

The arena stank.

FIRST DRAFT #135

It stank of sweat and fear and blood
and death.

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It stank of stale sour wine, of rot-
ting food, of the effluvia of five
hundred years of human misery in the
pits buried beneath it.

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Jonnath sat naked on the wooden bench beside the old man in a tattered
loin cloth. They were waiting for the Pitmaster to call them forth into
the arena...

□□ Well, I'm not going to quote any more of STAR GLADIATOR for this
issue, for several reasons; and I suppose I might conceivably consider
the possibility of copyright problems, although Not Really...

I, by the way, am still Dave Van Arnam of 1730 Harrison Ave, Apt 353,
Bronx, NY 10453. I am also still Co-Chairman of the NYCon 3 ommittee,
and urge you to send \$2 or \$3 (for Supporting or Attending membership)
to: Box 367, Gracie Square Station, New York, NY 10028. Checks & money
orders can be made out to (and sent to) either John Boardman or NYCon 3
at that address.

□□ "I think Vincent Pussykitty is a fine name for a kitten, even if it
is a female," I said to Cindy just the other Tuesday or Wednesday. A
small striped-and-white kitten stood on top of my crewcut and peered
unsteadily down at the top of my horn-rimmed glasses.

"You're off your gourd, Charlie," said Cindy sweetly.

"Hm, 'Charlie' -- that's another possibility," I said eagerly.

"I don't think you ever had a gourd," said Cindy determinedly.

"Lessee, now. Her father's name is Sinbad and her mother is Aphrodite.
Maybe we cd combine these somehow..." My giant brain churned softly.

"'Aphbad'?" Cindy's voice was sarcastic.

"Not half-bad," I mused, effortlessly sidestepping my typewriter as she
threw it at me.

"And you claim to have met Willis..."

"Actually, my love, I was thinking of something more rousing, something
along the lines of...of... But I have, or rather I don't have, this
lousy memory, and -- "

"Stealing lines from Alan Shaw again?"

"He stole it from me first -- which shows he has Fundamentally Bad
Taste," I added. "No, what I mean is, I'm trying to think of a name
appropriate to the female scion of a goddess and a seafaring mortal
adventurer, and I can't seem to think of any..."

"Why don't you have a contest?" Cindy asked, reasonably enough.

"It's an idea. But whatever we offer as a prize...no, no, don't bother to answer that one."

"Right," Cindy said, picking the kitten up off my head where it had been sharpening its claws on the solid bone it had finally managed to expose. "When you have a female feline, what else?"

"But," I observed carefully, as I applied a soothing lotion of beer and mimeo ink to my head, "we will get no response if we promulgate this contest simply among New York 'fen' (as we 'pros' say), because Ted White wd Kill anyone who took kittens from anyone besides Robin and him. I confess this problem seems insoluble to me."

"We could put an ad in RATATOSK," Cindy observed, as the kitten fell asleep in the palm of her hand.

"Why, it wouldn't even get that far," I pointed out. "Bruce of course would be able to figure out dozens of possible names from the criteria established, and would simply charter a plane to New York and pick up his prize -- which would solve our two problems but which hardly seems fair. And I don't think she's going to have a litter for a while, besides."

"That sounds pretty confused to me; your first-draft conversation is as complicated as your first-draft writing."

"Ha-hm; we won't go into that just now."

"FIRST DRAFT!" Cindy brightened. "Run a contest in FIRST DRAFT!"

"Now wait a minute. FIRST DRAFT is a fanzine with High Noble Purposes."

"Like telling about that Subway Incident?"

"Right. And printing chapters of my Works-In-Progress; stuff like that there. Poetry, too."

"Then it's settled," Cindy announced firmly.

"*sigh* You mean I've got to announce in the Hallowed pages of FIRST DRAFT that there is a contest to pick the name for the kitten, drawing it from the annals of fantastic adventurers and their no doubt highly obscene affairs with miscellaneous goddesses of high standing? -- bearing in mind, of course, the fact that the kitten is female?"

"Yes. And remember -- duplicate litters will be awarded in case of a tie."

"A tie? You mean we'd give this little itty bitty kitty two names?"

"Or more," Cindy said with determination.

"You're not really serious about all this, are you," I asked plaintively.

"Well," she said, cocking her head and looking at the kitten, "she does need a name..."