

To Marty - Shel

Vol 1  
No 6

# VARIANT WORLD



V A R I A N T W O R E D

Vol. 1 - #6



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V A R I A N T I A

I had a nice long editorial prepared for this ish, up until today. However, upon looking at the exehequer, I find that we won't be able to put out any more 31 page ishs for a while yet. So, this has gotta be short.

Maybe it's a good thing, who wants to read a long editorial anyway?

Unfortunately, there won't be any Egoboo and Dreamdust in this ish. Fred Chappel was in an automobile accident and broke his leg in two places. He'll be allright in time for the next ish tho.

I got a letter a little while ago saying something to the effect of "The Variants is the lousiest club I have ever seen, and V.W. isn't any better. And wot are you gonna do about it?"

To this, I have just one answer, wot are YOU gonna do about it? I've been running the club and V.W. to the best of my ability, but I don't have the time to do everything, wot with college....etc.

So, why don't you --and this means all of you run for the presidency and for the other offices of the club. I certainly made it clear enuf in the charter how to do so!

It's funny, but the guys who complain the most always turn out to be the ones who do the least work.

I hope that I've made myself clear enuf. I think I can handle this end if somebody'll take the administrative work off my hands.

Material has been trickling in slowly, and thanx to those who are interested enuf to send it in, but how about the rest of you getting off your collective .....es and doing something! There still isn't half enuf material.

NEW MEMBERS\* and CHANGES OF ADDRESS (stay put, dammit!)

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- \*Myron Ferreira: 169 Hudson St., Hackensack, New Jersey
- \*Raul Bru: Ave Central 18 & Victoria, Rpto Mohly, Marianac, Habana, Cuba
- \*Miss Fern Cobb: 843 Priestly Ave., Lawrence Park, Erie, Pa.
  
- A. Mazzarell, Jr: AK3: Fasron S2 Supply, Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Maryland
- A/3C Ira Kantrowitz: Box 664, 3650 Med. Group, Samson Air Force Base, New York
- Stephanie Szold: Box 106 W.C.U.N.C., Greensboro, North Carolina
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- Jean Bryant Bogert: 200 Elmwood Ave., Narbert, Pa.
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●Haaaaaaa

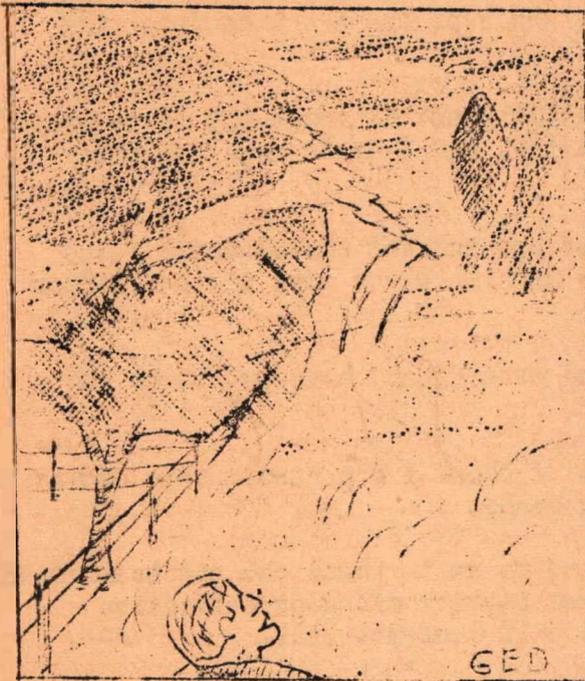
*Shel*

S T A R M A T T E R

by

Martin Clark

It was on a Summer's morning of the year 2030 that the alien space-ship landed on the Earth -- a unique event in the history of the World; unless indeed, at one time countess ages ago perhaps before the evolution of life, there had been a predecessor. Anyway, this was the first one in recorded history, and it was a big event, and a strange one. Its approach was heralded by a thunderstorm, the most violent in years, and great winds blowing down fencing in the part of the country in which it landed.



Stan Levan saw it first. He was on his way home on the outskirts of Brookville, a small Canadian town of about 20,000 inhabitants. It was a great black globe-shape, slightly flattened and elongated at two ends, and falling quite gently, one end downwards-- a black dot against the sky and the lightning about a mile up. There were no flames, no rockets, no lightning swoop, as he might have expected from the futuristic movies of the day -- just a steady descent from the sky. But he was not to be disappointed. It was a space-ship, as soon all the world was to know.

It landed about three miles from the town, and Stan hurried over in its direction with some anticipation.

"Could it be a space-ship?" he thought.

It certainly didn't look like a meteor, or a balloon, or anything man-made. "One of these anti-gravitic space-ships the S.F. mags talk about, perhaps?" he wondered. He's soon see. He saw it land, floating slowly slowly to the ground, and landing end-downwards. Imagine his surprise then, when the solid rock seemed to give way like sand beneath it -- there was a terrific screeching of rocks grinding together, a shrieking, rending sound like fingernails being scratched down a blackboard, as it sank deeply beneath the ground, which quaked and shuddered violently. The thing was about 150 ft. in diameter, half in and half out of the ground. It was in a pit about 75 feet deep, the rock all split and shattered round the perimeter -- solid rock you could have built a skyscraper on! Suddenly he caught a message his senses had been telling him for several seconds -- although he was a hundred yards away, the thing was pulling him towards it! Not very powerfully, but quite perceptibly it was exerting an attraction upon him.

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cont. next page

Philly, eh wot?

STAR MATTER (cont.)

He couldn't understand it. Was it magnetic? -- No, he had nothing metallic on his person, except the coins in his pocket, and -- but it couldn't be, not the iron in his blood! The thought struck him, but -- a magnet strong enough for that....! He began to approach still closer to the space-ship, stealthily and very slowly, tensing his body against the ever-increasing attraction all the time it felt like moving to the perimeter of a revolving disc. The pull became stronger and yet he was still a considerable distance away. Stan had only a very limited knowledge of physics, and yet he knew, from the force which the thing exerted upon him, and the fact that it was almost certainly governed by a universal inverse square law, that an enormous attraction would be exerted on anything only a few feet away from the thing -- that if he moved just a few feet nearer he would be unable to resist its pull. What then? -- he would go slithering towards it, across the ground, faster and faster, until his bones crushed and his body collapsed against it, and the very molecules of his body were spread in a thin layer over its black surface. He ran...He didn't stop until he was back at the town, and telling the authorities of his discovery. This was news indeed! Here at last, was something for Brookville to talk about till the end of time, --if it survived.

By the next morning, the investigation of the space-ship from a respectable distance --was well under way. There were some government scientists, press photographers, one or two politicians and a host of spectators. A metal fence was hastily being put round it, and police were there to see that all but the scientists kept outside it. The latter quite soon found out that the attraction Stan had noticed was not magnetic -- it was gravitational!

They worked out the mass of the space-ship on the assumption that the gravity associated with it was not artificial, but solely due to its mass, and the answer was in millions of millions of tons! Their assumption was, of course, not entirely justified. From Stan's description of the space-ship's descent, and from the absence of any visible rockets or other means of propulsion, it could only be assumed, as Stan had brightly suggested, that some anti-gravitic device was involved. And if a machine could counteract gravity it seemed probable that it could also produce it. The gravitational attraction, however, was found to be perfectly constant, and not even the very slightest variation in it could be detected, an argument in favor of the "true mass" theory.

The space-ship was slightly radioactive, emitting mainly gamma rays, cosmic rays and neutrons -- but their intensity was slight, and would only be dangerous, the scientists estimated, at a distance of about 50 feet, which was far beyond the limit a human being could approach safely. anyway.

Soon, the reporters had managed to grasp some of the more spectacular facts and theories from the scientists, and the evening papers were full of the most astounding tales about the space-ship. Speculation as to the nature and origin of the occupants was rife--further speculation was as to why the occupants had not yet shown themselves. Perhaps the landing had killed them or damaged the controls, perhaps, some imaginative report suggested, to everyone's distress, that the occupants already knew in some strange way all they wanted to know about Earth and were preparing to depart "without a word".

The scientists themselves were fairly certain that the material of the space-ship was neutron -- matter and that the occupants, if any, must almost certainly be from a "white dwarf" with a density of the order of millions of tons per cubic centimeter -- hence the intense gravitic attraction. What the occupants would actually look like was a highly interesting question, and such questions as this the scientists debated amongst themselves. But the days passed by and still no creatures showed themselves to satisfy the curiosity of the waiting world. The magnitude of the crowds of spectators each day waxed greater. Theories grew increasingly in numbers and improbability. "Aliens Attack Earth with Death-Rays" was one slogan pounced upon though a misunderstanding of the nature of the radiation emitted by the space-ship, and was widely believed. In vain the scientists tried to enlighten the public for at the same time they were arguing amongst themselves.

The days lengthened into weeks and still no movement. The world grew impatient and slightly annoyed. "The thing is ridiculous!" said the more typical politicians. "Why can't the scientists do something about it?" But the scientists having no wish to be made into uni-molecular films were in no hurry to investigate the space-ship except from a safe distance. It seemed, in any case, to have no visible exit, and even if there were it would certainly be impossible to force one open by any means at man's disposal.

One evening towards the end of the third week after the space-ship's arrival, however, a scientist came with some excitement to report his latest investigations to the committee appointed to study the machine. It was thought from the probable conjectures, that if alien beings existed they would be unable to hear, taste, smell or see. There could be no atmosphere or water or any other molecular substance upon a cold star. There could be nothing transparent to constitute the lens of eyes. Their senses, and they most necessarily possess some, in order to be intelligent, must be entirely different from those of man. Nor would the aliens eat "food" as we know it: if they needed energy with which to move their bodies or carry out body-processes, it could only come from atomic processes.

Now the scientist pointed out, radioactive processes differ from chemical ones in being slow, often enormously slow. Here he produced some rough calculations giving an approximation to the rate of body-processes of the aliens and, consequently, to their rate of motion. They were astonishing! Although they could not pretend to be accurate. They seemed to indicate that what to our senses would be of the order of years, to them would be the order of hours. In other words, although the aliens might be making their exit from the ship as quickly as possible, they might not appear for what, in our time-scale, would be a period of years. With this concept in mind, the scientist had taken some careful photographs of the ship's exterior and compared them in detail with some taken shortly after its arrival. And there, on its surface, an elliptic portion was seen to have become slightly more elevated than the rest --- a door! An exit from which the aliens would not fully emerge until perhaps many years had passed by.

of fantasy, or Damon Knight, or Chad Oliver, and you'll appreciate my point.

My grip is in the concept of fan-fiction. Fan-writers would be much more interesting if they had never seen a magazine in their lives. Professional fiction has tabs. For instance, a story like "Witch" would never be printed in a magazine.

STAR MATTER (CONCLUDED)

\*6\*

There was almost a riot, then, amongst the scientist's audience, as they saw his photographs and appreciated the significance of his findings. They were presented with the apparently insurmountable problem of communicating with beings more alien to man than any he had previously imagined. What would they look like to man? Beings without limbs or bodily organs as we know them; beings with mysterious means of locomotion, moving more slowly than the slowest earthly creatures; beings with minds of unimaginable structure locked somehow amongst the neutrons and the quanta of energy? And what, in their turn, would the Earthmen and their world look like to the aliens, -- phantoms who flitted about swifter than thought in a world with the consistency of soap-suds and gossamer, a world spinning in the twilight of a dizzily revolving ball of flame, the sun?

\*\*\*\*\*

NEOFAN'S PLIGHT

by Fern Cobb

\*6\*

Eye mysteries of science fiction  
Have me in a whirl of friction,  
Exasperating scientific terms,  
Have me fighting off galactic germs;

As for the language terminology,  
Oopala has me baffled (seriously,  
Is it oopsla do, or oopsla daisy?  
Am I going nuts or only crazy?

Now problem 3 is contacting fen,  
I've failed and wailed, but I'll try again.  
Harken, fair fandom, and thea this, my plea,  
Tell me, o where can ye local fen be?

Still through all this utter complication,  
STF's a world of fascination,  
I'll solve these mysteries whatever they are,  
Because I'll hitch my rocket to a star!

\*7\*



Some Words About "Witch" (cont.)

Not even if Bradbury, Kuttner, van Vogt, and HPL himself, worked on it.

Simply because it is in the form of a play. Yet, I think you'll agree --- a play is its most effective setting. But the idea of publishing a play would set Weird Tales on its heels.

Amateur writers come straight from reading a prozine and with stars in their eyes, sit down and start typing. The results may be good, or it may be bad; but it'll never be different.

It will be the same old stuff as the fans have been reading in the same ole prozines --- except that it won't be as good.

Amateur authors should set their goals on a good story first, and a pro-type story last. Fresh, new concepts are needed.

Of course, these "fresh, new concepts" are not so easy to conceive, develop, and iron out. Good! They should not be. It's hard--there are no guides. There will be no Ed. Hamilton to point the way. No van Vogt would say, "Here ---do this. Twist the plot thus ---and thus". No Eric Frank Russell would say, "Play on this emotion --and this one."

Fine.'

There could be no better training for aspiring writers.

It wouldn't be easy to break away from the old ghods. I might suggest very biting satires as an aid. But if you want to try something different, that's your problem. The choice is yours -- follow the herd, there's where the Mickey Spillanes are --or, try something new, a man named Poe once did.

FAN-AUTHORS OF THE WORLD, REVOLT!

III

As to the actual writing of "Witch":

I conceived the idea on Monday, July 7, 1952.

All stores close at one P.M. on Wednesdays around here. I ate lunch locked myself in my room and started the first pen-and ink draft of the play at two P.M. At seven P.M., I stopped a half-hour for dinner. The final typewritten draft was finished at one A.M.

And I was rather sick of the whole mess of Ed and the Ole Man and the Black 'Uns. I wondered frankly if I had wasted eleven hours. The next afternoon I was able to view "Witch" with a somewhat less prejudiced eye, and decided that it wasn't too bad, after all.



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cont page 10

Philly, sure!

SOME WORDS ABOUT "WITCH" (concluded)

"Witch" was written in somewhat different surroundings than most of my work. In writing it, I merely locked myself in my room opened all the windows to let the cool breezes blow, and set to work. Usually, I write in the cool downstairs of my grandmother's old house, in the old fashioned parlor. I sit in one of the rather uncomfortable chairs and write to the strains of Saint-Saens, Stravinsky, Moonlight Sonata, Marche Slav, and Schubert's Unfinished, weirdly interspersed with Les Brown, Tommy Dorsey and Harry James. An odd combination, I admit, and I've often wondered what effect ---if any ---it has on my writing. In fact, I was trying an experiment to see if I could detect a difference between "Witch" and the rest. It didn't work, of course, "Witch" was my first all-out attempt at a play.

I had grown slightly disgusted with the current 'devil' stories in the prozines. It seems to be a vogue, at this writing, to have the Devil meet a drunkard or some other queer character who treats him with the most nonchalantly off-hand manner. It is very humorous and makes good reading. I have enjoyed many such stories.

But don't forget ---a scrape with the Ole Man would be horror. Utter horror. "Witch" was dedicated to that end. Dialogue can show the terror in a man's soul much better than any mess of words the author can write, Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment to the contrary.

You may think spots of "Witch" to be repetitious. And parts of it to be unbelievably melodramatic. You would be right on both counts. The poker-playing scenes are repetitious to an extreme. But people are repetitious in their words and in their deeds. If you don't believe it, try working with one certain person on the same job in the same environment days on end.

As for the melodrama, I was aware of it when writing, but I needed it to tighten the suspense.

You may think that the writing is bad. Correct again. I am not a professional playwright. This, in fact, was my first attempt.

You may think that the plot is old. It is. But I found it refreshing to write after reading reams and reams of 'cute' devil stories.

You may think to hell with the whole deal.....

I wonder what you would think if you had spent eleven hours straight writing the damned thing?

\*10\*

The Philcon wants YOU!



## B U S I N E S S   L I K E   H E L L

by Hal Hostetler

The plump business man rounded a corner of Hell and marched up to Satan's throne.

"Well?" said Satan.

"Harrumph!" said the man.

"Harrumph what?" Satan looked amused.

In a loud voice the man said, "I, Willard L. Hamstring, demand respect from everyone -- even you!"

The devil raised his eyebrows and doodled in the sand with his long, pointed tail. Bringing his fingertips together, he said, "Oh?"

"And I am here on business."

"Uh huh."

"And I mean business!" He rapped his fist on the arm of the throne.

Satan jumped, then replied nervously, "Uh--and just what is this business?"

"I can't stand the heat!"

"What?"

"I like cool weather. I insist on moving to a cool corner of this place! I insist! Do you hear me? I insist!" Once more he banged his fist on the throne.



The devil frowned. "Am I hearing correctly? I thought you said....."

"I did!" Hamstring was red in the face. "I want a cool corner of Hell!"

"My dear sir--and I say this with no fondness for you --this is unprecedented." He turned and motioned toward a doorway. "Boys!" he called.

The "boys" came and carted off Mr. Willard L. Hamstring to the "correction chamber" where they proceeded to singe his --uh--posterior.

Sometime later Beelzebub ran up to the throne and said excitedly "Satan! Old Hamstring is running around Hell singing 'Cool Water.' and all the others are crying so much that their tears are putting out the fires!"

Business Like Hell (cont.)

"What?" Satan leaped to his feet. "That jerk said he wanted a cool place. Now he's trying to get it by himself. Well, I'll show him. C'mon."

But they were too late. As they ran from Satan's office, the last flame went "spfft." and Hell was literally "cold as Hell."

Shivering, Satan pulled his cape close about himself and shouted through his chattering teeth, "Toast his tootsies! Singe his skin! Burn his bottom! Roast his....!"

"But sire!" said Beelzebub. "There are no flames, anywhere".

And Satan, too, sat down and cried. "Now look what you've done, Hamstring," he sobbed. "What is Hell without fire? Our whole establishment will collapse! Oh, why did you do it? Why?" and Satan had a nervous breakdown.

Quickly Beelzebub and the "Boys" ran and gathered wood and kerosene and stole a cigarette lighter. Soon they had a nice fire going, and they guarded it from Hamstring and the rest.

"There is only one thing we can do," said Beelzebub to Satan the next day. "Get a refrigerator for Hamstring."

"No, I have a better idea," said the devil. "We'll...bzz...bzz..."

Beelzebub's eyes widened, and a grin lighted up his face. "A great idea! I'll have the boys get to work on it right away."

Later Satan called Hamstring over to a corner of Hell.

"Yes?" said Hamstring.

"I've got your cool corner." The devil smiled.

Beelzebub and the "boys" smiled.

"You have?" M.L.H. was excited. "Where?"

"Step right over here," said Satan. He opened a door.

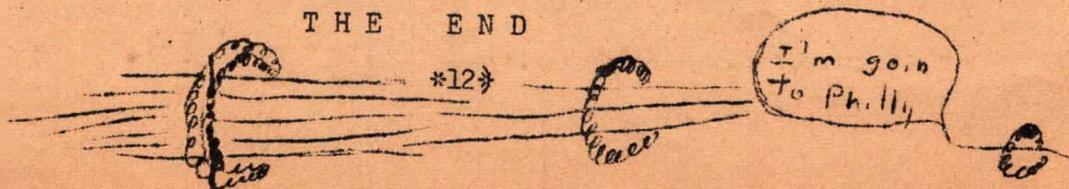
"Why--why, this is a meat storage freezer!" said Hamstring.

"Yes, it is," said Satan. "Push him in boys."

They did.

"Well," said Beelzebub, "he'll soon be frozen stiff. He'll worry us no more.

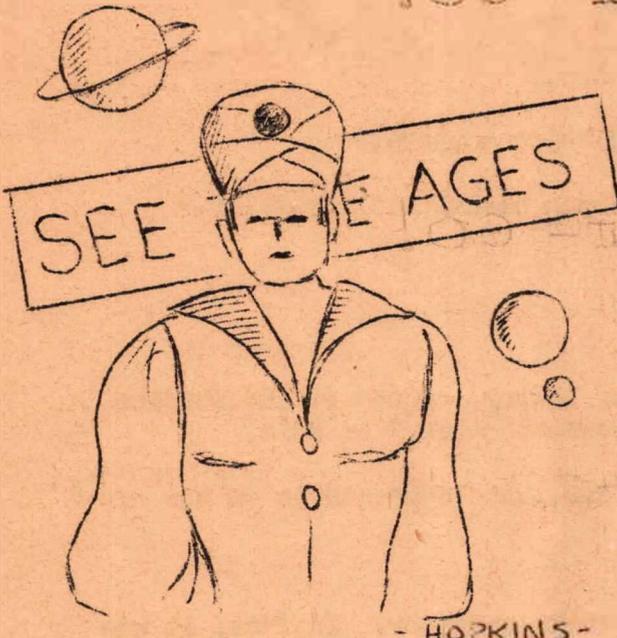
"Except for one thing", said Satan. "How do we keep the electric bill paid?"



THE TALE OF H. TYNDALL

by  
Burt Krunzinski

Now the boys down at Time Journeys, Inc. try hard to please all customers, but when they first saw Harry Tyndall, they knew what they were in for a tough time.



Not that he appeared to be the usual grouchy, ulcered, business-man type, no-- in fact, he was the exact opposite. Tall and suntanned -- handsome, with a bright smile -- and with a faint Oriental touch to eyebrows that overhadowed dark and flashing eyes. No ---- his bodily appearance had nothing to do with it at all. In fact, he seemed like a nice guy to them; albeit a little cocksure -- a little egotistical. He seemed to know exactly what he wanted; and he seemed to be accustomed to getting it.

But it was his clothes that decided them. His attire was most outlandish, to say the least. In the year 2986, the styles were simple. "Simple" and comfortable" were the fashion by-words. But this young man's clothes consisted of an

orange shirt and green pantaloons -- both of the lightest and brightest silk. Over the orange jacket, he wore a vest-like garment of blinding yellow, and around his manly waist was a sash of shiny scarlet. From the sash, there protruded the hilt and tip of a curiously curved sword. It resembled greatly an ancient scimitar. And to top it all -- if such an expression may be used -- he wore over his mass of curly coal-black hair, a burban of white silk, wound in multitudinous and complex mazes, with a great green emerald that flashed and sparkled in the center of it all.

In the first place, almost everyone who visited T-J wished to go to the future; to feast their eyes on the wonders of the future, to enjoy the super-comforts of the future.

Judging from this customer's attire, he either had some very mistaken ideas about the future, or he was a genuine, undiluted crackpot. And the engineers of Time Journeys summarily discarded both ideas.

However, someone had to serve him sometime so Rod Williams accosted him, backed by John Agnell.

"What can we do for you, Sir?"

"I wish to time-travel into the past."

THE TALE OF H. TYNDALL cont.

"Ummm---yes---Have you paid? Do you have your doctor's permission? Your family's"

For answer, the prospective traveller produced a thick sheaf of papers. They were quickly studied, and officially O.K.'ed.

"And you wish to go ...."

"Into the past." He finished the sentence.

"Into which era do you wish to go? and which country?"

"Into Arabia --ancient Arabia--when Haroun al-Raschid was ruler."

"Who?"

"Haroun al-Raschid."

"Hmmm....", John scurried over to a big ledger, opened it and studied it. He was back in a few minutes. "I have the correct dates," he said.

"Now, if you will just sit down here, sir...and concentrate on the era."

"Okay, sure."

He had led him to a chair. It looked quite ordinary. In fact, it was ordinary.

"One thing, sir, before we start."

"Yes?"

"You know, sir, that you can take nothing with you?"

"Well, yes, I knew, but I thought...." His voice grew a little despondent, and he drew the scimitar from his sash and threw it upon the floor.

"Oh well, I suppose I can get another of these there...."

"But sir...."

His eyebrows raised in annoyance. "Yes? I'm getting impatient. All my life---ever since I first read about Sinbad and Alladin ---I've wanted to go to ancient Arabia. I must go now....quickly, this is my greatest moment!"

John shrugged and signaled to Rod, who threw the switch. Harry Tyndall disappeared. He had gone into time --into ancient Arabia.

"I tried to tell him --you can't take anything into time. Nothing. John stared for a moment at the bright turban, and at the other bright silken, and empty garments, and then he busied himself about picking them up....."

M E D I T A T I O N S

by  
Fred Chappell

I sat alone in a woodland glen,  
wherein twisted roots of gnarled trees  
Dug obscene fingers into the flesh  
Of darkly-nourished soil.

Alone I sat, and my meditations  
Turned toward things of mien  
So terrible, that I scarce could  
Recognize those fantastic, flitting,

Half-formed thoughts -- which yet  
Were not thoughts, but contained  
Something belonging to dream-realms --  
As my own. And yet so vivid ---

So realistic were they, as if I had  
Lived those scenes before -- or that  
I should live them soon --- and  
My soul quaked at their portent.

Once I thought I glimpsed me  
As a daemon, holding sway over  
A thousand screaming shapes, and  
Once legions bowed before me.

As a powerful, yet nameless God.  
There were other visions, also, of exotic  
Castles and kingdoms, and terrible rites,  
But the one which seemed most real

Was when I reigned as Ruler of the Cosmos.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Tale of H. Tyndall (concluded)

He came out of time into a dirty, bustling market-place. He thought to make himself inconspicuous --and that was laughable, for the Arab multitude saw him in a plight; standing mother-naked in a market-place, with neither beard of mustachios--for he had not, in his impatience, grown one in his own time. And they set to laughing and yelling and flogging him with whips till the blood ran from him in all places. Then the Prefect came and took him to a dry prison.

And so it was that Harry Tyndall who had enjoyed in his lifetime the tales from The Arabian Nights --- and among them the tale of the Barber's second brother --- found himself in like plight, and found it neither enjoyable nor humorous.

In fact, he thought it to be unjust ---which is an ironic ending to his tale.

Praise be to Allah, the Compassionate!

# BOTTLES



## BOTTLES

by  
Gerald Hibbs

Bottles, bottles, everywhere. Did you ever stop to think that, during the course of each regular 24-hour day, you witness, in some way, shape, manner, or form, a bottle? I shall repeat that harmless little phrase - a bottle?

Harmless did I say. I retract that statement. A bottle is far from being a harmless item. Even a milk bottle, the container of the substance of which champions are made, (or have I got it confused with Wheaties - oh well. Makes no difference) can be the source of much annoyance.

Like for instance when junior drops the full bottle of milk on the nice, clean kitchen floor, after you've spent all morning scrubbing and mobbing it. Or

when the milkman wakes you up at four in the morning with his jangling (and here's that word again) bottles, after you were up 'till four the night before.

But, if this were the maximum height of the bottle perpetrated evils in this world, I should not be writing this article. Alas! the bottle has a more far-reaching influence than this. Bottle means, in one of its forms according to Webster's Dictionary, a point at which progress is retarded. Oh the truth of those words!

Take now for instance this little bottle. It stands about one inch high and measures about half as much around. Now would you believe that such a little bottle could contain any harmful ingredients. But just stick a label on it that reads "Solar Gravitation" and place it in the hands of some scheming woman (and what woman isn't) and you have the ruination of some good man.

But there is more my good friends. Many bottles with names of sweet, lovely, things like Four Roses and peccadilly, in reality contain evil spirits; brewed by the Master brewer of them all, the devil. Innocently you partake of the harmless beverage. Having once done so you must have more, more, More, and still MORE.

You are now a lost soul. Nothing can save you except another drink. Soon you are going to bed at night with little men wearing pointed hats and you have visions of all descriptions of Beems. And this is why I say that the bottle is the mother of all Beems. IT is the bug-eyed-monster that lies at the root of all bug-eyed-monsters.

Harken unto me, O men of the future. Hear me and gain wisdom. Take what thee will to the stars but leave the bottle.

The above was brought to you through the courtest of Alcoholics Anonymous. Any similarity to real products was purely accidental (HIC!)

PHILCON II\*16\* GO THOU!