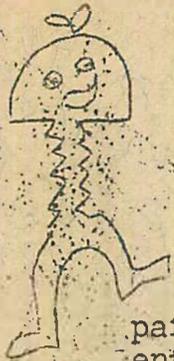


DAY-STAR





DAY\* STAR is published once in a while by

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Rochester, Texas

and is distributed, usually, through the regular mailings of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association and nowhere else at all, at all. However, this particular issue, together with copies of a Special Leaflet entitled MEN, HALFLINGS AND HERO WORSHIP, is being sent not only through FAPA, but to a select group of waiting-listers, friends and various other fans; if you receive a copy of this issue of DAY\* STAR and you are not a member of FAPA, one of the following is probably the case;

1. You have sent me copies of your fanzine and I am ashamed of reciprocating so seldom.
2. You are a member of the Fellowship of the Ring.
3. You are a waiting-lister I consider especially valuable to FAPA and I am taking this way of showing my pleasure at the thought of having you with us sometime.
4. I like you.
5. Your name is mentioned somewhere in one of these zines.
6. I am a whimsical person.

-----

This is why there are no mailing comments in this bundle. Not because I have lost my enthusiasm, but simply because, after cutting and assembling 26 pages of ASTRA'S TOWER and at least 14 pages of DAY\*STAR, I croggled at the thought of filling of another thirteen or fourteen stencils with more of my stuff. I think forty pages of Mezbiana in one bundle is more than enough for any FAPA member. So, unless I change my mind and decide I simply MUST make some comments to a few of you, there will be no CATCH TRAP in the May mailing.

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DEPARTMENT OF OH, LOOK HERE; BOB SILVERBERG: I hereby warn you not to read CRIME STORY in this issue. A couple of mailings ago you complained that I had "touched off...two acute attacks of squeamishness" with my accounts of the death of a kitten and of my experiences with a knife thrower. Since you deserve well of me, for many reasons, I have no desire to upset you again; so skip this one, please.

-----

SECRETS OF HAPPY BUNDLING: I would never have believed it, until I became the Official Editor...the variety of ways in which the post office can mishandle a bundle (like, slicing them open for inspection and cutting one fanzine in half); the way in which incredibly optimistic kids package fanzines (like putting them back in the torn paper in which the ream was wrapped, tying with a bit of string and scrawling my address in pencil). Or conversely the way in which Danner and Evans pack a fanzine so tightly that it takes me a half hour and four broken fingernails to get it out..

# when STF went to

by REDD BOGGS

# MARS

With a click of the metal cervix, a facsimile newspaper shot from the slot of the entertainment machine, its advent heralded by the clang of bells. For a moment the sound mingled with the dream, and the man sleeping behind the huge desk muttered "Tilt!" Then, reluctantly, he eased an eyelid open and stared glassily at the newspaper that had just been born. The red-splashed "EXTRA" inspired him to open the other eye. Carefully, then, he fumbled about on his desk till he found his glasses. He drank both of them, making only a vague grimace at the temperature of the beer.

"Beer is the only true god," he murmured reverently, fumbling around some more. Discovering his spectacles finally, he put them on. His red-rimmed eyes looked enormous, magnified by the thick glass, and they grew larger as he read the headlines on the newspaper extra. Slowly and painfully he leaped to his feet, snatched the newspaper from the machine, and read it hastily.

Very pale, he picked up an empty beer bottle and hurled it at the office door. The frosted glass, on which had been painted Harold Q. Stoneheart, Editor Highly Improbable Science Stories, Private, shattered to atoms and crashed to the floor in a silicate blizzard. The blond curls and sweated torso of his secretary, Blossom Brown, appeared at the jagged opening.

"You rang, Stoneheart?" she said, and opened the door and tripped in.

"Find me some cold beer," said Stoneheart wearily, "but how many times have I told you not to trip in here?"

"Then get that rug fixed," snapped Blossom, "I keep catching my heel."

"Speaking of heels you caught," sneered Stoneheart, "reminds me of your fiancée, Lochinvar Baldoon. The double-crosser! Read this!" and he tossed her the newspaper on which these headlines shouted;

DARING YOUNG MAN TAKES OFF FOR MARS!

First Space Voyage Begins Prematurely;

When State Passes Prohibition Act

"Mars no Drier than Here," states Space Ace;

REMOVES RADIO EQUIPMENT TO MAKE ROOM FOR BEER!

There was a half-tone picture of the young "space ace" on the front page, too. He was smirking at the camera as he

held a bottle of Schlitz.

Stoneheart glowered back. Baldoon, the daring young man, had double-crossed him.

In a publicity move to combat shrinking (the Board of Directors had said "stinking") circulation,

Highly Improbable Science Stories had financed Lochinvar Baldoon's epic trip

into the vastness of space. They had planned

a tremendous sendoff, almost as stupendous as the opening of a Hollywood supermarket. Baldoon was supposed to pose for the news photographers and television cameras with a copy of Highly Improbable Science Stories in his hand --not a bottle of Schlitz, which had not sponsored so much as a rocket tube in the ship.

Editor Harold Q. Stoneheart was scheduled to make a speech on the subject "Science Fiction is the mother of space travel", and Baldoon was supposed to remark that he considered himself merely a salesman of Highly Improbable Science Stories, on his way to introduce HISS to the Martians." As the rocketship took off, the atomic exhaust was supposed to spell out HISS! in letters 53 miles tall, though the details of this hadn't been worked out. And Lochinvar Baldoon had spoiled it all by taking off early. He had spoiled the whole affair. Stoneheart staggered to the office's iced filing cabinet and returned with a brace of Schlitz. He proceeded to moisten his sorrows.

Blossom Brown hadn't bothered to look at the headlines when Stoneheart tossed her the paper. She had riffled through the inside pages till she came to the comics. She was spelling out the captions in the second panel of "Pogo" when, half an hour later, Stoneheart reached a decision.

"Call a cab, Miss Brown. I'll go to the observatory and see if the ship can be spotted by telescope. Curse Baldoon for tossing out the radio! Radio reports direct from Mars -- through the courtesy of HISS--might have saved the whole affair.

"What about Lochinvar Baldoon?" asked Blossom, a puzzled frown moving into the vacancy of her pretty face, "Come to think of it, Stoneheart, I haven't seen him all day. What's up?"

"He is! Baldoon has gone to Mars. You've now got the longest-distance romance in history --with your fiancée 50 million miles away. Call that cab, or he'll reach Mars before we reach the observatory!"

\* \* \*

Lochinvar Baldoon was already on Mars.

Somehow he had come here, but that was all he knew. Somehow he had ridden his spaceship, the Horsefly of Space, down from the void to a safe smooth landing on the desert of Mars. The ship had touched with so slight a jar that the foam

on his beer wasn't disturbed. This was strange, because Baldoon hadn't anything to do with the landing. The rocket fuel had given out 10 million miles from Mars because Baldoon had removed half the fuel to make room for more beer. Baldoon had retired to the after-cabin to console himself with Schlitz while he made out his last will and testament. The beer was very good consolation, and he had only begun to write his will, leaving Blossom all his worldly possessions (viz. -- a cellarful of empty beer bottles and a keg of olives carefully salvaged from cocktails) when the ship arrived safely on Mars. It was all very, very queer.

But as he opened the airlock of the ship and set foot on the planet Mars, the perilous circumstances of the voyage were swept from his mind. Here he stood, safe and sound, on a raybrad-  
Lunish Red Planet, where the climate was midsummery and the gravity was Earth normal. From the desolation of the place, one might think he was still on Earth, stranded in Texas. Baldoon shuddered,

"But Texas hasn't anything like that," he reassured himself. He referred to the strange city that loomed, fairy-like, against the pale blue sky of the near horizon. Tall towers and battlements, slender minarets and domes glittered in the sunlight, many of them warm with delicate and pastel shades of red, green and gold.

Staring at the city, Baldoon blinked --and blinked again! In the split instant of his first wink -- as suddenly as that -- the city had moved. Moved, hell! The city now surrounded him! He now stood with his spaceship in a mighty city square, and on every side the city's towering, shimmering beauty shut him in. Directly before him reared a tremendous domed building that outbulked and outshone all the rest. This, he knew, was the hub, the nub, and perhaps the rub of the whole vast city that had swooped from the far distance to a position all around him.

Lochinvar Baldoon turned resolutely and re-entered the spaceship. Selecting a brace of Schlitz bottles from his dwindling supply, he uncapped them and quaffed them, then thrust five or six more into his clothes (which were specially equipped to accommodate a beer supply for such emergencies) and then strode outside again.

Boldly he barged forward, his hidden beer bottles gurgling and clinking almost as merrily as his teeth jittered in his dry mouth. He entered the main doorway of the gigantic palace, and found himself in a great hall. At the far end of this room, Baldoon could make out a mighty, sparkling throne. A fractured instant later, this throne materialized at Baldoon's very feet. It happened so dazzlingly swift that he was unable to ascertain whether he had moved, or been moved, or whether the throne had moved.

At any rate, he was standing now before a towering throne. And on the throne sat a sagging old man, who leered down at him, rheumy eyes burning.

"I detected your spaceship coming this way, and I brought you down with a tractor-beam," he announced, "it's been a million years since my enemy on Venus, the Thought Master of Daakta, dared to attack me. Are you from Daakta?"

"What is it ye say, laddie?" inquired Baldoon.

The Thought Master of Kantan, lord of Mars, went on musingly "I have materialized a karildex, and the answers the machine gives me seem to indicate that the spaceship was out of control.

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Evidently my enemy hoped that it would crash and smash me into medium-small smithereens. Well, I foiled him by catching your ship in a tractor-beam. And now, I think, I have me a Daaktan spy. Are you from Daakta?"

An amiable smile replaced the quavering puzzlement on Baldoon's face. Leisurely he perched himself on the Thought Master's royal footstool, drew a beer bottle from his pocket and proceeded to pour a dime's worth down his throat.

"As a matter-r-r of fact, laddie," he remarked, wiping away the foam, "I do some frae ther-r-e."

"Aha! You come from Daakta!"

"Aye, frae Aberdeen, South Daakta," said Baldoon, "My gr-r-randfather-r-r, John W. Baldoon Jr. -r-r-r-r, migr-r-rated ther-r-r-e the year-r-r-r of the Gr-r-reat Whisky Famine ---"

The Thought Master materialized a large handkerchief and wiped his eyes. He felt remotely baffled. "What is that strange fluid you pour down so habitually?" he asked.

"The godly libation called Schlitz. Have a quarter-rs worth," Baldoon invited, passing over a bottle, "But give back the bottle -- ther-r-r-r's a deposit on it."

The Thought Master sampled it gingerly. The bottle clinked on his teeth.

The palace, the vast city, flickered...

\* \* \*

In the vast, dark observatory, two lone figures stood before a powerful telescope, staring spaceward toward Mars. The astronomer who had been scheduled for duty on the 'scope had both diplomatically and threateningly tried to persuade Stoneheart and Blossom Brown to give up the instrument so that he could observe a supernova in Bootes, but Stoneheart had assaulted him with a beer bottle, and the astronomer had lurched lumpily home.

"After all," remarked Stoneheart, "who gives a damn about a supernova in booties? Wait till it grows up and wears shoes."

Now, however, Stoneheart was ready to give up. "Hell, ... if we had any sense," he told Blossom, absently uncapping a fresh bottle with his teeth, "we'd trot back to the HISS office and write Baldoon's obituary for the next issue. He must have cracked up on Mars by now."

"I've got another papa on the Mildly Pornographic Publications Line," said Blossom sorrowfully, "but I loved that Baldoon laddie." Her teary eye sought the eyepiece of the 'scope again. Suddenly she tensed and turned to Stoneheart with a stricken look on her mascara-streaked face.

He took one quick look at her and pointed off across the observatory. "Second door on the left," he said succinctly.

"Thanks," said Blossom automatically, and started off. "No! You character!" she shouted, whirling around again, "I didn't want that!"

"Wonder woman! You've killed eight bottles --" began Stoneheart, but he broke off as Blossom took him by the ears and shoved his eye hard against the telescope. Paunchily, he quivered, peered again, and, looking like a bowl of jello nattily dressed in pinstripes, whimpered "Where'd I say that place was?"

"Have a beer," she said, "and get a grip on yourself."

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Stoneheart walked off dizzily as Blossom took another peek into the telescope. Her heels clattered on the winding stair as she came racing after him. "I'll race you to that second door," she panted as she galumphed past, "A sight like that scares the --gawp, it spares me!"

\* \* \*

Lochinvar Baldoon drank up all his Schlitz recovering from the shock of seeing the city of Kartan fade away like a dream, seeing the Thought Master of Kartan topple from his dissolving throne and thud bonelessly on empty desert sand. Baldoon did not yet realize exactly what had happened. He did not know that beer had been a deadly poison to the Martian Thought Master. Moreover, he did not fully understand that the city of Kartan had existed only in the imaginings of a crazy old man. Only the misty horizons, so suddenly empty of towers and battlements, convinced him that it was only a peculiar dream. And only the sight of the dead Master crumpled in the dust proved to him that he, Baldoon, hadn't dreamed the whole thing himself.

The scrawny spacefarer shook his head as he stared at the corpse. As he did so, he noticed the bottle still clutched in the dead hand. Bending to retrieve it, he noticed something else; a strange metal band clamped around the Master's head. This and a tattered breechcloth were the only things left when the Master's mind had died.

Baldoon pulled off the metal band and, curious, settled it around his own cranium. An electrical twinge shot through his mind, and was gone. He shuddered. "Ah, for-r-r a guid quaff of Schlitz," he muttered. Idly he imagined a case of Schlitz sitting frostily on the desert.

Instantly the Schlitz appeared.

Baldoon didn't stop to figure it out. He reached out, seized a chilly bottle, uncapped it and drank. It was good cold Schlitz, no doubt of it. He drank another.

Later, the city of thought rose again from the Martian sands; this time a cockeyed reflection of Las Vegas, Paris and Calumet City, all muddled together. The palace was back, too, but it resembled a rather disreputable gin-mill. In the palace sat the new Thought Master, Lochinvar Baldoon, and beside him a towering pile of Schlitz cases, all perfectly refrigerated, and another thing -- a weird machine. Fuzzily realizing that, with his limited knowledge of things mechanical and electronic, he would be unable to imagine a machine with which to contact Earth, he had done the next best thing -- imagined and materialized a gadget to answer any question he asked.

"How do I get in touch with Ear-r-r-th?" he asked, and jabbed the "réply" button with an indolent toe.

"Radio," said the brain-machine tersely.

"How do I get a r-r-r-radio?"

"Build one," advised the mechanical brain.

"How do I build one?"

"Build a machine that will build a radio."

"How do I build a machine that will build a r-r-radio?"

"Build a machine that will build a machine that will build a radio."

"How do I build a machine that will build a machine that will build a r-r -radio?"

"Build a machine that will build a machine that will build a machine --" began the mechanical brain, but Baldoon cursingly dematerialized it. Fortifying himself with fresh Schlitz, he decided that the solution was to materialize a more intelligent brain machine. Thereupon he imagined one of the Great Brains he vaguely remembered from Last and First Men.

"Make me a radio capable of contacting Earth," he told the machine, "and make it double-snappy."

"Exactly," boomed the Great Brain, "we must hurry."

"Aye, snap it up," agreed Baldoon, "but --hold on! Why do you want to hurry, you overgr-r-rown adding machine?"

"Answer impossible due to insufficient data available," boomed the Great Brain --somewhat smugly, Baldoon thought. "But if you wish to contact Earth, this action must be carried out in the next 23 minutes and 4.516 seconds. At that precise moment, Earth will be destroyed by a cosmic energy bolt, mis-aimed at Mars by the Thought Master of Baakta."

Baldoon dropped a bottle of beer. It fell to the floor and shattered, but he did not notice.

"Quick," he demanded, "Tell me how I can save Earth!"

\* \* \*

Blossom Brown looked with cynical pity at the young author who stood forlornly in the HISS outer office. He drooped over her desk, a bizarre pipe clenched in his teeth and an equally bizarre manuscript clenched in his hands.

"Do you realize," she told him bitingly "that something terrible has happened to Earth? All the stars have disappeared! I was looking through a telescope last night when it happened. Ugh! It was the ghastliest sight ever! The stars winking out one by one, as if God was turning out the lights. And now you come in here trying to sell a manuscript called "Monsters of the Muck!" Just because a catastrophe has happened to the universe, why do you want to foist a catastrophe on our magazine?"

"Gosh," said the author meekly, "don't worry about my story, it isn't an interplanetary. It takes place in the mud under the Pacific Ocean. It's just the type of yarn to run, now that the stars have gone out."

Blossom's telephone rang, and she scooped it up as she shooed the author out of her office. "Hello? Who? What? What? Lochinvar! Where are you?" She listened excitedly for a long while. "And you're on Mars now? And talking to me through ultra-radio?"

Harold Q. Stoneheart slouched through the door and Blossom waved at him eagerly. "This is wonderful news," she screeched, "wonderful and terrible too!"

Stoneheart nodded vacantly. "It's mostly terrible, but I'll keep a stiff upper lip, my dear. After all, it could have happened to anyone."

"It has happened to everyone! It's happened to the whole world," Blossom insisted.

"Unfortunately it can't be helped. Alas, I am just a victim of fate," said Stoneheart moodily, as he opened the "B" file and removed a consolatory bottle of his favorite brew.

8

"Lochinvar did it! They discovered Earth was going to be destroyed, so the Great Brain showed Lochinvar how to save the world! They've hurled Earth out of normal space, looped it through a hyperspatial warp into something called the Ganck dimension, where there don't happen to be any stars!

"The sad thing about the whole affair," Blossom continued, excitedly explaining the situation to Stoneheart (who was paying absolutely no attention to her words, though he was staring at her with a peculiar melting look in his eyes, "is that the Great Brain doesn't know how to get the Earth back into normal space now, and the Earth is doomed to stay in this starless continuum forever. So --oh, Stoneheart, I'll never see Lochinvar Baldoon, my fiancée, again. He's stranded forever on Mars, back in normal space. Give me a beer, Stoneheart?"

"I can't understand how it happened," groaned Stoneheart, consternation contorting his face, though he had not heard a word of Blossom's wail. "It hit me like a wet herring yesterday when you stuck your face through the door after I'd tossed a bottle through it. Through the door I mean." He drew a shuddering breath, drained a bottle of Schlitz and said chokingly, "Blossom, my sweet, will you marry me?"

Blossom tremblingly hung up the phone, forever cutting the connection with Lochinvar Baldoon in another dimension, and opened the "B" file. Her hand clutched frantically and withdrew empty.

"Stoneheart, you cur," she screamed, "you drank the last of the Beer!"

Then she looked at him in puzzlement. "By the way, what were you saying a moment ago about getting married?"

\* \* \*

"Niagara Falls," said Blossom, "is very nice indeed. But Stony my love, I'll never forgive Baldoon for one thing."

Stoneheart tossed an empty bottle into the river and watched it swirl away and leap like a silicate salmon over the falls. "Of course not my dear," he said dutifully.

"I don't mind not having the stars," Blossom said, "you don't miss the stars so much on a honeymoon. But I miss one thing he could have looped into the Ganck Dimension along with Mother Earth. That unromantic sap! How I'd love to see the moon again!"

Meanwhile, back on Mars, 60 million miles and 13 dimensions away, Blossom Brown leaned from the palace window and saw the two little moons reflected under the amber surface of the Grand Canal. "No other bride ever had a honeymoon under two moons," she squealed happily.

Lochinvar Baldoon staggered to the window and peered out. "B'gosh," he muttered, "I see four --no --sixsh moons."

"You're drunk," snapped Blossom, "I wish you'd stop materializing Schlitz for a while. After all, even the Grand Canal out there isn't water -- it's beer you've materialized!"

Baldoon looked at his bride triumphantly. He was no henpecked husband. He was, in fact, the happiest husband on two planets and in 13 dimensions. "Aw, shut up," he shouted, opening another bottle of beer, "Or I'll demater-r-r-rialize you!"

+ + +

A NOTE ON "WHEN STF WENT TO MARS";

9

Fans who think they vaguely recognize the characters and situation in this story will not be greatly mistaken. "When Stf went to Mars" was written as Instalment #9 of "Stf Broadcasts Again", the round robin serial published in Spacewarp in 1949. But acting on the not-insubstantial theory that I wouldn't get this instalment written in time, Art wrote and published an instalment of his own before my manuscript arrived. In the present version I've made the story complete in itself by adding several new scenes, dropping one of the old ones, and rewriting the others, as well as rearranging the sequence. In the original version, Harold Q. Stoneheart was John Upperberth, Blossom Brown was Starr, and Lochinvar Baldoon was Glover Mackintosh. Von Heine and the Priestess, both in the original version, were written out. Only the Thought Master of Kartan (and the Thought Master of Daakta) retains his original name. In the original there was the threat of a new catastrophe at the end, to keep up suspense, and one of the snappers in that version was the revelation that Von Heine and the Priestess had just gotten married. In the published version of "Stf Broadcasts Again" they did not have to undergo this singular ordeal.

Redd Boggs.

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## the ether wobbles

Dear Editor,

I have read WHEN STF GOES TO MARS with great pleasure but I wanted to point out one little scientific flaw in the story, on account of fans have to be Real Accurate about science in their stories. Why, when the Thought Master of Kartan died, and all his projections vanished, did his breechcloth remain?

Willie Rottingsler

Because this is a family magazine... EDITOR

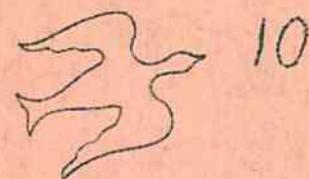
Dear Editor,

What happened to the young author's manuscript of MONSTERS OF THE MUCK? We take the liberty of making this inquiry because we would like to reject it from a French science fiction magazine and review it in FAPA.

Sam Mussed-up-wits

You're too late. Ackerman bought it and you can buy it on any news-stand as FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND --Editor.

# Three Moods



## I

Only the wind gives depth to autumn nights  
when stillness makes black paint of depthless sky,  
studded with dim unnecessary lights.

Only the fleeing breezes could untie  
the ropes confining motion, depth and space  
from those cold caverns where dull houses lie.

Cold holds me, too; I cannot move, or trace  
the branches of a pencilled delicate tree  
framing in memory your summer face.

Wind, rise! Stir with the night and blow from me  
fear of flat autumn, bring back mystery!

## II

....my lover,  
where have you hidden my friend?

You have hidden him beneath kisses  
under the storm of a smile  
the terror of a frown,  
you have hidden the face I knew.

My lover,  
where have you hidden my friend?

## III

She could not see beyond the tangled light  
that crossed the briar windows of the day;  
she tossed and sobbed and hungered for a way  
to turn the brass-cold sunbeams back to night.  
Beyond those arrow shafts, forlorn delight  
hung thilly where sarcastic shadows stay;  
the morning birds and breezes had to say  
there lies the world abandoned in your flight.

Too many things there she had tossed away, light,  
a crying child, a peaceful curtained stair  
leading to quiet rooms, a hearthstone flare  
empty now, dark, where only tears are bright.  
All these betrayed on her strange pillow there--  
enslavement, pity, passion and despair.

Marion Z. Bradley

# CRIME STORY

11

MZBradley

Although I grew up in a home where personal violence was not unknown, and I am myself of uncertain temper when provoked, I never cared for the lesser violence of inflicting pain or death on animals. My few ventures at fishing provoked only agonized revulsion (undefined, then, to my childish self) and horror which passed for mere female squeamishness, at the cruelty of forcing a worm over a barbed hook, the jerking of cruel steel through the beautiful feathered gills. I felt little distress at the dying flops of the decapitated hen; I had the realism of a farm-reared child, which says that the ultimate destiny of a chicken is to pay for its corn and its well-heated house by ending its days in a fricasee with browned biscuits. But the hunting of wild game always distressed me; the wild things had never harmed me and anyway they owed mankind nothing....I did not verbalize these things, simply maintaining stubbornly that it was wrong to hunt and fish.

Spurred by necessity, I have myself chopped off chickens' heads; but the swatting of flies and wasps I have pursued without pleasure, forced only by hygiene and the fear of a child perhaps; for myself I have always felt that if a bee or wasp were left alone it would return the compliment, and I have been stung more seldom than those who panic hysterically and run to kill the stinger. And I have an unconquerable repugnance for moustraps; I would prefer to leave crumbs for them. I have no female horror of mice, but their dead bodies, their pathetic tails and limp veined ears, rouse me to shame and pity, and when an insurrection of mice has made me see the necessity of doing something about nocturnal scurryings, filthy leavings and gnawed packages of oatmeal and crackers, I have done so only with reluctant sorrow.

Yet once, and deliberately, I murdered a cat.

Twice I have killed cats; humanely, with chloroform, when incurable sickness or the smashed leg freed too late from a trap have made it needful. But this was different. It was murder. And I would do it again.

Her name was Pixie. She was given to me when I was seventeen, and proved from the first a wild, unmanageable kitten, a lean and prowling renegade with some tinge of the alley in her otherwise-impeccable ancestry; for her mother was Thyrl Ladd's "Patches", a redoubtable feline of virtue and personality. This kitten, destined for the city pound, was given me because we had a farm, cows, endless mice in the barn and room for an infinity of cats.

An infinity of cats we had, indeed. I remember once when my father came from the barn, both hands occupied with brimming milkpails, to find the back steps cluttered with two she-cats suckling litters, two or three half-grown from previous litters, and a stray or two; nor did they scatter in the wild fashion of the barncats of other nearby farms, but maintained their sleepy stations on the sun-drenched steps, defying him to step into their midst. He paused, baffled, stared helplessly down into the muddled cattery, shook his head and remarked emphatically "Y'know, there's just one thing we need around this place -- a few more cats!" By nature a violent man, he might well have launched a kick into their midst, but instead he attempted a bluffing step or two as if about to land on them; they called his bluff and remained motionless, and he laughed, turned with his burden, and went around through the woodshed instead.

Looking back, I think our clowder of cats was extraordinary. Probably my brother and I were responsible; we snuggled (or smuggled) them into our beds at night, patted and kissed them, dressed them in doll clothes, teased them with strings, and gently scraped them off seats. A litter of new kittens was always greeted with rejoicing (by us, at least) and we could hardly endure the waiting period before their eyes opened before smothering them with love. Despite maternal admonitions not to "maul them so much", and my father's growled "Don't mux'em over like that," the kittens thrived on this treatment. Which explains why I hold no brief for the laissez-faire theories of rearing children or pets.

Queenie, the only cat my mother ever tolerated, a white and regal creature, once had kittens in the woodbox; we piled the wood elsewhere for weeks. Milking, night and morning, was not complete until we poured generous amounts of the foaming white stuff into the old pie-pans kept in the barn for that purpose, evoking a scramble of cats anywhere, in number, from two to thirteen. Not nameless strays, but each endowed with name and personality.

Pixie, as I say, grew into a renegade. I sometimes wonder if I loved her enough; I was suffering all the pains of delayed adolescence, beginning college, falling in love, discovering fandom. I had little time for a lean grey tufted cat with white patches on her ears and ready claws even for me; surely nothing like my beloved white Malta, a babylike cat who would still snuggle in my lap and give me fleeting cat-kisses with her whiskers.

I love cats best for their fecundity, and like Claudine, rejoice in the prospect of kittens. I first guessed that Pixie would be no typical Mama-cat when she had her first litter. On the same day, at the same time as Malta, (have I written elsewhere about this?) I found the grey cat and the white curled together lovingly in the haymow, suckling in common an assortment of five kittens whose maternity was never known to any of us. Pixie's docile maternity, perhaps a by-product of Malta's example, proved short-

lived, a matter of days; then, a cuckoo mother, she went her irresponsible way, while Malta placidly accepted fosterage, licking, suckling and housebreaking all five kittens, growing thin and careworn meanwhile.

Soon after this, I married and forgot cats and kittens alike in the scramble of moving to Texas. After five homesick months I returned home, pregnant, for an extended visit.

My feelings lay at this time near the surface of my mind; physically I never pampered myself, walking miles and miles, terrifying my fellow choir-members by running up and down narrow stairs, shocking my mother by standing on one foot, the other in the washbasin, to give myself a pedicure; motherly solicitude would have had me lose acquaintance with all anatomy south of the knee-cap for the duration. I admit a love for shocking people, so I suppose I exaggerated my suppleness to a dangerous degree by turning cartwheels and doing dangerous gymnastics during a long period of time. I suppose I was displaying my loathing for the grotesque, obelisk-like immobility of my swollen contemporaries.

But, if physically tough, I pampered my emotions shamelessly. All my life I have had the ability to endure a good deal in the way of physical discomfort, but I reserve the right to make as much fuss as I wish about it. Stoically endured pain is really impossible, but talking releases the tension and permits more endurance; probably I indulged (for I was desperately unhappy all this time) in an inordinate amount of self-pity. Surely my emotions were easily stirred.

Malta, a month before, had lost a litter of stillborn kittens. Pixie was still expecting hers. One morning my mother, hearing weak cries in the hayloft, found them there; three pathetic kittens, unlicked, covered with the slime of birth and still protesting their imminent death; born and abandoned by their renegade mother, who walked around them, still tottering with weakness, but ignoring, with satanic disdain, their feeble screams.

At first I felt sorry for her. I warmed milk and fed her, then tried by every means short of force to induce her to take some interest in her offspring. I held them to her nose; she sniffed disdainfully and turned away. I knelt in the hay, trying to persuade her to let them suck; she nudged them away with an angry nose, and in any case, unlicked, untouched, they were too feeble to suck. Finally she escaped from my hands, leaving a long scratch on them, and left me kneeling and crying over the kittens. I felt as if it were my own unborn child that was threatened, dying. I wanted to take them into the house and try to revive them myself, but my mother, probably wisely, dissuaded me; unlicked, unsuckled even for that vital first time, they were far too weak to survive, they were already half frozen with the

bitter frosts of late September. I knelt in the hay and held them in my hands, almost hysterical with grief.....they felt so cold; so cold; so terribly cold, they turned my hands cold and my heart cold, and they were still squirming and whimpering feebly, brought undesired and abandoned into a cold world they could not understand. I do not think this was simply sentiment. I think it was something which seemed to me so monstrous, so deeply against all instinct, that outrage ruled me even more than grief. I felt much the same when I heard that a newborn child had been found in a waste container in the women's restroom in the railroad station.

And that horrible un-natural grey devil, still unconcernedly walking around, callously indifferent to the kittens already icy with death. They were so cold, so cold..as I sit here ten years later, in blistering summer heat in Texas, I can feel my heart ice over with the chill of their freezing bodies that should have been warming with life. I can feel myself shake with the sobs of horror and outrage. The kitten I still held helplessly, powerlessly in my hands was barely alive, still feebly moving, its mouth in a futile protest against this useless death. So strong and yet so weak, so useless and senseless this abandonment. And I could not save it, I could not save it...I laid it down helplessly among the others, sobbing "They're so cold, so cold, so terribly cold, so terribly cold...." and I walked out of the barn into the bitter sunlight and picked up Pixie by the tail and dashed out her brains against the nearest rock.

I would do it again.

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Mechanics Illustrated - The Tattooed Man is working in a garage now  
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Mid-afternoon. A topaz hush hangs over the house, the street, the town. The buttery sunlight finds its way through my western windows and over my typewriter. The desk should be moved or the curtains drawn, but I pause to enjoy its dazzle briefly on my face.

I bend to re-read what I have done. What have these words to do with me? Am I, myself, outlined in black on those pages?

Does the act of writing make a writer? It always seems to me strange that the keeping of a house does not make me a housewife. As a young woman I subscribed to the common delusion that ring and book and "the perfect ceremony of love's right" would make me a wife, that the complexly simple process of giving birth make me a mother. And yet, though long married, I feel that inside in the core of myself (in what organ, cry modern mystics, lodges that intangible heart which is not physical heart nor the skinned and nameless spirit/soul?) I am no more wife than on the day of ceremonials; although for ten years I have kept a house and kept it well considering that I have little interest and am not a house-proud woman, not the uttermost stretch of imagination can make me a housewife; and though my son's increasingly larger clothing, more complex toys and deeper-toned and more sensible noises crowd the house, though he is paramount to many of my waking thoughts, he is my son; but I never hear the word "mother" without startlement to realize it is applied to myself. Universal or particular?

## STEVE AND I GOING FOR TWO 15

Some March afternoons in Texas are just too bright to be wasted indoors; clear and cool and blue, with a high dry wind rushing clean and doisy from a thousand miles away. So Steve and I, shunting housework and homework for the dark night, went off with a pocket full of chocolate for a rockhunting expedition in the Game Preserve. We didn't get that far - when we came to the bridge across the Brazos we decided to try the cut along the riverbed instead.

The river there is only a trickle, but the dry bed is nearly a quarter of a mile across; cut canyon-deep through the valley, you can see along the edges the layers of topsoil, sand, red clay, green talc, salt and white gypsum laid down straight and clear through the cliffs. We scrambled through washes and gullies at the edge, and along shelves, ridges and ledges where every step sent sand and rocks rattling down; and broke bits from the ribbons of white gypsum washed clear in the layers of talc and clay, and thought of you, Jean Young; and then broke through into pockets of sand where we sifted for little queer shells. Out in the flat bed of the river the ridges of sand lay flat and brown and muddy, a heavier sand than the fine white crystal sand in the pockets above; with wandering trickles of water and occasional patches of the supersaturated sand which can act as quicksand if you stand on it too long, so that we tested any spot where we wanted to stand for more than a moment, with our sticks. On one rocky outcrop we lay sprawled out on a patch of talc, eating our chocolate and humming elvish songs, while behind us on the cliff, in a thicket where a few twisty thorny trees still clung, some birds started up a strange throbbing tweedling song, and the sun dipped behind a little rainbow-edged cloud, and we might have been in some place before the world was made, except for an invisible silver dart and a silent white vapor trail cutting the sky in slices overhead. But we were not alone even in this place, for as we scrambled up a little gully we saw some rusty beercans and Steve said with a grimace of loathing "I see the Orcs have been here, for no other folk take such a delight in trampling and fouling what is beautiful"; and of course then we were both scrambling along the knife-ridges of the Morgai. Down at the edge of the water there was a dank acrid smell; for this is the Salt Fork of the Brazos; like the sea but without seaweed or tide-wrack or fish. The deserted piles of the broken bridge stood out in the river, three miles from where we had left our car. On the way back along the cliffs we chose another route and had to go transversely along one sheer cliff face with a fifty foot drop to rocks below us, or else ignominiously retrace our way and walk in the river bed; so Steve got his first practical lesson in cliff-climbing, namely never to move a hand-foot without having the other hand-foot and both feet-hands solidly anchored, so that three of the four limbs are in firm contact. I went below and watched like an anxious mother gecko, but he came through with flying colors, though we were both sweating and scared when we looked back where we had gone. As we came back the pale sky was darkening; and too bright for other stars, a single bright planet blazed out, and we were glad we lived in Texas and loved cliffs and plains.....