

Here sits Dave Van Arnam, of 1730
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10453, your friendly neighborhood
UnOfficial Shadow FAPA Editor, growl-
ing becuae he just discovered his
ShAPA zine had a misnumbered Publica-
tion #. *sigh*

FIRST DRAFT #126

Vol. 21, No. 6

12 Aug 66

Guess what, gang! Well, you know I've
started another new book; I know I
mentioned it in the last week or two.
Well, I just happen to be in a hurry, and I just happen to have the
opening pages here at the office with me, and... (Seriously, I find
that I get some remarkably worthwhile comments on my fiction, which is
why I keep printing snippets of it.) This is of course [C] Copyright 1966
by Dave Van Arnam.

SHADOW FAPA LIVES! Honest!!

WITCH OF THE DEVIL STARS

CHAPTER ONE: THE BLACK WARRIOR

Jonnath Gri stood up in the Inn of Six Moons. Draining the last of his
mug of strong Lashkari ale, he looked about him.

A dozen and more spaceships were docked in Karrithon VI's Sangorosh
Port, and the Inn of Six Moons was crowded. Crewmen hired from one end
of the galaxy to the other yammered and babbled in their myriad strange
tongues. Pungent smoke from the tobacco-like wind-reed of Althagon
mingled with heavy acrid body-smells. The autoclang on the far side of
the room banged out alien popular songs of a hundred planetary cultures.

A man of average size for his own planet, Jonnath towered fully seven
and a half feet. Clothed all in black, his great pantherish appearance
kept others wary of him. He appeared unarmed, but his leather fighting
harness was worn from use.

Willan was late. It wasn't like him. Jonnath stifled a yawn, set his
ale-mug down on the solid wooden bench he had been straddling, and
started for the door.

Accidentally he bumped into a Malekite, with a traditional great grey
plume stuck in his hat. Angrily the Malekite turned to him, plume wav-
ing grandly. "By Phanoc, you -- " he bit off before he took in Jonnath's
size. Then the Malekite paled slightly and returned to his wine.

Others jostled among the crowds to get out of his way. Mottled-skin
Javadians, the strange huge almost-humans of Parii with green silken
fur, swaggering Zandian adventurers, and one lone Kreshagar female of
Amazonian proportions, all stepped aside when the grim black-clad
warrior neared them.

What's keeping him? Jonnath mused, as he neared the doorway. Could the
Star Guards have caught him?

Rain beat on the shutters of the alehouse, and he secured his black
cloak about him. Ridiculous! They'll never get Willan!

He saw the telltale glitter even as he pushed aside the velvet-curtained
doorway.

"It is the one we seek," a voice said.

Jonnath whirled around, his great dark cloak swirling about him;
instinctively he moved for his hidden weapon, but checked the motion.

Null-Q Press
Undecided Publication #212

He was surrounded, and they were too close -- a half dozen of them in their shimmering crimson power-cloth uniforms. One touch of the power-cloth and there would be no more fighting.

"This is fortune," chuckled the black-helmeted captain. "Finding our quarry at the first alehouse we try! Come along, you shambling animal!"

Jonnath stared at the captain. He never had gotten used to that expressionless face typical of the inhabitants of Zarmith II. He watched the rain as it struck the shimmering crimson. The field of patterned electricity acted as weapon and shield at the same time. Energized, it was utter agony to touch it or be touched by it, though it was tuned to the wearer so he was not hurt.

And few things could penetrate it. Anything from a small grain of dust on up to a fair-sized metallic slug was tracelessly vaporized and its momentum dissipated. Some weapons could get through, of course; the shock of a smaller explosion would be dissipated by the screen, but the concussion from a beta-grenade, which could level a ten-story building, would get through if the guard was close enough.

You couldn't hit him over the head with a length of wood, because the patterned electricity fed through most ordinary non-conducting materials -- and the force of the blow would be dissipated by the field. It was possible to insulate certain rare materials with great difficulty, and Jonnath carried an insulated short sword in a hidden sheath strapped to his back. And the captain had simply ordered him to come with him; perhaps they wouldn't --

"Shall I search it, sir?" asked a scarlet-helmeted guard. Was there a trace of sarcasm in his voice?

"Certainly, you oaf!" The captain flushed. Though there were a thousand variations on the basic human stock after four millenia of man's expansion through the galaxy, certain human physical reactions remained much the same.

Then the captain smiled. "By all means, Valyur," he continued, "search it. Of course you will neutralize your power-cloth..."

It was a tribute to Jonnath's obvious strength and skill.

Jonnath smiled grimly, and Valyur reluctantly worked a hidden control. The weird red shimmering ebbed away, leaving only a faded red uniform, common and dusty, which immediately became spotted with raindrops.

"Afraid, small soldier?" asked Jonnath, perfectly aware of the almost two-foot difference in their height. "Perhaps I am honorable enough not to hurt you -- while you are unprotected..."

Inwardly he was filled with bitter anger, knowing what must come next. He had hoped he might be able to talk to them, perhaps to bribe them, or finally to fight them. He must not be taken prisoner to the Scarlet Tower.

Valyur searched him, muttering a curse -- then shouted triumphantly as he drew out Jonnath's hidden sword.

"Now we have a prize indeed, captain!" Valyur brandished the weapon, all sarcasm forgotten.

The captain's leathery space-tanned face crinkled in what for him was an open sneer. "I have a prize, Valyur..."

Valyur looked at his commander for a moment, then came stiffly to attention, his face expressionless. He handed the blade hilt-first to the captain.

The officer smiled with greed and satisfaction. "Quite a prize indeed. Few have been rich enough to possess such a blade! None of you will speak of this, of course." He spoke with absolute assurance, then saw the look on Jonnath's face. "That goes for you, my filthy little political will-o-the-wisp. Our information was correct about you, it seems. Well, animal, say nothing about your sword. I can learn all I need from you in a half hour of the Deep Questioning. But I could somehow manage to take much longer if you -- stop him!"

Valyur had neglected to restore power to his uniform. In one swift motion Jonnath had effortlessly picked up the Star Guard -- and from nine feet in the air Valyur found himself hurled at two of his fellow guardsmen.

He screamed once in bitter agony as soon as he touched the red shimmering. The guards were bowled over and Valyur lay unmoving in the muddy Street of the Rat.

Instantly Jonnath darted past the two fallen guards. They struggled to get up, and one lashed out, touching Jonnath's heel.

He fell to the mud in mid-stride. Agony lanced with brief sharp fire through every muscle. For a moment he was blind with the pain.

"Curse it for a rebel dog," shouted the captain, kicking Jonnath heavily in the side. The power-cloth effect extended from helmet to crimson boots; the double pain caused Jonnath to grunt involuntarily.

He writhed in the aftermath of pain. Where the power-cloth had touched, slowly-dissolving knots of pain battered at his nerve endings as the effects of the surge of patterned electricity wore off.

Jonnath gasped for breath, choking as his diaphragm worked spasmodically. The captain observed his efforts for a moment, then kicked a gob of mud into his face.

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((Jonnath is warned not to get out of the mud, a few minutes later))

"You do not want to die from our weapons, animal. We are not as weak as Thesharkan was..."

Karshon poison on the pellets! thought Jonnath, and shuddered involuntarily. Even the Star Guards were supposed to have a regulation against its use, so greatly was it abhorred by all men.

Karshon poison! The winged, slug-like Karshonites had used it on the tips of their weapons as an ordinary poison -- but for humans, it meant seven to fourteen hours of inhuman and irreversable pain...and the victims never lost consciousness.

Thesharkan -- a decadent pleasure-planet that had turned to the poison as its final thrill. Immensely rich sadists had paid the owners of the previously barren planet impossible sums to see children, women, and men tortured to death in front of them with Karshon poison. It had been discovered eventually, of course. Several nearby warring star systems had united briefly, and the planet was occupied by their combined forces. Several hundred employees were marched out and rayed down one by one with Nangee flashers. The owners and customers were each given a dose of Karshon poison and sent on a 14-hour spaceship voyage into Thesharkan's sun. The planet itself was seeded by rock spores from the Lesser Magellenics, and by now had been reduced to about half its original size. Jonnath had heard an estimate that nothing of the planet would remain in another 75 Galactic Standard Years. □□ owell, hoping you are the sane... -- dgw

* d i p o d y *

This is Dipody 17, Vol. 3, No. 5, August 12, 1966. CoproPub 21. Composed, as usual, directly on stencil by Alan Shaw of 20-35 Seagirt Blvd., Far Rockaway, NY 11691. Published on the Null-Q Press. Apa L 96, August 18, 1966.

TWO WEEKS NOTICE DEPT.: I, too, have been doing some thinking about apa L and just what I'm doing here. It does seem to be pretty much a waste of time and money for me to be doing this kind of thing all the time, especially since I don't have a duper of my own and can't really see myself investing in such a thing for at least a few years more, and hence have to go traipsing all over the city for duplicating. I feel I've more or less worn out my welcome with the Doom Duplicator Service, especially after The Sangreal Rubloon, and tho it's cheaper and less bother for all concerned when Dave runs Dipody, it's still an imposition, and this I do not like.

In addition, some people who are Major, not to mention Seminal, influences on me as far as fandom is concerned, like Ted White and Arnie Katz, have given up and/or deplored apa L as a Bad Scene. And they are right; if Andy is to be believed, apa L was much more worthwhile last year than it is now, and even I can remember when the nlgs weren't crudded up with a lot of personal attacks and cute newsnotes on the wife-swapping/stealing scene. Even I, who am perhaps the least involved in this stuff of all ELLers, have dabbled in the nastiness it generates. It's catching. Truly, the LASFS is sick.

I've not mentioned it before, but I first joined apa L with no intention of Sticking With It and building up a fantastic string of mailings. I thot it wd be a fun thing to do over the summer, a way to, by practice, improve my writing a bit, and a chance to get acquainted with that other Mecca of fandom, Los Angeles. As far as these go, I'm satisfied; I've enjoyed it, I've found some people I like, and the words flow much more easily onto the paper than they did two months ago. There is, however, nothing about apa L per se that justifies cross-country participation therein.

Two weeks from now is the TriCon. After that I'm going away to college in Boston, which, no matter how you slice it, is not a Hotbed of Fanac, in either sense of the word, and I will have, consequently, less compulsion and time to indulge in something that essentially has no value for me. Accordingly, my regular appearance in apa L will terminate after the 98th Distribution. I may do two advance issues to carry me through #100, and I may show up a few times during the winter to see how things are, but effectively, two weeks is it. I'll probably be back next summer if apa L is still here. Frankly, though, I think it's pretty likely that apa L won't survive the winter, Harness, Patten, Pelz, and Bailes notwithstanding.

Comments on 94: C. CRAYNE: re the Norton novel: Sorry about that. DIGBY: The flip side of "They're Coming To Take Me Away, Ha-Haaa", a damn good song that isn't being played in NY anymore because somebody objected to it, is the same track backwards. FELICE: (A comment left over from last week:) "From fans you expect English?" You betchum; the very existence of fanzine fandom depends on the ability to communicate. If it's too much to expect that a fan be able to distinguish between 'a' and 'an' or to avoid run-on sentences, he should not be publishing. :: Yeah, just wait'll Ed hears about it. Last Friday Katz and I raked him over the coals for inflicting the Big N on Poor Little Felice who must Feed the Starving Hordes of California to get it published, and now you want to make it Bigger. CRAYNE: I like the song. FITCH: *Sigh* You come back now and welcome me, when I'm leaving. Goddammit, sir, where were you all summer? You're pretty interesting yourself. KAISER: I had no idea you didn't like "Dwaino"; it's in such general use, as far as I can tell, that there's not much you can do about it. Besides, I like the way it sounds... but OK.

Late Saturday night my radio was blasting, and I wasn't listening until the newscaster mentioned "science fiction" and "Cordwainer Smith"; I think he was reading an obituary. If so, it's a damn shame. I cd go on at length about this, but I seem to have gotten completely away from doing two pages for apa L, let alone four. And so it goes; sic transit gloria mundi, and the crap, too.