

BURP!

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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....."

A light shone 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 the 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 Unknown Worlds," added Ted Forsyth.

"Or 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 tins 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 scopy f...er he wrote...," the face told Jimmy by way of explanation.

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