

Dave Van Arnam brings you another solid page of rare entertainment and pure delight.

FIRST DRAFT #115

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Ya-hoo.

Well, these days I spend a lot of time thinking about the Westercon trip, the Greater Trek, and about how I haven't saved a cent for it yet.

Yay WESTERCON! Yay WESTERCON!

I also think about the Gothick, which has not as yet sold; and there's also the sword& sorcery book. But there I stop feeling so gloomy, because it seems to be coming along ok. I say "seems" because I've worked over the first two or three pages about six or seven times, and I can't get any distance from it any more to try to judge the damn thing. But I am actually writing on it every night, tho I haven't been grinding out 8 pages an evening or anything yet.

Right now I am thinking about a big batch of fanzines being offered for sale tonite at FISTFA, and trying to get this FIRST DRAFT minac done as soon as possible.

THE BLACK MAGICIAN -- Interlude: Wizard's Dawn

Vast and night-riden was the mighty castle-palace of Azeltarem, the Black Magician, in the huge shadow of the Mountain Shaiphar.

Flickering in the cavernous windows were dim torches. Outside, all was black, for it was The Night Of No Moons.

Inside, though all was brilliant and flame-drenched, was blackness also, for congathered here were the Spellmasters of Sezain, at the bidding of Azeltarem present to share his mind on certain matters of dark and mystic portent.

"I like it not," muttered Varnashoth the Eld, of Zemna Keep. "The Black One has no cause to love us, nor we him."

"Ah, yes, came the low answer of Taher Kmatis, "but in Kazemi my worthy lord Thranor waits eagerly for my return. The knowledge I gain here may even suffice to win me the fair Riahi, with -- "

"With promise of his kingdom at his death; yes, yes, Kmatis, I know your old ambitions. But these bleak halls we pace through house Ambition personified. You and I, we know one secret deeply held within these death-grim walls -- and for how long it has been kept..."

The two fell silent as they came to the giant entranceway to the Hall of Counselling, adjusting their grey cowls about their heads.

Just inside the entrance to the Hall of Counselling a giant cage of iron hung suspended from the ceiling. A dozen yammering dwarfish beings inside it gripped the bars and screeched incomprehensibly at the ominous grey figures passing near them. Taher Kmatis felt a shudder.

"He jests more grimly than ever," said Varnashoth the Eld, quietly.

"The new one was Lainniat of Samand, was it not?" Kmatis glanced at his companion, who nodded.

"He attempted the spell of tarnflowers and the seldom-grass, though I warned him I had signs Azeltarem had set the Incantation of Tron upon such uses. Ah, well." He sighed.

□□ To Be Drug Out, as they say. I see some duplications of words, but

Null-Q Press as for the rest, it seems not too bad.
Undecided Publication #198 □□ In the mean-time, hoping you are

the sane... -- dgV