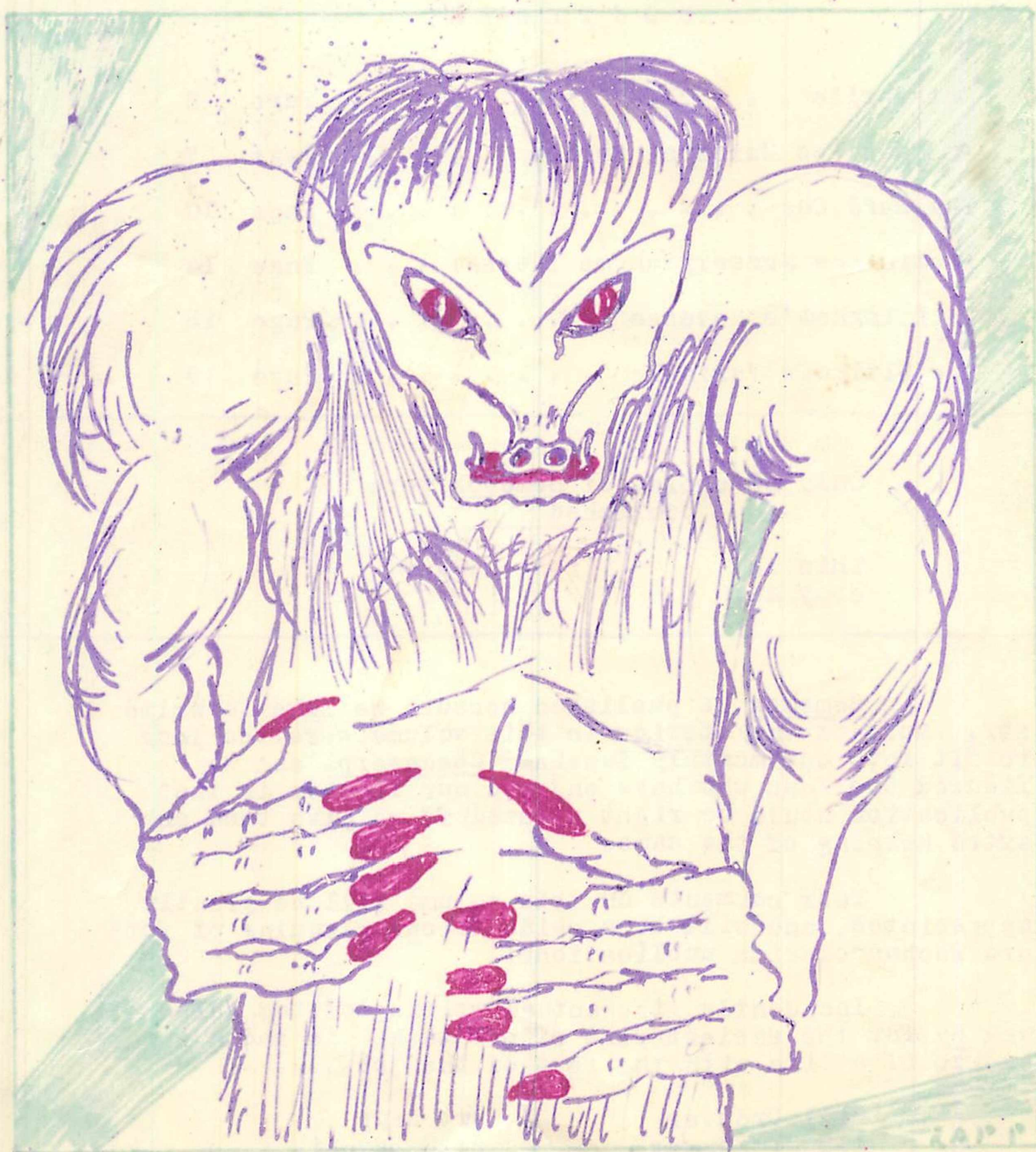


BEMBOOK



BEMBOOK

A Technopolarian Publication

July, 1947

C O N T E N T S

Enterprise	Page 3
The Man Who Murdered Random	Page 7
The Hard One	Page 10
Atomic Age Nursery Rhyme (verse)	Page 14
Whiffingham's Revenge	Page 15
The Ultimate Variable	Page 19

Only 30 copies of Bembook were
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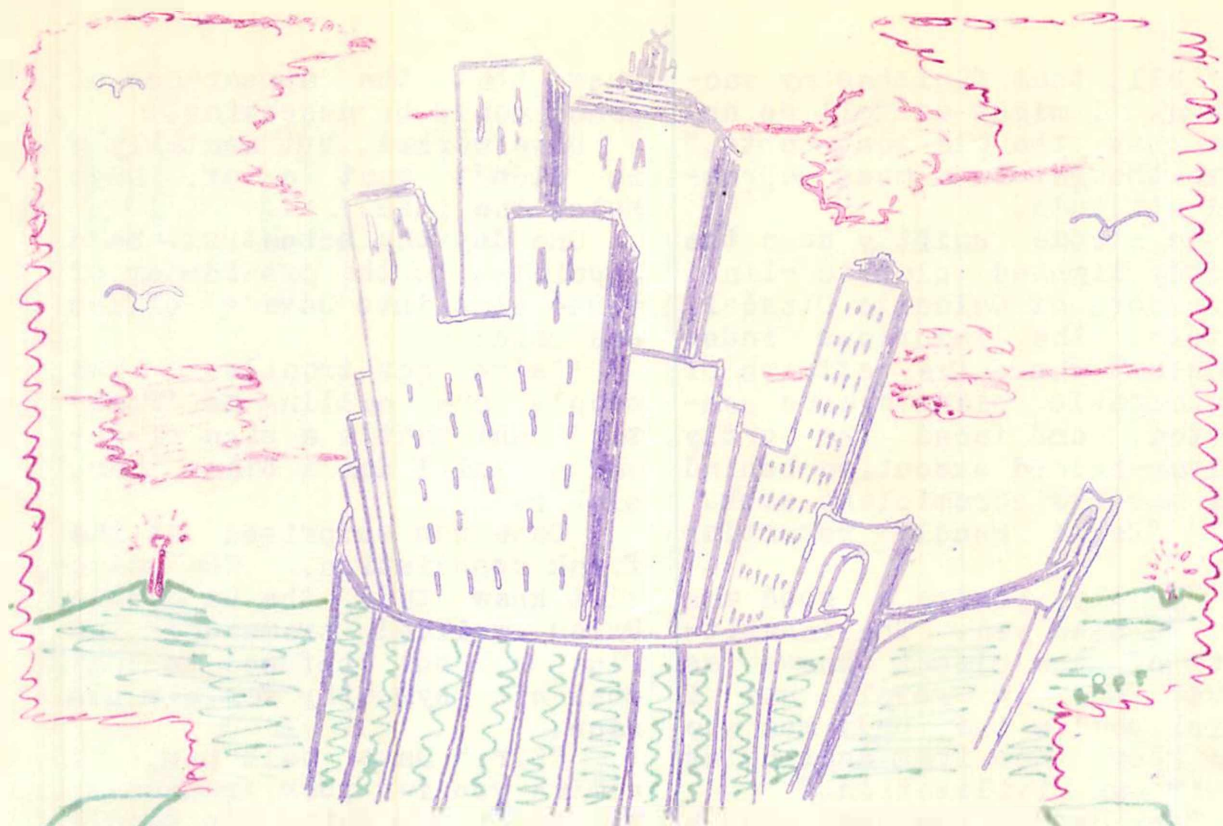
Bembook is published because we like to write
stf. Most of the stories in this volume were too long
to fit into our monthly fanzine, Spaceward, and we
figured the fans who have enjoyed our fiction in that
publication would be right pleased if we give them an
extra helping of the same.

Your comments on this volume will be greatly
appreciated, and will be a guide to our planning of fut-
ure Technopolarian publications.

Incidentally, the actual writing of the tales
was by far the easiest part of our task. We had a
heckto of a time with the rest of the job.....

Bill Groover
115 N. Porter
Saginaw, Michigan

Art Rapp
2120 Bay St.
Saginaw, Michigan



ENTERPRISE

by BILL GROOVER

Dave Handly flopped himself into a comfortable chair after coming from the very edge of the Galaxy -- and those interstellar ships weren't built for comfort!

He puffed a cigarette and relaxed until all of a sudden a voice boomed over the inter-office communicator:

"Captain David Handly -- report to the General's office immediately." Dave got up and swore until the walls got red. He said he wouldn't go, but he did anyway.

"Well, that finishes my vacation. I might as well go and see what the old goat wants," Dave thought in a most depressed attitude.

He strode swiftly down the softly lighted plastic-lined corridors of Galactic Citadel, entered the luxurious inner sanctum where the affairs of innumerable planets were conducted, and faced the portly silver-haired executive behind the massive chromioplast desk.

"David Handly reporting sir."

"Handly, you're a good man and we need you. The inhabitants of the planet known as v6944 are in revolt and I think you're the only man who can keep them from destroying their own civilization."

"Why don't you just send a battle fleet to observe developments and let them revolt?" Dave was quite disturbed at the General's wanting him for a routine matter.

"We want you as Military Governor. You know their language and customs. You ought to do a pretty good job. You will be in complete charge" Dave was amazed, to say the least.

"You mean I can do anything I want just so I restore peace on that planet?"

"Yes. Now get to work!"
* * *

One space ship was prepared and took off about noon of the same day.

The ship hit Planet v6944 and Dave got to work. First he appointed a scientist to govern the planet and sat back to enjoy the scenery, but not for long.

Dave, although not too well educated, was a genius, and he

knew that the appearance of peace could be deceiving.

Dave worked, but mentally--he didn't want a war, Dave hated the idea.

One day the scientist he'd appointed to the presidency of v6944 came into Dave's office and said:

"We've got trouble. The people are calling me 'Traitor' and that's a sign of revolt. And I don't blame them, either."

Dave was surprised at the frank repudiation. The scientist knew that the Galactic Union wielded tremendous influence, but refused to conceal his sympathy for his own race.

"Sir," Dave told him, "I admire you for your frankness, but don't you think you should use prudence in dealing with your superiors?" Dave wanted to get a reaction from the timid little creature.

"Well, I don't like your interference with our planet, and neither do the rest of my people. I didn't want your damn appointment in the first place, but I was afraid of what you would do if I refused to accept it. Now that my own race calls me a traitor, I don't care what you do!"

Dave sympathized with the anger and resentment of the President. "I'm sorry, I did not realize you felt that way. However, I suggest you go to your people and tell them you are going to improve something -- the education system. Ask everyone to send their ideas to you, then you and I will find which ones are the best and use them. Then your people will be satisfied that they still have a voice in the

government of your planet."

"I didn't know you wanted to do anything constructive," apologised the scientist.

"I just want to stop this rebellion. I want to do it without bloody fighting, and I can't get anywhere with a lot of dissatisfied people." Dave lied with ease. He felt a glow of pride at the thought of helping these barbaric creatures. It was something he had always wanted to do.

Dave thought back to all the creatures of half--forgotten planets which he had had to kill in following the orders of the Galactic Union, and the memories hurt him. Now he was doing something to help people and he felt good.

"I'm sorry you think we are a race that prefers war to peace," the scientist-President beside Dave said in a hurt tone.

"Well, I -- aw, skip it," Dave had always acted stern and ruthless and it was hard for him to change. "While the Galactic Union is running your planet we might as well change as much of your inefficient social structure as possible. Now get out of here -- you bother me!" * * *

The rest of the day passed uneventfully, as did the next -- poor mail service.

On the third day the President came into Dave's office with a bag full of letters and the two sat down to read them.

"Here's one that ought to be interesting. It's from a grammar-school student. Let's see what he has to say:

'Dear President Fnouf:

I hurd you were giving prizes for the best iders for improving skuls so here it is..'

"So you're giving prizes, eh?" Dave interrupted. "How much?"

"Well, I didn't offer anything -- just said a prize," came the timid response.

"We'll give a thousand Universal Credits for the best suggestion, five hundred for the next, and a hundred fifty UC's for third prize," snapped Dave, laughing inwardly at the way the President cringed.

"Why did you choose those amounts?" Fnouf was flabbergasted.

"That is the surplus in the national treasury of v6944, or rather, half of it."

"Surplus? How did that happen? We've always had a deficit before," said the little creature, his lower jaw dropping and his feelers vibrating with astonishment.

"More efficient administration," barked Dave, picking up the letter once again and continuing to read it aloud:

'...First thing I wud do to the school if I could, wud be to work in one class all day untill I completed the stuff I was 'sposed to do then have the students work on projects to help suport the schools."

"Say, that's not a bad idea" Dave said with genuine admiration.

They read the rest of the letters and waited for more to arrive. Some were packed with

helpful ideas; some persons wrote in their pet gripes.

After three weeks they announced the winners. The boy who wrote the letter Dave had picked up first was awarded the first prize.

Later Dave buzzed for the President to come to his office once again.

"You know, there are people without adequate homes," Dave said in his usual brusque manner. "I think it is a shame. Something ought to be done about it."

"But what?" was the classic reply.

"What did we do the last time? Ask the people! First we'll have to improve the economic position of the people involved."

Once more the letters by hundreds came pouring in. Days of reading boring letters, and this time they finished their task with nothing more than extreme eyestrain, incipient neurosis, and a couple of bad dispositions.

"Well, if we want anything done we'll have to plan it out ourselves," Dave said finally.

"I don't know what to do!" wailed the President, in his usual deep dejection.

"I know," said Dave suddenly, "The government's going

into business -- no, that's a flat idea. I've got it! We'll build space ports in the worst places, and attract business to those areas so more people will be employed." Dave's dejection suddenly turned to enthusiasm.

Space ports were put in slum districts; where there was not enough room for a space port, new government and municipal offices were located. There was still a large area of run-down district to contend with, so Dave decided to build prefabricated homes cheaply.

Finally the day came when all his task was complete, and orders came from the Galactic Union for Dave to leave. (And was he glad to get back to civilization!)

"The inhabitants of v6944 no longer rebel, sir," Dave told the General.

"Good work, Capttain." "Did you have a hard time putting the place in order?"

"No, sir. Any half-grown cadet could have done it. All it took was a dash of common sense."

"Hmmm," said the General lifting his hand to hide the smile on his lips. "I wonder why the three men we sent to v6944 before you, had to give up in despair?"

- THE END -

READ THE MONTHLY FANZINE

3 ISSUES FOR
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SPACEWARP

PUBLISHED BY THE TECHNOPOLARIANS @ SAGINAW

THE MAN WHO MURDERED FANDOM

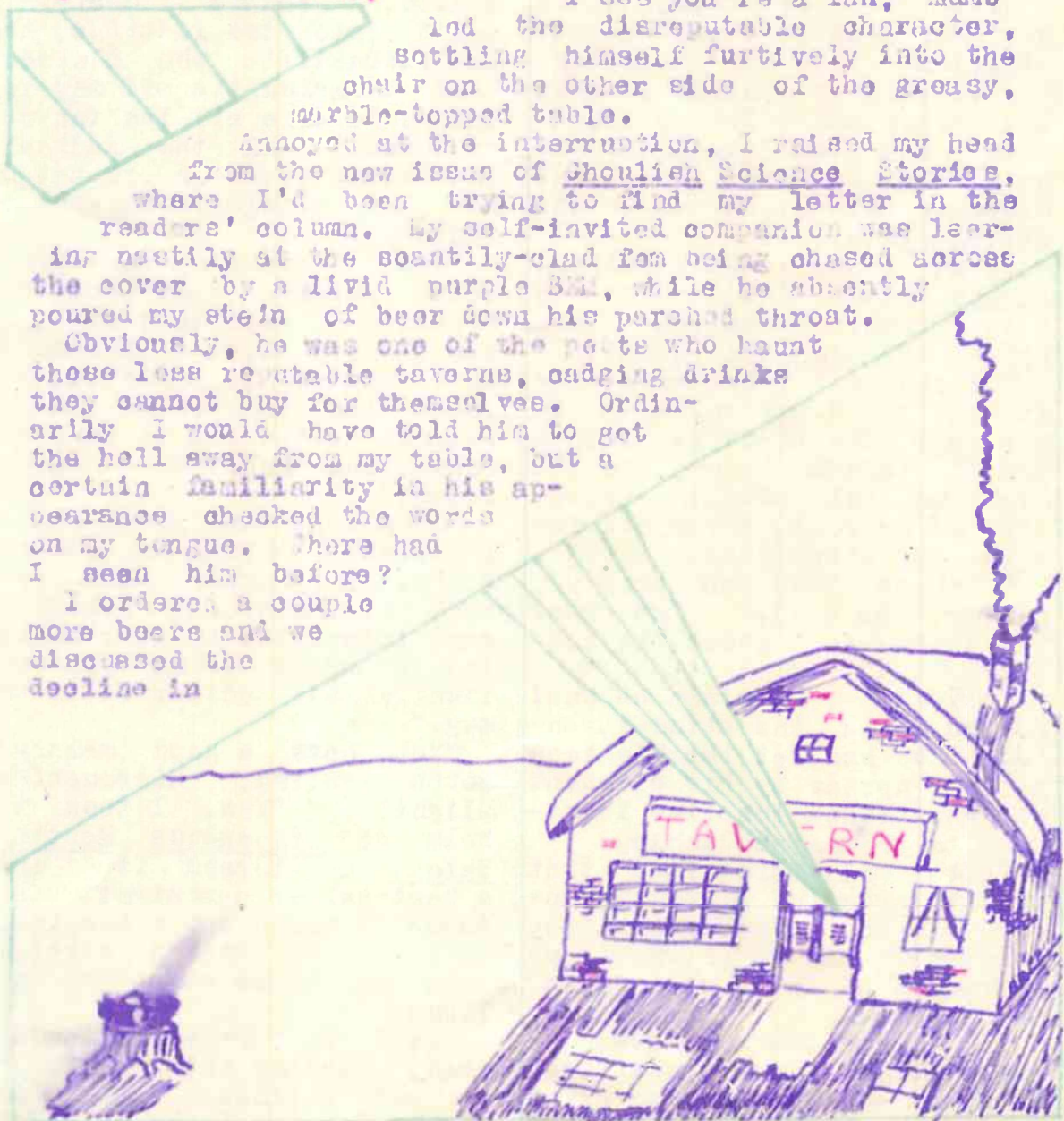
by Arthur H. Rapp

"I see you're a fan," mumbled the disreputable character, settling himself furtively into the chair on the other side of the greasy, marble-topped table.

Annoyed at the interruption, I raised my head from the new issue of Shoulish Science Stories, where I'd been trying to find my letter in the readers' column. My self-invited companion was leaning nestily at the scantily-clad fan being chased across the cover by a livid purple B.M., while he absently poured my stein of beer down his parched throat.

Obviously, he was one of the pests who haunt those less reputable taverns, oadging drinks they cannot buy for themselves. Ordinarily I would have told him to get the hell away from my table, but a certain familiarity in his appearance checked the words on my tongue. There had I seen him before?

I ordered a couple more beers and we discussed the decline in



the quality of stf, as exemplified by CSS. He had read all the classics, and knew much fascinating lore of fandom and the authors of yesteryear. I began to wonder what part he had taken in the annals of stf and what had caused him to sink to the level of degradation in which he now existed.

After six beers apiece and a bitter argument over the most efficient drive for interstellar travel, we finally reached the proper stage for confidence. The bum leaned forward until his unshaven face was close to mine, and began his strange tale.....

"Yes, I was once prominent in the fantasy field. You say I look familiar to you. Were you at the Michicon in '49?"

"Of course!" I answered indignantly. "That was back in the year the so-called Golden Era of fandom began, and the Michicon, held amid the splendors of Detroit, broke all records for attendance. Why?"

"Perhaps that was where you saw me," he said. "Remember the discussion about the future of stf?"

Suddenly I knew who he was! Morgan Botts, the stfan-inventor, who had set the Michicon in an uproar by his eloquent and unorthodox theories in regard to promag publishing!

Botts had maintained that the futuristic tales in promags should be accompanied by an equally modern physical appearance of the publications themselves.

Microfilm the promags, he suggested, or use sensitized aluminum - foil pages to print the tales on by a photographic

process. Use the three-dimensional illustration method which the U.S. Navy used as far back as 1947. He had even more sensational ideas. Botts told the Michicon delegates, which he would reveal when the time was ripe.

"You nearly broke up the convention," I told him reminiscently. "Fandom immediately split into two factions, the Traditionalists who claimed that changing the stf mag format would take all the fun out of fandom, and the Radicals who hailed you as a prophet of new and glorious heights of fantasy."

"Yes, those were the days," Botts sighed reminiscently, brushing a furtive tear from one bleary eye. "Remember when fistfights broke out between the two groups and the Detroit police had to raid the convention hall and restore order?"

"More fun, more people hurt" I urged. "But go on with the story. I remember that several of the promag publishers were interested in your theory and it seems to me you were finally made editor of a new mag."

"You have a good memory," Botts replied, hiccoughing slightly. "Yes, I took the helm of Stupendous Ecstasy Tales, and turned it into a best-seller overnight. Each issue I tried out a new innovation, and made a careful note of those which the fans liked.

"Well do I remember the day when, quaking with horror at my own boldness, I OK'd the cover for the issue of March,

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1950," he continued.

I recalled instantly the ish to which he referred. It had stirred fandom to the depths. Imagine -- a blue sky on the cover!

"You were famous," I breathed. "The world was at your feet. How, then, did you come to -- this?" My pitying gaze took in his shabby clothes, the cracked and mud-caked leather of his shoes, the horny calluses on his palms, sign of years of manual labor.

"I have only myself t'blame" Botts sobbed, blowing the foam from a brimming stein into my face. "After I had determined the ideal for which other promags were striving, but were always too timid to attain; after I had tested, feature by feature, all possible improvements, I began work on a super issue of Stupendous Ecstasy Tales. It was to be the promag that had everything! Trimmed edges -- extra staples so the pages wouldn't come loose! Every illustration by Finlay! Those were only a few of the attractions. Gad, what a mag it was, that SET for August, 1952!"

"Yes, I've heard of that issue," I said. "Unfortunately, I was employed at the time as a Fuller Brush man in the wilds of Tibet, and was unable to buy a copy. I've been trying ever since to get hold of one, but all fandom seems to be joined in a strange conspi-

racy of silence regarding it. Tell me -- what happened?"

"I outdid myself," Botts wailed, the tears flowing freely down his stubbled cheeks, and tinkling musically into his beer. "It was a perfect stf mag. The circulation broke all records. Only a few unfortunates, like yourself, missed reading it. And in that lay my downfall."

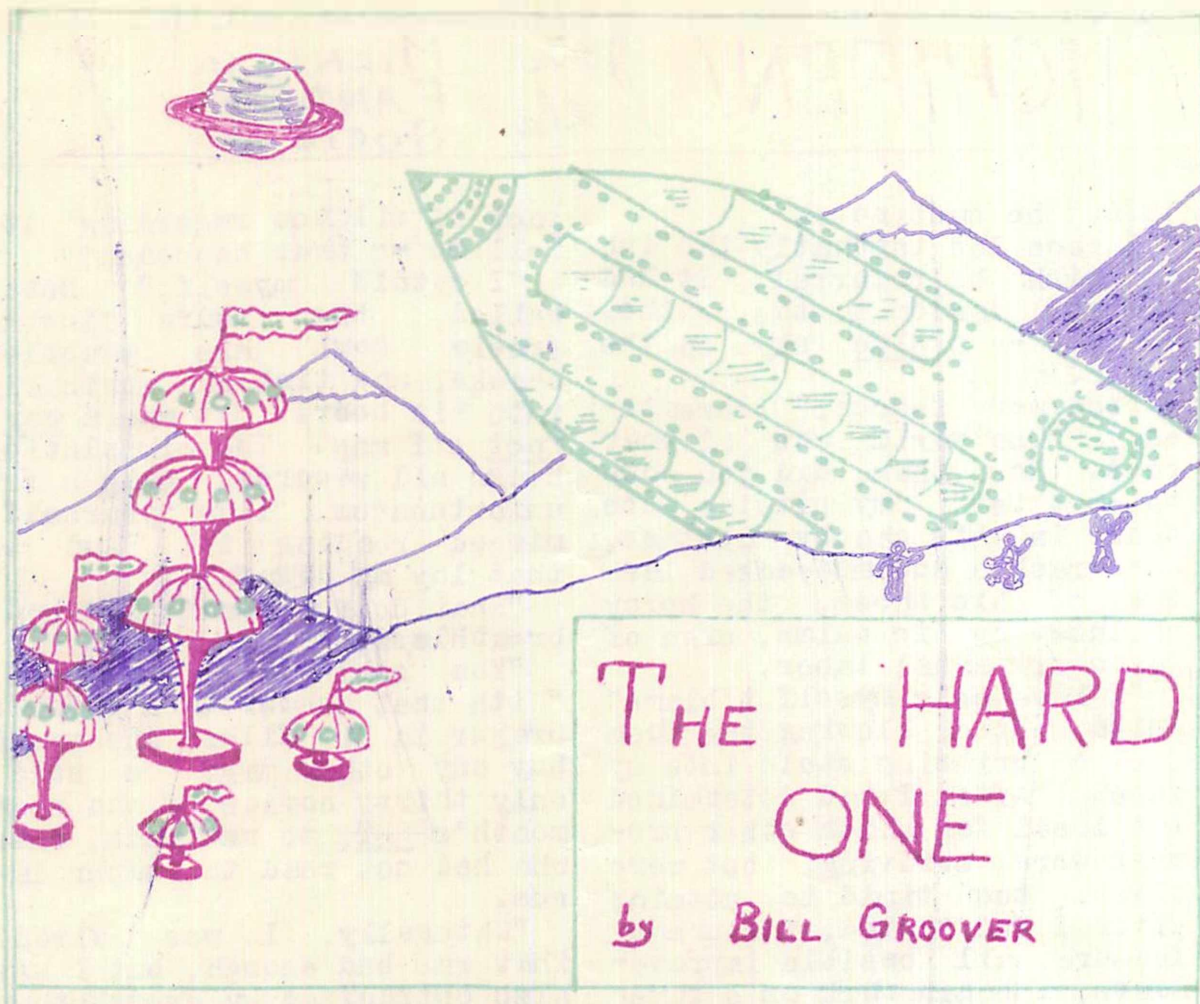
"What do you mean?" I asked, breathless.

"You see," he concluded, "with that answer to a stfan's prayer in his files, who would buy any other mag? We sold only thirty copies of the next month's SET, to new fans, ones who had not read the super issue."

"Naturally, I was fired. That was bad enough, but I was also ostracized by every other promag publisher and editor, not to mention the writers. Had it not been for the restraining influence and cool counsel of Hank Kuttner, some of the hotheads like Padgett and Kelvin Kent would have lynched me from the nearest lamp post."

"I had utterly destroyed fandom, and it had to be built up again from the very beginning. That is why a real old-time fan like yourself is so rarely seen these days."

Sobbing brokenly, he shambled through the swinging doors and was swallowed up in the vastness of the night.



General Fredrik sat staring at the wall as one of his aides came into the room.

"Sir, I checked the progress of the ship "Zenith" as you ordered. It disappeared near 92 Carina B, at 18:20. That area is little known except by telescopic observation from the Mare outpost. The region is made dangerous to astroga-tion by swarms of meteors which traverse it at all angles and with incredible velocities." The aide stood at rigid attention as he spoke, and made his voice as clipped and military as possible.

"Get me a ship within the hour. Hop to it!" Fredrik turned, exposing his hard face dominated by a big nose to the eyes of his aide.

The aide jumped, recovered himself, saluted, and rushed from the room.

Fredrik wondered if his appearance had frightened the man so. Well, he couldn't be blamed. Fredrik admitted to himself he was a mess. He had missed shaving for days, his hair was a tangled mess, his hat was shoved back on his head and his wild look was almost enough to kill by itself.

Well, perhaps it was the cluster of five stars which formed a glittering pentagon on his collar.

The rough life he had lived gave him the experience for the job of locating a missing ship, more so than any of the deskbound space-admirals who swarmed around Headquarters. As a boy Fredrik had shipped on a freighter and been ill-treated. Then he joined the Space Service, went to school and became a jet-jockey, but before earning his pilot's wings he was a fuel man, a gunner, and God knows what else, on more types of spacecraft than an earthbound civilian would know existed.

"Ship's ready, sir," said a voice.

* * *

The trip was uneventful, and eventually General Fredrik and his two-man crew landed on a small planet, beside the desolate, meteor-battered hulk of the "Zenith." The planet was larger than Earth, but its gravity only one-third of Terra's, due to the speed of its rotation.

The three men entered the deserted "Zenith," General Fredrik in the lead. He saw movement in the shadows and rushed through the open airlock. Then he wished he hadn't moved quite so fast, because it wasn't a survivor of the crash after all.

The movement was a native of the planet, as Fredrik soon found. The struggle that followed was short. The native rushed at him, and Fredrik hit him first in the solar plexus, and then just above the heart. He couldn't be sure that the corresponding two nerve centers existed in the alien crea-

ture, but apparently the blows were damaging, for the native dropped to the floor, blood foaming from his yellow-fanged mouth.

Then, things exploded in the General's face.

* * *

When his vision cleared, Fredrik was being carried along on the back of an animal of some sort, with his companions bobbing along beside him, lashed likewise to animals that looked like figments of an archaest nightmare.

The animals appeared to be made of metal, and came complete with assorted horns, three of them. The creatures that were herding the animals along the trail, on the other hand, looked comparatively human, moreso than the thing that had attacked Gen. Fredrik in the wrecked "Zenith."

The village was the oddest thing they had seen yet. The dwellings were rounded, something like igloos and some were set one on top of the other so they looked like electrical insulators. The unwilling visitors to this strange community were deposited in the midst of the cluster of buildings, and presently an Earthman in uniform approached them.

"Ken, you old fool! How in hell did you escape from the "Zenith"?" exclaimed the excited Fredrik.

"I jumped with a space-suit on and caught a headache by landing upside down. How the devil did you get here, you decrepit old star-jumper? Oh, am I glad to see you again!"

"I came after you, since you didn't have enough sense to get out of a scrape like this by yourself. How are these

animated tinkertoys treating you?"

"Well. They managed to teach me how to read and write their language," remarked the newcomer. "They kept me tied up until you came to visit, though."

"General Fredrik, sir," piped up one of the two privates of the crew, "Maybe we ought to get untied now and make a rush for it before all these men with the long spears get here." He pointed down the hillside.

"Good idea," the General said. "By the way, just call me Fred like Ken, here." The private had the most surprised look on his face when the General said this. He wasn't used to calling generals by their first names.

Getting out of the crudely-tied ropes took only a moment, and the party prepared to fight its way back to the ship and escape. They were surprised when the natives let them through without a fight as they had expected.

"Just goes to show you can't figure how an alien life-form will react," remarked the private, who was somewhat of a philosopher, a result of long hours of meditation while pulling guard duty and KP.

"Where the hell is the ship?" the General wanted to know, having been unconscious most of the way to the village.

"Behind a mountain," the private told him. "There's only one mountain in sight, so we'd better head that way." It seemed to be the thing to do, so without further ado, they began to hike.

Mile after mile they trudged at first effortlessly, then with more and more difficulty until they were ready to drop.

There was only one mountain, but there were plenty of hills to climb before they got to it late that evening.

"Where do we go from here? Shall we walk around this damn hunk of rock?" inquired Fred at that point, being the only one in the group who wasn't tired of walking. He'd pulled a couple of tours of duty in the Infantry.

The rest agreed to go on, which is usually the case when a General suggests something.

They walked about halfway around the mountain and came to a ship. Not their ship--this one was about four times as large. It was not only large, but big. As a matter of fact, it was colossal.

After the excitement had died down, the General assumed a commanding pose and issued a statement: "Well, gentlemen, the problem is to get in the ship. I can't find any way of doing it, however. The entry port is sealed and there seems to be no way of opening it from the outside. I looked it over carefully. Has anyone a suggestion?"

"Let's try hammering it with stones," said Ken after a moment of silence, but the General frowned.

"No, that's not the answer," he said. "Others have tried that, as you can see by the pile of rocks beside the port. One of us must go on to our own ship and bring back some tools. Maybe we can use them to crash in in grand style. I don't know if it will work, but it's worth a try." Undaunted, the General paused, then, "Pvt Merrill, you are elected."

"Yes, sir," was the private's tired reply. Since Ken was an officer and the other crewman a pfc, he'd been expecting to

get some work to do.

"Well, get going!" roared the General in a thunderous voice that made every listener tremble. Then he saw the tired look about the boy, and in an unusual (for a General) burst of kindness added, "I'm sorry. You may rest for a while if you like, private."

Frightened by this attitude the soldier left hastily.

Half an hour later he returned with the ship, and everyone got to work trying to force an entry to the alien craft. They used the atomic torch, which soon convinced them that the port had been built to resist more than a mere 15,000° Centigrade flame. They used the proton disrupters, and still the gleaming finish of that door remained unmarred. As a final resort they all heaved mightily on a crowbar, which snapped in the middle and sent them sprawling in the dirt.

Spraying the air with sulphuric language, the General picked up the broken bar and heaved it at the door. There was a loud clang and the port slid silently open.

"I'll get a recorder and get a record of that sound vibration," said the private. The others tried to look as if a sound-operated door was a commonplace, and their efforts of the past hours merely horse-play.

Inside the ship they found the control system operating on completely alien and incomprehensible principles, but the controls themselves were

designed for use by humanoid creatures. In the wall of the ship were three visiscreens, two with sets of knobs and dials, and one with a typewriter-like keyboard, but with approximately 2,137 keys on the board, each inscribed with a different character. There were a number of shelves and boxes filled with books.

"Look," said Ken. "This is the same kind of writing the natives taught me. The dialect seems a bit different but I can make out words here and there."

"Get to work and see if you can find out how to run this ship," ordered the General.

"O.K., I'll try."

Ken went to work on the books. He worked like a dog keeping himself awake with sulfabenzidrene-X pills from the Earth ship's medicine chest --and by next morning greeted the General with a report.

"The language isn't too hard to understand. Each word is composed of simpler word-components, and all I had to do was determine the meanings of a couple hundred characters."

"How did you do that? Look in a dictionary?" asked the General.

"No, the books are well illustrated. See, here's a picture of one of the creatures who built this ship."

The General looked at the three-dimensional picture, turned a delicate green, and lost his breakfast. The creature was more or less reptilian, with two legs, a head

like an octopus, and two hands on each of its eight tentacles besides sporting several dozen other novel anatomical features.

Ken picked up another book. "This is the ship's log. It tells how those things came to this planet. It seems they were using a new vibro-drive for interstellar travel and popped into this spatial dimension by error. They were somewhere near our Moon, and landed on Earth, capturing a few humans for scientific purposes, and then, not wanting to disrupt our culture, came to this planet. They established that settlement we saw, and were later killed by the natives of the planet, who are the ones now living down in the village.

"That last is only a guess

on my part," Ken added, "but it sounds reasonable."

"Did you find how old the ship is?" asked the General.

"No, but it must be at least a thousand years old," was Ken's reply.

"Can you operate it?"

"Sure, it's simple when you know how. I can run it alone, if necessary." * *

Back to earth came four men in two ships, bringing secrets of a lost race which were of incalculable value to the scientists of Earth.

You will be glad to learn that the private got a promotion for his part in the expedition. He is now a pfc.

The General, naturally, was already as high in rank as he could go. He had to be content with a new medal to wear.

THE END

ATOMIC AGE NURSERY RHYME *X* by RAPP

Ten little atoms
Spinning in a line
Along came a cosmic ray
And cut them down to nine.

Nine little atoms --
How they did vibrate!
The man turned on his cyclotron
And there were only eight.

Eight little atoms
For their escape thanked heaven,
But came the super-cyclotron
And there were only seven.

Seven little atoms
Amid the graphite bricks
A proton skidded into one
And there were only six.

Six little atoms
Glad to be alive,
But secondary radiation
Thinned their ranks to five.

Five little atoms
Remained to keep the score
But one was isotopic
Which soon left only four.

Four little atoms
Cozy as could be,
But one encountered Gamma rays
And that left only three.

Three little atoms
Rushed about anew;
Collision with a photon
Reduced their ranks to two.

Two little atoms
Cannot have much fun.
One exploded in disgust
And that left only one.

One little atom left,
Lonely as could be;
Got into an atom-bomb
MC Squared

is
E !

WHIFFINGHAM'S REVENGE

by A.H.RAPP

Dear Editor:

It was with shudders of uncontrollable horror that I leafed through the repulsive pages of your last issue. Why in the name of seven Martian BEMs must you descend to printing such awful trash?.....

Pausing to consider how I should proceed with my denunciations of the latest ish of Cataclysmic Cosmic Classics, I absently reached for the cool stein of beer which inspired me in these energy-consuming fan activities. My hand groped in empty space.

I looked up from my letter-writing, just in time to see the last of my beer flowing into an all-too-familiar face.

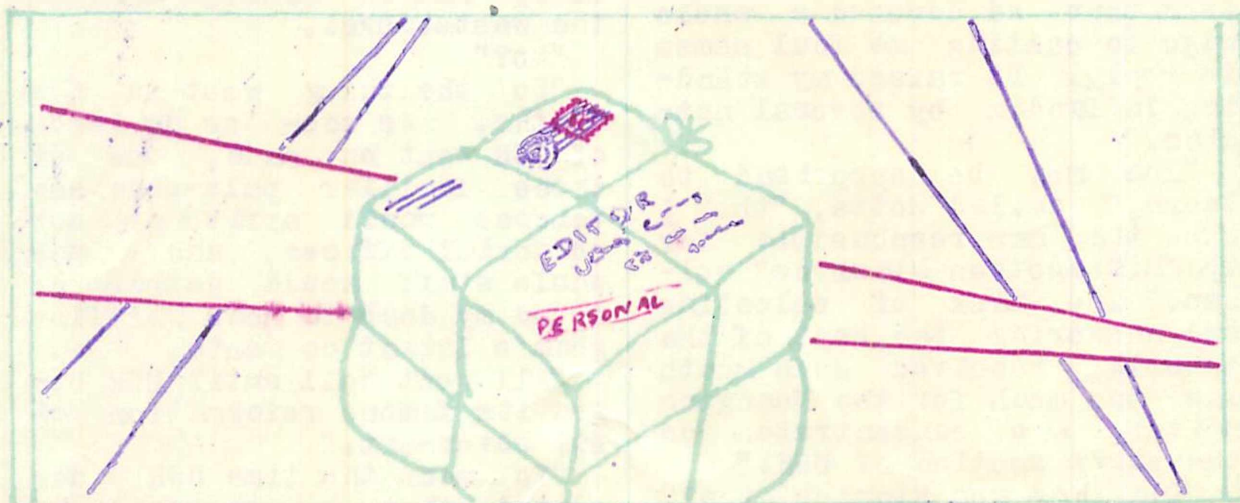
"So you're in again," I said resignedly.

"Good evening," said Morgan Botts, the sfan-inventor, "Hot isn't it?"

"I don't know why I come to this tavern," I retorted. "I could stay home and enjoy the peace and quiet there."

Botts ignored my unfriendly attitude. "Get some more beer," he ordered. "Seeing you writing a fanhack epistle reminds me of a rather strange incident. Talking is very dry on the throat, however..."

Oh, well, after all, Botts had once been one of sf's greats, and it was worth a few beers to hear his anecdotes of little-known aspects of fandom.



I arranged for a continuous supply of suds and settled back in my chair.

"This took place many years ago," Botts began. "I was on the staff of Unbelievable Galactic Horrortales at the time."

"Good old UGH!" I interrupted. "It folded back about 1950 as I recall."

"Right," assented Botts. "Fandom has often speculated on the cause of UGH's sudden collapse, in an era when other mags were springing up right and left, and circulations increasing steadily. I am the only living person who knows the inside story of UGH's demise."

"Proceed," I commanded, wiping foam from my mustache.

"As you know, UGH's crowning glory was its letter column, which often took half the space in the mag. The most cherished ambition of every fan back in '49 and '50 was to have a letter printed in "Misbegotten Missives" where, each issue, fans insulted the authors and artists, the editor insulted the fans, and the authors and artists hurled epithets at everyone, including each other."

"Ah, yes," I murmured. "As a matter of fact, several of my letters got printed, and one of them so enraged the editor that he devoted a whole page to calling me foul names in reply. It raised my standing in fandom by several notches."

"You may be surprised to learn," smiled Botts, "that I was the man responsible for the "Misbegotten Missives" column. The task of selecting and answering the best of the epistles received each month was too much for the Managing Editor, who concentrated on the story section of UGH."

"Did they run stories, too?" I asked. "I'd never noticed."

"As you remember," Botts re-

sumed his narrative, "The letters evolved more and more into a unique art-form. Eventually we were forced to discard, before even beginning to assemble the column, any letter written in ordinary, intelligible English."

"There was one guy who spelled every other word in reverse wasn't there?" I commented. "I always used to look for his 'Dear rotide' salutation as soon as I got a new UGH."

"Yep," Botts answered. "Then there was some guy named Bloog or Beagle, or something, who used a language of five-letter code groups, which could be deciphered only with a key-list he sent to other fans."

"At any rate," he went on, "we finally began receiving a series of letters from a fan named Chadbury G. Whiffingham. The letters were excellently written, propounding many interesting scientific theories, comments on the activities of other fans, and dashes of delightful humor, but unfortunately, they would have been approved by any English professor as perfect examples of correct punctuation, sentence structure, and spelling."

"In pursuance of UGH's letter-column policy, we regretfully had to consign them to the wastebasket."

"So?"

"So the thing went on for months. As soon as an issue of UGH went on sale, one of those familiar pale-blue envelopes would arrive at our editorial offices, and the whole staff would gather around my desk to hear Whiffingham's latest comments."

"All went well until UGH began its famous reformation of stf cover-art."

"You mean the time UGH declared that covers would be based on scenes in the tales?"

"Yes, but not only that. We

actually forced the artists to read the stories and comply with the authors' descriptions. He even hired people to read the stories aloud to those artists who had never mastered the alphabet.

"Naturally, fandom was enthusiastic. No, enthusiastic is too mild a term. Fandom, to put it bluntly, went nuts about the UGH covers. People began hailing the Editor as a "second Cernsback" and rating UGH the best promag published."

Botts paused to drain his stein, then resumed.

"There was only one fly in the ointment. The next time we received one of Chadbury C. Whiffingham's blue envelopes, we were horrified to learn that he disapproved of the new covers!"

"In heaven's name -- why?" I gasped.

"Well, this Whiffingham had a rather fantastic theory that it was better to have a cover which did not coincide with the stories at all. Then, if parents or other disapproving non-fans said that stuff was trash, the fan could always explain that the lurid covers were merely an incidental detriment ---that the stories themselves were actually of high quality."

"He has a point," I admitted "but it seems like a fairly flimsy argument, nonetheless."

"My sentiments exactly," Botts concurred. "However, whatever mental quirk was responsible for Whiffingham's antagonism, we could not convince him that he was wrong. His letters appeared regularly, but degenerated into mere tirades of invective and derogatory comment on our covers.

"Several months went by, with Whiffingham becoming more and more angry as his suggestions went unheeded. Suddenly a new note appeared in his epistles-- he began to threaten us."

"I suppose he said he'd stop buying UGH unless you changed your covers?" I asked.

"No," said Botts. "He said that he couldn't stand the new covers any longer, that if we didn't abandon our policy, he'd sic a Saturnian Voorhinkle at us. He described it as a horrible BEM with crushing tentacles and long, sharp fangs."

I yawned. "That's an ancient gag," I said. "Fans have threatened editors with BEMs as far back as I can recall."

"Of course. That's why we didn't pay much attention to Whiffingham's letters after that. They kept arriving, but we just glanced hastily at them and chucked them into the wastebasket."

"I thought you were going to explain why UGH folded," I said, refilling our glasses. "I don't see any connection between all this..."

"Just give me time," Botts retorted. "It is important that you know of the incidents I have related, so that you can appreciate what happened next."

"What happened next?"

"Well, Whiffingham finally reached the boiling point. Shortly after an issue of UGH hit the stands, we received an airmail letter from him. He said he'd stood for our defiance long enough, that this was our last warning. Naturally we sighed with relief at being rid of another too-troublesome screwball at last.

"Then our next issue appeared, and we heard from Whiffingham for the last time."

"What did that letter say?"

"It wasn't a letter. It was a small package, about the size and shape of one of those little boxes that a jeweler uses to keep a wedding ring in. It was addressed to: Managing Editor, UGH, and it was marked PERSONAL."

"Go on," I prompted, as Botts paused for a copious draught of the foaming amber brew. "What was in the package?"

"Well, I never did see the contents myself," Botts admitted. "The editor was alone in his private office when he opened the box. The first intimation I had of anything unusual was when a most terrific uproar started up, startlingly sudden in our quiet office."

"An uproar? What do you mean by that?"

"The noise was in the Managing Editor's office. There was a tremendous crashing and banging, as if someone were throwing the furniture around, and the editor was shouting in surprise. Suddenly the shouts were abruptly cut off, most horribly, by a sort of gurgle. After that came a dull thud, and what I can only describe as a gulping sound." Botts shuddered and took another pull at the beer.

"Naturally, the entire staff rushed to see what was the matter. I was the first to reach the office, and after one look at what lay inside, I kept the rest of the staff back, telling them to call the police."

"Don't keep me in suspense!" I yelled. "What was in the Managing Editor's office?"

"It was horrible!" Botts shuddered again. "The desk and swivel chair were overturned and smashed, and the Editor was lying in the center of the room -- what was left

of him. He had literally been torn to pieces! Blood all over everything even the hardened policemen turned pale at the gruesome spectacle."

"What happened?"

"We searched high and low for the murderer. The room had only the one door, and a window which opened on a sheer drop of 27 stories, so no one could have escaped. Besides, the window was only open two inches or so, and hadn't been moved recently, as could be seen from dust on the sash."

"The police were baffled, and finally the coroner had to return a verdict of suicide although everyone knew the explanation was not that simple. I told them of Whiffingham's threats, and we tried to trace him, but the return address on his letters was a vacant lot, and he was never located."

"What happened to UGH?" I wondered.

"They offered me the editorship, but I declined. Of course, I could have changed the cover policy, but I knew I would never have a moment of peace knowing that SOMEWHERE Whiffingham was leading my magazine, and possibly taking a dislike to some other feature in it."

"Rumors of the strange circumstances surrounding the Editor's death had gone through the ranks of the profession like wildfire, and no one else could be persuaded to take the job, either."

"And that, my son, is why Unbelievable Galactic Horror-tales was discontinued."

Botts arose from the table and left as abruptly as he had appeared. I mused for a bit over his strange story, then resumed my letter-writing.....

"Unless the stories in Cataclysmic Cosmic Classics show an improvement by next issue, I'll send my pet Zeeper from the swamps of Jupiter to haunt you, Editor..."

THE ULTIMATE VARIABLE

by
A. H. RAPP

There were the usual precautions against petty thievery around my lab -- UV beams across doors and windows to ring bells when interrupted, an electrified cyclone fence, etc., and the place was a menace in itself, what with uninsulated high-tension wire rigged all over everything as an incidental to my experiments, but apparently Kreuger had been trained to sidestep that sort of thing. At any rate the first warning he gave of his presence was when he stepped up behind me at my workbench and jabbed a pistol into my back.

"Hands up!" he growled, quite melodramatically, I thought, but so suddenly that my hand slipped and ruined a delicate grid I was soldering.

"What the hell--?" I began, but shut up when he waved his gat in my puss.

"Heil Hitler!" he said in a

voice dripping with sauerkraut "I haff come so dot you vill show me der working of der Entropy Reverser."

"Oh-oh," I thought, "That's what I get for letting reporters gather Sunday-supplement fodder in my lab." Aloud I answered, "What gives? I thought you Heinies got enough of Hitler a few years back? That "Heil" stuff sounds corny in 1949."

Kreuger took out two of my perfectly good front teeth with the barrel of the pistol. It became clear that he had no sense of humor. "Der Entropy Reverser," he continued in his calm but guttural tone, "It is der machine for time-travel, night wahr?"

"Well, yes," I admitted, through rapidly-swelling lips and a mouthful of blood. "However, I can't show you how it works because it's not ready for use yet."

"Ach, so?" He was skeptical. "Then how do you account for this?" He pulled from his pocket what I saw at a glance was the article that ran in several Sunday papers back in 1938, luridly reciting my somewhat unorthodox theories in the field of physics, and quoting me as saying, "I have conducted successful experiments in time-travel."

"Dis is true, nein?" barked Kreuger.

"Yes, but--"

"Mit your machine," he interrupted. "I shall to der Reich uff 1939 return, und mit der knowledge of der Amerikanisher strategy in der hands of der General Staff, der war will end der way we planned it!"

"You're misinterpreting that article," I protested. "The Entropy Reverser is successful -- I've sent several objects back in time. I sent a self-contained radio transmitter, back a couple of hours once, and got signals from it before I did so -- but a human being can't use it to go back in time."

"Would der travel through time harm a man?"

"No, but it's never been done, because--"

"Bah! Because you decadent democracies value human life too highly to risk even some unimportant dolt on experimental work! In der Reich we haiff different methods! Vell, Professor, I vill put your vunderful machine to der test for you. Come -- vass iss it?"

"My calculations on the process aren't complete!" I told him, but knew by his sneer that it was useless to argue.

The Entropy Reverser was in the corner of the lab, a big bulky affair, but years of neglect, but in working condition.

Kreuger inspected it curiously. The controls were clearly labeled, and simple enough so that he could operate the machine without my aid. They were in dual form -- one set, operated from outside the Reverser, sent back any object placed in the Time Chamber. The other set -- untested -- were in the Time Chamber itself, and would carry the entire machine back in time.

Kreuger climbed into the Time Chamber and then turned to me. "Any message for der Reich?" he sneered derisively. I opened my mouth to reply, then thought of the ruined grid and my smashed teeth (in that order). I remained silent.

Kreuger was very confident that he could change history -- so confident that he didn't even bother to liquidate me before he flipped the switch that took him back to 1939.

I watched the machine over which I had spent so many weary hours of labor blink out of existence in this time. I turned and walked over to my desk. There, in a dusty folder, were the calculations I had never been able to finish.

There were many motions to compensate for: The Earth revolves on its axis as it travels around the sun. The sun moves in relation to the stars and the stars themselves are moving. All these could be taken into account. But -- in what direction is the Universe itself moving?

Kreuger is now in 1939, at this point in space. I've often wondered how far away the Earth was from this point -- in 1939....

*** THE END ***