

'GLOM'

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FAPA (Nov '48)

Publisher:
Forrest J Ackerman

S TARMAGEDDON

Two Star Gods fought
With axe and mace.
A spark flew into
The Womb of Space.
Space nurtured the Spark
And gave it birth.
Now men fight on
Planet Earth!

--Alan Moss

FORRY-WARNED IS FORRY-ARMED; or, Do as I say, don't do as I do! This is an impromptu editorialette on the dangers of delay. I've put off till the penultimate moment the creation of the first two pages of this issue, and now, just as I sit down to dream up the contents, the tone-bell rings and brings The Unexpected: A fan visitor from afar. Calling from just around the corner, I learn, is Eric Holmes from Honolulu. Of course, I have every desire to meet this quasi-correspondent and sometimes customer of mine, let him look at my den, see that he gets to meet the fen, etc, but my hands are tied to this typewriter because the stencils must be cut toot-sweet and I must beat it over to the mimeo.

Well, introductions over, I have explained the situation to Eric and excused myself while I bat out this fan-de-rol, as he, cross-legged, sits contentedly on the floor of my book den with a copy of THE OUTSIDER tenderly cradled in his lap, lapping up the pages.

The moral of this was trite when Triton was Roman the waves, only Eric informs me Triton belongs in Greek mythology, thereby striking my pun a mortal blow. Anyway, the upshot of all this is that procrastination is the thief of time and tide wait for no man can serve two "Masters of Time" (forthcoming van Vogt book I agented to Fantasy Press).

End of Editorial ...

BECAUSE it is easier to copy than to think under the circumstances that I am now under, I am going to quote you an article by John T. Watts from the Glendale (Calif) News-Press for Mon 5 Jan 48 rather than write a review of SPACE CADET by Robt. Heinlein. But I do urge each and every one of you to get the latter book (Scribner's, \$2.50) for it is adult, not adolescent, and it is of a high order of excellence. Never has such justice been done to the subject as Heinlein has done in delineating the do's and don'ts of the service of space.

And now, if you will turn the page.....?

WATTS WITH THIS STUFF?

If you want to stimulate your imagination and escape everyday worries, look into science-fantasy fiction, "scientifiction" as we in the know call it.

Ever since Jules Verne wrote "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea", this type of literature has been building up to where it has a tremendous following today--and we are not all adolescents.

Sometimes a scientifiction yarn hits the Saturday Post, or another "slick", and frequently they come out in book form, but mostly they are found in specialized magazines, such as "Amazing Stories".

Jules Verne wasn't the only prophet among the scribblers with wild imaginations. During the war government A-bomb officials chewed their nails when one of the magazines came out with a story which practically gave the Big Secret away--in fiction form, of course.

One of the themes now in the scientifiction pulps is the terror of war at some time in the future when science really puts its shoulder to the wheel. The A-bomb is like a broken cap pistol compared to some of the things that are being dreamed up.

There are such devices as a teleportation machine, which can pick an individual up anywhere in the world, dissolve him into pure energy, whoosh into a receiving gadget on the machine, and reassemble him as good as new before his protoplasm gets cold.

Then, of course, there is that great espionage weapon of the future, the tele-aug, which can spy on persons miles and miles away and even read their thoughts.

In justice, it should be said that war and destruction aren't the only theme in scientifiction. It has explored the whole range of cosmic possibilities (and improbabilities) for yarns, from boy-meets-girl story told on the setting of a tiny world revolving in a molecular universe, to giants a mile high inhabiting a planet of proportionate size.

Religion has not been neglected, either, and many Bible stories have been given the scientifiction treatment. A Garden of Eden story had Adam and Eve created thru scientific processes by god-like scientists who came from a distant universe to populate terra.

Interplanetary travel is no trick at all, of course. The scientifiction writers were using atomic energy long before the first atomic pile was created at Chicago.

Interstellar cruising which conceivably would take many lifetimes--and you would die before you got well started--has also been solved, we are happy to report.

It is all very simple. If your super-cruiser can do a thousand miles a second under ordinary atomic drive, and it would take you a thousand years to get to yon twinkling star at that pokey pace, you shift into interstellar drive.

Bingo, you are there in maybe a few seconds.

⌊The End Is Not Yet. Columnist Watts winds up by revealing that maybe Stalin and Uncle Sam are damning each other because--oh, brother!--of the ray+mechs of the cavern deros.....7

THE BROOCH

by

E. Everett Evans

Father Phillip Marcy's steps slowed involuntarily, and he cast an apprehensive glance back over his shoulder as an inexplicable chill struck him. He sensed presences, or a Presence, near him. A malicious, offensive presence. He stopped still, turning slowly about in the little path, peering carefully about through the swift-gathering dusk.

He was not an overly imaginative man, as could be seen by the fact that he habitually took his evening constitutional in the park-like little grave-yard attached to St. Xavier's, his parish church. But now his pulse and breath raced, his hair emulated a stand of reeds. He involuntarily made the Sign of the Cross, then chided himself for doing so. There was no necessity, he assured himself, for seeking that added Divine protection. Yet his veins were still iced by an eerie shuddering.

It was a still, hot summer evening, with not the shred of cloud marring the sky, nor breeze to rumple the festoons of low-hanging Spanish moss on the trees. It was, however, cooler here in the shaded and beautiful little cemetery, which was one reason why he preferred it for his nocturnal walks.

Now he scanned carefully the surrounding scene, trying to discover what had so suddenly chilled him. Half-consciously at first, then with startled awareness, his attention was drawn to one of the graves. He moved closer, stooping for a better look.

The ground was stirring, as though something -- or someone? -- beneath was trying to get out. He stepped back, he whirled, he ran a step. Then he stopped, shook his head, and laughed. How silly! He turned back and bent once more to the spot. What could possibly harm him? Wasn't this a modern age?

At last he stood up and laughed -- an almost hysterical giggle of relief. "Only a mole!" He spoke aloud, feeling the need of the sound of a human voice. "I didn't know we had any around here. I'll have to speak to the sexton in the morning."

But the next morning, while at work in his study, Father Marcy saw the aged sexton staggering across the lawn. At the front door the priest intercepted the old man. In a state of severe shock and horror, the sexton was led inside.

"Here, Man, sit down. Be careful! What's the matter? What's happened?"

Old Josiah's jaws opened and shut with the mechanical woodenness of a ventriloquist's dummy, but no words came. His hands pawed the air, fluttering aimlessly, his breath gulped spasmodically in his tortured throat, his eyes protruded.

The priest produced a glass of liquid, from which he forced the other to sip. After several minutes, the sexton's tremors subsided.

"Graves ... disturbed!" he gasped.

"Yes, I know," Father Marcy said quietly. "There are moles out there; I saw one working in the ground last night.

"Not moles ... graves of both former wives ... of Horace Burgier ... tampered with. Sod torn up ... dirt looks like it'd been spaded ... It's the work of ghouls, Sir!"

"Nonsense!" the priest snapped. "If it wasn't moles, then the only ghouls possible were human ones! Let's go see about it."

"You'll not get me near there again," the old man shudderingly refused to move from the sanctuary of the Parish House.

Father Marcy went on alone, to stand by the Burgier plot.

The two graves were badly damaged. The priest examined them, but could see no place where feet had trampled about anywhere near the graves. The dirt, while freshly turned, showed no spade marks or those of any material tool.

His hands trembled. He was unbelievably cold.

"I'll have to notify Mr. Burgier," he said. He walked back under the black trees, shivering.

Two men from the police department arrived at about the same time as Horace Burgier. Father Marcy met them at the graves. They all studied the plot for some time, slowly shaking their heads. There was no clue as to the who, or the how, of this desecration.

"I can't for the life of me imagine ..." Horace Burgier spoke at last, hesitatingly. His diamond rings flashed. Then, "... and yet, ... I wonder"

Apparently only Father Marcy noticed that last half-finished remark, and he kept silent.

Later, in his study, after the police had gone to get legal permission to disinter the two coffins, the priest recalled this remark to his parishioner.

"What was it you wondered, my Son?"

There was no answer for some time, nor did he press for one. The room was quiet in the mid-day sun; it was a material scene of furniture and books and rugs that did not lend itself to fantastic imaginings. Yet the priest had a feeling that Burgier considered this affair to be a sort of a supernatural one. Just what, he did not know, nor did the other vouchsafe any information.

"I believe you knew, Father, that my first wife was an intensely jealous woman, especially toward the last?"

"Yes," the priest answered in quiet tones. "She came to me several times, and I tried to aid her in eradicating the passion of jealousy that was consuming her, extending, as it did, even to her personal possessions."

"I give you my word, Father, I gave her no cause for such feelings."

"Jealousy is one of those sad afflictions that feeds upon itself," was the oblique comment.

There was another space of silence, broken by the ringing of the phone. After listening a moment, and making some responses, Father Marcy hung up the receiver.

"They're ready for the opening of the coffins."

Only half a dozen men were in the autopsy room in the basement of the courthouse building when the Coroner gave word to open the dirt-encrusted boxes. The heavy, nearly-overpowering feter of death caused the nostrils to tremble. It was so intensified in the room that the men were hushed, speaking rarely and then in whispers.

The body of the second Mrs. Burgier came first. She had died a scant two months previously. In the blue-green light of the mercury-vapor tubes, Father Marcy thought her face expressed stark fright ... or a puzzled wonder. Which, he was not sure. Very little decomposition showed, but the clothing was badly disarranged, the front of the white silk dress ripped and torn.

Does she know her tomb was desecrated, he wondered? Can the dead know, fear, be aware? Why the look of horror, of disturbance?

He glanced at the white, strained face of Horace Burgier, then quickly reached out an arm to steady the man.

"Something ... something frightful ... has happened to Barbara." Then Burgier shook himself, and stood unaided. "She looked so calm and happy when we laid her away. As though she'd been given a ... a glimpse of the Beyond ... and had liked what she saw. My God!" he exclaimed suddenly, leaning forward. "Was she still alive? Perhaps only in a cataleptic trance when we thought her dead and buried her?"

"That's impossible in these days of modern embalming," the Coroner reassured him. "I think it's merely some trick of the light here that gives her that strange expression."

"I suppose," cried Burgier, "it's a trick of lighting makes her dress look torn!"

There was no answer. The men shuffled, then turned to the other coffin, which the mortician had finished opening. This body, of the first Mrs. Burgier, had decomposed but, curiously, not as much as might have been

expected after two years. The men's first real, studied looks were at the face.

Father Marcy shrank back. The others exclaimed. He heard quick footsteps, the sound of retching against a further wall.

For the face of Amanda Burgier showed very, very plainly -- no possible trick of lights here -- a feline satisfaction, a gloating satiety that was somehow -- diabolical!

For several minutes the men made no further sound, except their quickened, sobbing breaths. Father Marcy sensed that the others felt, as he did, the horror stalking through the room, eating away courage. The maddening drip ... drip ... of a leaky faucet in the far corner magnified itself into the illusive qualities of a voodoo drum, again ... again ... again.

At last the Coroner spoke. "I'll have pictures made; we can study them, and this matter, tomorrow at ten in my office."

Seconds later only the dead remained in the room.

"This isn't," the Coroner began the next morning, "in any sense a regular inquest. We're here merely to see if some light can be shed on this puzzle."

The police official reported briefly. "I sent two of my best men to the graveyard again, and about the neighborhood. They found nothing."

"I talked at length with the sexton," Father Marcy spoke up. "He's sure there was no one in the graveyard during the day -- that's the day before yesterday -- as he was there all day long, watering the lawns and trimming hedges."

"It was probably done at night," the Coroner suggested.

Father Marcy coughed hesitantly, colored a bit, and then continued. "I think most of you know I take an evening walk in the cemetery there. Night before last I experienced a sudden chill, a frightening coldness that actually made me ... afraid, for some time. I saw movement in the ground above one of these graves ... I studied it and then was relieved because I thought it was merely a mole working underground. But now ..." He shrugged helplessly.

The other men looked up, startled at that revelation.

After considerable pause, the Coroner broke the silence to say that he'd looked up the records; that Mrs. Amanda Burgier died of coronary thrombosis; that Barbara, the second wife, died of a quick pneumonia following swiftly a short attack of influenza.

"That's right," Burgier agreed. "Barbara was ill only about three days. But she'd not been feeling well for several months before that --

since right after our first wedding anniversary, in fact. She'd always been so vibrant and filled with the joy of life, that when she began being listless and distraught I was worried. But the doctor I called to check her health said he could find nothing wrong except a slight run-down condition, for which he prescribed only a tonic. But less than two months later Barbara had this sudden attack, and died so quickly."

His face was drawn and sad, and the men were silent a moment. Then Burgier raised his head. "I don't know if this has any connection or not. I didn't understand it at the time -- thought I was probably mistaken. But just as Barbara was dying, she sort of raised up on the bed and her hands clutched at her gown above the breast, or perhaps toward her throat, I wasn't close enough to see clearly. I rushed forward, and it seemed as though she was trying to scream, although her voice was too weak to hear plainly. But I thought she was trying to cry out, 'No, it's mine!' I couldn't make sense to it, and up to now I've always thought I misunderstood her. Perhaps, though, it's a clue. That's why I thought I should tell you."

"You've no idea, then, what she could have meant?" the Coroner asked.

"None whatever." Burgier sat with bowed head for long moments; the other men were as silent and still.

"Any relatives who might've had some reason for doing this?" the Coroner finally asked.

"No, none. Barbara and I were both only children; Amanda had only a sister living, and she passed on a few years ago. All our parents are dead. The only time I ever saw the sister, who lived for many years in Haiti as a teacher, was several years ago when she was home on a Sabbathical leave, and spent a couple of months with us."

Father Marcy watched Horace Burgier, who was looking down towards the floor, his hands twisting and knotting themselves about each other as he spoke in low, carefully-controlled tones.

"Amanda and I were married about twelve years. Father Marcy knows that during the last few years we were not too happy, as my wife developed quite a streak of jealousy. I'm not trying either to defend myself or to defame her when I say that as far as I know I never gave her cause for that feeling."

The Coroner caught Father Marcy's eye, questioningly, and the priest nodded agreement to both portions of the statement.

"We'd both known Barbara for some years, but were not close friends as Amanda did not seem to like her especially. But after my wife died, Barbara was so unobtrusively helpful during those weeks when I was in a mental turmoil, that I grew to depend on her to quite an extent. The feeling quickly grew into love, as I got to know her wonderful qualities. When she seemed to feel the same toward me, I proposed, and we were married about five months after Amanda passed on. It was sudden, I know, but nothing more than that."

Again the priest signalled assent with eyes and nodded head.

No one seemed to think of any questions, nor could anyone find any clue in this simple story. The tension was relieved a bit when a policeman brought in a package of photographs. The Coroner studied them for some time, then passed them to the others. They were enlarged photos, showing the head and face, and that part of the upper torso which is disclosed when the forward portion of the lid of a casket has been removed.

There was only the rustle of the pictures passing from hand to hand. None offered comments or suggestions, none had any questions.

At last the Coroner sighed. "I guess it's just one of those peculiar things -- an unsolvable mystery. I can't make head or tail to it, that's for sure."

The others relaxed a bit. Father Marcy started to hand back the pictures he held, then turned to Burgier, holding out one of the prints for the other to see.

"I've always been intrigued by that unusual brooch your first wife is wearing. I've seen it on her many times. It was one she was particularly fond of, wasn't it?"

Burgier glanced carelessly at the picture, then into the priest's face. "Why, yes, it was. Quite her most prized possession, I guess. Her sister sent it to her from Haiti -- I believe there was quite a history attached

He stopped, his eyes widening with sudden fear. Seizing the photo, he peered at it closely. His hands began shaking, sweat sprang out on his livid face. He reeled as though about to fall from his chair.

"What is it, Man?" the Coroner cried, and Father Marcy hitched his chair closer to Burgier's, to steady him.

Burgier pointed a shaking finger at the picture. "But ... but that's all wrong!" he quavered. "Amanda wasn't wearing that brooch. I distinctly remember that she was buried without any jewelry whatever. Besides, I know, positively, that I gave that very brooch to Barbara as her first wedding anniversary present -- went to the bank vault purposely to get it and now I stop to think of it, it was on her dress when I last looked at Barbara in her coffin."

"Yes," the mortician, who had been examining the picture, spoke up in a small, awed voice. "I put it there. There was a discolored spot on Mrs. Barbara's neck, and the dress chosen for her was rather low-cut, so I used the first nice-looking pin I found handy to pull the dress up closer about her throat. I noticed that it was a peculiar pin -- this is undeniably the same one."

Father Marcy hurriedly crossed himself -- this time he felt that he needed it. Finally he said, slowly, "I think that our little puzzle here is cleared up, but it leaves us with a greater, more insoluble one. Can you tell me what life is? What death is, or the mystery of life beyond life? But somehow, a jealous woman has regained something she felt was peculiarly her own, from a hated rival. May they both now rest in peace!"