

THE

WALL

THE WALL.

What has gone before.

Episode 1 synopsis.

Investigating a blood-stained postcard from Chris Miller, his London stamp-spotter, Ron Bennett visits the British Museum where Miller has been reading the fanzine files. With Bennett is Bill Donaho who has somehow appeared on the scene. Bennett loses Donaho in the darkness of the B.M. vaults and comes across Miller's corpse. Shots ring out and Bennett crumbles cookiewise. He is then attacked by something with sharp talons. Bennett murmurs "Toe-nails...sexy...toe-nails". The dust around him glows...

Episode 2 synopsis.

Bennett dies and is reproduced in another body as is Miller. They then move off to Kilburn, to the Penitentiary. Present are Parker, Mercer, Kearney, Forsyth, Patrizio, Groves, Burn, the Potters and Donaho. Discussion centres around Bennett's strange experience. Ken Potter then mentions his play about the walls closing in on a group of people. Jimmy Groves is sent by Ella to brow up some soup in the upstairs kitchen. He finds a penny black (stamp) at the bottom of the saucepan, goes to the door to call Ron, grasps the handle and finds that the door won't open. The walls begin to move in towards him, the stove behind him melts, the door-knob comes off in his hand and turns to ice. He shouts for help; a voice on the other side of the door yells "Fire, fire! Run quickly the lorries are here".

A white staring face appears at the window, upside down and leering. "It's the scopy f or he w..." it says.

Da-da-da---dada-da, dada-da---dada *

.....now read on....

Episode 3.

Part 1 ...in which some high powered thinking is done and Bennett gets his (again).

Suddenly silence fell. Jimmy looked round quickly. Yes, the stove was still a pool on the floor, that much was not illusion. The door handle in his hand was slowly melting and the door was still unopenable. The walls seemed nearer but they had at least stopped moving. He turned quickly towards the window; the face had gone, or had it ever been there? Definitely a case for some high-powered thinking.

"This must be tackled logically", he thought. "First I discovered that penny black in the saucepan, I went to the door, found it jammed, the walls started moving in on me, the door knob turned to ice and came away in my hand, the stove melted, and then those things began to happen outside. Well lets start with that stove. Iron stove changes to ice:-

Fe \rightarrow H₂O plus Energy ($E=mc^2$ y'know)

This nuclear reaction gives off energy which must have been radiated in all directions. On contacting solid matter again it is re-transmuted thus:-

Energy \rightarrow SiO₂

Enter Dick Barton, Jock and Snowy to the rescue... ahem, special ingroup joke.

thus depositing quartz on the brickwork and making it seem as if the walls were closing in.

The oven, being alight, melted down. He turned back to the door, yes it was still jammed, but it seemed very cold. "My Ghod!", he exclaimed, "It's turned to ice! That must be due to some sort of 'side reaction". He turned back to the pool where the stove used to be, picked up the saucepan and picked out of it the penny black that he had noticed earlier. "A penny black started this whole business", he murmured to himself, "and now here's one at the scene of this latest mess. I bet it has something to do with it. But first I've got to get out of here". He turned back to the door and stood surveying it for a little.

"Hmm, ice"; he murmured, "if I waited long enough it would melt of it's own accord, but I can't afford to waste that much time, therefore I'll have to help it on it's way". He stood silently, deep in thought, for a moment and then-

"Alcohol!!" he shouted, "that's the stuff. If alcohol is added to water it lowers the freezing point according to the equation :

$$\frac{\Delta T}{m} = \frac{Kc}{1000}$$

"All I've got to do is impregnate the door with alcohol and it'll speed up the melting". So saying he went over to the kitchen cabinet in the corner and got out the 'SFGL liquor' supply.

"All's a good cause..." he thought, "now to apply it. Best to inject it, but with what?" He thought for a moment. "I'll have to breathe it on and hope that it penetrates far enough in", he said.

Twenty minutes, and half a bottle of vodka, later the hole in the door was about a foot across and, rather unsteadily, Jimmy climbed through it and out onto the landing. He stood still for a moment to collect himself, and then began to descend the stairs. At the foot of the stairs he stumbled against something. He looked down and saw that it was Ron. Bending down he turned the body over. The white strained face stared back at him.

"Ron speak to me", he said urgently, "what happened?"

"They got the Atomillos", said Ron blurrily, "and Ella", he added.

"Hang on Ron", said Jimmy, "look I've found a penny black". He held it up hoping that it would prove up to the task of luring Ron to rally his strength. Ron reached up for it with a trembling hand and tried to grip it, failed and it fell. It landed in the pool of blood seeping from the wound in his side. At once it began to glow and the glow began to spread. Jimmy jumped back in alarm and sprawled on the stairs. Ron began to glow all over now. Jimmy stared in amazement as Ron (third edition) Bennett began to materialise in the corner of the landing. Slowly the glow died and Ron3 moved forward and locked down at the lifeless body of Ron2. He stood there, not moving, as Jimmy got to his feet and approached.

"So that was what happened in the B.M.!" breathed Jimmy, "If I hadn't seen it for myself I'd never have believed it. Whats that?!!" He turned quickly.

"It's only Bill", said Ron3, "he rushed out with the others to try to catch them as they left".

*a slight exaggeration no doubt, but what the hell, this is fiction after all. author.

Donaho came thumping up the stairs, he reached them and stood staring. "Ron, I thought you were a gonner", he said.

When the rest of the party had come straggling back to report failure, and had heard about the resurrection of Ron, the question of the next move came up.

"Where do we go from here?" said Bill Donaho.

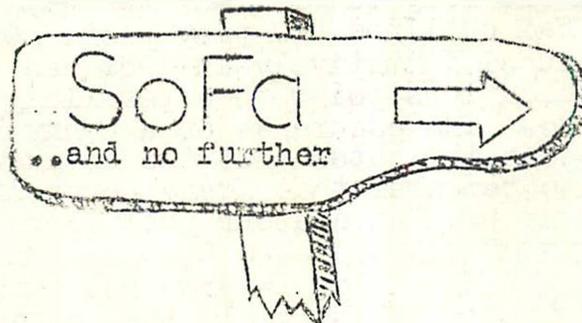
"We better consult SoFa* before things get too complicated", said Jimmy.

Part 3 In which Jimmy and Bill visit SoFa HQ and talk with the Good Doctor**.

After some further discussion the group split up, Archie Mencex and Pat Kearney going with Bruce Burn to Warrington Crescent to deal with the latest ONFA mailing, Chris Miller and Ron3 off to get Ron3 stuffed. "Something for Ella's wall", said Chris. "I'll top the skulls and the shrunken head, and give her a surprise when you rescue her."

The Potters had to go home to see to Karen leaving only Forsyth and Fabrizio to go with Bill and Jimmy to Chelsea to follow up the latter's suggestion.

Coming down Chelsea Bridge Road our intrepid adventurers could see that they were on Locke territory when they came upon a notice:-



"UGH!!" they grunted in unison.

"This is it," said Jimmy. "George isn't here of course but the custodian might be able to help us."

Inside the building there seemed to be a great deal of activity. The white haired attendant hurried over to them.

"What do you want?" he asked.

Jimmy explained that they required some information and advice on an urgent fannish matter.

"Ah" said the attendant. "You've come just at the right time. The Master himself may be able to advise you."

"But I thought he was in Africa" said Jimmy.

"He still is."

"How can we hear from him then?"

"Ahah" said the attendant, "These gentlemen are helping to complete a land line connection to Africa for us."

He waved his hand towards three oilstained and sticky figures hunched in the corner over a huge mass of wires and things.

"They're Messrs. BencLife, Jones and Shorrock of PSYCHO LTD***.

* SoFa - The Society for Fannish Research, prop. George Locke.

** not Asimov, Locke!

*** Psychia and Electrical Engineering Company Limited.

By misusing the Eurovision link they have established contact with Spain. There the message will be relayed across the Med. by means of stations established in Barcelona and Algiers, at great risk and expense, by members of the Liverpool Group under the command of Sir William Harrison. From there the message will go by camel, drum and glider to Kenya." He looked at them with a 'isn't that clever' expression on his face.

"WOW!!" said Joe Patrizio, the only one of the group with the technical training to appreciate the magnitude of this feat.

"When will it be ready?" queried Jimmy.

"It's finished now" said a voice from the corner as he switched on.

"This is London calling Nairobi, come in Nairobi."

Soon there came a reply -

"Hallo London, this is Nairobi here, Ken ya hear me?"

"Ugh, that's George" groaned Ted.

Soon Jimmy was explaining the position, aided by frequent interjections from the others.

"Mmm," said George at last, "I think I have it. All the signs point only one way. Things like the letter signed Ken Plitter, the thing in the B.M. with the sexy talons, and the wall episode at the Pen just after Ken Potter had outlined his play plot. Obviously the anti-fandom which Willis deduced intuitively in 1958 has at last come into the open*. All the indications point to a parallel time line which broke away some time ago. The occurrence of a penny black stamp each time something odd happens indicates that the breakaway occurred in the last century. I seem to remember that Irene Baron in an issue of ABSTRACT wrote about some pre-fan amateur publishers during the last century**. Probably one of these groups in that other time line survived and infiltrated fandom when it grew up, turning it into a deadly menace. Having conquered one world they obviously now intend to conquer ours. Their intention is to destroy fandom in this time line as a prelude to conquest." He stopped for a moment to gather his thoughts.

"All the incidents so far seem to centre around the other time line analog(***) of the Potters," he said at last. "Roydon is probably a weak spot in the continia, perhaps because of Karen Potter; Baby makes three..."

"Baby is Three", interjected Jimmy absently, "Sturgeon, Galaxy October 1952, later expanded into 'More than...'"

"Shuddup!" shouted Joe and Ted together. ****

"As I was saying", said George, "before I was so rudely interrupted, Roydon is probably the best place to pick up the trail. I wish I could get back and help but there doesn't seem to be much chance of..."

"Yes there is" said Bill. "Art Wilson is flying to London today to see the GE about his membership. We'll get in touch with him and get him to pick you up in passing."

* "Sound the Anti-Toesin" by Walt Willis; INSIDE no. 53 Sept. '53
page 40

** "Fandom 1877" by Irene Baron; ABSTRACT (January 1955?)

*** they're probably responsible for that title change too!!

**** "...Human" published by Ballantine '53, Gollancz '54, and the SFBC '55. Nya!!

With the help of the PSYCHO team contact was soon established and the arrangements made.

"Hello Kenya, this is London calling. George, Art can pick you up in 3 hours time but he can't land so he says will you be at six thousand feet over Nairobi in your glider at that time and he'll catch you as he goes by, over and out."

"Well that's settled," said Bill, "I guess we better go ahead to Roydon, we can't afford to waste any time if we want to prevent the destruction of fandom."

"But I still don't see why they kidnapped Ella and took all the Atomillos off the walls of the Pen" said Ted Forsyth.

"Because that's the best way of crippling the London fans," explained Jimmy, "now London fandom is minus a meeting place and also the finest collection of Atomillos in the country. Their next move will probably be to cut off our finances, so watch it, Ted."

"Attack is the best form of defense" declared Joe, "so let's get down to Roydon right away."

Part 3 On to Roydon.....through the wall....and into the hands of
ORGA!!

Pausing only to purchase a couple of penny blacks ("You never know when they'll come in handy" said Jimmy) our determined quartet of fans headed for Roydon and the caravan centre.

"How will we know which is Ken and Irene's?" said Bill.

"That's easy" said Jimmy, "It's the only one with a shed for the inessentials like pots and pans and things, stuff you don't really need to be a fan."

"Oh, I see."

Soon they were there. They knocked on the door. It was opened by Ken.

"Hi gang" he said, "What brings you here?"

"Well Ken" said Bill, "It's all to do with the things that happened at the BM and at Ella's."

"You'd best come in and explain" said Ken.

Inside, Jimmy and Bill, aided by Ted and Joe, explained all that had happened, stressing what George had said about Roydon being a weak spot and his suggestion that they start their investigation there.

"The best thing I reckon is for we four to go outside and try to break through the barrier whilst you stay here and act like a focal pointer something" said Jimmy to Ken and Irene, "That would probably cause a break in the continuum."

"OK" said Ken, "Good luck."

Ted, Joe, Bill and Jimmy trooped out and stood round the shed.

"Place those penny blacks round it" said Jimmy, "And then stand back."

They stood there waiting for a few minutes, then suddenly the stamps began to glow. The glow grew in size and strength and obscured the shed. As it cleared they saw that there was a wall where the shed had stood.

"That must be the time barrier" said Joe.

"Kick it down Bill" said Jimmy.

Bill stood close to the wall, swung his foot and soon made a large hole. They looked through. The scene that met their eyes was quite normal as far as they could see.

"Well do we go through?" queried Bill.

"Of course" said Jimmy. "Let's go."

They went cautiously through the gap and looked around. Apart from a notice stating that "THE TIME IS NEARLY HERE" their surroundings seemed quite normal. As they went slowly forward the wall behind them dissolved in a mass of flame. All at once there was a cry

"FANAG"

and a baying-sound*.

"Run!" shouted Jimmy.

They ran. People came out from buildings all around them, trying to cut them off. Of them all Bill was in the lead. Ted, Joe, and Jimmy were soon captured and hustled into one of the buildings.

"Let's hope Bill got away" said Ted. "He's our only hope now."

A tall dark figure came towards them.

"Ha, fans" he said, "We'll soon cure you. O.R.G.A.** hasn't failed yet, and your friend won't stay free long either. The dogs will soon get him."

Bill stumbled forward breathing heavily, he had to find sanctuary soon or he was lost. Ahead he saw a low concrete bunker. Over the entrance was a sign:

DANGER - POISON
DO NOT ENTER

He went towards it.

"After all I've very little to lose now" he said to himself.

Inside the bunker he rested with his back against the door. He heard the noise outside rise to a loud shouting and barking, and then slowly fade away as the hunters went on.

"Ehew" he said wiping his brow. "That was a close shave."

He tried the door meaning to leave as soon as possible, it was locked now and no amount of rattling seemed to budge it. He looked round to see if there was anything with which he could force the door. All around him were piles and piles of prozines! This then was where the anti-fans stored their loot prior to destroying it, this was where all those prozines went, the ones the shop sold yesterday at a penny each, mint 1950 ASFs and the complete runs of UNKNOWN. And here in the other corner were piles of fatzines. These then were all he had to help him out. And he had to hurry, any moment now the hunters would discover their mistake and come back.

"Eureka!" he shouted, "I have it!"

And he set to work.

* Cry "FANAG" and let loose the dogs etc.

** O.R.G.A. the O.R.G. & Radio Gossiping Association.