

gambit 31

---STELLAR c/w GAFIA #27---



is written and published by Ted E. White, at 2708 N. Charles St., Baltimore 18, Maryland. Free for comment. GAMBIT will now accompany VOID...

EVERY TIME RON PARKER comes to town, strange things happen. Ordinarily I am a sedentary creature who works, sometimes, goes outside to visit the newsstands twice a week, and to the store for food slightly more often, and to the mailbox every morning. We rarely go out at nights, though since Rickhardt came we've all gone out more. Usually I sit here at my typewriter most of my free time, composing deathless prose, or stencilling someone else's.

That's usually. Yesterday it was different. It was different when the doorbell woke me from a sound sleep (without disturbing Sylvia) at eight-thirty in the morning. Unghodly hour; the sun had barely risen. I know: I once got up at seven just to see what happened.

The bell-pusher and defiler of our sleep quickly ascended the stairs, and soon confronting me was Ron Parker. The same Ron Parker who is in the Army, and who will in a few days be shipped to Europe, destination as yet unknown. He was obviously shocked by my appearance, but said nothing. I said very little myself. It consisted of, "Hi. Here's the latest GAMBIT and VOID. Your FANTASY AMATEUR was returned. I'm going back to bed. See you in two hours." Which I did.

That's how the day started. A couple of hours later, Sylvia and I had risen, dressed even, and having found a note stating that Parker was next door at 2712, we went over there.

Ron's story was a harrowing one, part of which he wrote for a further ADVENTURES for GAMBIT. It seems he'd arrived at about 4:30 in the very early morning and had gone to sleep on my doorstep. He'd pinned on himself a note advising anyone finding him there to ring our bell and roll him inside. About 5:30 he'd awakened, decided that doorsteps were not in, and spent the rest of the night in Bill's VW, which was unlocked, due to Bill's having lost the key for it.

Ron had brought along from Tulsa (where he'd spent most of his 30-day leave, doing such things as courting a girl and getting engaged to her), a tape from Sam Martinez, so we decided to repossess my taper which was currently in Fred von Bernewitz' apartment at 2706. There we found not von B, who is in Philadelphia these days, running a theatre, but Richard Wingate and Bob Kemp. We sat around and talked for a while, as is our want, discussing such things as Wingate's acquisition of a '58 Ford ("How many cylinders, Richard?" "I don't know; never looked..."), and how the Cameo Theatre, which Richard was now running, would be closing in a few days, and the party Richard was throwing there Thursday night ("I have this artist who'll be there and will draw filthy murals on the walls of the rest-rooms--it'll be a real orgy. I may even keep the box-office open and let a few paying customers in..."), until Richard had to leave, and shortly after Ron returned to 2712, despite the absense of Magnus, who is now teaching Seventh Grade English. This left Bob Kemp, Sylvia and myself.

"Let's go to the Art Museum," Sylvia said. It was a beautiful day, and we had nothing better to do. The Art Museum would suit our mellow moods. And it was only a few blocks away. We wandered through an intervening park, swapping stories, Bob and I, of Houses & Fields I Have Burned, and our old days as jd-type hoods, way back before Juvenile Delinquency was In. "You know," I said, "I think everyone I know here in Baltimore is an ex-hood or criminal. It's like finding One's Own Race...!" When we got to it, we found the Museum closed. "It's closed," said Sylvia. "Look; there's a sign." Sure enough, the sign said "Closed Mondays". It was Monday.

While we were wondering what to do, Sylvia suggested that we make it over to another, larger park just beyond the Hopkins campus. We drowsily made our way parkwards through the sun, joking, having fun, confusing Hopkins Undergrads.

The park is really just an undeveloped area, full of trees, grass, and undergrowth. And streams. They run into a main stream along which are posted signs reading "Danger! Typhoid Water!" A small gravel road leads down into the park, and at one point it is crossed by a small fording stream.

It's been years since I last played in a stream as I used to do in the one on our farm when I was a kid. While Bob and Sylvia walked on to a grassy area she knew to sit down, I searched for and found a stick. Whereupon I began poking about in the stream, first clearing out channels where leaves had collected against stones. Then I began diverting the stream from a strong channel to a weak one.

About this time, a man laden with somewhat seedy authority strolled down the road and past. "Hey, mister! What're you doing?" he asked. I stared up at him from my crouched position with my baby blue eyes, and I said: "I'm playing." He wandered away, for some reason never to return.

Bob and Sylvia, rested, wandered back, and caught up with my enthusiasm began helping me. Bob began constructing a dam with dirt clods and rocks. Soon all the stream, a small but swift one, had been titally diverted into the originally smaller channel. After a bit--it seemed like a short time, but already it was three in the afternoon--we rested on a large rock and talked and Dug Nature. Our natural empathy had been considerably sharpened.

It was then that Bob suggested that we dam up the entire stream, and divert it up the road to an old, unused stream-bed. "Man, think big!" he said.

Two hours later we had not only diverted the stream, but turned the entire road into a sizeable lake. And Bob was Thinking Bigger. "Now, if we remove that natural dam upstream..." Bit it was growing late. We contented ourselves with unblocking our damn at the road, and watching the torrent of water rush down the original and now-dry stream-bed. "Wow," said Bob. "That's Big." Having created a Thinking Man's Stream, we went home to a relatively uneventful evening.

And Ron Parker? He'd gotten a date with Wingate's ex-girl, Sunnie, and was out all night. He left town at eight the next morning. We hadn't seen much of him, but he'd been the catalyst to an unexpected day.

ACCOMPANYING THIS, is G30, the last of the large-sized GAMBIT's. And in all likelihood, the entire mess is being mailed with VOIE 15. One Never Knows. Why, there might even be a FLIP #2. I guess you'll know when you receive this. In case you hadn't already gathered as much, G30 is Dated. Like, it was mostly written before Christmas. -tw