

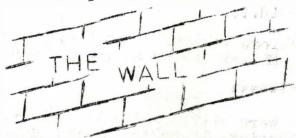
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featuring part two of THE WALL by Ron Bennett and including an idea by Kingsley Amis. Cartoon by Dick Schultz.



"It must be a Bennett magazine. All of a sudden I have this irresistible desire to play brag...."

In the March OMPA Mailing there was a piece of nasty nonsense—nasty only because I suffered—called THE WALL, a round robin serial in which a writer gets someone in a mess and that someone has to write following chapter, getting himself out of said set mess and someone else into one. And so life continues. The first instalment of this master plan was written under the by-line "Edgar Bates" which points to Bruce Burn, though I fancy that friend(?) George Locke had much to do with it. With offstage muttered curses directed at these two and/or anyone else who was responsible for the mess I was ensuared into, here is:



Part Two

What has, more or less, gone before: Investigating a blood-stained postcard from Chris Miller, his London stamp spotter, Ron Bennett visits the British Museum where Miller has been reading the fanzine files. With Bennett is Bill Donaho who has somehow appeared on the scene. Bennett loses Donaho in the darkness of the B.M. vaults and comes across Miller's corpse. Shots ring out and Bennett crumbles. cookiewise. He is then attacked by something with sharp talons. Bennett murmurs "Toenails...sexy...toe-nails." The dust around him glows.... Now read on....

The dust glowed, casting an eerie light round the vault. Bennett felt a buzzing in his ers, the sound like that of a tape recorder being played at fast rewind. The vault seemed to spin, the floor tilting. The glowing dust seemed to shimmer and Bennett felt his life oozing away. "Damn," he thought vaguely, "I won't be able to play Ellik brag when he comes over on TAFF....." The noise grew and echoed in his ear drums. The shimmering of the glowing dust enfolded him and everything went black. Like falling into one of Chandler's bottomless pits, Linwood, Bennett would have thought had he been capable of thinking.

And he was! From the dark corner of the vault Bennett's bespectacled eyes blinked down at his new body. He slapped himself several times to ascertain that he actually existed. He touched his jacket, finding the CND badge on the lapel and his wallet intact in his pocket. The dust, he noticed, was no longer glowing. He bent down and groped for the two bodies on the floor.

A light shore in his face, causing him to shield his eyes with his arms. "Don't move or I'll shoot," said a stern voice. Bennett froze. "Right, now drop your arms and keep them away from your pockets." Bennett did as he was told, blinkly quickly and continuously in the unwavering light.

"Oh, it's you, Ron," said the voice and the person holding the torch turned the beam on his own face. Bennett was surprised to see Chris Miller walking towards him. "Say," said Chris, "It must have been you I shot. My nerves were a little on edge. Sorry, Ron."

"I'll bet your nerves were on edge, "said Bennett. "What did you decide — that I was this beast with the talons?"

"Well, yes, actually, I did..."

"Let's get out of here before it comes back, "said Bennett as the thought struck him." Miller needed no second bidding. They got out.

A short while later they were sitting side by side on the spare bed at the Parker Penitentiary in West Kilburn. Ella was counting the hands raised for tea and coffee.

"It was really weird," Chris was saying. "I was looking up tha fanzines in the vault...."

"Eney's?" asked Archie Mercer who was staying in London at the time.

Miller ignored the interruption. "....when I was attacked by some strange beast. I'd given myself up for dead when the dust began to glow and I found myself looking down at my own body. There was a gun on the floor and I'd no sooner picked it up than I heard something move and when I heard that horrible scream I fired. I'm sorry I hit you, Ron."

"I don't understand how you managed to come back to life," said Pat Kearney.

"It reminds me of a Bob Bloch story in <u>Unknown Worlds</u>," added Ted Forsyth.

"Cr that novel by Sheckley...."put in Joe Patrizie. "What is it called?"

"I know the one, "Jimmy Groves volunteered. "Immortality Incorporated."

The doorbell rang suddenly. "Last one answers the bell," said Ella and Bruce Burn went clumping downstairs, two at a time, to the front door. He returned a moment later with Ken and Irene Potter and a sheepish looking Bill Donaho.

The floor shook slightly more than usual and Pauline from the flat below came up to see the cause of the disturbance. When she saw Bill's bulk she beat a hasty retreat. "Well, Wee Willie, what happened to you?" Bennett asked Donaho, but his question was drowned under the hum of general introductions.

"I'm writing a play," Ken Potter was saying. "It's about these people in a room when they find the walls closing in on them."

"It's what comes of living in a caravan," said Irene in that Little Girl voice of hers.

"Who's for soup?" asked Ella suddenly. Hundreds of hands shot in the air. "Well if you lot think I'm making any for you, you've another think coming," Ella went on. "Jimmy, you're about the only one here who isn't all thumbs when he comes to doing something useful. Take yourself upstairs into the kitchen. You'll find some tins of soup and a saucepan. See what you can do, will you?"

Jimmy climbed the stairs to the kitchen. He cut open the tine and was about to pour the soup into the pan when he noticed a piece of paper sticking to the bottom of the utensil. He fished it out.

It was a crumpled postage stamp bearing the head of Queen Victoria. "I'll bet this is a penny black," he thought and wondered what it was doing at the bottom of a saucepan in Ella Parker's kitchen. He went over to the kitchen door to call down to Bennett. It was closed. He didn't remember closing it but grasped the knob in order to alter that situation.

The door was locked. He took hold of the knob even more tightly and shook it angrily. A slow grinding noise caused him to look about him. Could it be....?

Yes! The walls were closing in on him. "What about the stove?" he thought without reason. The stove immediately dissolved into a pool of water. "I must be dreaming," thought Jimmy, but the grinding noise and the shrinking limits of the kitchen seemed to indicate that this was not the case. Jimmy went on shaking the doorknob. It suddenly broke away in his hand. "Ice!" he remarked and began to shout for help at the top of his voice.

A voice at the other side of the locked door shouted back "Fire, fire! Run quickly, the lorries are here."

A white face appeared at the kitchen window, upside down and leering. "It's the scoppy f or he wrote to," the face told Jimmy by way of explanation.

The voice outside the kitchen yelled, "The lorries have lost their sirens." The walls moved ip..... (end pt 2 & BURP!)