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AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1953

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CONTENTS

STORIES . . .

A HALLOWE'EN TRICK (Novelette) By Robert G. Warner
Illustrated by William Reins

THE CUBEAKOIDS! (Novelette) By Elmer R. Kirk
Illustrated by Lane Marin

TWO FOR HEAVEN (Short Story) By Al Rothlands & Gerald Kamen
Illustrated by William Reins

* * * * *

FEATURES . . .

SPATIAL RELATIONS (Short) By Henry Moskowitz

AUTHORS OF THE ISSUE (Short) By The Writers

BONE OF CONTENTION (Short) By The Readers

* * * * *

CLASSIC POEM . . .

ON TO ARMAGGEDON (Short) By Johnathon L. Magnus

* * * * *

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Back Cover Illustration By: Ted E. White. Depicting: 'Man Eternal'.

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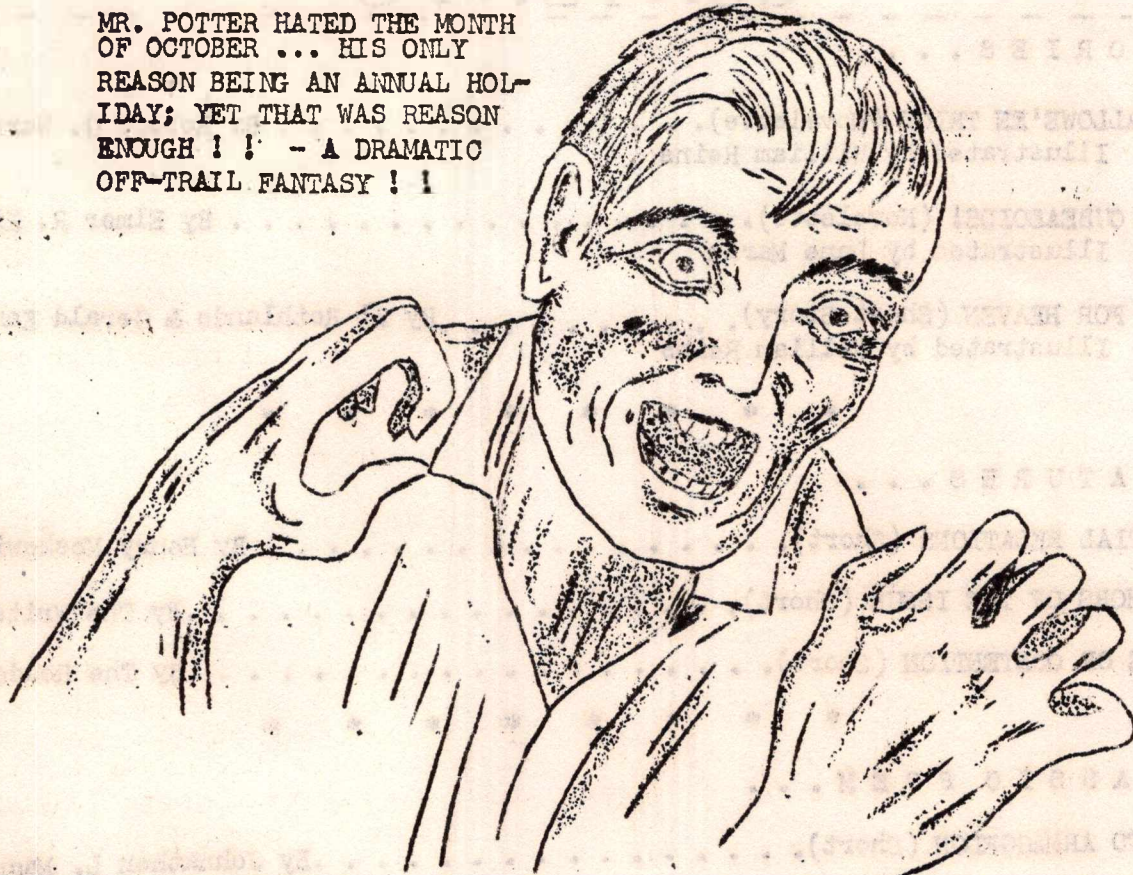
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A HALLOWEEN TRICK

by-
ROBERT G. WARNER

MR. POTTER HATED THE MONTH OF OCTOBER ... HIS ONLY REASON BEING AN ANNUAL HOLIDAY; YET THAT WAS REASON ENOUGH !! - A DRAMATIC OFF-TRAIL FANTASY !!



The acknowledged leaders of strange tales --such as John Collier, Ray Bradbury, etc. -- had better move over! Whether they know it or not there is somebody just as good in the personage of one, Robert G. Warner! What's that? They don't make 'em like Collier and Bradbury anymore!? You haven't read this story yet, friend. -EJH.

IT WAS OCTOBER and the trees were giving up their long-tenacious hold on the russet leaves. A breeze was blowing October coolness over the lawns and setting fallen leaves aqriver. As the breeze passed on, the tenebrific fingers of late evening closed over the land . . .

Mr. William Potter felt the passing of the breeze and shivered inwardly as he looked about him and realized, actually for the first time, that summer had really abdicated to the autumnal monarch and that soon all the remnants of the summer passed would dry up and be blown away in crispy flakes on the cold winds of the coming winter.

Mr. Potter's sneakers made a pleasing sound as they came in contact with the smooth-worn surface of the sidewalk. He walked along at an unhurried pace, wishing that the summer would, just this once, abstrain from giving way to the winter bleak. It was then that the sound of children laughing in the cool distance broke through his wishful thoughts and he stopped there in the middle of the sidewalk to crane his neck in the direction of the laughter.

It was the Williams children. They were all squatting around a great, orange-bulging pumpkin, gouging at it with sharp knives, probing into its mushy insides,

digging it hollow. They were making a Jack-a-Lantern. Already they had most of its insides strewn out on the lawn; and now Jackson, the youngest of them, was brandishing his knife to cut the evil-looking leer into the face of the pumpkin. They'll finish it before the hour's gone, thought Mr. Potter; and when it's done they'll take it inside and put a flickering candle in it and hang it in the window so it can dangle there, swaying in the breeze, and finish frightening the summer away!

FOR A FEW minutes more he stood watching the Williams children transform the pumpkin into a Hallowe'en monster, then he sighed and turned away to continue his homeward walk.

How autumn changed them! In summer they had played out in the bright sunshine underneath the blue-metal sky -- played the sensible games. Hide and Seek and Cowboys and Indians and Wolf over the River and Rover, Rover, Let Someone Come Over! But now -- now they had undergone the season-change and had become miniature sadists, hacking away in fiendish glee at a defenseless pumpkin, turning it into a horror-head with which to scare the dickens out of some unwary one on All Hallow's Eve. It was hideous!

Someone was burning a great pyramid of dead russet leaves. Large puffs of orange-brown smoke mounted into the sky. The leaves crackled and made sputtering sounds and the fire sprites danced a ludicrous dance against the gloomy background of the October evening. He walked by the burning pile of dead leaves, increasing his pace and holding his breath as not to smell the sharp, burnt odor of them.

Mr. Potter was forced to step hurriedly from the sidewalk when the howling pack of all-excited children streamed by him, as though completely oblivious to his presence, carrying in their arms innumerable numbers of red-ripe apples and tapers and cookies and candies and metal things which, when whirled in the air, would make sharp, nerve-wracking noises. Some of the children, in addition to their other loads had unidentifiable costumes draped over their crooked arms.

Mr. Potter stared after the children and said in an undertone, "Oh, my God! Tonight is Hallowe'en!" He stood there in the edge

of the street, letting the depressing thought sink in. He wrinkled his forehead in a frown of distaste and stepped back up onto the sidewalk.

Hallowe'en! A time of goblins and pseudo cardboard skeletons and demons and apples floating in filled wash tubs and witches and tricks-or-treats and all the other paraphernalia of the hideous occasion! Disgusting!

HIS THOUGHTS SWITCHED back, and he found a momentary consolation in thinking of the summer now passed. Now take the Fourth of July! There was a noisy-quiet dignity in the Great Fourth! The firecrackers exploding in brief flashes from the hands of the grinning children. The skyrockets shooting in a silent path of splendor across the late evening sky to die in a dazzling shower of sparks high overhead. And a little later, in the cool of the evening, the meeting of the entire townspeople just outside the city limits to watch the brilliant display of fireworks ablaze in the late-day sky. That was something for the children to see and take part in!

The shadowy cloak of night was falling rapidly and Mr. Potter hastened his steps he certainly wanted to get home before the pseudo-ghosts and paper-masked goblins and crepe-paper witches began romping across the lawns and hiding behind sidewalk hedges to jump out and make loud boo! cries at unsuspecting passers-by.

In the east the full moon was just beginning its ascension in the quiet, cool heavens, regarding the October lands in silent contemplation of the mischievousness to come when the night had grown a little older.

MR. POTTER PASSED two young boys standing on their front lawn watching the rising of the moon with expressions too seriously rapt carved, immobile, on their faces. And as he moved away from them, one said, almost in a shriek, to the other: "I thought the moon had to be 'way up 'fore we'd be able to see a witch or goblin fly 'cross it!"

Of a sudden Mr. Potter felt sharp anger. He glanced back at the children and wondered what backward adult had told them that witches and goblins flew across the

face of the moon on Hallowe'en. Witches and goblins! How long had these non-existent entities of fantastic and too-imaginative thinking struck fear into the minds of adults and children alike? How long would people keep up that foul humbug! Now, he thought, glancing back at the two young boys, they'll grow up to pass the damned nonsense on to their children -- so it'll be kept alive down through the coming years. "They should be stomped -- whoever told them!" he said under his breath.

LOOKING UP SUDDENLY at a tall sycamore tree, silhouetted, leafless and skeletal, against the silver-glowing face of the full moon, Mr. Potter shivered involuntarily as some childhood fear-memory was recalled in a fleeting instant. He reached up to zip his jacket against a sudden puff of chill-wind.

Mr. Potter turned a corner and came in sight of his house. He had left none of the lights on before leaving for his evening walk, and now his was the only darkened house in the entire town. All the others were lighted to some degree; some of them blazing with electric-light brightness and others burning with eerie, dancing candleglow. And as he passed houses wherein Hallowe'en festivities had already begun, Mr. Potter peered into open windows at the children -- and their parents, too -- all noisy and filled with an enthusiasm that bubbled over into the night. He gasped as one small boy with dark hair that badly needed trimming almost fell head first into a wash tub while trying to snatch bobbing apples out of the water with his teeth. He murmured, "Damn Hallowe'en!" from between clenched teeth, then turned from the in-fun devilry and padded on to his darkened house.

He hurried up the front walk, pausing on the doorsteps to cast a sad glance sideways at the trellis and its dead rose vines. He looked down at the freshly spaded ground where he had planted the new rose vines, which would bud out again next spring, scarlet and sweet and alive. And he turned to look back out over the autumn night lawns, where children were beginning to stir, running about with their leering pumpkins held high up on cane poles and small shocks of corn stalks rustling in the chill breeze. He shuddered at the grotesque masks with their caricature-of-

evil expressions and the strangely-cut costumes. There was one in particular that caught his eye; a thin youngster was dressed in a skin-tight Devil suit, and its red color was turned sanguine in the dancing candlelight from the pumpkin-head he held overhead. The boy turned suddenly and looked at him through eye-slits cut out of the evil-leer face of the mask, and Mr. Potter hastened on into the house, perspiration forming on his brow in spite of the chill outside.

Inside, Mr. Potter went from room to room, turning on all the lights, feeling the good warm glow of them sink into him. Ah. The bulbs miniature suns burning complacently down from wallpaper skys of the ceiling. Outside, he could hear the multitudes of Hallowe'eners shouting, prowling about in the night to keep alive the spirit of ancient evil, pretending that they were that evil. And perhaps in some of them evil was reincarnated!

Mr. Potter drew his over-stuffed favorite chair in front of the small gas heater. He lit the heater and sat down heavily in the chair, a little exhausted and more than a little oppressed by the thought of the distasteful goings-on in the October night.

He got up after a moment, and switched on the radio, twisting the tuning dial until he located a program of softly-toned music. He stood bent over the radio, making delicate fingertip adjustments in the volume until the music came forth as a gentle murmur-sound. He returned to the easy chair, and, stretching his feet out to the warmth of the heater, he relaxed and clasped his hands over his stomach. Ah. It felt so good just to sit there and watch the little tongues of flame dance in the heater and forget the unreal world of Hallowe'en nonsense going on outside.

"OCTOBER!" MR. POTTER snorted the word at the dancing flames. "I hate it! Oh, God, how I wish there were no Octobers or Septembers or Novembers or Decembers or Januarys or Februarys or Marches! If it were summer and spring all the year round! No staying in stuffy houses, then, and listening to the cold wind outside making those hideous sounds!"

There was, quite suddenly, the sound of many small shoes scurrying up the concrete

walk and the unintelligible babel of children's voices rudely bursting into his momentary relaxation.

Tromp! Tromp-tromp! Up unto the porch with many scraping sounds, up to the door. He could see them in his mind's eye, a pushing horde of them made up to be goblins and witches and devils and white-sheet ghosts and bleached-bone skeletons painted on ehonl cloth.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Small knuckles pounding with impatient fervor on the doorframe. Mr. Potter tried to retreat into the back of the chair and was very still and silent, hoping they would go away . . .

THE SOLES OF small shoes shuffling impatiently back and forth in the October coolness. Muted voices. More pounding.

"Oh, all right!"

Mr. Potter pushed himself out of the chair and stood for a long moment getting up his nerve to face those mimickers of evil. Then he stepped over to the radio and snapped it off. He filled his cheeks with air, puffing them out, then let the air escape in a long sigh-sound. He turned from the radio and stalked through the house. He stopped before the front door and looked through the door window at them pushing and murmuring and giggling out in the night. He switched on the porchlight and opened the door to stand shivering in the sudden breath of October wind.

Their voices roared in to meet him:

"Crackling bones and burning wheat,
Do we play a trick or do you give
us a treat!"

A little girl, dressed like a fairy sprite, stepped forward and extended an upturned palm, her ble eyes all aglitter behind the silver mask.

Mr. Potter started to say something when the Red Devil boy suddenly materialized out of the night, waving the pumpkin on the cane pole. Mr. Potter exchanged a flashing glance with the pumpkin, then quickly averted his eyes, shuddering as the candle aglow within the pumpkin lit up the giant eyes and threw wavering

ghost-shadows upon him.

"Hey, you got a treat for us, Mr. Potter?" Red Devil asked in a very high-pitched tone of voice.

Mr. Potter, by an intense effort of will, simulated a smile and spread his hand for silence. When they had all quieted down, he said, trying to keep the irritation out of his voice, "Children, I'm truly sorry, but I don't have a thing in the house for you. Completely forgot it was -- Hallowe'en!"

He managed another smile, then left them standing there making aw-sounds and went back into the house, closing the door behind him. They all turned to go, and he switched off the porch-light. The pumpkin held on high above Red Devil's right shoulder glared back at him in anger and the shocks of corn rustled curses back at him. It was monstrous!

Mr. Potter stood watching until they had all dispersed in the night, drifting away to leave their laughter behind to echo on the crisp, chilled air. Finally, he turned from the night and sought again the comfort of his easy chair and the murmur of the radio, trying to forget the dark enigma outside that was Hallowe'en.

* * * * *

MR. POTTER SAT IN the chair and dozed, and somewhere in that few minutes of half-sleep the sounds had begun! He was awake, very suddenly, sitting up in his chair, his head bent forward, trying to hear all the sounds at once.

And those sounds were everywhere. The rustling on the roof, the scraping at the window panes, the slithering underneath the house. His eyes enlarged and his heart set athrob in his chest as a sudden fear panic swelled up from deep within him.

Mr. Potter jerked his head up to stare at the ceiling as the sound of monstrous, flapping leather-wings was heard stirring the October air low over the house.

"My God!"

Mr. Potter leapt from the chair and stood shivering in the middle of the room, his lips working but with no sounds coming forth. Fear incited him to act, and he rushed

to the windows, latching them and jerking down the shades. Wham! Down went all the windows in the living room. Wham! Bang! Down the windows in the bedroom, kitchen and little dining room. He rushed to the back door, his lungs working furiously like twin bellows, his mind all but numb from the thoughts of what might be out there in the October night, trying to get in to him. He snatched the key from its peg on the wall and thrust it into the keyhole, twisting violently.

"Had that been a chuckle outside?"

"Oh, Lord! . . ."

He turned and fled back through the house. The front door! He had not locked the front door!

Mr. Potter stopped and stood choking back a scream, unable to take his eyes from the thing standing there silhouetted in the open door, dark against the soft-glow face of the rising moon. The October wind drifted in from behind the slender-lean figure and blew against Mr. Potter's face, bringing him the nauseating odor of rich, black earth and polished coffin-wood. Behind the thing, Mr. Potter could see leathery wings gently pulsing. Raising an emaciated arm, the impossible horror grinned a sharp-fang grin

"Good God! It can't be! There are no such things as vam---!"

The word somehow got hung in his throat as the scarlet snake slithered in between the thin figure's legs to change into a were-thing and stand there on slender-strong legs leering at him with dripping mouth and regarding him with red-glowing eyes.

"Get out! Please, get out! Please!" He retreated a step and pleaded with them with his half-dollar-large eyes.

They looked at him with their read-beaded eyes and laughed silent laughter.

"I -- I didn't mean those things I said about October and Hallowe'en! Just go -- go away and I'll never say them -- think them, even -- again! Not over!

An ebon spider had climbed the wall and

dropped down onto his right shoulder from an invisible web. He looked down at it, eyes agape, and felt his skin crawl as cold horror gripped his insides. Automatically his hand came up and knocked the spider across the room. The spider arched up, then down to fall and land softly on its eight legs. It crouched there in the corner of the room, its fiery eyes laughing at him.

Mr. Potter retreated another step from them. The tall form with the pulsing wings took a shaky step forward. The spider was busying itself spinning a web of gossamer sheen on the wall.

"Please!" His voice was weak. He stood shivering before them. "Please don't!"

Then Mr. Potter happened to glance past the tall figure, out into the October night. The moon's silvery rays angled down to fall on the porch and silhouette a dozen other nebulous shadow-forms of difformity waiting without. And old witch-woman whose face could only have been described as being hidden in valleys of sunken flesh and dark wrinkle - ravines of shadow. He shuddered as though a violent chill had passed through his body and jerked his eyes away before he could see what the others might be. But in a brief glance at them that he could not keep himself from taking, he saw that their glowing eyes were fastened upon him -- hungrily.

OF A SUDDEN Mr. Potter felt a tendril of what might well have been logic call out to him that there was nothing to be afraid of, that these were not supernatural entities but practical jokers topping off the hideous Hallowe'en play. Perhaps the children had told the parents he would not treat them, and now the parents had come to play this grotesque trick on him. Yes! Oh, God, yes! That was it! That had to be it!

Mr. Potter pulled himself up straight and stabbed out an accusing finger at the tall form he had thought (he managed an inner laugh to buck up his spirits) a vampire.

"Who are you? Is that you, Thurston? Yes!" Thurston, the voice of logic told him, would be just the one to pull something nasty like this -- and naturally he would insist upon playing the leading roll. He and his damnable practical jokes . . . !

"Damn you, Thurston, this isn't very pleasant! And the others -- who are they? Did all you fools go to this much trouble just to give me a scare? Well!" He laughed a short acid laugh. "Well, I am sorry that your little trick fell so flat! And now would you please get out of here and go play with the other children! That's what you're acting like to-night!"

The vampire-shape grinned broadly and showed yellowed fangs once more. Another shaky step forward. Mr. Potter could smell the damp-earth smell of him, could see the bits of earth still clinging with stubborn tenacity to the tattered suit of black that was fifty years out of style. A lump of the dark soil disengaged itself from a worn-fabric sleeve and fell to the floor with a plop! sound.

The logic voice called out: "Steady. Steady!" But it became hopelessly lost in the jumble of fear thoughts that had arisen. Mr. Potter could only stand rooted to the floor. Unnoticed, five scarlet spiders had manoeuvred into position over his head and were lowering themselves on pink strands. In a flash, the spiders had alighted on Mr. Potter's lips and instantly begun spinning pink-steel threads across his mouth, lacing his lips tightly. Mr. Potter reached up in sudden panic and clawed at the spiders. He crushed one of them, then the remaining four swarmed over his fingers, spinning them together, tightly, tightly . . . !

EYES BULGING LIKE polished agates, Mr. Potter stumbled backward, trying to pull his fingers apart, brushing at the scarlet-gleaming spiders that were running, zig-zag fashion, up his shirt front, across his collar to thrust tiny thorns of pain into his neck. He felt the deprivations of feeling coming over him as the potent anesthetic fluid was injected into his body and began spreading, spreading throughout his body.

Mr. Potter struggled to keep his body from being drained of feeling, to keep the paralysis from shooting through his vein-tunnels and pumping in and out of his racing heart to grip him tighter and tighter. His eyes became suddenly very heavy, and it seemed that he wanted to close them but could not do so. A leather-bat fluttered into the room, and in a

brief puff of white vapor it had become a slender-beautiful woman, who stepped past him and turned off the light. The room was thrown into a sudden darkness, with only the moonglow to cast unreal shadows of unreal things.

Mr. Potter became a statue. He wanted to scream out, to flutter his arms and bend his legs and turn his head from side to side and run. His hands remained at his neck where they had been in the act of clawing at the spiders. On his face was frozen the expression of fear. But although he could not move, he could still hear the sounds and see the figures in the night-dark and smell the foul smells of them.

A batrachian shape hopped into the room, its cup feet making hideous sucking sounds, bringing with it smells of a decaying swamp. It stopped a few feet from him and squatted on the floor, making loud, long sniffing sounds and licking a rough tongue across its skash-mouth lips.

"THIS CAN'T BE happening!" His mind shrieked. "Not to me! Not to me!"

From the open door the sounds of the Hallowe'eners drifted in to him. Oh, if only they knew what was going on here! If they could only be here with him and see the foulness of the things they so inadequately (thank God!) mimicked! If only they knew -- they would tear the month of October from the calendar and Congress would declare it no longer a month of the year and the children would burn the costumes and leave the pumpkins out in the fields for later use in Christmas pies! If they could only see just for the briefest moment those creatures so fresh from rotting boxes and sunless swamps and meadows where no bird ever sang!

Mr. Potter screamed a silent scream to God, imploring Him to render aid, begging Him to use the forces of Good to send the October-things back from whence they had come

THE VAMPIRE-THING came forward, jerking like a grotesque, rusted automaton, its red-bead eyes regarding Mr. Potter's fleshy neck in the wan light of the moon which slanted in through the open door. It reached out and touched Mr. Potter's neck and grinned an impossible grin. Had he been able to do so, Mr. Potter would have vom-

ited when the nauseating stench of the thing's hot and fetid breath was exhaled into his face.

Mr. Potter didn't feel the sharp teeth as they slid, twin scapels, smoothly into the vein in the side of his neck and began extracting the red fluid from his body. No, he could not feel the slightest feeling, but he knew what the thing was doing and screaming came in mental anguish. Finally the vampire-shape lifted its head and ran a slightly-pointed tongue over thin lips. From one of the needle-teeth ran a drop of dark scarlet to fall, glinting, in the moonlight.

A TWISTED DWARF-THING came shuffling into the semi-darkness of the room. It stood, not quite waist-high to Mr. Potter, contemplating him with squinting eyes. Then it reached up and took one of Mr. Potter's arms in both its large hands. The frog-creature hopped forward to hold Mr. Potter steady, and the dwarf twisted his arm in a power-grip. Mr. Potter almost fainted at the wrench-sound as the sleeve of his shirt ripped loudly and muscles were pulled from bone, and the bone made a muffled and sickening sucking sound as it was pulled from its shoulder socket.

My God! My good God!

The dwarf stripped the sleeve from Mr. Potter's torn-off arm and tucked the prize under his arm with a small, gurgling chuckle. He shuffled back out of the room, out into the darkness and across an autumn lawn to vanish into a patch of darkness . . .

"My arm! My arm!"

No pain, nothing.

Just the knowledge that his right arm had been torn from his body and was out there now being the night meal of some difform creature that stirred only when the October winds blew the last of summer away and the children carved leers on pumpkins and donned their goblin masks.

The vampire-thing reached out and closed Mr. Potter's eyes. He could smell it close to him, could sense the emaciated arms closing around his body. There were

all the shuffling, crawling, rustling sounds around him. No feeling, but he knew that his right foot had been torn off, his left leg, his left ear.

My God! My God what's happening to me! What's going to happen to me! God, God, God! I'm torn apart and still living! Anything -- Lord, yes, even death! -- would be better than this!

He was being carried away, what was left of him. The smell of the vampire-thing which carried the remains of him, went on. The sound of taloned feet. The sound of flapping wings and the sensation of rising up to float gently on the night wind. . .

Far up in the October night that he hated so much, Mr. William Potter went quietly insane.

* * * * *

STANDING ON THE moonlit lawn, the boy dressed as the Red Devil glanced up suddenly, then dropped his grinning pumpkin-on-a-pole and pointed into the night sky.

"Hey! Hey, look!"

A dozen heads turned and a dozen voices flew away on the wings of silence. A dozen heads had their mouths drop open and a dozen very sharp breaths were drawn in through gaping mouths. Two dozen eyes opened wide in momentary disbelief.

"I told you! I told you vampires flew across the moon on Hallowe'en!" Red devil shrieked, pointing moonward and cast a smug glance back over his shoulder at them. But none of them was paying him the least bit of attention and he turned back to look skyward, up at the full orb of the moon, at the large bat-thing beating its wings into the face of the moon.

There was a nervous stirring among them. Someone started to cry and wanted to go home.

Then one little girl noticed the stiff, unidentifiable form it carried and asked, "What's it got?"

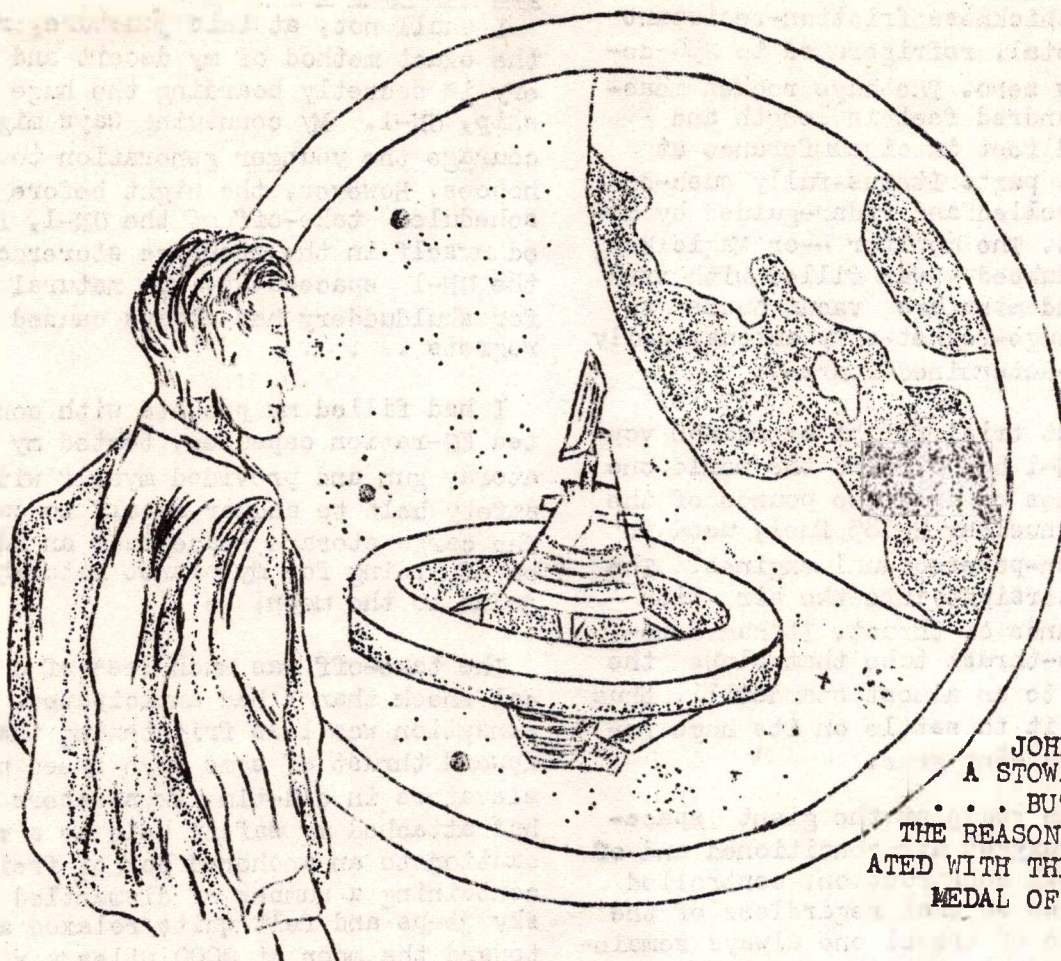
They all strained their eyes and momentarily forgot their fears . . .

But none of them could quite make out what that dark bundle was . . .

THE CUBEALOIDS!

-10

By - ELMER R. KIRK.



JOHNY FORD WAS
A STOWAWAY ON THE UN-1
. . . BUT THAT WASN'T
THE REASON HE WAS DECOR-
ATED WITH THE WORLD CONGRESS
MEDAL OF HONOR !!

Somebody mentioned sometime ago that science-fiction has come of 'age', that it is more widely known by the man-in-the-street. To an extent we agree; ten years ago if you asked somebody his opinion of 'stf' he'd say "Huh?" But now! Now, ask the opinion of the average male and you'd get, "Yeah, ya mean that crazy stuff wit' men bouncin' der brains off a star?"

Leaving Mr. Average Male to his pursuits, we still find science-fiction highly enjoyable more so, whenever Elmer R. Kirk authors a story. . . . - E.J.H.

CAPTAIN FANTZA BLACK, transtellar pilot of space-ship UN-1, looked me in the eye and smiled, "Sorry, Johny," she said, "our reservations are all filled for this trip. Try us again next time."

I had been one of the first applicants to apply for reservation and the captain's refusal to permit me passage infuriated me to the extent that I decided to go anyway, come hell or high water . . .

The tumult of wars had long since passed in this year of 2053 A.D. The unions have relinquished their hold to an organized bureaucratic World government, and scientific invention has been projected

to the unified financial and economic welfare of mankind. Electronic and nuclear research had just perfected the new multi-million dollar space-ship UN-1 and I intended to be a passenger on its first moon-trip or die in the attempt.

The long-haired scientists had been bouncing radar waves off the moon for years on end but only recently had they been rewarded with a reply -- all be it, undecipherable, but an electronic impulse message in code, anyway. This intraspace communication over 240,000 miles of black void was the direct reason that the super-sonic board at the World Congress pentagon had appropriated the funds to build the

new space-ship UN-1. It was a straight rocket-ship, the old-fashioned jets having long since been outmoded . . .

The outer shell of the UN-1 was of five-foot thickness friction-resistant bilanium metal, refrigerated to 250 degrees below zero. The huge rocket measured six hundred feet in length and two hundred feet in circumference at its largest part. It was fully push-button controlled and radar-guided by monitor pilot. The monitor --or Magic Box, as it was dubbed-- was filled with transistors and minature vacum tubes to steer the huge-rocket-ship automatically on any pre-determined course.

On its first trial flight or maiden voyage, the UN-1 had circled the world one hundred times on only two pounds of the new Therom-nuclear H-285 fuel, used in its hydrogen-powered dual engines. The UN-1 shot straight into the air with 150,000 pounds of thrust. It had a reverse brake-thrust tube that slowed the giant ship to an almost standstill, thus permitting it to settle on its huge retractable landing gear.

The inside rooms of the giant space-liner were oxygen air conditioned and of floating ball construction, controlled by gyroscopes so that regardless of the ship's angle of travel one always remained gravitated right side up. It was, indeed a masterpiece of transtellar travel comfort.

"Now look, Captain," I begged. "You could switch reservations with some less deserving passenger --please? I am an experimental planet construction engineer." I had thought, at first, to lie to her, telling her that I was from W.B.I. headquarters and that I had heard rumor of sabotage but knew that I would be caught at such subterfuge.

"You are a --what?" Captain Black asked, sitting forward at her desk looking me straight in the eye.

"I---I build fantastic man-made satellites to be installed in the circling gravity slipstream of near-by planets..."

"You're a liar, Johny Ford, and I don't believe a word you say -- try for the next moon-trip, will you? Goodbye."

The interview was over; the answer a definete one.

THE STOWAWAY . . .

I shall not, at this juncture, reveal the exact method of my deceit and trickery in secretly boarding the huge space-ship, UN-1. My conniving ways might encourage the younger generation to be sky hoboes. However, the night before the scheduled take-off of the UN-1, I secreted myself in the steerage storeroom of the UN-1 space-ship. My natural talent for skulduddery has always caused me regrets . . .

I had filled my pockets with concentrated KG-ration capsules, tested my M-2 atoray gun and provided myself with a safety belt to anchor myself to cargo. The cargo storage space made an ideal place of hiding for my planet hitch-hiking jaunt to the moon!

The take-off was much less of a physical shock than I had anticipated. The sensation was less frightening than the upward thrust of some high speed nonstop elevators in old-time skyscrapers. I had attached my safety belt as a mere precaution to an anchored box of freight containing a number of dismantled one-man sky jeeps and felt quite relaxed as I sped toward the moon at 2000 miles per hour. The place was dismal dark so I passed some time away doing arithmetical mental acrobatics and finally concluded that in about six days we would travel the 240,000 miles and arrive on Moon.

The passenger list, I knew, consisted of 100 people plus ten crew members. The passengers were mostly stratospheric and electronic scientists attached to World Space Operations and a few high-ranking interstellar patrol officers.

Now, as I reflected on my present situation, I became aware of the dangers of being confined in pitch-darkness for hours on end. One of the worst punishments dealt a prison inmate, I mused, was to imprison him in the "black hole" where, if left too long, he would become a raving maniac. If one has never been confined in utter darkness or visited deep caverns in the bowles of the earth where no sunlight has ever penetrated, it is difficult to realize the morbid reflections that horrify the human intellect. All sorts of weird conjectures

fluttered onto my mental processes like grotesque demons from some outer and unknown black void.

The fear of becoming terror-stricken was about to overcome me when I heard a faint noise at the passageway door. I listened intently and thus surcease from the black madness came to relieve my tortured thoughts. It must be, I thought, the steward superintending his culinary affairs. If so, I held no fear for it was he who had helped me board the UN-1.

THE DESTRUCTIONIST . . .

I suddenly realized that my companion in darkness was not the steward at all because it would be unnecessary for him to sneak about so quietly. I closed my eyes tightly so the blinding light from the passageway would not effect my vision. The light on my closed eyelids was like looking into the blinding flash of an electric welding arc. The door closed silently and the strange figure could be cautiously creeping toward my hiding place.

I opened my eyes thinking that my unknown visitor might turn on the overhead lights but nothing like that happened. Instead, he was using the new mid-get Z-light, a self-rejuvenating pocket flashlight. The tiny beam pierced the inky darkness until it came to rest upon a packing case not over ten feet from my own secluded hiding place. I peered around the edge of my anchored box of freight watching intently. The shaft of light rested only an instant upon the stenciled lettering of a packing case; DANGER, it read. HANDLE WITH EXTREME CAUTION--H-285 FUEL. The case contained, beyond a doubt, the Thermonuclear fuel to drive our huge rocket-ship on its return voyage from the moon.

Good God, I thought, what is that inhuman beast up to, anyway?

Then my blood literally froze in my veins, stiffening my body like the sub-zero refrigerant used to freeze the outer shell of the UN-1.

The black demon of death and destruction was affixing a time-bomb to the case of thermo-nuclear engine fuel.

What insane bestial madness was this, anyway? What maniacal desire would drive a man's mind to acts of unheard-of violence and instant death to all aboard -- including himself? If that case of powerful H-285 fuel was ever touched off there would be only a blinding light in the outer realms of space -- and weird mushroom-rooms of gaseous smoke left as an ethereal grave-marker to our unknown doom . . . Ghastly . . . God, how ghastly.

Then I silently reached for my M-2 atoray gun, thinking to blast the horrible creature into Kingdom Come. It is, at terrifying moments such as these, that my past training with M-3 comes to my rescue -- split second thinking before pulling a trigger. A bolt from my atoray might freeze the time-bomb's connection or, more horrifying still, might explode the case of potent H-285, sending all aboard to an astral deathbed. I reluctantly shoved the atoray gun back into its holster and silently waited, taking mental notes of this space-killer's description.

THE EXPOSED SPACE-SHIP STONKWAY . . .

As my unknown host of death closed the passageway door behind him, I crept blindly toward the time-bomb ticking away its remaining minutes until doom. How many minutes, I thought. What if the damned infernal machine should blow up in my face? (Let's call a spade a spade -- I was terror-stricken.) The suspense was frightening. My fingers trembled as I removed the wires connecting the time-clock to the hellish bomb. I was careful not to short the wires until I had removed the explosive from the ghastly contraption. Then, when that was done, my mental relaxation was so acute that I slipped limply to the floor from sheer nerve exhaustion.

Finally and with much effort, I mastered my mental fear and, in the haunting darkness, made my way slowly toward the compartment door. It was locked.

I pounded the metal barrier for what seemed to me more than an hour before my frantic efforts were rewarded. About one-half the space-ship's crew, including the captain stood before me, with awe-stricken amazement in their eyes.

"Johny Ford," the captain demanded. "What are you doing here -- and, for heaven's

sake, what is that apparatus in your hands??"

"That apparatus as you call it," I said, "is the remains of a time-bomb which was set to blow us all into exact nothingness." I then told them the entire story from beginning to end. "And, furthermore," I concluded, "that demented killer is still running loose somewhere on this space-ship."

We made our way up the companion-way and stepped silently into the pilot's cabin. Fantza Black push-buttoned for the rest of the crew and they answered almost immediately.

I looked each crew member over carefully and shook my head. "No, Captain, Ma'am," I said. "He is not among us." Then I described the killer and waited.

"I know him," Ed Bodin, the space-ship's purser hesitated. "He is on the passenger list as a nuclear scientist--an--an isotope specialist; that dangerous and contaminating substance that transmits its lethal light with equal velocity in all directions. Like its mad master it, too, is a deadly killer. Jonhoff Skalin has a container of isotopes in Cabin B-10, ma'am."

CABIN OF HORROR

Fantza Black turned to me, a queer light dancing in her eyes. "Mr. Ford," she said. "You are aboard space-ship UN-1 as an unauthorized passenger -- a stowaway. You are armed which is, also, against regulations. I hereby detail you to bring me one Jonhoff Skalin as a prisoner."

She turned and looked into the huge radar screen, noted an off-course planet nearby, turned an electronic clarifier dial and brought the tiny satellite into distinct focus. "Wait, Mr. Ford," she snapped. "I will be with you in just a moment."

Then Fantza Black turned to the co-pilot and gave him an astonishing command. "Release the Magic Box robot. Switch to manual control and head for those planetesimal squares. Bring the Rocket down on the nearest one. We should be there within a couple of hours... Come, Mr. Ford, let's you and I bring the mad scien-

tist in.

"No!" I refused. It was my turn now to be surprised. "Being an unauthorized passenger, I refuse to obey the captain's order -- unless I go for him alone." The crew gasped.

Fantza Black stepped to a locker, removed a holstered automatic atoray gun and buckled the gun belt around her slim hips. "Follow me, Mr. Ford," she ordered. There was nothing to do but obey the stern command...

She led the way with caution to the passenger's cabin quarters and stepped directly in front of B-10. All was silent as a tomb.

Slowly, she opened the unlocked door enough -- just enough -- to see Jonhoff Skalin's dead body prostrate on the cabin floor. The corpse lay near the container of deadly isotopes. His face was a death-mask of horror and his terror-stricken eyes were glazed, open and rigid with frightening madness.

I lunged and grabbed Fantza Black away from the poisonous chamber of death, screaming for help. Ed Bodin and two crew members came on the run.

"Find some of those nuclear wizards among the passengers," I yelled. "We have been exposed to a near fatal dose of isotopes, Have them change the decompression room into a decontamination chamber ... and Hurry!"

Fantza had swooned in my arms.

THE CUBEALIDS

The huge rocket-ship UN-1 had already settled gently upon one of the beautiful Cubealoids when Fantza and I emerged from the decontamination chamber.

"You give orders like a true transtellar captain," she smiled at me. I was still shaken by my frightful experience and said nothing.

Interspace communications aboard the UN-1 had already signaled World Congress pentagon on Planet Earth regarding the attempted sabotage and, also, about the new discov-

ery of the box-shaped planet on which our huge space-liner now rested.

Several members of the crew and a number of the scientists aboard had made a short and brief expedition of near-by tropical terrain, discovering that the tiny planet was a miniature duplicate of Earth's atmospheric and soil conditions. However, the shape of this diminutive satellite was most unusual. Its contour was like craps shooter's dice, -- cube-shaped, with rounded-off corners.

Captain Fantza Black ordered a World Congress flag erected --by right of discovery-- to mark ownership of the small Oubealoid solar system. She then arranged for the burial of our celestial beast, Jonhoff Skalin, whose stateroom and remains had undergone complete decontamination. One of the noted psycho-mentalists aboard ship had ruled that overindulgence of concentrated scientific thought had so warped the isotope specialist's mind that he had become a madman.

Then Fantza Black called me into her private quarters. "Mr. Ford," she said. "I wish to thank you for your heroic performance in saving my life and the lives of all those aboard the UN-1. Tonight there will be a party given in your honor to celebrate your heroism, at which time I shall announce your recommendation for a World Congress medal of honor . . ."

"Look, Fantza," I stopped her. "I did nothing more than anyone would have done under the same circumstances. I was merely trying to save my own hide. Fact is,

if you want the truth, I was scared as hell all during the whole fantastic affair."

"You are being very modest, Johnny Ford," she accused. "Besides, what if I suggested that you remain here on this tropical Oubealoid as sort of a heritage for your valor? I am advised that the rivers and streams abound with fish, the forests are filled with wild game, the land is fertile, and, well, its---its just an ideal lost paradise."

"Not me," I said. "I'm no hermit."

"We could raise a lot of little Johnny Fords to go thumbing rides from planet to planet or...or maybe be a stowaway..."

"Well, now, Fantza," I agreed. "That's different. You read my mind beautifully."

"But will you do with all your spare time here on the Oubealoids?" she asked.

"Oh, that," I answered. "I will build fantastic man-made satellites and install them in the circling gravity slipstream of some nearby planet." I tried not to smile but finally burst out laughing.

"I see that you have other virtues besides bravery and modesty," she said.

"For instance?"

"You're a talented liar, Johnny Ford. I don't believe a word you say -- but you can make the announcement at the party tonight . . ."

- Elmer R. Kirk.

"ON TO ARMAGGEDON" by -
Johnathon L. Magnus

On, to Armageddon.
With our lances and shields
We will march to the fields
To fight battles of fame.

On, to Armageddon.
And, in blood's myriad
We'll be anxiously glad
To put evil to shame.

On, to Armageddon.
And we never will fear
To give blood for our dear,
Give our lives if we must.

On, to Armageddon . . .

SPATIAL RELATIONS

Conducted By -
HENRY MOSKOWITZ!

THREE BRIDGES, New Jersey, May 25. -- Due to the fact that we went to NYC last week, we were pretty sure of this being a scoop: Theodore Sturgeon, popular stf and fts author, has been commissioned to edit an anthology. Now residing in Concord, New York, he is said to be writing full-time now. This may mean the completion of the original novel which a NY publishing firm contracted for several years ago. Due to an overload of other things, he was unable to do the book, to the sorrow of the publisher and your reporter. Ted may be found in the July--and first--issue of the new BEYOND FANTASY FICTION, represented by ... And My Fear Is Great.

A TREAT FROM AN unexpected source: Popular Science Monthly. With a full-page ad in its May issue, it announced a special feature for its June ish: A condensed version of Arthur C. Clarke's Island In The Sky. A fine and popular book, it is one of the Winston two-dollar originals. Speaking of the book, our advice is to get the English edition instead of the American, for it will have a jacket and six interiors by Gerald Quinn, one of England's finest stf artists. Speaking of Quinn, he did the jacket for the revised and expanded English edition of Clarke's Prelude To Space. This excellent work is non-fiction, but it is not dull reading. It was originally published in the GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS series, Number 3. It was rushed into the vacuum caused by Street & Smith's refusal to let out the pb rights to Hal Clement's Needle. The latest fiction out by Clarke is Against The Fall Of Night, an expanded and revised version of the novel which appeared in the November 1948, SS.

WITH THE POLARIS Fantasy Library, we have a fine example of what lice some of us fen can be. L. A. Eshbach wanted to start a subsidiary press to exclusively print rare stf and fts classics. These volume were to sell as cheaply as possible. They were to be in limited editions. There would be no advertising of them, to keep the price lower. He came out with The Heads Of Cerberus, a famous classic from the pen of Francis Stevens, which originally appeared in THRILL BOOK in 1919. A First Edition, exceptionally bound, stamped in silver, with a slip-case binding. All for \$3. That was more than a year ago. Was he supported? No. Not too long ago, he presented The Abyss Of Wonders, by Perley Poore Sheehan, from ALL-STORY, c. 1915. Same quality of presentation, same price. Support him. If you buy a book every now and then, I don't think you can go wrong with PFL, 12 N. 9th St., Reading, Pa.

SHASTA PUBLISHERS LATEST IS The Demolished Man, by Alfred Bester, the classic from GSF. As to packaging of its books, Shasta stands equal to Fantasy Press. It stands equal also in the fact that both have a hard time in getting their books out on schedule. A Rog Phillips original was promised from SP last Spring; it has still yet to appear. It is also rumored that Heinlein's "Future History" series has been discontinued -- for the present, at least. It's their best selling books. What stf needs is publishers who put out quality material in quality bindings on time! Pray!

ABOUT FANZINES, WE MUST put the subject aside for a bit yet. But do try to get the January 1953 issue of Science Fantasy Bulletin. It is the "GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION APPRECIATION ISSUE", out just recently--it's way behind schedule--it can be gotten for 20¢ from Apt. 616, 12701 Shaker Blvd., Cleveland 20, Ohio. Shows how much half-truths can be put together, while not giving the other side a chance. Usually level-headed, Harland Elluson went off the deep end this time.

SOME PUBLISHER IS COMING out with collections of mag stories by such authors as Henry Kuttner, etc. Good line-ups, too.

FANTASY MAGAZINE IS NOW FANTASY FICTION. Its second issue was a great improvement over its first, with a fine and striking cover by Barnes Bok -- also

a good line-up. You should be able to get the August issue by the time you read this.. Del Rey and de Camp are supposed to be featured.

ALEX SCHOMBURG, MY FAVORITE cover artist, has spread his wares over a wider range of late: the June-July FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, the July issues of SFA and RS, and the August DSF. The top three depictees of Space are Bones-tell, Schomburg, and Smith.

WE KNOW THAT Poul Anderson is capable of writing fine stf; he has proven it with The Double-Dyed Villian and Unkman, plus several pieces in GSF. He did a fine novel for Winston last year, which was blessed with an equally fine Orban jacket. His The Temple Of Earth in the latest RS was thud-and-blunder in a more reserved vein; and we thought highly of The Nest in the latest SFA. With its September-ish, SSF begins a long serial (longer than the usual novel of today, says del Rey) titled The Escape. It sounds good so we advise you to watch for it.

THE TWO BEST BOOK reviewers in the stf mags today both appear in del Rey mags: George O. Smith in SSF . . . and Damon Knight in SFA. Read the latter's review of Heinlein's The Rolling Stones, which is the most enjoyable review of said book that we have seen.

THE BYRNE SERIAL concluded this month in OW is, as you must know by now, not about any of his famous characters. In fact, we were most pleasantly shocked upon reading the first two installments. This novel is good! It could be better, no getting around that. If a book publisher picks, as one should, I would suggest his having SJB rewrite it to tighten things up generally--and to perhaps add a few thousand more words here and there. This shows that OW is picking up, even though Myshkin did show the opposite. . . . (Editor's Note: "Other Worlds" has since suspended publication.)

TALES OF TOMORROW--RADIO is off. It used stories from GSF and nowhere else. TOT-TV is doing badly since they have turned to original scripts by guys who don't know stf. It was such a good program -- once! (Editor's Note: The American Broadcasting Company has since replaced the show Mr. Moskowitz refers too.....)

DEPARTMENT OF FIRST ISSUES

UNIVERSE SCIENCE FICTION. 35¢, 128 pages, bi-monthly. Published by Bell Publications, Inc. A fair cover by Malcolm Smith, which could have been much better. The cover is all cluttered up with type, which doesn't help. J. V. Taurasi has called it a well-watered down version of the new AS. Art-work while good is not the type for a stf mag, as Browne has learned. We haven't anything in it except for Stowaway, which is the third in a series concerning the crew of a space cruiser. An acquaintance called Sturgeon's The World Well Lost "pretty good".

BEYOND FANTASY FICTION. 35¢, 160 pages, bi-monthly. Published by Galaxy Publishing Corporation. Changed at the last minute from its original title of BEYOND FANTASTIC FICTION, BFF is an excellent mag. We read just four of the eight stories presented in this, the July issue. We would call . . . And My Fear Is Great, by Sturgeon, a truly fine piece. A much better job of writing than his 1951 piece for FA. Excalibur and The Atom, which used the same basic plot-stay. Richard Matheson has as lovely a piece of nonsense as we have seen in many a month in The Wedding. Knight's Babel II is all right. McConnell's All Of You shows that he read The Lovers. The last two are pure stf and would have been much more at home in GSF. It is hoped that the Editorial Staff will be able to distinguish between stf and fts in the future.

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE. 50¢, 102 pages, bi-monthly. Published by King*Size Publications, Inc. With the first 50¢ mag in many years, Sam Merwin Jr. returns to the editorial side of the stf field. With a fine amount of wordage this magazine should go far. We found Bradbury's story a very moving piece. Nice to have you back, Sam.

- Henry Moskowitz.

One Step To Hell;

TWO FOR HEAVEN

By- ALEXANDER ROTHLANDS
and GERALD KAMEN

A Sequel to 'The Dead Be Damned.'



Up to this point Al Rothlands has been known for hard-boiled/fantastic-mysteries, to counteract this situation of mayhem Gerry Kamen teamed up with Al to produce this latest effort. The results? Have you ever thought what would happen if Mickey Spillane and Thorne Smith could have worked together? Brother, (and sister), this sequel to 'The Dead Be Damned' is long to be remembered!! . . . - E.J.H.

DEAD. DEAD AS A doornail. It was quite apparent in his mind now. At first Johnathon Brunkner didn't quite believe in the idea . . . but he saw the proof: His embalmed body!

The thought was still startling, the concept magnificent ... Hell, terrible. Yes, Brunkner took up new residence in what was commonly referred to as the fiery furnace.

The funny part was not in Brunkner 's being down there; Heaven knows he was not in any term an angel. The unusual part was Hell itself . . .

Why for instance, were all the devils wearing halos tipped rakishly to the side of their heads? Also strange was the fact

that Brunkner experienced no physical torture in so much as anguish ... any anguish he had was mental! It seemed the "torture" lied in the fact that the 'dead' spirits could not realize primary human desires. For example with John Brunkner living for 'freedom' of sex and liquor found his immortal (and immoral) soul still longing for it ... he had not yet gotten satisfaction in obtaining it, however. A strange 'torture' indeed . . .

A damned funny place. Hell, that is...

LUCIFER SAT IN A straight backed chair passing judgement over the new crop of mortals. It used to be fun; in the old days.

Somehow enjoyment wore thin after countless centuries. No sport involved.

There wasn't even enjoyment in competition anymore. The kind there used to be with friction between Heaven and Hell. Now, Heaven claimed its spirits, and Hell the souls that belonged to it. Boring. That's what the whole damn thing was. Boring . . .

In his heart the Devil knew the actual trouble but he didn't care to admit it. "It" was Earth. A short a time ago as three hundred years they were a lot more . . . well, . . . superstitious!

Yes, he could recall when the horns were feared, red a color to be wary of, his very name something to shrink from! If he came on Earth the way he looked now half the population would claim it a clever stunt to sell Hallowe'en costumes . . .

Souls went on about filing in. Sentences were passed. Ooooppss! That one went up! Oh, well, St. Peter would send him back down . . . What the hell . . .

THE RECORDING ANGEL yawned. It was a tired yawn. Not the kind you'd expect from a Recording Angel, maybe the kind that would come from some young cherub, but from a Recording Angel!!? Unthinkable. Yet true. Hmmm, was that St. George beyond the cloud. Yes; the Recording Angel appeared slightly busier now . . . only the Saint showed slight interest in his attempts . . .

"Had any interesting ones, today, R.A.?"

R.A. yawned once more. "Heaven isn't what it's cracked up to be . . . such as in the old days . . . I've even heard they're taking it easy in the furnace rooms. After a thousand years taking these names and backgrounds . . . it gets, and I don't mean to be critical, it gets, tedious!"

St. George nodded in agreement, perhaps it was a nod resolved toward boredom. He didn't continue the conversation but was rather content in flattening a softer place for himself in the nearest cloud.

Philosophy entered into the Recording

Angel's head, and never being one to lose his thoughts go unheralded he spoke up, "You know George it isn't exactly Heaven's fault of this, well, boredom . . . the trouble rests with Earth. In the old days they were a lot more co-operative than they are now. Yessir, the fault rests with Earth.

"DAMN. DAMN. DAMN." It was Brunkner . . . a strange, tired, worn out Brunkner. For the last ten minutes he was in close pursuit of a liquor bottle that refused to stay put! Each time he finally raised it to his lips it dissolved before his eyes. It had been doing this for days, but one of these times old John would get it, and when he did....! Damn, it went behind a lump of charcoal now . . .

Unknown to Brunkner in his wild chase of liquor that did not exist, Lucifer made the rounds of his new 'guests'. Stopping on a rock some four feet from Brunkner the Devil smiled in playful amusement . . .

"There's one that shows real promise," he remarked to a small imp on his left side. "Imagine what a person like that would do if he was unleashed on Earth with supernatural powers."

The companion imp shuddered, he noticed a spark of sadistic thought flash through the Devil's eyes; sadistic thought, that he considered long lost.

"I have just had a thought," remarked the Master of Evil, "Long has it been known that things are slipping into boredom down here and even —ahem— up there. I wonder . . . I wonder what would happen if I released him back to his Earthly haunts, gifting him with the powers of the damned."

The imp was no longer shuddering . . . it was an out-and-out tremor.

"Almighty Prince of Darkness," said his small red companion, "things such as what you have suggested are no longer done . . . you could not . . ."

There are somethings better left unsaid. Telling Lucifer he 'could not' do something was one of 'these things'. It presented a challenge. Like the 'call of the wild' it was something to be answered . . .

"OOOPPSS, ALMOST gotcha that time . C'mon home to Pappa," the curraclious female anatomy that so easily eluded Johnathon Brunkner disturbed him to no end; yet, with outwardly good nature he persisted in his manner of gentle coaxing. "Baby doll, over here on Old John's lap. You don't wanta go an' sit on that old piece of granite, or whatever in the name o' deah old hell that is ... C'm o n" His female tempter giggled.

"His Majesty, Lucifer, requests th e presence of one Johnathon Brunkner." It was a courtly and dignified gentlemen standing over John that finally m a d e him look up from the pleasures t h a t w e r e known a s hell.

"What in Sam Hell does he want?"

"Whether you are in a state of realization or not is not my concern. I am ordered to bring you before his Almighty Presence"

"Go ta hell."

"I am already in hell, my good man. Come along quietly."

"Alright. So go to the other place."

While it may be said that John's departure from his 'anguish' was entirely voluntary; that statement would not be entirely true. His departing self was assisted by two heavily muscled gentlemen. John came under the presumption that these men were probably nightclub bouncers in the other life ... at any rate John knew a bouncer when he saw one. He saw plenty

IT WAS AN enormous palace one which in its days perhaps saw many nights of gay revelry. However, at the very moment John viewed it, it looked like it was going very much to the place in which it now was resting. Hell.

His two bouncer friends anyone could tell where the chummy type ... why else were they sticking so close to John? A long black corridor preceded them to what the dignified ambassador-of-tidings described as 'the all-wonderfyt chambers.'

"I'll be damned if he ain't real," remarked the awe-stricken Brunkner.

The Devil sat on a black throne carved of dark marble. It was amazing how accurate our conceptions of the Devil, or Lucifer, proved to be.

John moved closer, as the devil rolled in his chair at the sight of the wonder-struck human.

Lucifer's skin pigment was red, both a moustache and goatee gracing what was supposed to be an enormously evil looking face. The horns protruded to a point that would have reminded any ordinary U. S. citizen of a television antenna. He sat naked.

"I'll be damned," once more uttered from John's lips.

"You are my friend, you certainly are." It was a rollicking; and in its way, tempting smile that came over the Devil 's broad, sinister features.

"Listen, Bub, I'd like to know what the con' game is you're trying to pull off here."

"If you are insinuating that I am making an offer to you --being perfectly truthful-- I am!"

John winced. This certainly was not the Devil mythology mused on.

"I see my friend," remarked the Prince of Darkness, "That you are not in eager earnest to accept any plans ... but o f course you haven't learned them."

Seeing that this was evidently going to be a drawn-out affair Brunkner made himself comfortable on the granite-marked floor. "Shoot, Pal," he said.

"It is with great interest Mr. Brunkner that I've studied your earthly records. You have had a full life for yourself. One of sex, revelry, cruelty, heartlessness, e t c .

"You realize it is not my fault that you are now in Hades, but rather the fault of the stupid asses on Earth. Through t h e m you are here. In every man there is a natural lust for vengeance ... a

wanting to go back to the ones who have been unkind in their ways to you."

No comment came from John.

"Mr. Brunkner, I will take the liberty of telling you here and now that YOU are one fortunate personage! Mr. Brunkner, out of the very evil that composes my immortal soul I am going to give you a second chance; a second life!"

JOHNATHON BRUNKNER WAS a born cynic. Whatever instincts went with his earthly remains, suspicion was not one of them. The Devil was a character who did not do something for nothing. However, John was neither one to leave opportunity stand knocking

"What's the pitch," he burst out. "What do you get out of my second chance?"

The Devil laughed; a long hearty laugh. "Brunkner you're all right!" Plainly this was a happy frame of mind for the Evil Master. "Yessir, you're one shrewd mortal. Ordinarily, they'd take something for nothing and get the hell out of hell."

He sat back stroking his beard. "Let's face it, Brunkner, I've got my little greed, my moments of amusement. The only thing is that they've been far to scarce in the last century or so. I like to laugh ... to be entertained ..."

"Say, I'm no clown or nut'in' like..."

"No, no my boy it's nothing like that. MY entertainment would come once you've reached your earthly destination. You see, I'd endow you with certain spiritual qualities, certain powers that would literally scare the hell out of humans!

"You have no idea how many hours of laughter I'd get from seeing YOU make 'boobs' out of them. No idea whatsoever!"

Brunkner was unmoved by his companion's touch for humor.

"After a certain time though I'd go back here wouldn't I?"

Lucifer frowned. "Brunkner, my lad, I said you were a shrewd mortal ... but I advise you to be shrewd only when it's

wise. You would stay on your destination until the humor you supply me with is expired ... naturally, you would return to the domain to which you belong. But ...but John, you wouldn't suffer as much as you ordinarily would."

Brunkner smiled. "Yes," he said, "there are a lot of people I'd surprise with my presence ... a lot of people."

The Devil was positively possessed with humorous m i r t h.

"Fine, fine, my boy, you'll make a fine Devil's Helper, you will. I'm glad to hear you'll do it."

"Do it?" John was entirely shocked. "Do it? I should say not! How in the name of hell do you expect me to catch that damn keg of rum; and the nymph if I do it? Oh no, I'm much to used to Hell; and I'll catch them if it's the last damn thing I do! Do it? HELL, NO!"

IT WAS LATE IN THE day in the place known as Hell. Lucifer, Beelzebub, the Devil, or whatever is your choice of names, sat dejected and alone except for a lonely imp companion. He hadn't been heard to make a sound since he ordered Brunkner's soul burned in the lowest and filthiest pits of Hades. Finally, a pitted tongue was heard to utter:

"What can a devil do? You supply torture that would drive any human neurotic with frenzy, and you yet when you offer them a chance for life they refuse an out-and-out NO. An enjoyable torture is what I've provided; I'll be damned if this whole cursed place isn't going to" Somehow the Prince Of Darkness never finished his sentence. He didn't want to . . .

Somewhere in Heaven the Recording Angel floated on a lazy cloud by St. George. Trying to make conversation with the other.

"You know George," he said. "It may be boring here but can you imagine the excitement down there. There's an ever increasing amount of torment I've heard...and can you imagine the spirit in which the Devil attacks those wretched souls?"

Authors

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF OUR WRITERS!



HENRY MOSKOWITZ

(SPATIAL RELATIONS)

I was born long ago, and I have lived my sixteen years pretty fully. I'm a Junior and intend to go to college in a year or so, to Columbia University if they'll let me in. Majoring in Law and sub-majoring in Criminology.

I've written three stf stories and submitted them this Summer. They've all been rejected countless times. I've also done a fts yarn, with Terry Carr as my cohort. No sale on that as yet. I've done one detective story, which is now on the rounds. It may sell better than my stf.

I met Captain Future in 1949 and have flown deep Space with him ever since. I'd hoped to get him reinstated in a mag. I have a TV producer interested in him at present.

My greatest wish at present is to see the stf field tighten up, dropping some mags and upping the quality-level of material. Maybe the hard-cover publishers will do away with the crud they still publish from time to time. I have hopes of becoming an editor someday and, like Jerry Bixby, acquiring a bank account -- leaving the ulcers to Bix.

This is overly long now, and I sense the blue-pencil drawing near. I hope you like S.R.

* * * * *

TED E. WHITE

(STAFF WRITER)

Waf asked for a biography. Only, there isn't much to tell, except that I'm old enough to drive a car and young enough to still be in school. I'm interested in both art and writing; art taking the preference. I'm a genuine Science-Fiction Fan, who can't stand Spillane.

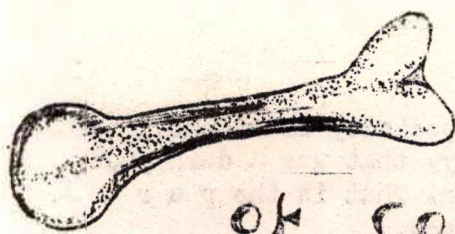
I'd rather see Brevi! publish more stf, but still like it best, as Brevi! brought me into active fandom . . .

There's not much else except that I've a collection worth well over a thousand bucks, and I'm still enlarging on it. . . .

I hope to attend the coming convention. Oh, yes, please forgive the shortness, as final exams are coming up . . .

* * * * *

Editor's Note: Our other contributors to this issue include; Robert Warner, destined to become a top professional; Elmer R. Kirk, a semi-professional in his own rights his fiction always glitters with the touch of a true author; Al Rothlands, who refuses to give a true biography of himself for fear of scaring all potential readers; and Gerald Kamen, humorist, editor and one swell guy. With that kind of help you know your magazine is a success!



OF CONTENTION

IN EACH ISSUE of Brevizine Adventure we will publish a selection of letters from our readers. Both criticism and praise is welcomed eagerly by the Editorial Staff. All correspondence must be signed.

THIS IS A MASTERPIECE! By John Magnus

Dear Waf, I think this is the first time I've written you, but at least it is for a purpose this time -- concerning the J*J issue of Brevi-. It's terrific!

Frankly I've found most of your previous stuff hard to digest, though I've always enjoyed reading Brevi-. But this! This is a masterpiece!

You're still too damn sensational, but I guess you can have your fun if you like. I still hate your heading for Bone of Contention. Why don't you get Ted to draw a pic of a dinasaur skeleton, and call it Bones of Contention, for after all, there are more than one . . . and it would also be in keeping with the stf theme.

Tastefully put together, well-done, appropriate artwork. Good!
By g o s h! G e e! - Silver Spring, Md.



IT'S THAT MAN AGAIN! By Fredrick Christoff

Dear Waf, Here I am once more and without further ado I will rip into Brevi as is my wont to do.

For once the front cover is much better produced than the back one. One thing before I leave the subject of covers, if that fellow doesn't have a mink coat on the end of that line he doesn't stand a chance of catching her.

"The Whisper Of Rain" by RGW contained a poor plot but Bob's writing ability overcame this. However, Bob always seems to use a word or t w o that is in discord with the mood and word arrangement of his tales. This time it was Pruneface. That word was like a pebble on a pane of g l a s s.

What is the matter with Henry? In the past three issues he has had two substitutions. This thing certainly is looking badly for him.

"Departure" is the type of fiction I like. "Wonder House" was enjoyable. - Kitchener, Ontario, Canada



OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES, By Ray Thompson

Dear Waf, The title format is muchly improved, though I can't understand why you don't enlarge the contents page title heading and use that on the cover. The artwork is beginning to look good.

On page twelve you advertise the BREVITY ANNUAL. My God, one would think you were publishing the story of the Return of Christ!

Spatial Relations without Henry Moskowitz is like Ham without Eggs. The Bone of Contention could be lengthened some. . . . - Norfolk, Nebraska



BOB SUMS IT ALL UP! By Bob Warner

Dear Waf, I was pleasantly surprised to find the June-July issue of Brevizine (like Terry Carr, I don't care for the ADVENTURE part of y o u r

title) gracing the top of the hall table.

This Lane Marin is a pretty fair artist. I especially liked the illo for Terry Carr's 'Departure'. And by the by, Terry, that was a darn good yarn. Thanks for getting that old human element in. That is the part I like to stress also. Hope we'll have more from you.

This fellow Rothlands -- he seems to be rising right up there. I favor his writing myself. Now and then I like to wrap myself around an emotion-violence thing, so quite naturally I feel warm towards anyone who can turn out this sort of material successfully.

Kirk's piece left me sort of flat on the ending. However, the writing was good I'm awaiting further material by him.

One thing I did miss in this issue -- your editorial. I don't think you should neglect this, for it lends an air of warmth towards reader and editor. - Bessmay, Texas.



HOW FAR WE TRAVEL! By Lars Frykholm

Dear Sirs, We take the great liberty of asking you about the possibility to obtain a sample of your publication: Brevizine Adventure. - Uppsala 7, Sweden



An Amazing Preview Of -
ROBERT GENE WARNER'S
Fantastic Adventure in
" AWAY ON A DIM, GREEN WORLD "

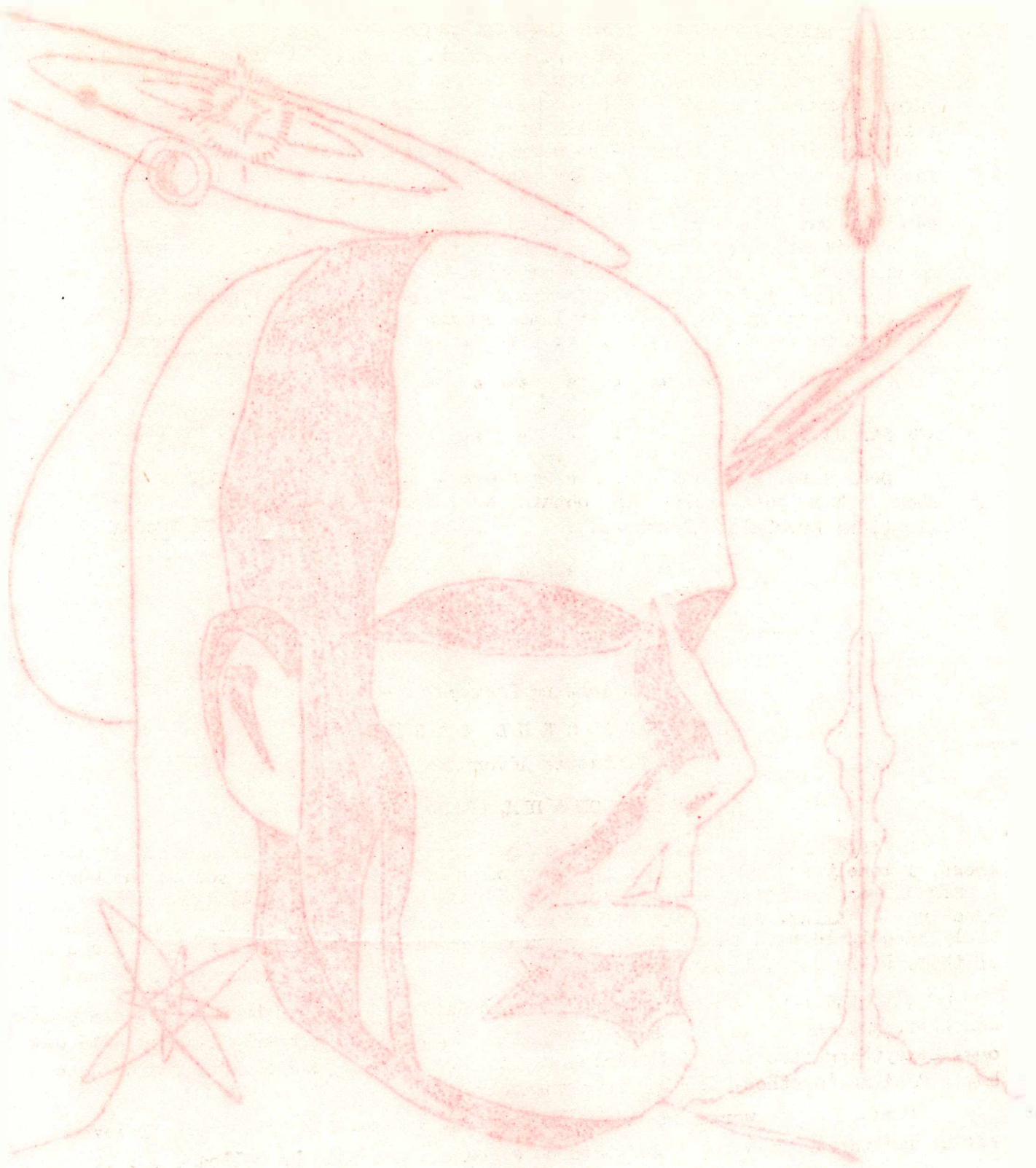
A world, a dim green world, floating, sleeping, dreaming in a space of darkness. A lonely world perched on the very edge of time and space. And on the world a race of people. A very old and very proud race of people, toiling, building, creating, dreaming. For a time he had dwelled there among them, had become intimately associated with them, had, in a brief period of time, gotten to know much of them, their deep, inner selves. No wonder he had wanted to remember the dream!

Quite suddenly he was awakening. The room could be seen through his sleep-laden eyes. But there was something wrong with it, something utterly and damnably wrong! Everything stretched and swirled out of its natural perspective. The objects began folding together, flowing into themselves.

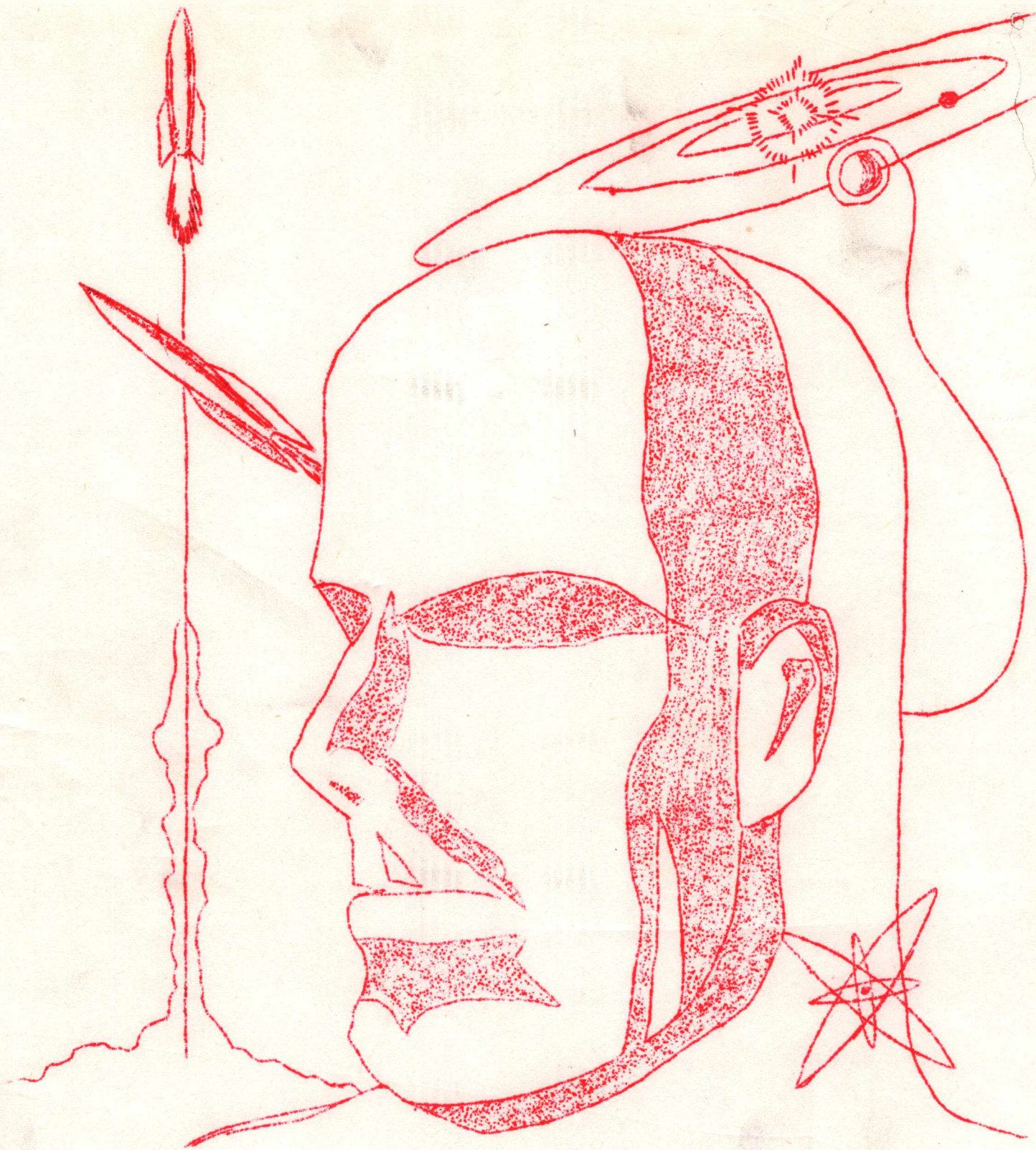
About him the world throbbed, and a firm, woman-voice whispered, "I love you my darling. I love you." And then he screamed. And then he yelled

The Outstanding Drama Of This Futurama message will shock you

READ IT IN THE OCT-NOV. ISSUE OF
" BREVI-ZINE ADVENTURE " on
SALE SEPTEMBER TWENTY-FIFTH, 1953



MAN - ETERNAL



MAN ETERNAL