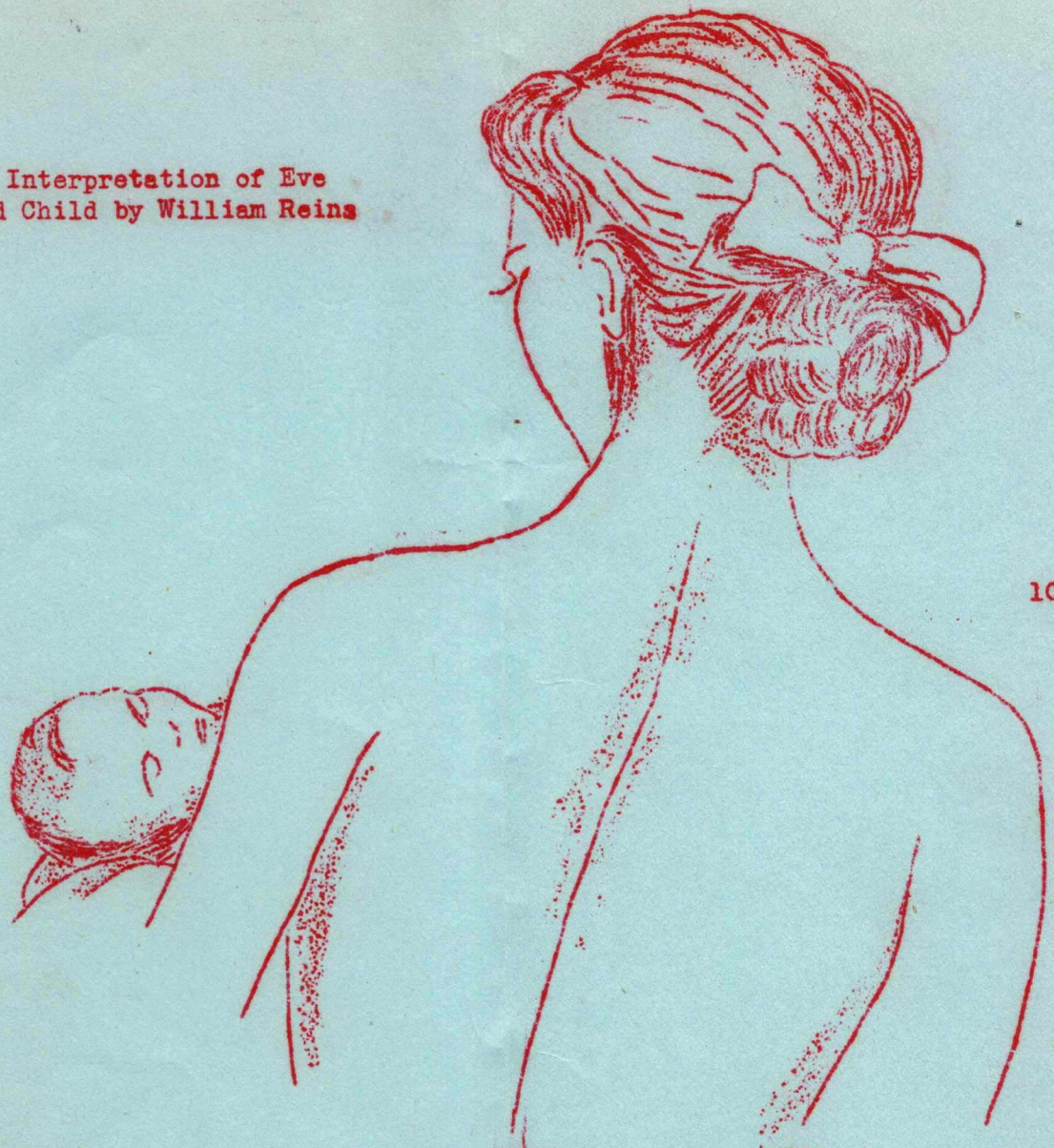
An Interpretation of Eve
and Child by William Reins



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Brevizine

Sophisticated and Exotic Fiction

"MEET THE DEVIL, PLEASE"
by Elmer R. Kirk

"RAIN SONG"
by Robert G. Warner

"HYPERSPACE"
by John G. Fletcher

MAY, 1954

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover by; William Reins

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RAINSONG

a short story by ROBERT G. WARNER

If you're a young girl and happen to be reading this magazine on the way home from work ... well, we wouldn't read this story just now! Oh, yes, we have a warning for you if you do read Bob Warner's fiction piece: Watch out for a guy who hates the rain!

IT WAS WINTER, and it was raining.

And the rain was singing to him, as always, as it fell, transparent powder, from the pale and rolling-cloud sky overhead.

The rain sang a song, and the song it sang was a song of death.

He hated the rain. He hated it with a hate that was more than a hate. Yet, at the same time, he loved the rain. The rain was a hideous and a blessed thing which killed a part of him and fed another part. That rain was both his life and death. It was just that the part of him that hated this rain was stronger than the part of him that thrived on it.

And even though this was true, that he did hate the rain, he could not, as much as he might try, resist that irresistible songcall of it as it tumbled from the sweeping clouds.

The rain started at five o'clock in the afternoon. It started slowly, softly, then it gained momentum until it drummed out a maddening tempo against the roof of the house he had rented.

"I will not answer it!" he shouted at the echoing insides of the house, and the sound of his voice came back, hollow, derisive.

Not daring to look at the window where the rain was sliding down in silver sheets, he fled into the bedroom, where the shades were always kept pulled down as far as they could possibly reach. He flung himself down heavily on the unmade bed and reached out to turn on the radio.

He turned up the volume and twisted the dial and found a program of popular music.

The song being played was SINGING IN THE RAIN.

His eyes burned hatred into the radio's speaker. He said, "Damned!" and twisted the dial to another station.

A silky-smooth voice was saying ". . . brought to you by the makers of SOFT-AS-RAIN SHAMPOO. . ."

Swearing under his breath, he switched off the radio and swept it off the table to land with a crash, tubes shattering, on the floor in the corner of the room.

In the silence that followed the rain chuckled against the roof and sang softly to him.

He heaved himself up on his elbows, then sprang from the bed to stand in the center of the room, tearing at his shirt pocket for cigarettes. He finally managed to calm the jerking of his fingers long enough to light one of the cigarettes.

The cigarette burned its way through his lungs and settled its smoke in a blended blue-yellow mist around his head, stinging his eyes. After a few moments of drawing off the cigarette, he threw it down and crushed it into the floor, not caring if he burned the whole house down.

Again the rain chuckled. Its song became even more irresistible.

He ran his slender-strong fingers through his uncombed hair and cried shamelessly. And the tears rolling down his cheeks were like raindrops streaking across a windowpane.

He screamed, and in the closeness of the room, his scream was like dull thunder, rolling ahead to prophesy the coming of a rainstorm.

"I will not answer it!"

The rain as though it had not heard him, played a light arpeggio melody against the roof and said, over and over, "Come, look out. Look out where I am falling...."

In the end, he knew, the rain would win. It had won, in truth, when the first drop had fallen. . .

He reached for the cigarettes again, but his shirt pocket was empty. Whirling, he said aloud, "Now where in hell could I have put them?" Then he saw them, where they had dropped to the floor. He started toward them, and the rain struck a single inharmonious sound, like the sudden striking of a cymbal, where no cymbal should have been struck. The sound drove down into his mind, and vibrated every nerve, painfully, in his body. His body grew stiff and he closed his eyes for a long moment. "All right, damn you. I won't smoke."

The rain wasn't falling quite so heavily now, and it sounded like thousands of tiny pebbles striking the roof. He shook his head and rubbed his right hand across his eyes. That damnable sound was enough to drive him insane!

Suddenly he realized that the room was very cold. It was winter, inside as well as outside; and the heater hadn't been lit since the night before.

He dug the matches out of his pocket and started toward the heater.

He stooped before the heater and struck a match.

And from somewhere a silent draft sprung up, blowing across the match and extinguishing its flame.

He didn't even bother to strike another match; he knew that it would do no good. It would remain unlighted.

Not knowing why, he glanced at his wrist watch. It was five thirty-one.

Somehow, that had no meaning to him. Once, perhaps, it had meant something. But now--nothing. Five thirty-one. No. Nothing.

He felt his fists, clenched tightly, pounding together. He felt his lips skinning back from his clamped teeth. It seemed that he was clenched and clamped all over, contracted into a painful, corded single-muscle. He stood, waiting.

The rain showered down, singing.

Singing a clear song of death and life and neither-death-nor-life. Singing a soft and liquid song. Singing along the thread-strands of his body nerves, lightly. Playing a Hell-born symphony deeply within his very soul. He raised his fists to his head and ground his knuckles into his temples, oblivious to the pounding sound of his heart there.

"Raymond," the rain sang to him, gently.

He bit his lower lip and felt the blood.

"Come, look out."

I won't look out there this time. I will not!

"Look out where I am falling. . ."

The sound of the rain became a soft euphony, almost pleading with him.

I won't!

"Come, look out. Let your hands relax. Feel them as they are relaxing."

No! I'll not relax my hands! Not...not this time!

"Look out where I am falling...And feel your hands relax. They must relax--until they have something to close upon. They must relax!"

Please! Not this time--I can't do it this time!

"But you must, Raymond. You must."

The rain pelted down softly. It whisper-sung to him. It told him a great singing story of a jungle place. Of huge and golden lions stalking through hot, green places, of emerald alligators and crocodiles splashing in churning, milky-purple waters, of a hundred thousand multi-colored insects, whispering in that vast and horrible silence. Of death and dying and life and living. Of a tremend-

ous rolling cloud of death, and of flashing and brilliance.

"I won't do it!" he screamed.

Life...Life...Life...LIFE!... Very far away in the unfathomable depths of the jungle murmering drums were pulsing.

He hated the rain--hated it! But there was also a part of him that loved it. And that part of him was stirring to life now. He resisted, but he knew that he did so in vain.

"Come, Raymond, look out."

He glanced unconsciously at his watch. It was only five thirty-six. Dimly, he remembered that when he had looked at the watch before it had been five thirty-one. He thought: So much can happen in five minutes.

"Come, look out. Look out where I am falling."

There was no use trying to resist that call. No use at all.

"I'm coming! God damn you, I'm coming!"

He moved across the room and raised the shade and gazed out into the hypnotic sheet of rain.

The wind blew against the rain and it swayed, dancing, as it came down. Was it the wind that made it dance?

The song, clear and sweet and hideous, rose in volume, pulsated and trembled throughout him. He gripped the edge of the window and listened to that beating sound, not resisting. It was a beautiful song, beautiful, full, and fulfilling.

Why had he resisted it in the first place? He wondered. Why had he ever resisted it?

Thou shalt not kill...

That was why. That was why!

The rain was a rushing flood of transparent fluid to erase the thought from his tortured mind.

Thou shalt not kill...

The rain-song was swelling up into a monstrous chorous, as though all the sound since the dawn of time had been gathered up and unleashed upon him in that moment.

There were the beating tones of it as it crashed against the roof. There were the more subtle tones of it tinkling somewhere in hidden puddles. And of its wind-driven swish as it pulsated against the side of the house. He stared with more than fascination into the grey and misty surface of the windowpane as the rain sung and sung and sung its song of death and life to him. Him only...

The heavens opened, ripped asunder down the center, and the torrents of song fell heavily. And it seemed that most of the rain fell against his roof and slid rapidly away from his windowpane and gurgled the noisiest chorous in the drains at the sloping eaves of his roof. And it did. It did.

He reached out, took hold of the window and heaved it up, all in a single, swift movement.

The winter rain gushed in and slashed wetness across his face and chest, soaking his shirtfront. It was cold, cold and cutting. It powdered his face, and took his breath for a moment, it was so cold.

He opened his mouth and closed his eyes --and screamed at it:

"All right! All right, damned you! I'll do it!"

He closed the window then and stood for a long while, it seemed, crying softly, his tears mingled with drops of rain still clinging to his face. Then he turned from the window and went to get ready for what he had to do...

Now that he had given up the internal fighting of it (or had he?), he could look forward with a deep-gnawing hunger, to what he was going to do. He and Rain.

He went and sat on the edge of the bed and removed all his clothes and his shoes. Then he moved, shivering, around the room, collecting all the articles of clothing he always wore when he answered the song of the rain. There was the tan flannel shirt and the maroon sweater and the brown slacks and the colorful Argyle socks and the brown loafers. He put them on and went to stand before the mirror, admiring himself in the ice-coated depths of it. The sporty clothes made him look and feel quite young again. Not that he was really old.

Uneasy thoughts stirred. He felt a sudden urge to tear the clothes from him.... But then he stopped and listened for a long while to the lazy rain, then laughed the urge away.

"Come, Raymond."

More uneasy thoughts. How could he forget so quickly his intense hate for this Rain?

"Come, Raymond, and live..." The singing rain promised so much. He shouldn't kill--God how wrong it was to kill! Yet, there was much life to be had if he killed. And how wrong it was not to answer the call to feed upon life!

"I'm coming," he murmered, searching the bureau drawers for the transparent plastic raincoat which he invariably wore. And the transparent hood.

At five minutes until six he left the house, stepped out into the now lightly-falling rain, felt it ripple in the ecstacy of expectation as it filtered down through the air to soak up into the soft lawn or to be carried away into the gaping mouths of street drainage gratings.

The rain was cold as it tapped gently against his face when the wind happened to blow it under the hood.

IT WAS SIX O'CLOCK, and the light of day was fading rapidly into the darkness of night. The wind died almost completely away, leaving a still-cold. And there was only a shimmering mist of falling rain...

He was an animal, stalking in a primeval mist-forest, walking lightly, gazing easily into the distance, seeing everything, hearing everything. He was a dim phantom-shape, sliding soundlessly through the mist of rain.

And he was a man. He was a man with all the weaknesses and strengths of other men. But when it rained, and when the rain began its song to him, he became something more than a man.

And now it was raining. And the rain was singing to him.

He walked with a mixture of hatred and hunger-satiation burning within him, and the coldness pressing upon him from without. He hated himself, for not being able to resist the song of the rain. He hated the hunger of the rain and he hated his own hunger--which was a hunger far beyond his comprehension.

He let himself become acutely aware of his hands. They were inside the plastic pockets of his coat. And they were relaxed. Relaxed and quiet (such a word to describe his hands!) and waiting.

He walked until six fifteen, then he stopped at a corner bus stop and caught a passing city transit bus and road, sandwiched between murmering numbers of people, all of them soaked and dripping rain inside the bus, uptown. Through the entire trip he closed his eyes and kept them shut tightly, listening to the rain and trying to figure out the pattern of the song it sang. He tried once to hum it, softly, under his breath, but he couldn't. He felt, suddenly, that if he could only hum that rain-song aloud, he would be able to resist the call.

But the rain fell whisperingly against the top of the bus, as though to say, "You will never be able to do it, Raymond. Never."

He got off the bus when the bulk of the other passengers got off; and hurriedly he singled out one of them--a girl of not more than seventeen or eighteen--and followed her as she moved away from the bus stop. He wasn't listening to the song of the rain now, but he knew it was a light and melodious tune of climax and satiation.

It was past six thirty when he stopped and glanced at his watch and lit a cigarette to give the girl time to get a little farther away from him. She must not become suspicious of him. Not now.

He began walking again, slowly, as though window shopping, and after a few moments threw his cigarette into the miniature river of water rushing along the sewer. The girl was just ahead of him, pausing now underneath the awning of a jewelry shop. The rain slid down his raincoat, chuckling, as he pretended to be interested in the objects in the store window.

The girl moved on, and he followed, hastening his steps now, beginning the process of closing in. Inside, buried deeply, below his conscious awareness, two feelings were tearing him apart: revulsion and satiation.

He came abreast of the girl at the black mouth of an alleyway. The street was dark, and there was no one in sight. No one at all. He said to her, suddenly:

"Ah--pardon me, but isn't this Vine Street?"

Startled at the sound of his voice, the girl stopped and turned to look at him, standing there at her left shoulder. He smiled...

And in that moment the rain came down harder. Much, much harder.

For an instant blazing neon lights on the next street caught his eye as they shimmered and were unreal through the curtain of rain.

Then the girl opened her mouth to reply and he brought his clenched fist up in a swift movement. There was a sharp, sickening sound as his fist struck her jaw. She sighed and fell, but he caught her quickly, while her body was still collapsing, and tugged her into the mouth of the alleyway, into the shadows.

He shifted the girl in his arms until both his hands were around her throat, caressing the smooth skin there lightly. The rain was falling almost urgently now from the churning sky, washing his hands, over and over. He tilted the girl's face up, and watched as the rain fell upon it, wa-

shing away particles of facepowder.

The rain was singing, "Now...Now...Now ..." over and over, and he felt his hands beginning to contract about the girl's throat. She stirred, then, her eyes fluttered open and she looked up at him for a moment, incomprehensibly. Then memory came back to her. She realized what he was doing and tried to tear his hands away. The muscles of his arms corded as his hands closed about her throat, tightly, a flesh-and-bone-and-muscle vise.

Long moments passed as eternities.

From somewhere a voice:

Thou shalt not kill! ...

Come, Raymond, and eat ...

He felt his body swaying to and fro, as though he were standing between two strong currents contesting to outblow one another. Nausea churned inside him. Nausea and hunger.

"Come, Raymond, and eat."

A wind came blowing down the slit of the alleyway, and he shivered.

"All right! Damn you, damn you, damn you I'll eat!" His voice was hollow there in that empty corridor-place.

A part of him could feel the life-force leaving the girl.

The rain was feeding also. And it had stopped singing.

He stood there in a dark and blowing dream for what seemed a very long time, holding the girl in trembling hands. Dimly, he was aware of the sounds of the city, far away in the darkness. He tried not be aware of the girl in his arms. The dead girl.

He had fed, and the rain had fed, and he was sick and satisfied, both at the same incredible time.

Finally, he let his hands relaxed, and the girl slipped out of them and fell to the wet surface of the cement at his feet.

The rain had ceased to fall; and he looked up and saw through the darkness that the clouds were breaking, scattering on the wind. One last drop of rain fell and struck him on the cheek. He reached up and brushed it away, cursing it under his breath.

Suddenly, with the rain gone and a wind springing up, it was very cold there in the alleyway. He opened his mouth slightly and exhaled, and his breath hung, a silver mist, before his face. Then it was caught by the wind and carried swiftly away to no telling where in the night.

He turned from the motionless body of the girl, turned from the black alleyway and the sound of water dripping in cement puddles. He began walking, his mind churning, a great expanse of confusion.

Thou shalt not kill ... Come, Raymond, come and feed ... Ah--pardon me, but isn't this Vine Street? ... Rain, rain, go away; come again another day ...

****

HE WALKED FAR into the night, through the dark city, through the silent winter streets, walked all the way home. Once he heard the sound of police sirens in the distance and wondered if they had found the girl. The sound of the sirens rapidly faded into silence, leaving him once again with his mixed thoughts.

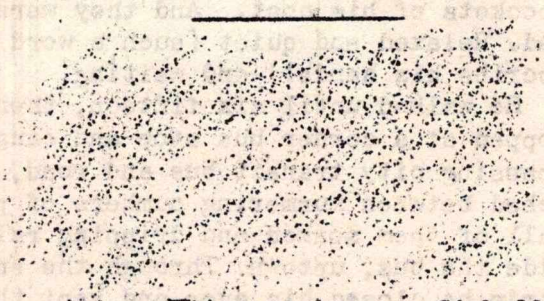
Every now and then he would look upward to see if the rainclouds might be returning. But the sky remained clear, flecked with, it seemed, a billion stars.

And all the way home there stirred within him the memory of the song the rain sang to him. The memory of the song that would linger in his mind and haunt him until the rain came again.

Perhaps the next time he would be able to resistit.

Perhaps.

But he knew that he wouldn't.



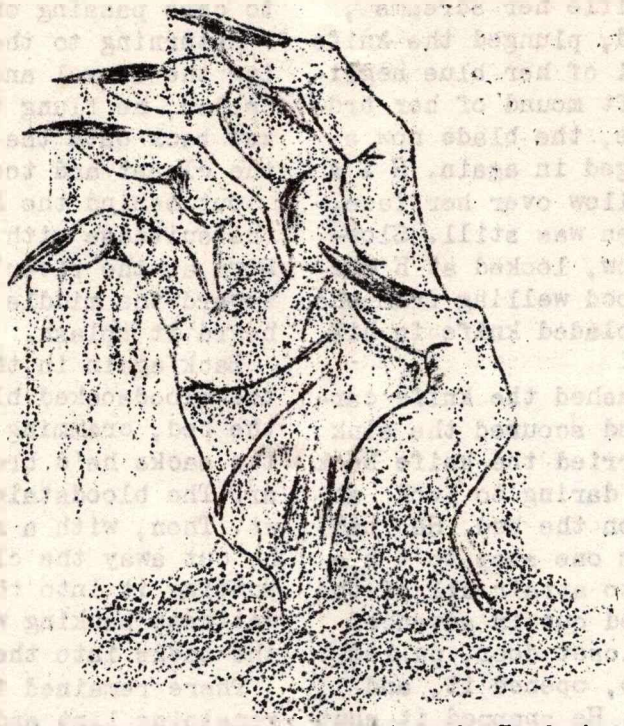
Whispers by Cimball.

" Man is the only animal capable of dominating minds; and yet the Mind is quite capable of dominating him... "

- Franz Leitger.

SPRING FLOOD

BY DENNIS MURPHY



Fiction, mystery variety, has matured. Back in the dear-dead days murder was committed by mysterious shrouded figures that wandered into the night. These murderers would roll over in their dust-laden pages if they saw today's brand! Now the murder is done, neat-like, and the corpse solves it . . . . EJH.

ROGER KANE FLICKED on the light of the lamp on the little bedside table, and looked at his wife Lydia. She was sleeping soundly, the twin hills of her breasts rising and falling rhythemically with her deep breathing. How quiet she was...now, thought Roger.

But, come morning, it would all start up again. The continuous nagging, bickering, complaining. Remembered snatches of her constant chatter traced their taloned fingers across his thoughts--

"The Mason's have a new car! If they can afford one, so can we!"

"I've told you a hundred times not to smoke that smelly cigar in my presence! It nauseates me!"

"If you must stare out of the window, do not disarrange my drapes! I've set them just the way I want them!"

"Haven't you asked for a raise yet, like I told you to do? We have to live!"

Roger's thoughts turned to the bills that Lydia was running up, without consulting him first. The first inkling he'd have of her debts would be when he opened the mail. He begged her to cut down on her spending, but that only led to more quarrels and arguments. He didn't mind her buying nice clothes, but did she have to buy them in the most expensive shops in town? He'd try to cut down on his expenses, only to find her spending more.

Now he had enough! Tomorrow there would be no more nagging! Tomorrow there would be no more Lydia--- And after she was gone perhaps he and May--

May was a clerk at the office where Roger worked, and he'd made friends with her from the first. She understood him. He had a very strong feeling that if he wasn't tied to Lydia, May would be his wife, willingly and lovingly. And she could be, in the not too distant future!

Roger had planned it well. It had been laid out in his mind with the same timing and precision as a radio script...a well-planned script for murder!

He snatched up his pillow, and picked up the paring knife he had hidden beneath it earlier; just after Lydia had fallen asleep. He swiftly pressed the pillow over his wife's face, to stifle her screams , and with his other hand, plunged the knife into the silky material of her blue negligee, just below the left mound of her breasts. He pulled it free, the blade now a deep crimson, was plunged in again. H i s weight was upon the pillow over her face. Her body convulsed, then was still. Slowly, he raised the pillow, looked at h e r face, looked at the blood welling from the wounds, looked at red bladed knife in his hand . . .

In the kitchen, he washed the knife carefully, then cleaned and scoured the sink with equal care. He carried the knife back to the bedroom, hardly daring to look at the blood-bathed form on the bed. He had to keep going now, from one step to t h e next, if his plan was to attain all of the perfection he had mapped out in advance.

He jerked open the closet door, pulled out his wife's suitcase, opened it, and threw the knife inside. He snapped it shut and returned it to the closet.

He went into another room, procured an old coat of his, donned it quickly and buttoned it securely. He slipped off his bedroom slippers, putting on an old pair of shoes.

A temporary span of nausea at his deed swayed him as he lifted his wife's body from the bed and wrapped it in a blanket. He steeled himself against his emotions , and carried his burden out of the bedroom.

At the back door he shifted the body over his shoulder while he worked the latch.

The moderate February night air quickly cooled the globules of sweat on his forehead and face, as he made his way toward the river bank, about fifty yards behind the house.

When he reached the edge of the river, he turned southward following a narrow path until the familiar oak tree came into sight. It's gnarled roots bared like motionless tentacles beckoned to him.

THE DIRT WAS fairly easy to work after the recent February thaw. When the hole was deep enough he rolled the body from the blanket and into the tree-sentineled grave. . .

As he entered the house, he thanked Lydia with his thoughts for her insistence on this little place close to the river, with the nearest neighbor a quarter of a mile away. For one panicky moment he wondered if anyone had observed the burial. No--not at two o'clock in the morning. Besides, his actions would not be visible to cars passing on the highway.

Returning to the bedroom, after cleaning the shovel and replacing it in the cellar, he flung the blood-stained blanket back onto the bed. Then he went to the closet and took out Lydia's suitcase.

Out behind the house again, he loaded the suitcase with rocks, clamped it shut. Down at the river's edge he flung it out toward the middle of the gurgling stream, heard it splash.

Back again in the bedroom, he gathered the bloodsoaked blankets and sheets from the bed, cramming them into one of the two sacks he'd brought up from the cellar. The bloodstained overcoat went in last. Then, with a strong pair of scissors, he cut away the clothwork of the mattress putting it into the second sack. T h e mattress packing went in next. He carried the sacks into the cellar.

There remained the sweeping up of the remaining lint and threads, and the wiping away of the gory stains on the floor which had occured during the removal of the body. And the removal of the mattress framework to a corner of the cellar. The mattress from the spare room would replace the former.

IT WAS DONE at last! Exhausted, Roger flung himself across the newly made bed, falling into a stuporous slumber.

The alarm clock, as pre-arranged, woke him at nine-thirty. After the initial shock of realization of his night's labors had passed, he phoned the office, telling them he wouldn't be in. That Lydia had left him, and he was upset. No, she had left no message. She had gone during the night while he was sleeping.

He was glad this was the last work-day of the week. He'd go out of town over the weekend, on a pretext of seeking his wife at her various relatives' homes. As his confidence grew, his trepiditions waned.

A MONTH PASSED. No one even suspected! He was safe! Not only safe, but more certain than ever of May's attentiveness... She had offered to go to lunch with him on the first morning following his wife's "departure." And she had lunched with him every day since. There had also been eve-

nings at the shows, and dances.

"To help you to forget for awhile--until Lydia sends you some word as to where she is, and what she intends to do," May said.

"She's gone for good," he'd told her, "She'll never come back!"

"Oh yes she will, Roger! Despite her crude ways, she still loves you. She'll come back when you least expect her!"

Roger could see the faint hope in May's eyes that Lydia would not return. As time went on, the light of hope grew stronger, and brighter.

Then, one night, Roger brought May home with him, to show him how she could whip up a wholesome dinner. They spoke little during the meal--but May's eyes were saying all that was needed.

Later, seated on the couch, with the window open just enough to let the warm Spring air into caress them, it wasn't just her eyes that told him of her feelings. It was her lips, her arms....

The river, swollen by the melting snows up north, sung an accompaniment to their wild, wordless song of love....

IT RAINED HEAVILY the next two days. The river swelled upward along its banks, gnawing away bits of mud, swirling around the tentacled roots of the old oak guarding an unmarked burial place....

Somewhere up north, a large dam cracked, burst asunder, and spewed its imprisoned waters into the raging river.

IT WAS AFTER one o'clock in the morning. Roger woke, hearing the frenzied rush of water. It sounded too close--too loud. There was a jolting jar, which caused him to sit erect immediately. The river! Over its banks--lashing around the house with its fury. And the smell in the room! Could the river give off that revolting, fetid smell, as of something long decayed? In vain, Roger flicked the lamp switch. The only light came through the gray oblong that was the window. Above the river's roar, Roger heard a voice--a woman's voice! May? No, it wasn't May's voice calling it was the still too well remembered voice of Lydia!

Roger leaped from his bed, in terror, and icy water swirled around his legs, reaching his knees, creeping steadily upward. Again there was the voice of Lydia calling his name over and over...And that horrible smell! The stench was choking him, suffocating him, curdling his stomach. He had to get out, or drown like an imprisoned rat in the very room in which Lydia had died. Panic swept over him as the water reached his hips. The ransid smell of decay thickened to near tangibility. The window! Escape!

He struggled forward through the window and into those revengeful waters.

Days later, after the river had receeded nearly to its normal level, the warm sunlight of early Spring shown on the base of an old oak tree. It displayed Roger's body. And the half-decayed corpse with one flesh-crusted arm draped across a bloated throat.

...WE'D LIKE TO HEAR IT, TOO

After an unusually long treatise on ghost stories, by an after-dinner speaker, the host was heard to remark: "I wonder if a spectre would care to hear a thrilling human-story...?"

- Myron Generan.

MEET THE DEVIL PLEASE

BY ELMER R. KIRK

The day of judgment is near. What's that? How do we know? We got it straight from the...ahem...angel's mouth! Here's Elmer Kirk to tell you about a rather unique young spectre, Heavenly sent, that winds up in one hell of a spiritualistic mess!

GABRIEL, BEFORE SOUNDING his final trumpet for judgment, gave me a release order to visit an ancient graveyard on planet Earth, during the year A.D. 1954. I needed material and inspiration for some dripping dagger stuff with which to entertain my spirit friends.

"Thank you, Gabriel," I said. "I'll take my mentalistic spirit-writing note pad along. But I would like to shed these filmy robes of gossamer ectoplasm and return to evil human flesh while there. I'm going to visit a cemetery -- one that I missed during my reincarnation while on Earth. I would appreciate leaving my halo on yonder cloud bank."

"Sure," Gabriel consented. "But you better make it snappy for the All Knowing One may have me toot my horn for the new reincarnation at any time. You are registered here; not there."

"I'll take that chance--and thank y o u again," I said.

So I shed my flimsy cloak of transparency and hung it on a cloud bank along with my halo. I bid my reportorial friends adeau at The Celestial Aura Times, picked up my spirit-writing pad and descended down through the black void to Earth.

The night was dismal-dark. It was raining cats and dogs, while the weird Earth-winds moaned and the lightning flashed and crackled like the breaking of huge dry skeleton bones. My soggy Earthy-clothing stuck to me like a million leaches sucking the putrid blood from a doomed leper.

Upon entering this old sanctuary of the dead, the first evil thing I noticed was that there were no ordinary gravestones. This was the devil's own graveyard, a place of waiting for doomed souls to be reincarnated into an even darker world of black spirits. Instead of tombstones, ghastly symbols were used, turning the burial grounds into a fantastic picture of horror, weird and macabre at each thunderous burst of lightning.

Over the first grave was an old and battered money vault, its door blown to shred and draped over it, like a shroud, lay the last remains of a dead burglar. He had a bullet hole between his eyes and blood and gore bathed the empty gun beside him.

Next to this, writhed the ravaged figure

of a desolate man dressed in rags. He was holding an empty opium pipe. His face was contorted and his horrible screams pierced the midnight air and faded into the thunder of black night. He fell over dead for the agonizing want of unobtainable hashish to drug his evil brain. His departing spirit crawled into his tomb of darkness leaving only his bony hand and the empty opium pipe above the dank sod to symbolize his destiny.

Then a few graves away was that most famous of all chairs; the Electric Chair. It was, indeed, a ghastly sight. A black-hooded figure sat in the death chair, his head bent forward in tortured agony, a victim of Earth's insane brotherly love. The stench of electric ozone mixed with the foul odor of burning human flesh permeated the entire graveyard, making my innards retch.

Next, I was attracted to a more mild symbol, or so it seemed, which stood above a sunken grave. For here grew only a huge tobacco plant, its stalk bending to andfro in the eerie wind and rain. Huge green worms had devoured the corpse below and were crawling up toward the leaves of the plant starved, and eager to feed on this s l o w plant of death. I looked into the mona-eye of one of the gluttonous green crawlers and wondered what would happen to him when all the leaves were devoured--a dried ghost worm would be left for a symbol.

Nearby, was an old bloated grave with merely a whiskey bottle as a marker. Idrew nearer to read the epitaph on its poisonous label but the enebriated thing reeled in such a drunken fashion that I gave it up as hopeless.

I turned in misty-eyed horror to yet another grave over which gleamed a gruesome deck of marked playing cards, fanned out into the awesome shape of a Gambler's Rose. The quest of a Royal Flush was the downfall of this mad victim, for the fever of chance had beguiled his tormented mind.

At this point my Earthly legs felt weary and I decided that one or two more symbols would yield more than enough material to last until Gabriel blew his final trump. A sort of evil forbodding came over me as I gazed about these horrors of mankind.

For now I beheld the tumbled-down tomb of a once-famous perverted playboy, over which was carved the scarlet image of a naked female. She was holding a red light in o n e hand and beckoning with the other, dissipation and disease written all over her pock-marked face.

By this time, I had arrived at the far-end of the graveyard of lost souls and only one more symbol remained to be explored, or so I thought. Here was located a giant burial vault over which rested the most remarkable symbol of all. I gazed in amazement. This unusual marker headed the list for the great-among-the-weird sepulchers--for the God of War stood there in all his gory and infamous glory, not with his sword dripping in blood, but with gold and silver clutched in his greedy war-mongering hands, while underneath his bloody feet lay the broken remains of humanity.

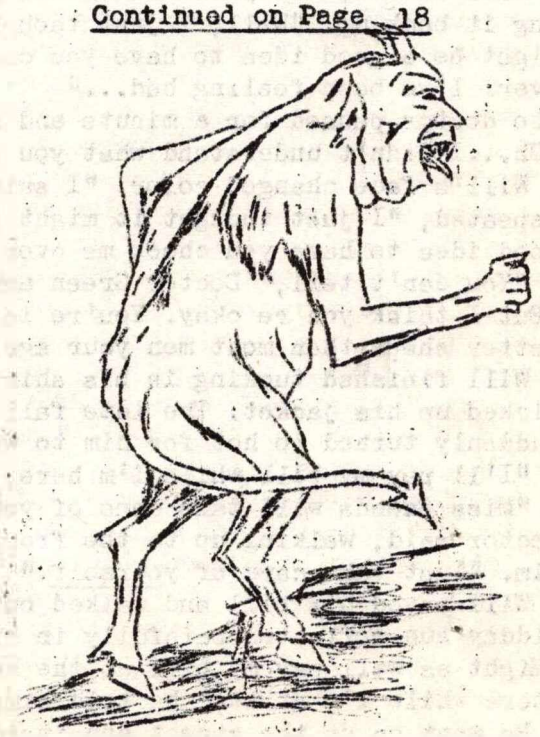
I turned and ran screaming.

I was brought suddenly to a standstill by Lucifer himself, for he had stopped me with the tines of his fork pushed tight against my belly. He was, as I had often portrayed him, a glistening scarlet in color, big horns, forked tail and split-hoofed. The odor of brimstone was all about this beast oft of perdition, smoke rolled from his nostrils and hell-fire issued from his dragon-toothed mouth. "What in the name of the infernal hades are you doing here?" he bellowed. "--and who are you?"

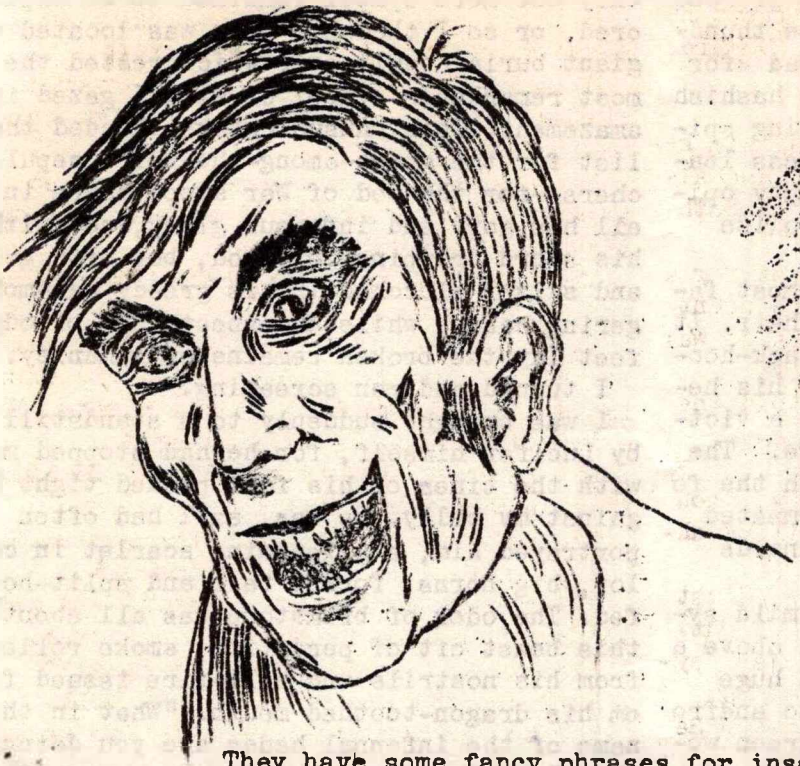
"Me?" I replied innocently. "Why, I was a purveyor of the fantastic while on Earth. Gabriel gave me permission to come here for a respite and--and inspiration." I waved my hand about the dismal graveyard.

Before us lay an open grave-pit, d u g and ready for its corpse. Beside it was a new and unerected symbol ready to be pla-

Continued on Page 18



THE QUESTION



BY JAMES LEWIS.

Poetry from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner": by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

They have some fancy phrases for insanity today. A psychiatrist walks up to you, tells you you're unadjusted or have a neurosis, you walk out after paying him fifteen-per, you still have your unbalancement...But isn't it nice that somebody understands? Then again, perhaps he isn't correct...!

"THERE'S NOTHING WRONG with you that I can find," the doctor said.

Will shifted his shirt as he was buttoning it back up. "Well, I just thought it might be a good idea to have you check me over. I've been feeling bad..."

The doctor paused for a minute and spoke, "Uh...I didn't understand what you said.."

Will's face changed color. "I said," he repeated, "I just thought it might be a good idea to have you check me over."

"You can't tell," Doctor Green agreed. "But I think you're okay. You're in a much better shape than most men your age."

Will finished tucking in his shirt and picked up his jacket. The late fall day had suddenly turned to hot for him to wear it.

"I'll pay my bill while I'm here, doc."

"Miss Sneeds will take care of you," the doctor said, walking up to the front with him. "Just take care of yourself."

Will payed his bill and walked out. The midday sun reflected painfully in his eyes. "Might as well pay my bill at the hardware store while I'm at it," he told himself.

He went on up the street and inside the store. The ceiling was high above him. The store having the impression of great age.

Robert Smith, the clerk, smiled and said, "Good afternoon, Mr. Garth. C a n I help you?"

Will smiled in return and said, "I thought that I might pay my bill and buy several shells."

Immediately there appeared a puzzled look on the clerk's face.

"I'm sorry, sir, but I didn't understand you."

Mr. Garth stirred. "I said, I thought I might pay my bill and buy some shells."

"Yes sir. What gauge?"

"Twelve," he made it very distinct.

"Sir?"

"Twelve!"

Robert turned and ran his eyes over the crowded shelf directly behind him. He turned and reached up for the shells. "The shells are two seventy-five," Robert said. "And the bill amounts to twelve dollars. That'll be fourteen seventy-five plus thirty cents tax or fifteen dollars and

five cents."

Will collected his receipt and Robert's thanks and come backs. He walked out of the store and moved slowly down the street. He saw one of his old friends walking towards him.

"Hellow, Bill!"

The man walked by without turning his head. He was hurt for a minute. Bill had always been a good friend. There was something wrong. Something bad wrong.

JONES' DRUGSTORE WAS vacant except for a soda jerk making lazy swipes at the counter. The air, a relief from the outside,was cool and moist. He sat down heavily.

"I'll have a coke, please," he told the boy behind the counter.

"Sir?"

He leaned forward and said slowly, "You didn't hear me ask for a coke? Tell me-ah-just how did my voice sound?"

The boy moved a little and spoke, "Just hazy and muffled. I couldn't make it out."

He drank his coke with the soda jerk eyeing him in wonder. He paid; walked out.

The street was just as warm as ever. He went down it and crossed a redlight. He wasn't feeling well; not at all.

"Hello, Mary," he called to a friend as she just walked by...

Then she turned and came back.

"Why Will Garth, can't you speak?"

"But I did," he protested.

His head turned around...and around...

"Oh, you just thought you did." She waved his protest away with a flick of her hand. "How are you getting along? Has the dry spell hurt the crops?"

Will relaxed as his head came to a dizzy standstill. "Well, they're fair..."

"Speak a little louder," Mary said breaking in. "I can't hear a word that you're saying!"

"I feel sick," he told her. And it was the truth. His head, heart, stomach, and legs were moving---quivering.

"In a fix?"

Suddenly he felt something give. He had to escape. He had to run. He ran down the street screaming.

No one turned. No one moved.

He screamed as long and as loud as he could.

No one even turned their head.

He turned and walked back through the crowd that had collected around his--and it wasn't even a shock--body.

"I'm dead." He said it loudly. But no one moved. And with great wonderment he asked the question that was bothering him. "What is death?"

No answer.

He heard no one. No one heard him.

"I died just a minute ago...What is death?"

No answer. He was looking in through a window. He could rant and rave. But who would hear it?

He screamed and hit a man. He kicked them while they said with silent lips things that he couldn't hear.

The man just shook his head. Looked sad and walked away.

It's a movie, he thought. Then he said it: "It's a movie. A 3-D movie. The sound is bad. It'll get better in a minute. They're fixing it. It'll be okay."

But he knew that it wasn't so. He knew that he was dead. That he was alone.

The actors acted through the screen.The actors spoke. But nothing came out.

The screen was a fury of sound and motion renewed. The death scene was over.

He asked it again. "What is death?"

He heard his own words. Flat. Dull.

Somehow he gathered his wits and walked away. And from his far distant youth he remembered a poem. He said it slowly. Just one part.

"'Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone, on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.'"

That was the answer. He knew it. He tried to deny it, but it came through.

Slowly, he walked away. Through cars and trucks. Through buildings. Theatres, drugstores, bars, supermarkets--and churches. He watched lovers making love. Lovers fighting. People talking.

But he never heard it. He never felt it.

He thought over and over...

"Alone, alone, all, all alone."

"'Yea, slimy things did
crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

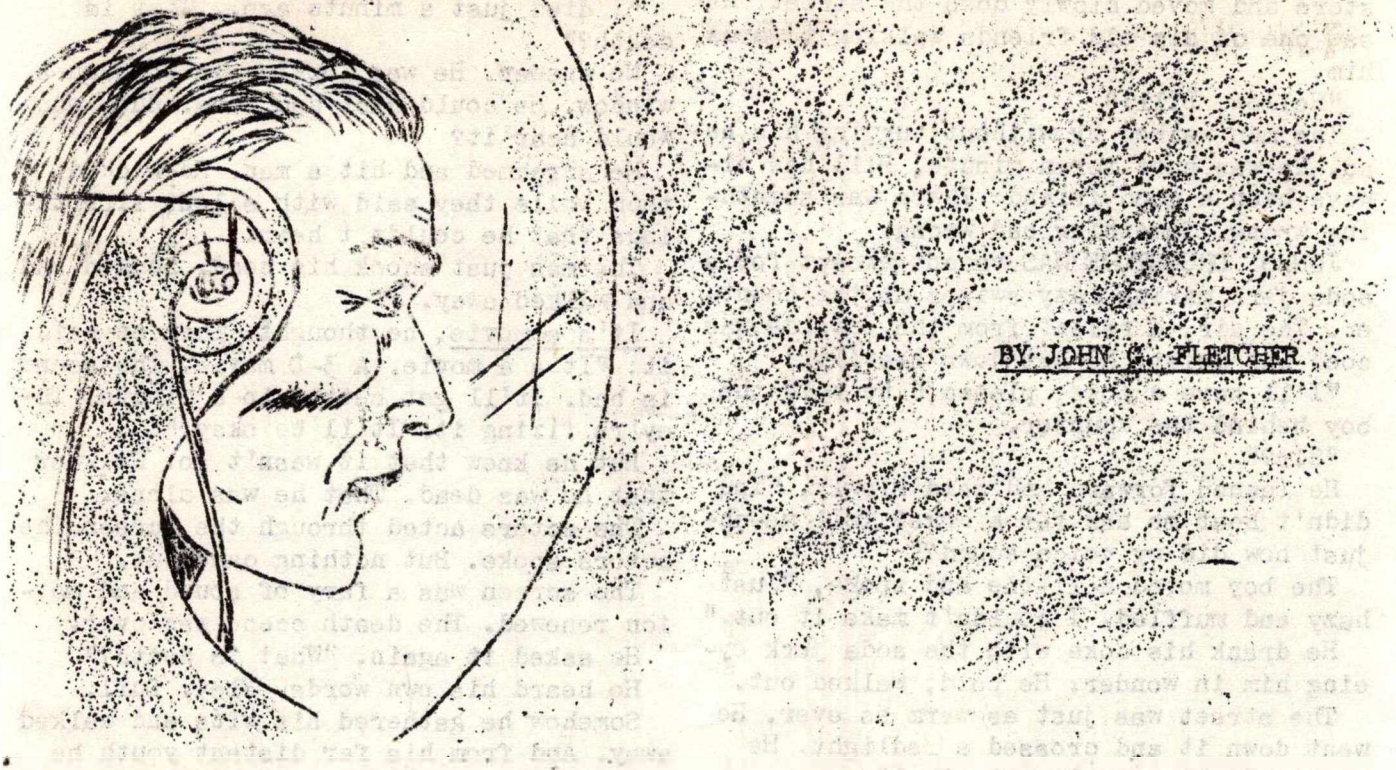
Alone, came his thought.

"'...The holy hermit
raised his eyes,
And prayed where he
did sit.'"

And these he knew would be his only thoughts...his only comforts...his only sorrows...his death blood...

Forevermore....Alone!

HYPERSPACE



BY JOHN C. FLETCHER

Seems there's a disagreement these days as to the interpretation of genuine science-fiction. Personally, we've always considered "stf" to belong to the strictly action and adventure lines; with a little Buck Rogers thrown in. Nothing Shakespearean, but passable entertainment! We'll leave John Fletcher tell you all about it. Action-like !

IT SEEMED LIKE there was no end to the black, merciless depths.

For months the ship had been plunging through the hell of all eternity, with nothing but brief flashes of the light of stars interrupting the pitch.

Jason Cross stepped back from the viewing plate and sighed. He retreated back to his cabin, shrugging his scrawny shoulders and scratching his balding head.

His cabin was like a closet to one w h o was used to traveling in the lap of luxury. But when one has lost all his money he can not afford to travel on the best space cruisers.

Jason climbed back into his bed and pulled the inexpensive covers up to his neck.

Suddenly the ship lurched. Jason heard the air whistle out of his room. His head swam. Bright lights sparkled all through his skull. He heard voices somewhere, someone picked him up and then dropped him again. He felt the floor move under his feet.

He tried to sit up but a gentle hand pushed him back.

"Lean back and take it easy. After what you've been through you shouldn't even be alive."

Jason tried to talk but his lips were dry and his tongue wouldn't take the right position.

"I said take it easy. There are only ten of us now. We don't want to make it nine." It was a girl's voice. A beautiful girl's voice. "If you'll keep still I'll tell you what happened...

"A meteor hit the side of the ship. No, I guess you wouldn't call it a meteor. We don't know quite what it was. We're not even sure it hit us. We're not even sure there was anything to hit us.

"You want to know why? Well...because we're still in hyperspace. Oh, you'll be all right. We're in the life-craft. The only trouble is...There's no way to get out of hyperspace. We didn't even know it

was possible to be stranded in hyperspace. Just like we didn't know it was possible to see stars flashing by in it.

"But, boy, we are in it!"

Jason passed out again.

THE ROOM WAS bright. Jason could makeout shapes dancing about the room, bending over his bed, and performing their grotesque ballet acts.

"He's coming to."

"Shhh! Keep your voices down!"

"Jason. Jason! Are you okay? Come on. Open your eyes."

His lips parted but he could make no sound come out. Finally--"I...I can't breathe right. Help. I...I...can't breathe..."

"More oxygen, quick!"

A burst of oxygen filled his lungs. The murky blackness swam away.

JASON STARED ACROSS the table at Maureen. Her hair was golden with a slight trace of brown in her pompadore. Her short hair glistened in the bright light of the dining hall. Her eyes, a lustrous blue, glanced at Jason, then at the floor.

He saw that she was about twenty-nine, not a beautiful girl but a striking one...

She looked as if she were about to speak. Her lips parted but Jason broke in.

"I don't quite know how to thank you," he pulled the blanket closer to him. "I.." he stammered, searching for the right words, that never came.

A man walked over to the table. "Maureen, Alec wants to see you in his quarters, rather than the usual place..."

"Be right there." She turned to Jason, "Don't thank me. We needed men. If I didn't save you there would be only nine of us. You'll have to understand that."

As she turned away a slight gleam, that could have been a tear, showed in her eye.

"Say fellow," Jason called to the message carrier. "Come here will you."

"Yes, sir."

"This is only a life-craft, isn't it?"

"Yes."

Jason could see the boy was no more than sixteen. "I thought there wasn't enough supplies for more than a month for eight people on one of these things? No hyperspace controller either?"

"You're right on both counts," the boy forced a smile. "I wouldn't worry though. Mr. Alec says we were lucky enough to smack up near a sun; not exactly a sun though, something different about it he said, but anyway it has some sort of planets circling it. He said we were going to land onone of them."

"Planets? What type of planets could there be in hyperspace?"

"Don't ask me. Ask Mr. Alec."

"Yeah..."

"I DON'T RIGHTLY know, Jason, but we'll find out."

Jason looked around the room with outright interest.

"It is quite a room isn't it?" Alec stood up from his leather backed chair and walked to a panel containing numerous switches and buttons. "Confusing to someone like you who doesn't understand the difficulty of a pilot's job."

"Tell me this...Why are we stuck in this position? Why doesn't this ship have some mechanism to take us back to normal space. It's pretty God-damn stupid!"

"Whoa, Jason, whoa! You've said just about what everybody wants to know. Nobody was ever stuck like this before, everybody figured that if the ship smashed everything would revert back to normal. Apparently that isn't so..."

"It looks damn right like it!"

"Your language is stinking, Mr. Cross. Especially in front of a lady!" A voice floated across the room from the doorway.

"Sorry, but a lady usually knocks before she enters. And the name is Jason if you want to be so friendly aboard this hunk of plywood!"

"Look, Jason," Alec was infuriated. "Anytime you want to get off this hunk of plywood, just tell me. I'll throw youoff!"

Maureen flushed. "Act like grown men will you! I'm sick of listening to this! We've all got to stick together if we're going to get anywhere!"

"She's right, Jason. We've got a lot that needs doing!"

"--And you can do it yourself!"

"Get out of here!" Alec's voice sounded throughout the room.

JASON REMAINED IN the men's quarters until the ship landed. Alec was sounding off again. The inter-com buzzing vibrantly.

"Bring all testing equipment to the hatch. One of you go get Jason and bring him here. Sally, you and Maureen are the only girls on board. You go with her down to the medical department and bring up all essential material.

"The rest of you will test the conditions on the planet.

"Is Jason here yet?"

"He's on his way here now."

"Ah, there you are, Jason. Tell me, what did our fine little boy do for a living?"

"Nothing. I was a playboy!"

"Come on--what were you?"

"An insurance investigator."

"Oh, wonderful, you'll be a great h e lp here." The men sneered at Jason.

"I didn't ask to be brought here!"

"Neither did any of us!" Alec fumed. "U-can help the women do their jobs!"

A throaty, "Go to hell!" was held down by Jason as he looked at the sturdy men...

"--And be careful not to get any dishpan hands..."

The men fairly rolled on the ground with their laughter.

"YOU DON'T HAVE to help us," Maureen was saying, "Why don't you go and help the men with their testing?"

"Look, out of 150 people on board that liner, you have to pick me to save. Me!The guy that can't do anything! The guy w h o didn't care whether he lived or died. The only guy on board that ship who was scrawny, and because of that he lost his job... Me! Why couldn't you pick the cabin next door? Why?"

"You must have some hidden talent that's useful. Something that could help out." Maureen searched Jason's face.

"Not a damn thing."

"DISMANTLE THE SHIP!"

"Are you crazy, Alec, if we ever have to get out of here we won't have any way."

"Look, Jason, just because you found that you know something about nature do'nt get over-confident. If we ever have to clear out we could never do it on that. It only has a jet engine. We wouldn't have enough fuel to get from here to the lake half a mile from here...

"We can use the material from the ship for building make-shift houses. We've picked the lake area for our spot. After we get settled we can figure what kind of a universe we're in here. That's the question bothering me..."

THE FIRST FEW months in the 'colony'were busy ones. Houses were built, farming began on a small scale, and several problems were solved as to how the women should be left alone, and to choose their own mates.

Yet all that time there was only one real goal...to get out of that hyperspace existence. And that, too, was becoming reality.

"TODAY, ALL OF us are gathered here to try to get back to real space. As you know, we have come across only one form of animal life on this planet. A beeflike animal that ate only the naturally-grown plants.

"We have only one man with us on this venture that is qualified to even talk on hyperspace, our physicist, Lee. It's my opinion to turn the project over to him. What do you all think?" Alec heaved a heavy sigh and sat down.

"I agree." Jason had filled out his small form over the two strenuous months of colonization and had lost his sulkiness. "Lee should choose his committee, say 5 members, for this special work, and the rest could do the regular chores..."

"Right," echoed the throng.

Lee, a small man of Chinese descent, stood at the head of the long table.

"I have been looking around on this strange planet," the Chinaman spoke slowly, "and I have found that everything moves incredibly slow here. Our own time rate is about twice as fast as that here. We do not notice that because we are, or have been, very busy. But if you will take notice, it takes the sun, the same size of Earth's, and of the same magnitude, twice as long to travel around this planet...the same distance away from this planet as Sol is from Earth.

"It also takes this planet, the s a m e size of Earth, twice as long to spin on its axis. Nearly 48 hours. Possibly, no one else noticed this because it gets dark relative to Earth time."

Voices buzzed up and down the table.

Lee continued, "I have come to one conclusion...someone or something is controling this planet!"

He paused for breath.

"That makes to questions to be answered: How can anything exist where there is nothing possibly able to exist, hyperspace. And, too, who is the controller?"

Lee sat down amid a series of questions shot at him from everyone at the table.

Jason got up and walked to the door. Maureen followed him outside.

"Jason?"

"Yes. Is that you, Maureen?"

Maureen found herself in Jason's arms.

"I'm scared, Jason, oh I'm scared. All this is...is so impossible. It couldn't happen. I can't understand it..."

"Don't try. No one could." Jason began to wonder. Began to wonder if this were really happening. As if this weren't he. He thought he heard his name being called, but he couldn't be sure. He couldn't be sure of anything.

Then...He was sure. He had heard someone calling. Someone calling everyone of the ten spaceship-hyperspace survivors.

A strange voice, booming all over the

universe. Calling and echoing throughout the edges of Eternity.

He could just make out what was said...

"So, puny ones! You have found your way to our planet! We see that you are stranded. Have you not mastered the mind yet? Can you not transport yourself with y o ur weak brains?

"You have much to learn before you can become one of us. Do not fear. We shallnot harm you. We would have nothing to gain by such a measure.

"I see that you do not understand howyou could possibly be in what you call hyperspace. Hmmm.

"What you call hyperspace, my friends is nothing more than mechanically - induced thought-waves!

"I see that you are still puzzled...

"Did your scientists not discover that you could travel only twice as fast i n hyperspace and not as fast as was originally considered?

"Did they not find that thoughts had a weight of their own; can be measured.

"Puny ... conceited, puzzled mortals!"

JASON'S THOUGHTS began to fade. He felt himself slipping into nothingness. He could still feel Maureen in his arms, b u t he knew he was blacking out.

TEN AMAZED PEOPLE looked at each other as their spaceship plunged toward a small green, now even infinite, planet that suddenly loomed before the audio-wave screen. So very small.

Puny, was the word...

It was a long while before anyone ventured to speak out. A long time.

MEET THE DEVIL, PLEASE!
BY ELMER R. KIRK
Continued from Page 12

ced when its victim was lowered into the grave. The symbol appeared to be a book of fantasy...

The devil's imps hovered about the pit of death. Huge reptiles, dragons and a conglomerate mixture of witches, werewolves and phantoms pranced on me, all of them grinning and gnawing on the decaying and putrid flesh of a nearby corpse. They were gleefully singing and hissing to me a funeral dirge. I suddenly realized that they were going to have a party at my expense for I had made use of all of them at one time or another in my writings.

"That," Lucifer bellowed again, pointing to the open grave, "is to be your resting place."

"Look, you old bastard," I said. "I have never done anything worse than scare hell out of people, stabbing their brain with fantastic words of my pen in a vain effort tomake the world a better place to live in. Look at the craven symbols of humanity buried here."

Without warning...the eteral skies were filled with t h e final blasting of Gabriel's trumpet. Doomsday had arrived without advance notice.

I was caught up as if by levitation and, as I looked down upon the horrors of Earthly evil, I double-thumbed my nose at the devil and all his imps....

The Bone of:

CONTENTION

RUNDOWN ANALYSIS!

Sirs:

...I like the cover format, also the TofC page. The double columns give a very neat appearance. The actual printing, the grammar, spelling, legibility and general appearance of the text, are of excellent quality, but the reproduction of the artwork is exceedingly amateurish. In fact, it seems incredible to me that a person capable of turning out such clean printing as the text, could turn out such stiff and graceless illustrations.

G. M. Carr

Seattle, Washington.

FAITHFUL READER!

Sirs:

Allow me to view your excellent publication from the other side of the seas. I have been reading BREVIZINE for sometime. More than anything else that appeals to me is the editorial policy. The editors seem to have a clear, confident, thought-out way of running the periodical, which they are following thru on.

Unlike many other periodicals this type of format cannot help but get at the 'sophisticated reader.' My congratulations!

Millard Cranston

London, England.

BEYOND HIS COMPREHENSION

Sirs:

...I didn't dig any of the fiction in the two copies I have. With the exception of the piece by Elmer Kirk, which I thought was rather good. Actually the story wasn't good as far as quality goes, but it was well-written.

The best item in the November '53 issue was the Moskowitz column. In fact it was the only read-worthy piece in the entire issue. If you get more stuff on this quality, you might have a mag.

Gerard M. Steward

Ontario, Canada.

****

DUE TO THE unexpected demand for the Brevity Annual we have found that our limited supply of copies to be printed was a far underestimate of what was in reality our need.

WE THEREFORE ask those people who have sent for their copies, but have not received them, to be patient until we can make ready a new edition.

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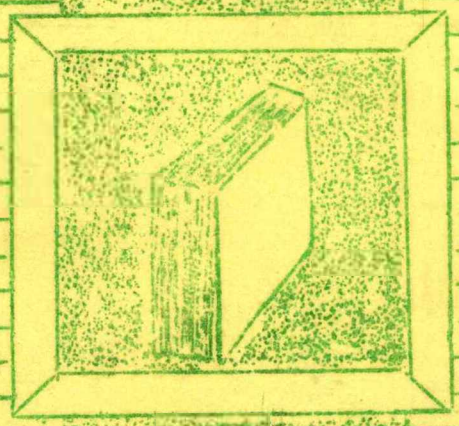

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