not check Einstein against that figure.

I knew, of course, that the enquiring minds of the cosmologists had immediately noted this flaw...the massive distances travelled in violation of Einstein's 'speed-of-light' directive, and they speedily found an answer.

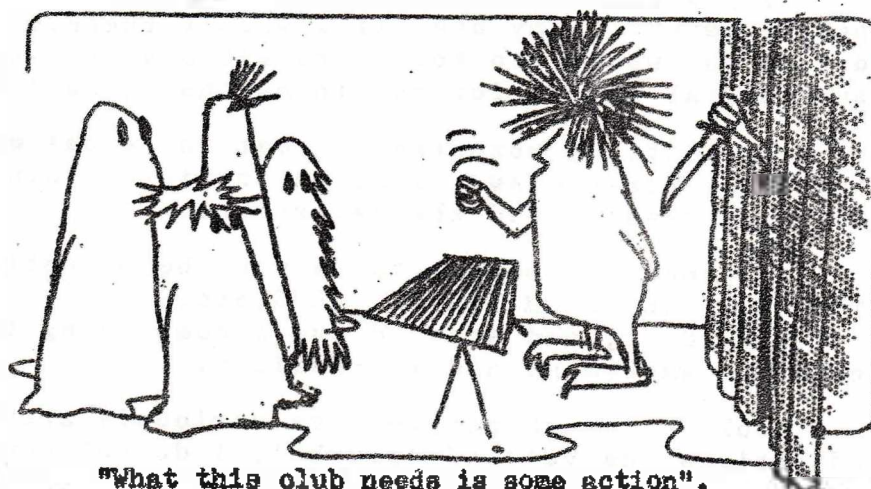
The atom, which exploded with such massive force and travelled such unimaginable distances, was a 'singularity'...a one-off...therefore all known physical laws did not apply to it.

I must add, in fairness to the Reader's Digest, that their account of the initial Big Bang is in accordance with all the other authorities I've studied...theirs is just much more understandable.

I made my way with difficulty to the library toilet, and sank my half-filled hip flask in one magnificent throat-burning swallow...I woke up next morning in my Sally Ann bed...

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It was a few days before Christmas...I was utterly surprised to be invited to the library staff's annual Christmas dinner, in D.H.Evans, Oxford Street, actually..."you're one of us now," whispered Helen.



Atom



The 'Brut' young man, an introvert, sidled up to me and took a seat next to me, obviously satisfied that, to him, I was no longer persona non grata.

"Mr. Bleary," he whispered softly, as you have to do in a library, but not necessarily with a lisp, "we've been saving up all year for our Christmas dinner, and there is money left over, so we've unanimously decided that each of us may choose a book. What would you like?"

I triumphantly brought into play a terrible pun, exercised by Irish Fandom forty years previously, and how I had been awaiting for an opportunity to use it.

"Um, The Sore Arse, by Roger," I quipped.

"Say that again," he whispered hoarsely.

I repeated my request.

He turned white and his fingers trembled.

"WHAT DID YOU SAY?" he thundered, all whispering pretence thrown aside in fury.

"THE SORE ARSE BY ROGER!" I shouted even louder.

Helen and a couple of other staff members came rushing over, researchers faces scanned us in amazement.

"What's wrong, Roger?" she said, anxiously.

Oh Jesus, not that; he'd thought I'd blunted his kindness.

"Mr. Bleary was extremely rude to me," he panted.

"How?" she queried, "I heard him ask for THESAURUS by ROGET."

"I'm going home," he said.

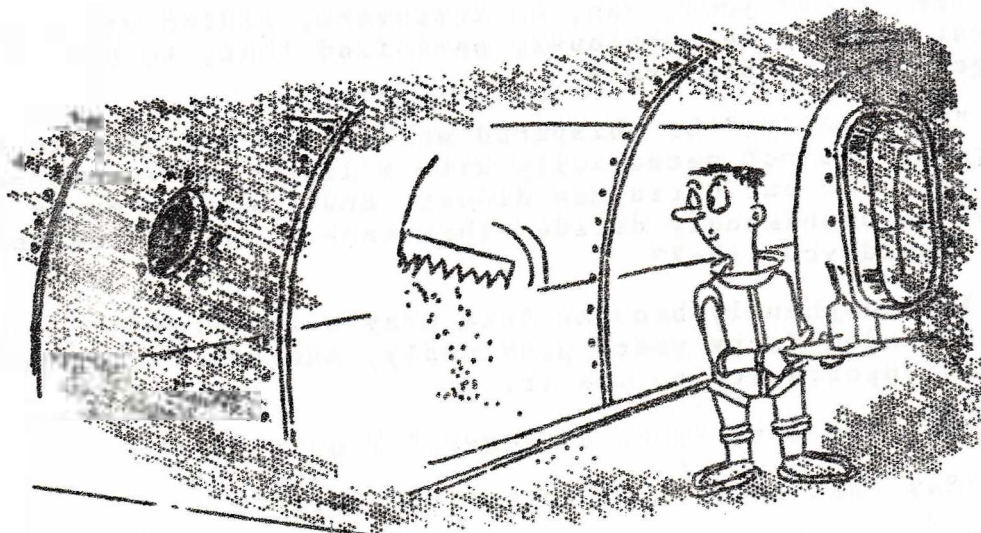
"He's got a personal problem, Mr. Bleary," Helen said softly to me, and the aura of cloistered sanctity once more returned to this seat of learning.

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My research now dealt with black holes...I studied many publications, working through bibliographies, and found it fascinating but frustrating at the same time...how leading astronomers and cosmologists vouchsafed the existence of black holes, and discussed them in matter-of-fact terms, and yet, leaning against the radiator in the library, with no formal education, eyes glazed behind my thick





lensed reading spectacles,  
I could find not one iota of proof of  
their existence in the Literature.

Leading cosmologists such as Stephen Hawking write articles and publish books about black holes, and glorify their existence, but it is all theory. The Reader's Digest, for example, states confidently... "Many stars and galaxies will collapse into black holes", note there is no element of doubt...no equivocation, it is a specific statement of fact.

The real fact is that the Black Hole Syndrome is a Model... there ought to be black holes...the Universe requires them, as massive vacuum cleaners...everything, theoretically, cries out for their existence...most probably there are black holes...but there is absolutely no proof that they exist.

I have studied books and articles by world famous astronomers and cosmologists...the most learned of them, not looking for sensationalism, phrase their comments about black holes most carefully. I have noted the words... "and (perhaps) black holes .. NO ONE HAS POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED A BLACK HOLE YET" (my capitals) "Black holes are an even more celebrated consequence of Einstein's theories."

Yet Hawking, in his most fascinating A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME- FROM THE BIG BANG TO BLACK HOLES, (his capitals), speaks positively throughout. Chapter six is titled 'BLACK HOLES' and he glories in them. "We now have evidence for several other black holes in systems like Cygnus X1, and in the neighbouring Magellanic Clouds" , , , "The number of black holes is certainly higher"... "The number of black holes may well be greater even than the number of visible stars, which totals a hundred million in our galaxy alone". And on he goes, The latter statement is on page 95, ... I must repeat what he wrote.... "THERE ARE MORE BLACK HOLES THAN VISIBLE STARS" (my capitals).

Dear reader, pul-heeze, if you cannot take my word for it, and and you have several spare months in which to study the subject... well. I'll declare once more to save you the trouble;-

THERE IS NO DEFINITE PROOF THAT BLACK HOLES EXIST.



Quite by accident I discovered that my nickname in the library was, "The Prof!"

At various times I overheard snaps of conversation that I did not realise referred to myself, probably because I was using up all my powers of concentration on my studies.

I heard one man at the next table observe. "I only nibbled a biscuit, and was castigated by the Staff, and yet The Prof sits there munching his corned beef sandwich and no one says a word."

I couldn't recollect anyone else eating corned beef sandwiches, but they are tasty and nutritious, and, I'm sure, quite popular.

"The Prof never takes off his battered trilby hat."

Well, sometimes I took mine off, so obviously I wasn't the subject of their sanction.

However, one morning I was squatting in a cubicle in the toilet, and I overheard two slab-users observe:-

"I wonder why The Prof has four rubber suckers in his breast pocket?"

Ergo, I was 'The Prof'.

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One morning Helen called me over to her desk.

"I've got THE HIDDEN UNIVERSE for you," she smiled.

I thanked her profusely...this book dealt with the hidden matter...so-called dark matter.

"I understand I'm known as The Prof," I suggested.

"Yes, er, that is true...you don't take offence?"

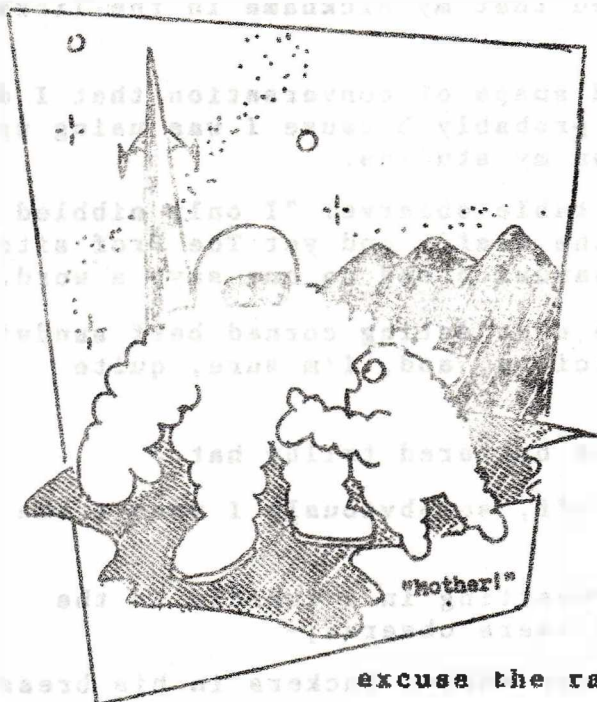
"No, I'm delighted to be given such a high-grade category for a nickname... I bet Walt Willis, even in his wildest dreams, would never envisage that I would be called The Prof."

"Who is Walt Willis?"

"A B.N.F."

"What's a B.N.F.?"





"Too complicated to go into that at the moment, my deah."

I scuttled to my radiator seat to study my new book.

She called me over whilst her colleague's had gone for morning coffee.

"Look, Prof," she said, and I must say that she had a sort of look of pity in her eyes, "What do you do in the evening?"

"Watch tv mostly."

"Humm. Hilda (one of the librarians) tells me that you like classical music?"

"Yeah, anything, really, except the new atonal crap... excuse the rather crude observation."

"Er, I've got tickets for a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Concert Hall tonight...Richard Strauss, Ravel, Brahms and Mahler."

"And? I panted, through cracked lips.

"Would you like to come with me?"

I tapped my pockets, trying to find which one the heart tablets were in...she reached behind her desk, looked warily about for possible witnesses, and handed me a large brown paper wrapped, string tied parcel.

"It's a trench coat, light blue," she explained, "they will not let you into the concert in your present, er, attire. I got this from a charity shop in Kensington for three pounds. Take it as a gift. Please wear it tonight...put on the thick jumper I knitted for you, because its going to be a cold night."

"Delighted, my deah," I preened. I'm quite prepared to make a sacrifice if it is to my advantage.

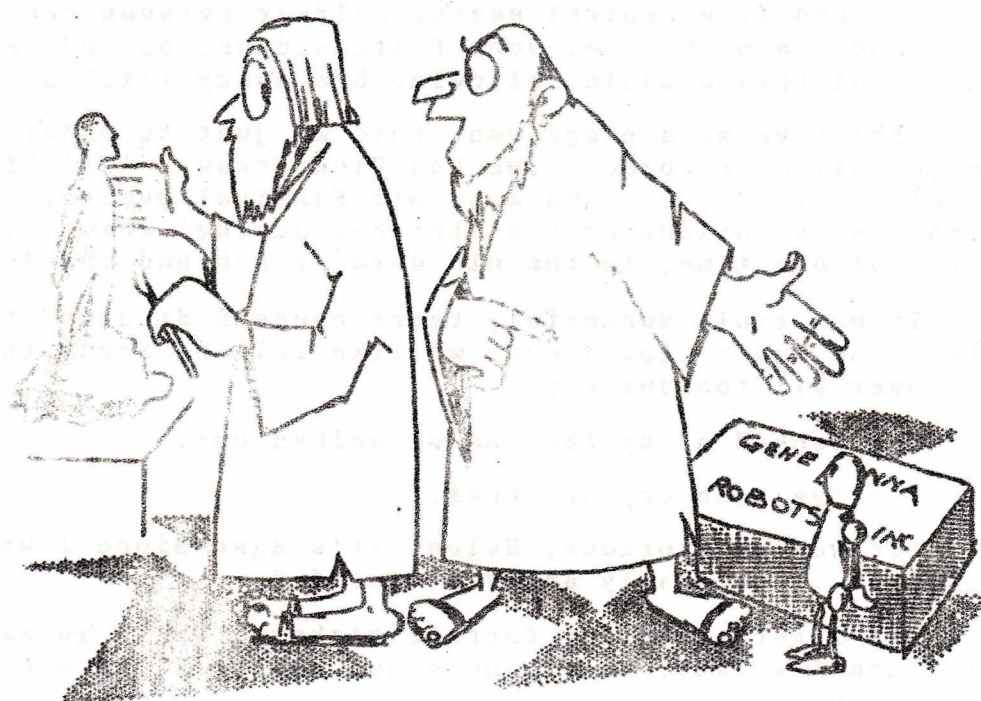
"Two more things, Prof. Please don't take my comments to heart, but don't wear your trilby part your hair in the middle, you'll look quite nice, and, er, in case we go for a drink at the interval, don't bring those rubber suckers with you, not in view anyway."

"Just so long as you don't tell Art," I croaked in resignation. But she didn't ask who Art was...

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When I walked past the desk at the Sally Ann on the way out that night, Reg, the receptionist, shouted for me to stop.





"Here's just what you want...trouble free running...  
built in ten commandments".

"How did you get in, mate?" he thundered.

"It's me, Reg, Mr. Bleary...I've got a date tonight."

"What's the bloke's name?" he parried with a laugh.

"It's a gorgeous gal, actually."

"Sweep me, I would never have known it was you...you look like Noel Coward, what a tremendous disguise."

Hmm. In my active service Bleary Eyes days it had never occurred to me to be dressed as a toff in order to infiltrate and investigate. Too late now, though...

I took the Underground to the concert hall. She was waiting at the entrance, wearing a thick Astrakhan fur coat with a wide collar in which she hid her face, because it was so very cold.

She smiled, and, honestly, she couldn't hide her relief at my appearance...she didn't even try to, she flipped the coat collar down round her shoulders.

"Prof," she announced, "you are a fine-looking elderly gentleman when you are dressed for the occasion...oh, damn, I knew I'd forgotten something."

She snapped her fingers in disgust...she looked down at my feet. "Honestly, Prof, those huge hobnail boots are disgusting...please don't clump your feet when you walk."

It was true what they were saying...women are the giv'nors, but I was getting well treated here.

We had fine central seats, halfway between the rear of the hall and the orchestra. John Fritchard was on the rostrum, with the Royal Philharmonic following his every flick of the baton.

She gave me a programme, told me just to enjoy myself and forget all my problems...we had Dick Strauss 'Til Eilenspeigel' Ravel, La Valse; Brahms Academic Festival Overture, and Mahler 1 with its variations of the 'Brother Jacque' theme. I knew them all...at one time, in the old days, I had had the lp's.

It was truly wonderful, tears coursed down my cheeks all the time, the music flowed over me like rolling fog...the concert was over all too quickly.

She looked at my face as we walked out.

"You've been crying, Prof."

"It was so glorious, Helen, it's ages since I was at a concert...I've really enjoyed myself."

"If I get given any further tickets, we'll go again..I don't live too far away, escort me home, and we'll have coffee and a little chat."

She held my arm and we walked for over half an hour in the cold and slight downy drizzle. I hoped it was a sign of future camaraderie, but actually she was supporting me, I felt so tired; I usually eased myself into my kip by about half nine.

She unlocked the door of her flat and ushered me in. It was nicely furnished, with a blue motif. She folded my trench coat and placed it over the settee. She pushed me into a deep, luxurious armchair. In a few moments she returned with two cups of coffee and a dozen Cafe Noir biscuits.

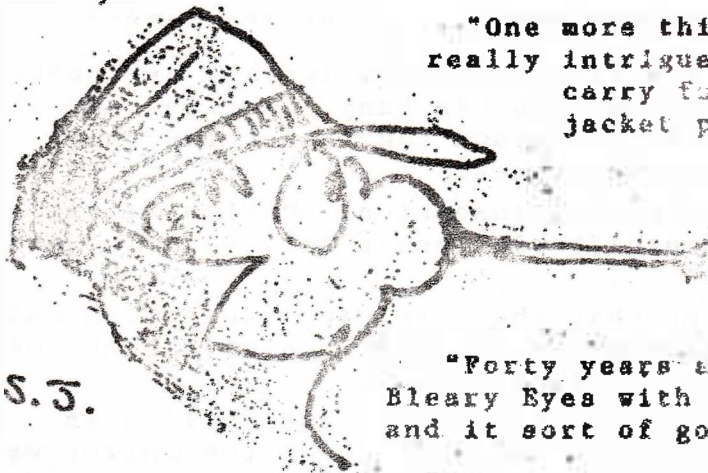
She probed gently, wanting to know all about my past; how I came to be at the Sally Ann, but I demurred, too interested in trying to snare all the biscuits.



"I'm sure she's been included in the crew for some good reason, prof".



After about twenty minutes I could hardly keep my eyes open; and she said she'd call me a taxi, "I'll pay," she added hastily.



"One more thing before you go, Prof, I'm really intrigued to know why you always carry four rubber suckers in your jacket pocket?"

She helped me on with my trench coat, which I buttoned and belted.. She pulled up the collar.

"Forty years ago," I said, "I founded The Bleary Eyes with Art to investigate fandom, and it sort of got out of order."

"Er, but why the rubber suckers?"

"Easy," I grinned. "Let me show you my plonker...folks say it's the biggest thing in fandom."

With my arthritic fingers I opened my trench coat, opened my jacket, pulled up my jumper...I glanced across to her. Never did I see such dilating pupils, taut skin wrinkled on her forehead, mouth opened in absolute terror.

"Excuse me a sec," I panted, "it's caught in my braces."

I struggled for a few seconds, found the holster, straightened it, eased it from behind my braces and pulled out my gat, sucker jutting aggressively out of the end of it.

Her face softened remarkably, as if her worst fears had been assuaged...what was wrong with the gal?

"I, er, don't understand, Prof....what was that?...I think I heard your taxi horn blasting outside."

"A Bleary Eye is always on the alert for evil-doers...we are never at rest."

"But...but..." She sounded like a motor boat engine being revved into action.

"I can hit a forehead at fifty paces...I've done it many times doesn't half surprise 'em."

She clutched my arm and dragged me through the door of her flat, down the short flight of stairs, opened the front door. It was snowing slightly...the gal was in her slippers, she seemed to be most anxious to get me into the taxi, out of the frosty night air.

"But, I've got to ask you this...who do you shoot at?"

She threw me into the taxi as the driver opened the rear door, and she slipped the driver a five pound note.

I opened the window as she tried to escape...."Oh, er, lots of people..Chuck Harris, Blaze McKendrick, James White..." But she

scuttled back into her flat, and I sank back in the taxi. What a night.

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I noted throughout my research that cosmologists are quite chary about discussing what the pre-big bang condition was like, except they consider that it is beyond the ken of the human brain to appreciate the circumstances.

Hawking et al began their philosophical considerations at the point when the atom/proton/table tennis ball exploded with such tremendous velocity.

One cosmologist stated that the atom was 'everything and everywhere', a strange observation to make when, within one second, debris is one million billion miles across.

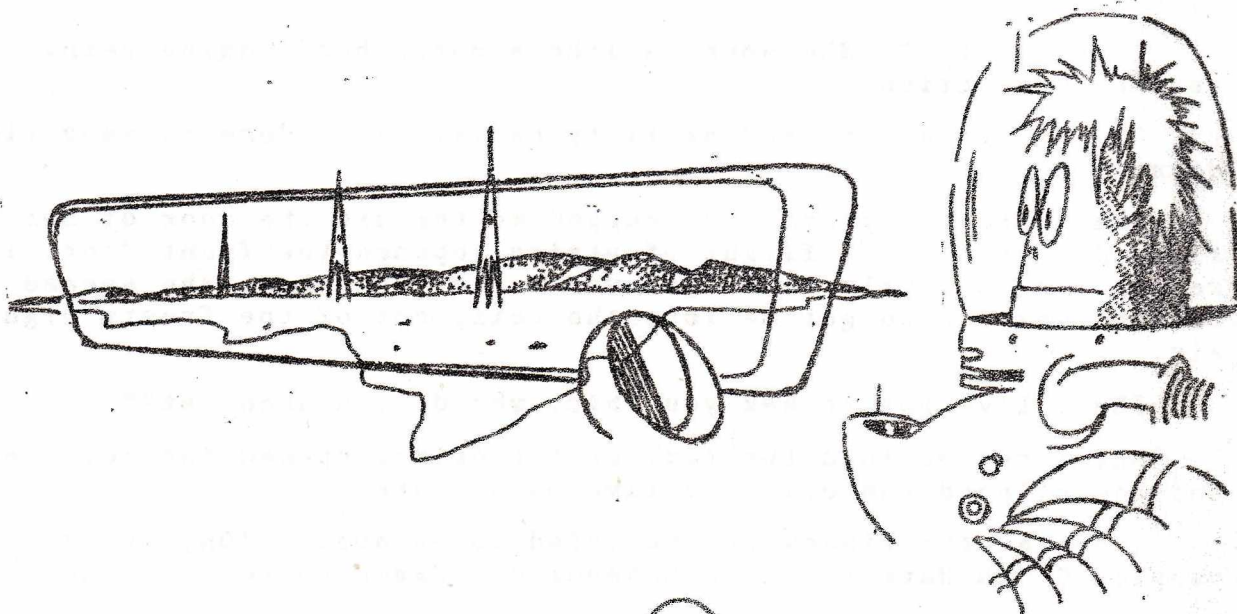
What I really wanted guidance on was - where did this tightly-packed atom ( or however small or large the entity was ) come from?

You see, I am terribly sceptical about this packed atom... obviously, Hubble, with his redshift discovery, proved that there must have been an initial start to the Universe, but surely the entity must have been of absolutely colossal size. I proffer, merely as a suggestion, a body the size of our Solar System, with matter packed into it at a million tons per cubic inch...that would supply a tremendous mass of material, wouldn't it?

The initial explosion was gigantic, no matter what the object was, but two questions are raised... where did the initial body come from...and what initiated the explosion?

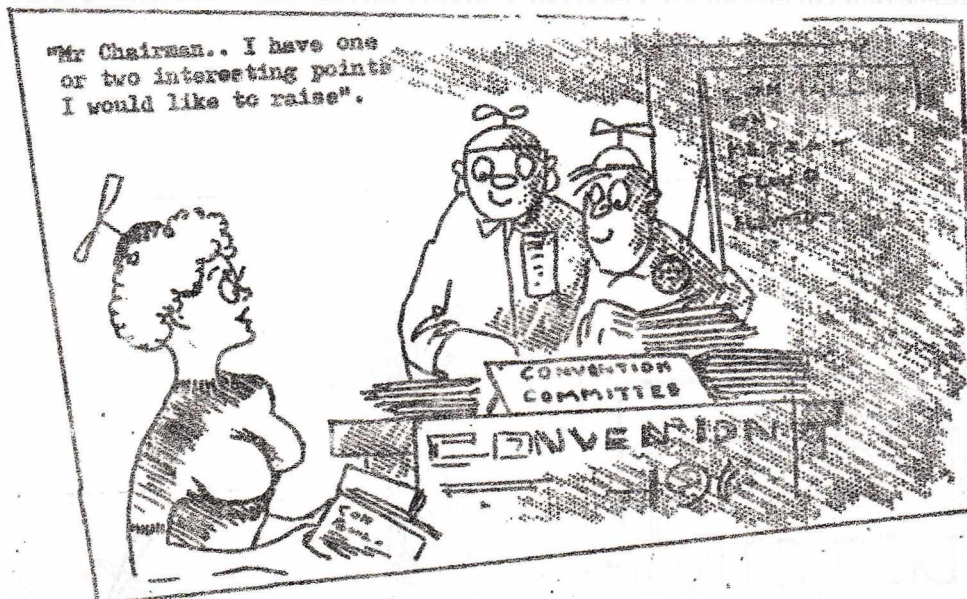
I read that no one can possibly know, and I ask myself, in that case, why do all the authorities, without exception, know it was atom sized?

Well, all right, if you press us, say some cosmologists, the Universe was created by God. That three-letter word settles everything for them, and a host of other people too. But I ask, where did God come from?





"Mr Chairman.. I have one or two interesting points I would like to raise".



Some cosmologists say the Universe is all-enveloping, there is no end to it, but if, as Hubble stated, it is expanding at tremendous velocity, it is encroaching into 'space' at thousands of kilometers per second, ergo, there must be something outside the periphery of the Universe, even if it is only a vacuum...a vacuum is something...nothing is a quantity.

And I read that some cosmologists and astronomers opine that there are other Universes...they come from black holes, DESPITE THE STATEMENT THAT NOTHING CAN ESCAPE FROM A BLACK HOLE!

I consider that the brutal truth is that too much imagination was used by cosmologists to develop their theories, which some of them believed to be The Holy Grail. They had perforce to conjure up even more fantastic and bewildering theories to bolster up their miasma of contradiction.

For several months of research, I read, pondered, calculated, made notes, sought the truth but didn't find it forthcoming. Fortunately, this period coincided with a very cold winter...I was warm, made friends, exercised my mind, felt rejuvenated. I even commenced to read science fiction novels again, most of the plots having been thought out logically, even if outrageously imaginative...but not so outrageously imaginative as cosmology.

So I crossed to Helen's desk early in the Spring, thanked her for her valued friendship and assistance, but I explained that I had earnestly searched for The Truth, and failed.

Therefore I had to pursue a new research subject.

"Can I order a book for you, Prof?" she asked.

"Yes, my dear, The Kinsey Report, please."

John Berry. 1995.







The Blarney Eyes vol. 2

selected by John Peery



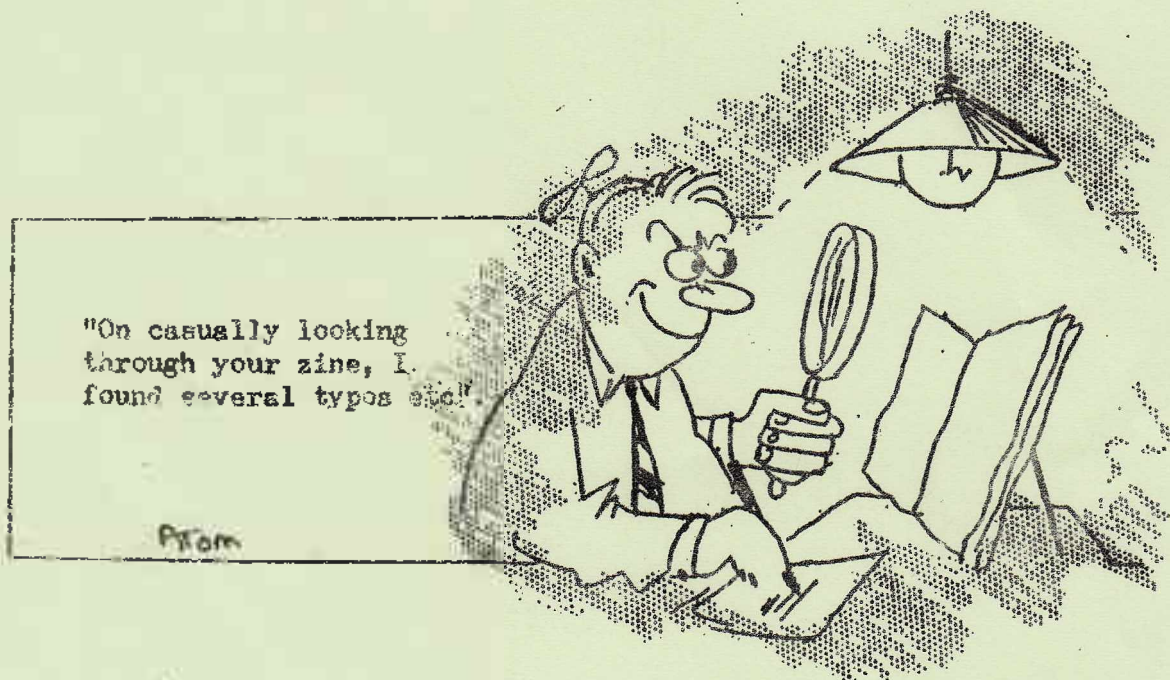
For a full and complete  
description of the  
book, see the  
book, "The Blarney Eyes"

1891

Watch for the Good  
he will return!

# The Bleary Eyes vol. 5

selected by John Berry



**Watch for the Goon,  
he will return!**