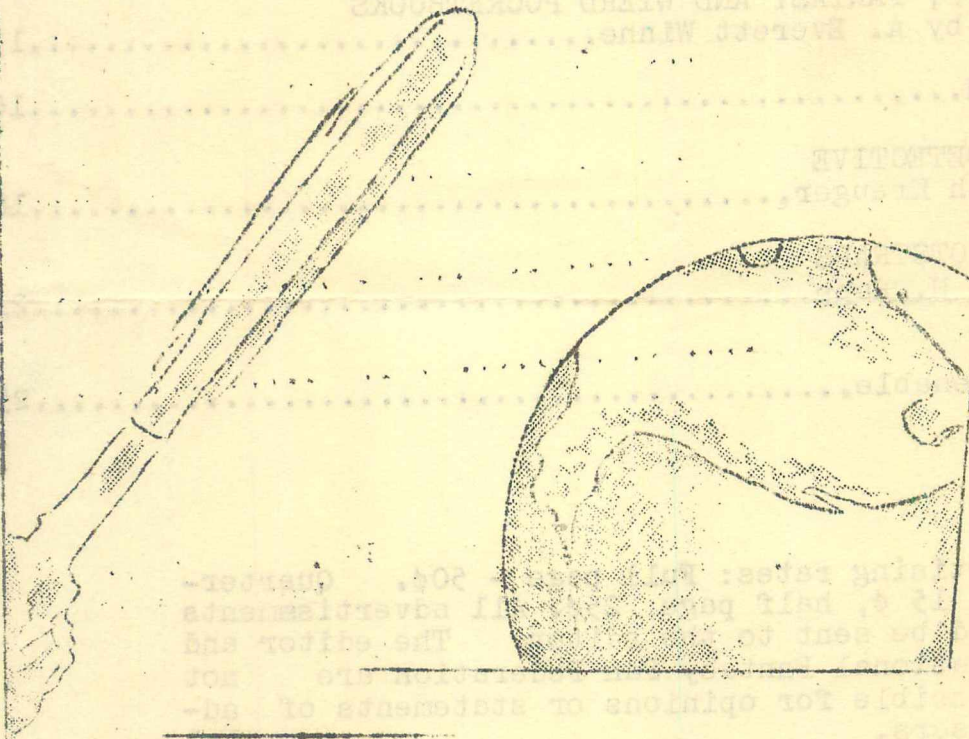


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VOL I, NO I AUGUST 1950

15¢

ALPH-NULL

Volume 1, Number One

Aug, 1950

CONTENTS

WORLD WITHOUT END Editorial.....	3
THE CITY (part one of two parts) by Manly Banister.....	5
THE SIGN by Alfred Machado, Jr.	12
CHECKLIST OF STF, FANTASY AND WIERD POCKETBOOKS compiled by A. Everett Winne.....	13
NFFF NEWS FLASH.....	16
THE GREAT STF DETECTIVE by Kenneth Kreuger.....	18
BOTTS BY HIS BOOTSTRAPS by Arthur H. Rapp.....	21
PREDICTION by Bill Venable.....	25

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ALPH-NULL

WORLD

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END

Editorial

PITTSBURGH
SCIENCE-
FANTASY
SOCIETY

COSTUME
BALL
TONITE



A WHILE AGO your editor was arguing with President Sneary about the feasibility of putting out a '49 FANNUAL. When Rick brought out how much hard work it was for one person to type up 125 stencils, I suggested distributing the work among five persons, thus giving each one only 25 stencils to type. As of now I have discovered just what a big job it is to type up even 25 stencils. So Rick, I capitulated.

ate.

By the way, did you know you are now reading the first issue of a brand-new zine? Yes, this is VINI of a new project sponsored by your NFF, and we earnestly hope you like it. Naturally there are a lot of bugs to be gotten rid of -- although we are a member of the SAPS -- this is our first effort in the generalzine field.

Every member

OF the NFFF will get a free copy of this, the first issue of ALEPH-NULL. From there on it's up to you; if you like it (and we think you will), why don't you send at least 15¢ for the next issue of ALEPH-NULL?

Looking over this issue, you will see a variety of material of interest. For those of you who like fiction in your zines, we have THE CITY, by Manly Banister, and BOTTS BY HIS BOOTSTRAPS by Art Rapp. Both Manly and Art are capable, active and well-known members of the NFFF. You probably know of Art as one of your directors as well as being the most prolific zine-publisher in fandom. Art also has a very nice style of writing, and his Bottstories are very famous -- one of them even won a prize in the AMAZING STORIES clubhouse Dept. Manly Banister -- well, if you've seen his new zine THE NEKROMANTIKON, there's nothing left I can say -- but in case you haven't, I can tell you that Manly is a fan in the best sense of the word. He has written a lot for the pros, as well as for fanzines. And if you haven't seen the NEKROMANTIKON yet -- you don't know what you're missing.

For those of you who think a zine should serve a practical purpose as well, we have THE CHECKLIST OF STF, FANTASY AND WIERD POCKETBOOKS, compiled by Everett Winne. Although some of you may not have heard as much of Ev as Art and Manly, let me tell you that he is one of the hardest-working NFFFers there is. Ev works on the Welcommittee, thru which I first met him, as well as being the guiding light of many NFFF projects that make the NFFF the biggest and best fanclub today.

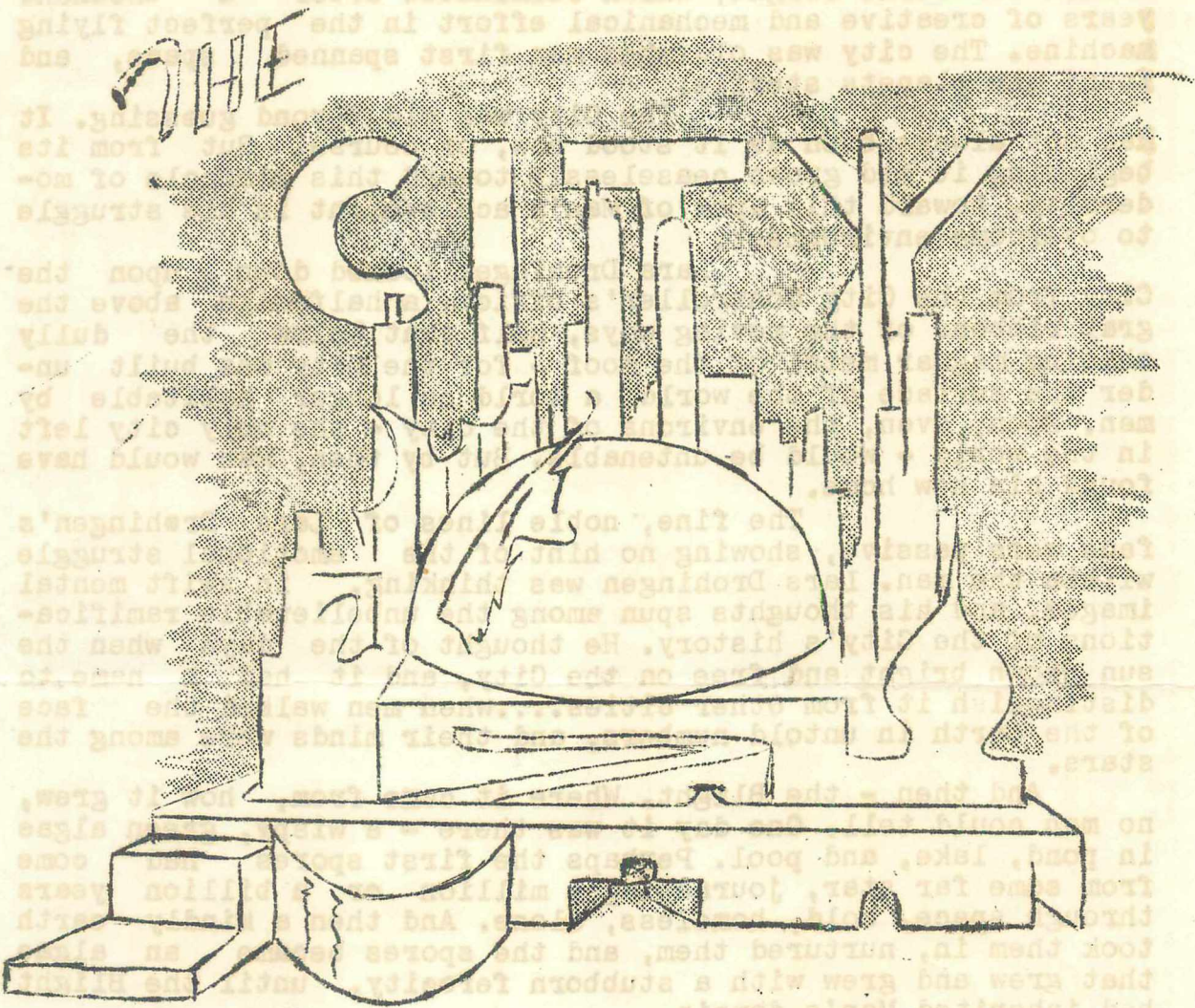
To round out the contents, then, we have some poetry, features, and an article by Ken Kreuger. Ken has been my personal book-dealer for a long time, and he and your editor are very good friends. He has an hilarious style for writing humorous articles and stories, and is active in many ways. We hope to have some more by him next issue.

A bit ago I was mulling over in my mind (Hah, mind!!) what the purposes of a fanzine may be. I figured that some editors publish for ego-boo, or merely for the heck of it, or as a service to some club or form of fandom. ALEPH-NULL falls in the latter category, since, you see, this is not our zine. This is an NFFF project, and we must make our policies fit the wants and desires of the readers. So, I want to ask You to help make this your zine -- by contributing to it, writing us and telling us of any changes you would like, and sending us news, bits of information, and your suggestions. Next issue we will have a letter column for your letters and suggestions. So write us, won't ya?

Lastly, I would like to ask all of you who write or wield a drawing pen to send us your work for publication. We want the cover next issue to be by you, we want stories, articles and poems by you. And don't forget to subscribe -- 15 cents per issue, 2 issues for 25¢, for for 50¢, or \$1.00 if you want to be assured of getting ALEPH-NULL for the next 10 issues. According to what we get in subscriptions, we will improve ALEPH-NULL -- new lettering guides -- screen-plates -- and maybe -- a lithographed cover! So be sure to send in your sub -- and to write to the editor and let us know what you think of ALEPH-NULL!

Bill Venable, editor.

PART ONE OF TWO PARTS



a short story by

Marilyn Barister

To leave the deathless City was to doom an old friend-- a living, warm, sympathetic friend-- to oblivion and decay. But they couldn't take the City with them, and they had to go.

And after they had gone the eternal fires would continue to smolder in the City's heart. Only time could erase the City's life... time measured in aeons; for before the atomic fires burned low, the metals and plastics of the City itself would be dust.

The City was old beyond Man's reckoning. It had been ~~was~~ founded--- in the dim era of antiquity, when men wrestled mightily with the vagaries of steam, with the irresolute unpredictability of electricity - even before the first gropings toward air-borne flight, which culminated after a thousand years of creative and mechanical effort in the perfect flying machine. The city was old when men first spanned space, and found the planets sterile.

The City was old beyond guessing. It had not always been as it stood now, of course. But from its beginning it had grown ceaselessly toward this pinnacle of modernity, toward this apex of Man's achievement in his struggle to overcome environment.

Lars Drohingen looked down upon the City from the City Controller's office, a half-mile above the gray ribbons of the moving ways, half that below the dully shining magnar metal of the roof - for the City was built under the surface of the world, a world no longer habitable by man. Soon, even, the environs of the City - the only city left in the world - would be untenable. But by then, Man would have found his new home.

The fine, noble lines of Lars Drohingen's face were passive, showing no hint of the emotional struggle within the man. Lars Drohingen was thinking, in swift mental images, and his thoughts spun among the unbelievable ramifications of the City's history. He thought of the days when the sun shone bright and free on the City, and it had a name to distinguish it from other cities....when men walked the face of the earth in untold numbers, and their minds were among the stars.

And then - the Blight! Where it came from, how it grew, no man could tell. One day it was there - a wispy, green algae in pond, lake, and pool. Perhaps the first spores had come from some far star, journeying a million or a billion years through space, cold, homeless, alone. And then a kindly earth took them in, nurtured them, and the spores became an algae that grew and grew with a stubborn ferocity, until the Blight had inherited Man's domain.

Men had fought the Blight, to be sure - with microscope, chemical, poison, and flame. Here and there, it was beaten back a little, as it first came oozing from ponds and waterways to usurp the land.

Futile effort! Little by little, century by century, the Blight crawled inexorably on, swallowing this city and that town, moving up the slopes of an immovable mountain, brimming the valleys with slime.

The Blight won the centuries-long struggle, covered the earth from pole to pole with a sickly, slimy mass of putrescence that poisoned the very air, choked the seas, and drove man underground, where his machines sucked down air through the stifling mass, cleared it of its poisons, and delivered it to the pitifully few left alive to breathe.

This had happened a thousand years before Lars Drohingen's time. And now he was acutely conscious of the role he held in common with the city-dwellers. He was a spectator at the end of history.

But history began anew here and now, as the last men on earth left their age-old abode for a home among the stars.

In the Controller's office, the air stank a little of the algae, a warning that not even the perfect machines could clear the atmosphere completely of its poisons. Soon they should fail utterly.

Vice-Controller Stevenson coughed discreetly in the doorway. Lars Drohingen turned.

"I suppose the ship is ready to blast off?"

"Yes, Controller. The last citizen has gone up the lifts. We are alone in the City, with the four guards waiting in the hall."

Lars Drohingen cast a lingering glance through the transparent pane. Pain and sorrow tinged the look.

"The City will live on," he said softly. "It will live for a thousand thousand years; and perhaps, some day, men will come back from Alpha Centauri, equipped with the knowledge and weapons that will clear away the Blight forever!"

He shrugged then, and laughed shortly.

"Forgive an old man his maundering, Stevenson. To me, the City is a living thing. It - it's like leaving part of me behind."

"I understand how you feel, sir."

Electro-chemical blasters kept a small area immediately above the City reasonably free of the nauseous bulk of the Blight. In the center of the cleared area rested the long, lean shape of the Star Driver, designed to span stellar distances at the speed of light. It had taken forty years to build her - forty years since the expedition had returned from the system of Alpha Centauri's double sun to announce its habitability.

Under the cold, unwinking stars of winter, the last of the City's citizens milled about the open ports, lit in the blinding flare of atomocandescents. They moved slowly and clumsily in the bulky dress that protected them from the Blight's flying spores and permitted them to breathe the filthy air.

A bell clanged insistently. The swarming citizens swirled more hurriedly, streamed into the ship. The masses shrank and vanished.

From a surface exit, Lars Drohingen led his little group toward the ship. The six passed inside. The ship rumbled and clanged. The great spacevalves swung ponderously shut.

Nose reared into the starry sky, the Star Driver was like a sentient thing, scenting its destiny in the deeps of space, among the windrowed stars. Long, stretching moments passed. Then the vessel flared briefly and was gone in a single, trans-dimensional jump that took it far into space for the first, painful leg of acceleration.

Over the quiet City, the stars leaned down in the blackness of the sky. The wind blew keening cold, and ever so slowly the gelatinous mass of the Blight began to creep, to slither sluggishly across the

area from which it had been withheld. And beneath, the City slumbered, not dead, for it could never die so long as life remained in its atomic piles, only sleeping with its engines turned off, its circuits closed, its tubes and relays stilled.

* * * * *

A thousand years the City slept. The stars wheeled in their courses; Day came and night succeeded it endlessly. Summer's heat followed winter's chill, and for a thousand years the surface of the Earth roiled and bubbled with the filthy stirring of a thing half-sentient, a blanket of rotteness that took into itself the whole of the planet's atmosphere, and gave back to it its own vile poisons.

For a thousand years no hand touched a switch or moved a piston in the sleeping City. For a thousand years its inextinguishable lights glowed softly upon desolation. For a thousand years, the once-hurried circuits, the nerve trunks of the City, had felt no impulse of energy. And then the City stirred.

How this could be is beyond telling. For a thousand years the City had slept.

But for a million generations it had lived with men, been a part of men, as men were a part of it. For a million generations the City had performed to the bidding of men, as a whole and as each of its separate parts. This part had started, that one had stopped, as men had desired.

Was the City indeed alive, as Lars Drohingen had figured it long ago? Was the City then, not a cold hulk of plastics, metal and stone, but a tame, living monster of metal and isotopes, of current fluctuations and magnetic impercep-

tabilities? The City had been born to slavery, had lived a happy servant. But now? It had lived vicarious life too long to die.

For a thousand years the City had lain still and silent. And one day, in a machine shop far below the level of the ways that had once moved, a machine turned over. Just a single revolution, but it had moved by itself.

Somewhere in the serried banks of vacuum tubes that were the City's heart and soul, a plate leaped to glowing life. Energy flowed from the spidrous web of the grid. A spark, only, in the giant bulk

of the City, but it was a spark of life!

The thoughts of the awakening City were formless, vague. A memory, an instinct, call it what you will, reminded it of the men who had once been its soul. And the City wondered. Where were they, then, these men who once had tended the City, who once had bid it stop and go? A half-life in the City's heart struggled to live, a sentience fought for memory, cast it in the shape of a puzzle, and set itself to solving it.

Progress was swift. Man did not rise from the ape in a fortnight. For another thousand years the City stirred sluggishly and nurtured the spark of life in its electronic heart.

Little by little, the awakening City fought the battle of existence. It had no true memory-circuits among its banks of tubes. It had only a pseudo-memory, a gestalt impression of the touch of human hands, the tread of human feet, the soft vibrations of the human voice. If the City could be said to feel, its feelings at that early stage were those of wonder and of sadness in searching after something lost.

Then came the day when a part of the City detached itself and roamed the ways once trod by men and women and their laughing children. With electronic eyes it peered throughout the parts and body of the giant and reported one thing alone: Desolation!

The air was vitiate; the halls and apartments of the City stank of the noisome Blight above. But the machine knew nothing of this. It was aware only of its loneliness and of its need to live.

How long the City explored with feeble intellect is dwarfed in the time it spent in methodical unravelment of the riddle. Face the fact. Below the pulsing floor of the City a Being had been born - a Being of metal and energy-flow, of magnetic pulsations within the intricate wiring of tuned circuits, of delicate balancings of one force against another, several forces against many. All this the giant had to learn about in order to direct its parts as it willed. Such knowledge came not quickly, nor easily.

But finally little monstrosities of metal tooled about the streets in multiplying numbers, clung to the ways that moved again, rode up and down on the elevators, and set themselves to being the eyes and hands of the brain buried under the City. Everywhere, machines hummed and flickered. The apartments were invaded, subjected to microscopic scrutiny. The library was rifled, and here the City almost failed. For what was language?

For long and long the City pondered the meaning of vocal and written communication. It ran and reran the tapes and wires, leafed through endless shelf after shelf of books. Understanding came slowly. Finally the machine combined the video wires with the audios. A picture of the no longer extant civilization grew in the monster's understanding.

It recognized at length where it lay beneath the surface of the earth, and knew why this was so. It understood that men had been forced to flee the City in order to live. By direct test it constated the fact that the vitiated vapors of its own halls and byways could not possibly sustain the life of the

carbon-creature known as man. And the City hungered in its loneliness.

Measured by the span of a man's life, it took considerable time for bitterness to grow in the monster's electronic heart. It took longer still for resolve to form. Like a malfunctioning gland in a human being secretes its poison into the blood-stream, acute magnetic fluctuations disturbed the nerve-trunks and thought-lines of the monster imbedded in the planet.

It had been created for one purpose alone - to serve and be active, to house the sons of men in its shelter, to move them about, to subsist them, entertain them, and render them happy and full of the substance of life. The City would do so again, hungered to do so, resolved to do so. It was monomania - singleness of purpose carried to its ultimate extreme. But how to bring back the long gone men?

Came a long period of cool thought. The City could not bring men back. But suppose they should one day return on their own account? They would not, unless... unless the world were fit for them to live on. The City would make the world fit. It would clear away the Blight, clean the air, replant the forests, build the cities. . . .

The giant awoke to its purpose of living.

In twenty thousand years, human hopes and aspirations change with the face of things. Truths become musty legends; and ancient legends turn into truths. In all the race of men who called their twin suns Alpha Centauri, there were a few who remembered the old legends, and fewer still who cared whether they mirrored truth or not.

A race twenty thousand years removed from the staggering flight of a crippled space-ship, a thousand generations removed from a handful of semi-delirious half space-mad survivors, can hardly be expected to take complete stock in old legends. It was true that the early history of the race was anything but clear; yet the majority of the population still disbelieved the feverish stories of its origin. Why, there were myths of ancient gods and goddesses more real, even to so banal a people as the Centaurians! There was more charm in the semi-religious myth of a man called Adam and his wife Eve who lived in a wonderful garden somewhere near the equator and propagated the race.

Garth Rango was unlike his fellows. He was one of those who hungered, one who had his eyes on the stars. Star-reaching had not gotten far among the Centaurians. Not yet. For less than a hundred years men had voyaged leisurely among the planets of the Centaurian system in their atojets. It was a slow, insecure means of getting about the deeps of space, but it sufficed for planetary travel. Besides, eminent authority could conclusively prove that, for one reason or another, it was impossible for man to travel faster than the speed of the atojet. Ergo, interstellar travel was out. Of course, science had once claimed it impossible to travel faster than the speed of sound, but they had been long since forgotten.

Garth Rango said man could travel as fast as the speed of light, if not faster. And Garth Rango hankered after the old stories.

"If men once crossed space from the distant stars, it must have been at the speed of light, or faster," he argued obdurately. "Even if our ancestors came from Ergon, the nearest star, it would take the time of growing from youth to manhood to span that gulf at the speed of light!"

All unconsciously, Garth Rango had gestured in the direction of a brilliant, first magnitude star that glowed in the neighborhood of a constellation men had once called Cassiopeia.

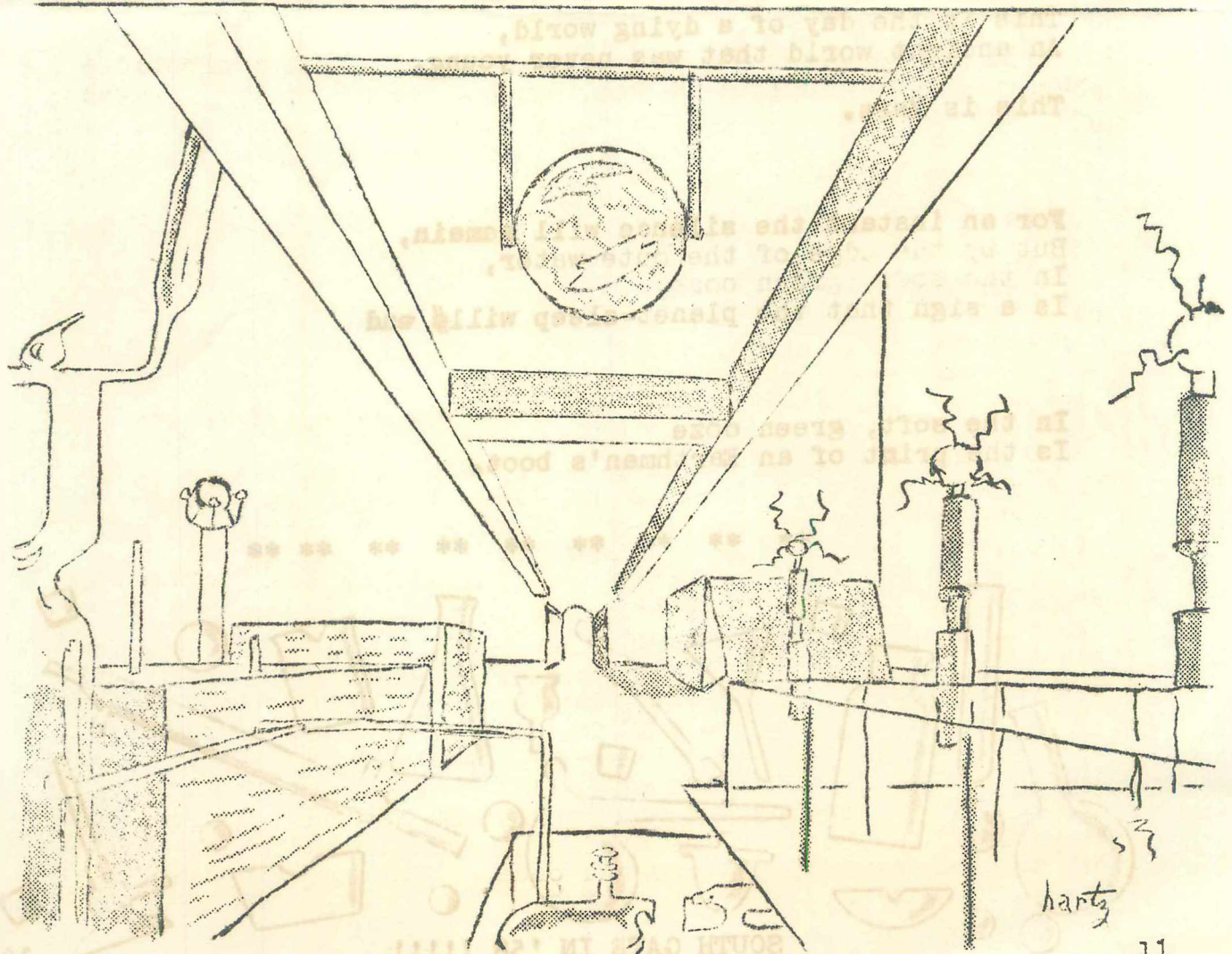
Pretty, blond Rancee snuggled her curly head against Rango's chest in the manner of women since the dawn of time, and murmured, "If you say it is so, darling, it must be so."

"Garth Rango, typical of a man goiled when he's looking for an argument, growled in reply "Well, it is so, and, someday, I'll prove where the race came from!"

* * *

continued next issue

I'm contribbing, friend; are you? To the NFFF Mess Boo! Yahoo!!!!!!



THE SIGN

By Alfred Machado, Jr.

The yellow sun is bright but a polar coldness is everywhere.
The blue sky is pale for the air is ever dwindling;
The red soil is powder, speckled with valiant green:
The brown rocks are smooth and lines cover their crumbling faces.
The blue water is a flawless mirror of the heavens
And it moves with weary slowness.
But for the whisper of a rare wind,
There is silence.

Through the relentless passage of ten million centuries
There has been no change.
The sun has vainly searched for living intelligence.
The wind has muttered and moaned incessantly;
No whine of machinery answered.
The water has walked and walked again through the parched redness
But it was never channeled and dammed.

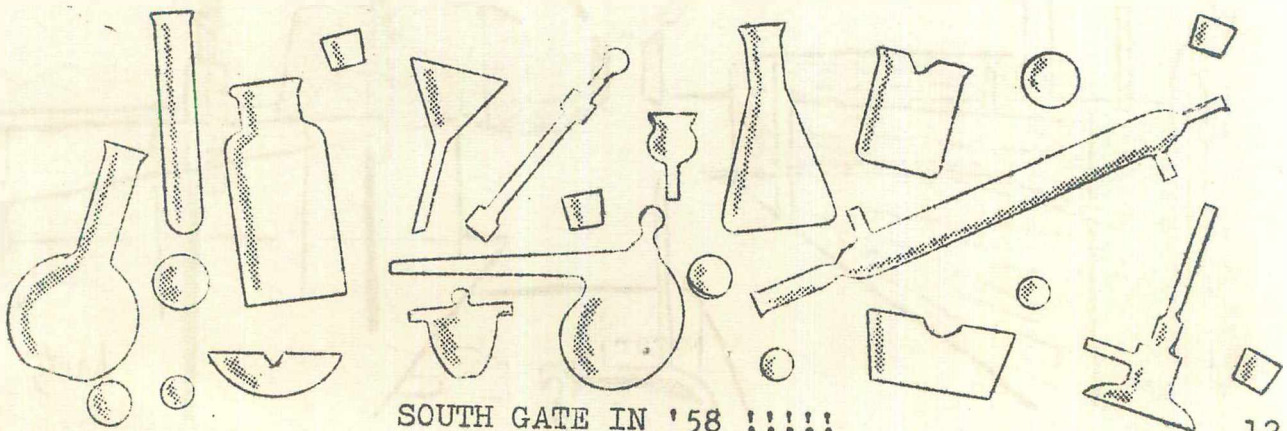
This is the day of a dying world,
An ancient world that was never young.

This is Mars.

For an instant the silence will remain,
But by the edge of the mute water,
In the soft, green ooze,
Is a sign that the planet-sleep will# and

In the soft, green ooze
Is the print of an Earthman's boot.

** ** *



SOUTH GATE IN '58 !!!!!

CHECKLIST OF S.F., FANTASY & WIERD POCKETBOOKS

compiled by

Ev Winne

Many members have requested a listing of pocketbooks still in print, there being no adequate supplier of p.b.'s in this neighborhood. Book dealers, newsstands and drug stores may have some of these fantasy p.b.s but the supply is usually quickly exhausted. The publishers usually keep some on hand for mail-orders. To the best of our belief, the p.b.'s listed here were in stock as of Mar. 1st, 1950, but we cannot guarantee this.

If you disagree with the listings do not blame the NFFF -- instead you can lay it on Ev Winne, the compiler! The classifications by type are his own, and under each type the books are listed in his own order of preference. All questions, suggestions and criticisms should be sent to Everett Winne, c/o John Nagle, 115 1/2 State St., Springfield, Mass, and all letters and cards will be answered. If this listing proves of interest and value to our members, it can be followed up in future issues by listings of new p.b.'s, others discovered still in stock, and a list of p.b.'s out of print but available at your dealer's. So let us know what you think about this department.

* * *

SCIENCE ** FICTION

305 - INVASION FROM MARS - INTERPLANETARY STORIES - Ed by Orson Welles. Short stories by Heinlein, Bradbury (2), Boucher, Leinster, Brown, Bond, Asimov, Sturgeon, H.G. Wells (Koch); Dell - 25¢

751 - SHOT IN THE DARK - Ed. by Judith Merrill - short stories by Forster, Kipling, Sturgeon, Brackett, Brown, Kersh, Heinlein, Benet, Wells, Padgett, Leinster, London, Raymond, Asimov, Bradbury, Marshall. Poe, Freeman, MacCreigh, Boucher, Tenn, Thurber. Bantam - 25¢

P67 - THE SCIENCE - FICTION GALAXY - Ed. by Groff Conklin - short stories by Forster, Kipling, Hodgson, Clarke, MacDonald, St. Clair, Leinster, Brever, Hilliard, Sturgeon, Bradbury, Manning; PermaBooks - hard cover - 35¢

195 - OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET - Novel - C.S. Lewis - Avon - 25¢

--- THE TREMBLING WORLD - Novel - Astron Del Martia - British - Gaywood Press.

201 - FIRST MEN IN THE MOON - Novel - H.G. Wells - Dell - 25¢

216 - GLADIATOR - Novel - Philip Wylie - Avon - 25¢

320 - CAVE GIRL - Novel - Edgar Rice Burroughs - Dell - 25¢

- 582 - NORDEWOLFE'S MILLION - Novel - J.F. Connington - British - Penguin Books.
- 116 - TIME TRAP - Rog Phillips - Novel - Century - 25¢
- WORLDS WITHIN - Novel - Rog Phillips - Century - 25¢
- 109 - THE DOOMSDAY MEN- Novel - J.B. Priestley - British - Pan-books
- 100 - THE LOST WORLD - Novel - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle - British - Pan-Books.
- 269 - THE INVISIBLE MAN- Novel - H.G. Wells - Dell - 25¢

FANTASY

- 117 - CREEP, SHADOW, CREEP! - Novel - A. Merritt - Avon 25¢
- 214 - THE FOX WOMAN AND OTHER STORIES - A. Merritt - Avon - 25¢
- 339 - SHE - Novel - H. Rider Haggard (retold) - Dell - 25¢

FANTASY AND SCIENCE-FICTION

- 184 - THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES AND OTHER STORIES - Ed. by Donald Wollheim - short stories by Leiber, Tenn, Grendon, Miller, Long, Wellman, - all printed first time - Avon - 25¢
- THE GARDEN OF FEAR AND OTHER STORIES - Short stories by Howard, Eshbach, Lovecraft, Breuer, Keller - (Fantasy Publishing)- 25¢

WIERD

- 90 - THE UNINVITED - Novel - Dorothy Macardle - Bantam - 25¢
- 108 - A TASTE FOR HONEY - Novel - H.F. Heard - Avon - 25¢
- 384 - THE POCKET BOOK OF GHOST STORIES - Ed. by Philip van doren Stern. Short stories by Onions, James, Walpole, Blackwood, Harvey, Kipling, Broster. LeFanu, Crawford, Poe, Gilman, Wharton, Wollcott -- Pocket Books - 25¢
- 43 - BURN WITCH BURN - Novel - A. Merritt - Avon - 25¢
- 393 - SELECTED TALES OF ALGERNON BLACKWOOD - British - Penguin Books
- 91 - GHOST STORIES OF AN ANTIQUARY - DR. M.R. James - British - Penguin Books.
- 189 - THE DAUGHTER OF FU-MANCHU - Novel - Sax Rohmer - Avon - 25¢

FANTASTIC WIERD

- 136 - THE LURKING FEAR AND OTHER STORIES - H.P. Lovecraft - Avon 25¢
- 110 - TERROR AT NIGHT- Ed. by Herbert Williams - short stories by Lovecraft, Stoker, Jacobs, Burke, Wakefield, Blackwood, Backus, Machen, Whitehead, Bierce, Dunsany, James, Benson - Avon 25¢

- 90 - AVON GHOST READER - Short stories by Lovecraft, Merritt, Heard, etc. - Ed. by Herbert Williams. - Avon - 25¢
- 264 - FEAR AND TREMBLING - Ed. by Alfred Hitchcock - short stories by Whitehead, Walpole, Collier, James, Bierce, Bowen, Bradbury, Metcalfe, Wakefield, Buchan, Wells, Dunsany, Irish - Dell 25¢
- 110 - TALES OF MYSTERY - Edgar Allan Poe - British - Pan-Books.
- - A DESCENT INTO THE MAELSTROM - Poe - short stories - British Ivor Nicholson & Watson, Ltd.
- - THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM - Poe - Short stories - British - Ivor Nicholson & Watson, Ltd.

FANTASY - HUMOROUS

- 546 - RAIN IN THE DOORWAY - Novel - Thorne Smith - Pocket Books-25¢
- 410 - THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER - Novel - George Malcolm Smith - Bantam- 25¢
- 4 - TOPPER - Novel - Thorne Smith - Pocket Books - 25¢
- 447 - TURNABOUT - Novel - Thorne Smith - Pocket Books - 25¢
- 314 - THE BISHOP'S JAEGERs - Thorne Smith - Pocket Books - 25¢
- 428 - THE NIGHT LIFE OF THE GODS - Thorne Smith - Pocket Books- 25¢

(We believe that TOPPER TAKES A TRIP, THE GLORIOUS POOL, and THE PASSIONATE WITCH - all by Thorne Smith - are also in stock.)

SCIENCE - FICTION SATIRE

- 498 - MR. ADAM - Novel - Pat Frank - Pocket Books - 25¢

PUBLISHERS' ADDRESSES FOR MAIL-ORDERS

Avon - Avon Book sales Corp., 119 W. 57th St., New York 19, N.Y.
Add 5¢ per item for shipping charges.

Bantam - Do not advertise mail-orders. We are checking.

Mentor) - The New American Library of World Literature, 245 5th Ave.
Signet) New York 16, N.Y. -- add 5¢ per item.

Permabooks - Permabooks Mail Order Dept., Garden City, N.Y. Add 5¢ per item.

Pocket Books - Pocket Books, Inc., 18 W. 48th St., New York 19, N.Y. -- add 5¢ per item.

(continued next page -)

"NEFF NEWS FLASH"

FROM WALT DUNKELBERGER THRU EV WINNE

The National Fantasy Fan Federation's reprint edition of the Finlay Folio is exhausted, but the Minn-Dak Fantasy Society is re-printing the first and second folios now, and 100 copies are to be reserved of each, through Walter Dunkelberger, to be distributed at the price of \$1.00 each to NFFF members.

The NFFF also has the rights to a third Finlay Portfolio --but that project is to be handled in the future.

There is a very small edition of the first folio (eight full-page illustrations by the Master from the pages of FFM) that will be ready for mailing March 22nd. One hundred copies will be reserved--until May 1st -- at \$1.00 each to NFFF members.

There will be a 500 copy edition of the second Finlay Folio (8 pages) available about the first of May. Of this also, 100 sets are to be reserved at one dollar each to members of N3F. Order at once if you want your copy as they won't last long. No further reprinting will be allowed when these are exhausted, we are informed by the artist and his publisher -- so when these are gone, fans will be at the mercy of the dealers.

THIS IS ANOTHER SERVICE OF YOUR NFFF!!!

Get yourself some ego-boo: contrib to the NFFF Mess Boo! Woo-woo!!!!

POCKET - BOOK CHECKLIST (cont'd)

Century - Century Publications, 139 N. Clark St., Chicago 2, Ill.
No mailing charge mentioned.

Dell - Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 261 Fifth Ave., New York 16, N.Y.
No mailing charge in U. S.

Fantasy Publishing Company - 8318 Avalon Blvd., Los Angeles 3, Cal.
No charge mentioned.

British - Try Capt. K.F. Slater, 13 Gp. R.P.C., B.A.O.R., 23, c/o
G.P.O., England.

USE BOOK TITLES AND NUMBERS WHEN ORDERING BY MAIL

THE END

16

If you would become a BNF, Be active in your NFFF!!! Send to Mess Bo

ATTENTION, FAN AUTHORS:

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THE NFFF

MANUSCRIPT BUREAU

THE GREAT STF DETECTIVE

by Ken Kreuger



FOR a long, long time I have sat back and listened to a great many fans beat their gums about what science-fiction needs most to give it that added boost that will send it into the best-seller class and make detective stories look sick. To me the best answer that was ever given was that science-fiction needs a detective.

If, at this point, anyone has the gall to point out John Carstairs and announce that stf has a sleuth already, I would merely consider that person as the lowest possible moron and ignore the interruption.

Stf needs a good red-blooded private eye who can hold a belly full of some sort of rot-gut, get his brains (?) beat out all over the place, tangle with a nefarious woman or two, and still emerge victorious. No Sherlock Holmes with a calculating machine for a heart will do. We need a Micheal Shayne of the future who can tell tradition to go to hell and flaunt the law in the faces of the authorities.

In the absence of a Shayne, a nother Peter Chambers can be resurrected to get loaded and diddle with any women who happen to walk along that futuristic street.

I guess you-all get the idea by now. So, I tell you what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna write an outline of the ideal stf best-seller. Anyone who wants to use this can do so at any time. All I want is my share of the millions in royalties that will come rolling in.

CHAPTER I

The scene opens in our Private Eye's office. He has two rooms in a dingy building. He sleeps in one. He works in the other. His secretary has a desk in the bathroom, which is also the only way into the office. As we look in, the Eye is just coming to. He had a hard night. His face looks as if it has been through a meat-grinder. The inside of his mouth feels like a bar-rag. He reaches in and pulls out the bar-rag. He squeezes a few drops from it and downs them. He immediately feels better. Door bursts open.

CHAPTER II

Short fat millionaire runs in and gasps out that his wife had disappeared. He suspects Martian cowboys from visiting rodeo. 18

Eye looks at him coolly, walks into bathroom and scares hell out of Sec'y. Drinks a bottle of eyewash (no puns, please) and returns to office. Scares hell out of millionaire. Asks millionaire if wife was ex-chorus girl. She was. He accepts job. Millionaire leaves and is burned to bits by heat-ray as he leaves building. Eye looks wistfully on.

CHAPTER III

Eye starts to get dressed. Finds flask of Venusian potato-juice in pajama-leg and takes a swig. Runs into bathroom and scares hell out of sec'y. Gets dressed and ~~xxx~~ leaves. Goes first to home of late millionaire to get info. Seduces maid. Butler walks in. Big so-and so. Beats hell out of Eye. Tosses Eye out. Eye laughs it off and goes to burlesque show. Three Martian cowboys laughing at burlesque comedians (i.e. - "crawl into the gazeeka box, and presto"). Eye is jubilant at finding them. Plies them with liquor and asks where millionaire's wife is. They tap him with a piece of lead and hawl him out.

CHAPTER IV

Eye wakes up. His surroundings are strange. He feels motion. He is on space-ship. It dawns on him that he is being taken for a ride. He tries the door, not locked. He sneaks out into corridor and starts toward control room. Martian comes around corner and Eye ducks into another room. Inside is missing wife, drugged into thinking she is a Martian belly-slider. She slides over to him. He speaks to her. Her belly is full of slivers.

CHAPTER V

They wake up. Martian comes into room and lassoes them. They are taken to commander. Eye tricks him into revealing plans for Earth conquest. Learns that there are millions of visiting Martian cowboys on Earth. Earth hasn't a chance. Eye sneers at Commander. Commander shoots millionaire's wife to show he isn't fooling. Eye is a little impressed. Suddenly Eye gets idea.

CHAPTER VI

Eye joins Martians. He has great plans. Earth is attacked. Martians win and Eye is head of secret service. Eye goes to home of ex-millionaire and seduces maid. Butler walks in. Eye shoots him dead and goes to office in triumph, walking in front door. Scares hell out of Sec'y. Eye and Sec'y share a bottle of hair-tonic. Eye gets another idea.

CHAPTER VII

Eye shoots self.

THE END

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BOTTIS BY HIS BOOTSTRAPS

ARTHUR H. RAPP

"Ah, Spring," murmured Morgan Botts, lifting a brimming beaker of beer to his lips. "At this pleasant season of the year, the pulse of youth and adventure throbs once again in my blood."

"That's not youth and adventure," I told the stfan inventor disrespectfully. "That's just alcohol in your capillaries."

Botts ignored me. He replaced his empty stein on the marble-topped tavern table and stared intently into my face.

"Do you remember the Norwescon?" He asked abruptly.

"Don't be silly," I answered. "Fifty years ago I wasn't even born yet, let alone a stfan -- do you mean, by any chance, have I heard of the Norwescon?"

"What the hell do you think I mean?" Botts snapped. "I know you're just a young whippersnapper ... well, have you or haven't you?"

"Hah!" I retorted. "Remember that Norwescon Memory Book you sold me as a rare collector's item only last week? How could I ever forget the Norwescon, huh?" I was beginning to guess what Botts had up his sleeve, and I wanted no part of any more reckless time-travelling.

"How'd you like to attend the Norwescon?" Botts asked thru the foam of a fresh beer.

So I'd guessed right! Without hesitation I yelped, "Absolutely, finally, definitely, NO!"

"No?"

"En-oh, no. Not unless you get a permit from Central Control to visit 1950 for purposes of historical research. In that case I'd be only too glad to see that epochal event -- the first World Stfeon in the Great Northwest. But no more of your illegal trips; my nerves won't stand 'em."

"Ah," said Botts with satisfaction. "So you would like to visit the Norwescon!"

"What stfan wouldn't?"

"Look at it this way," Morgan Botts replied. "Our trip back to 1948 to visit the Torcon* proved that my time-machine is undetectable by Central Control; therefore, there's nothing to worry about --"

"Unless we happen to screw up the Temporal Constants."

"Yeah, but all we're going to do is watch the Norwescon-- we're not going to interfere with events at all."

"Like I said, get a permit from the council, and --"

*See "Time and the Torcon" in Macabre, July 1948.

"Ah, jetwash!" snarled Botts. "You know how much red tape that would involve. Besides, there's the license fee, all the insurance premiums, the bond to be posted, the-- "

"What the hell makes you so anxious to see the Norwescon again, anyway?" I asked. "You attended it, didn't you?"

"Well, yes, in a way," Botts admitted. "No doubt, I have often told you how I first heard of stf when I ran an errand that took me into one of the Norwescon sessions -- however, I missed a lot since I didn't know enuf about stf at the time to fully appreciate what went on, and, of course, I couldn't know that the Norwescon was to go down in fanhistory as the dawn of a new era of stf. Besides, I'd like to go look the thing over again purely for sentimental reasons."

"Or because your memory's dimming with age, -- hah?" I commented.

"That is a Ghu-drenched lie!" roared Botts. "Wait till you get old enuf to try recalling events a half-century in the past, and you'll realize that I have a remarkably excellent memory."

"O.Q., I apologise", I answered, seeing that the aged stran-inventor was really angry. Botts hates to be kidded about his age unless it's a compliment on his knowledge of the early days.

"Well, then", he demanded, "Are you or are you not going to Portland with me?"

"Ah, hell, I suppose I might as well," I said reluctantly. "Somebody's got to keep you out of trouble..."

* * * * *

It's a strange sensation, wandering around in the past, -- especially when your presence there is decidedly illegal. You see people dressed in those queer, uncomfortable, costumes of fifty years ago, carrying on their affairs with no slightest intimation of the spectacular course history is so soon to take -- that history you know so well from your classes in Modern History I at college. It makes you feel like getting on a soapbox and shouting your knowledge at them, warning of the coming Catastrophe and the men whose real character lay so long unsuspected beneath the gloss of superficial conformity -- it makes you want to do something, some little, unimportant-in-itself action which would turn the whole current of the Temporal Constants aside from the turbulent channel they are destined to take.....

"Look, son," Morgan Botts interrupted my musings, "You wait here in front of the building and watch the people if ##### you want. I'm going to look in on that last meeting again. I'm almost sure that's the one I wandered into.....but after fifty years it's hard to be sure of details." He sighed wistfully. "I sure don't want to miss seeing myself, back here in '50."

I let the opening pass. This was no time for wisecracks about

Botts' memory. Besides, I was fascinated by the street scenes in old Portland. I gawked like a Martian at the spectacle of a nervous old lady trying to maneuver her quaint internal-combustion vehicle into a parking space at the side of the vehicle-way -- and suddenly a touch on my arm made me jump.

I whirled, not knowing what to expect. Then I sighed with relief at seeing it was only Botts, not a Central Control representative.

"Great Throbbing Beavers! Don't scare me like that, Botts! I thought you'd gone inside long ago."

"I did," Botts replied. "But I came back out to tell you something. Look, I can't find myself in that meeting, but they're having a discussion about the future of stf up there that's really funny to hear. Coming up?"

"No, I'll stay down here, I guess."

"Hmmm, I rather thought you would. Beats history books, doesn't it?"

"Hell, it even beats tri-dims! This is the real past."

"Well, I'm going back to that meeting. If you see me around anywhere, call me down here, will you? I'd like to see what kind of a looking young'un I used to be."

"Sure thing, Morgan."

It was about five minutes later that I saw the kid. Dirty and ragged, he was leaning against the wall of a building in the mouth of an alley on the opposite side of the street. I watched while, in the shadows swiftly gathering as the sun dropped, he pulled a bottle of beer from his hip-pocket and tilted back his head to take a long pull at it. Little doubt that this was Morgan Botts at fifteen!

What should I do? I didn't want to let the kid out of my sight long enuf to go get Botts, because in the evening twilight it might be impossible to find him again. But I knew Botts would be heartbroken if he missed seeing himself. The old geezer gets horribly sentimental at times.

Then I noticed the newsboy beside me, busily folding his evening papers to fit into the carrier on his bicycle. I could not help thinking what a contrast this lad's neat, clean-cut appearance presented to that of the half-drunk hoodlum across the street. I called to the newsboy.

"Hey, bud," I said, "How'd you like to earn a quarter?"

"How, mister?" he answered, shoving his stack of half-folded papers to one side.

"Look," I told him. "Go upstairs and find room 213. There's a meeting going on in there, and I want you to find an old gent with hornrim glasses and a white mustache. Tell him his friend wants him downstairs. Got that?"

"Sure, mister," said the newsboy. "Gimme the quarter, mister."

Clutching the coin, he scampered up the stairs. I waited impatiently for Botts to arrive. The sun sank lower; the shadows deepened; the disreputable youngster in the alley tossed aside his empty beer-bottle and lit a cigarette.

It was fully fifteen minutes before Botts came out of the building, how-

ever. By that time, only the red spark of the cigarette's tip was visible in the darkness of the alley-mouth. The newsboy's papers and bicycle lay deserted beside me.

"What the hell took you so long?" I greeted Botts. "Or didn't the kid I sent up give you my message?"

"Oh, the kid gave me the message, all right." Botts answered. "But I hated to leave in the middle of the discussion. Besides, I thought I'd do better to stay where I was."

"Well, you should have come down right away. I'm sure that's you standing in that alley across the street, only now it's too dark to tell."

Then Morgan Botts amazed me. He showed not the slightest interest in the cigarette-smoking juvenile delinquent. Instead, he led me back into the building, laughing heartily. However, it was not until we had gone thru the Temporal Lock into our own time once again that he condescended to explain to me...

* * * * *
* * * * *

"--and if he looked like your description, I think I ought to be insulted," Botts chuckled, a can of beer in his gnarled hand as he relaxed in his apartment.

"You mean that wasn't you? Didn't you drink and smoke when you were fifteen years old?"

"I'm proud to say I did not," Botts answered virtuously. "I must have been all of six teen when I first tried drinking beer. Thought it tasted awful at the time, too."

"Well, then, you didn't get to see yourself at the Norwescon after all, did you?" I asked. "Don't mind it too much, though -- we'll go back again someday and look in on the sessions we missed this trip."

"What makes you think I didn't get to see myself?" Botts demanded.

"Hell, that's all you were grumbling about all the while," I told him. "Why, right up to that last meeting, you told me to call you if I spotted anyone who might be you."

"Holy Roscoe, son, don't jump to half-baked conclusions!" Botts shouted. "I told you I remembered what went on at the Norwestcon, even after fifty years. I just had to do a little play-acting in the interests of keeping the Temporal Constants straight."

"You mean you saw yourself at one of the earlier meetings and after that you were just pretending...?"

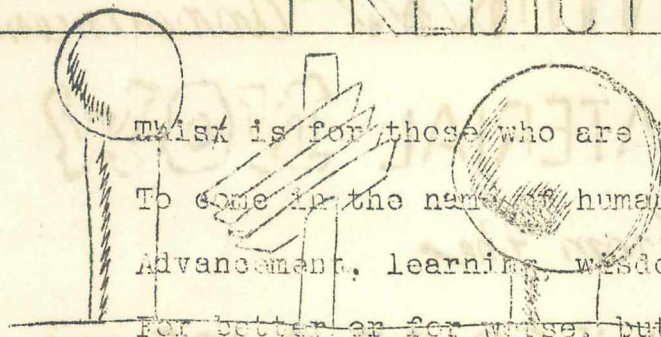
"Don't be stupid! Hell, haven't I told you innumerable times that I got into the Norwescon by running an errand? Yep, my memory is excellent, always has been...even in those days, I never needed to write down stuff I wanted to remember, like most people do. Why, I even kept in my head all the accounts for the subscribers on my paper route!"

- THE END -

Everyone's sending stuff, great Ghu, to the N3F Mess Boo! You too??

PREDICTION

Bill Venable



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of space and time,

The transcendental demonstration of the true nature of
things;

Who will die, slowly or violently, as the case may be
Of radiation burns, explosions, dangerous experimentation,
But will leave their mark nonetheless.

This is for those who will dissect the thin,
bright,

And not know it, but they will not know it.

Who will photograph the atom, smash the velocity-barrier

Of interstellar space, break down the portals and
barriers of time,

Conquered, never stop to luxuriate in their

to greater goals.

* * * * *

I am glad I shall not see those days;

They will be Gods, omnipotent or omniscient, but---

Will they be human?

Announcement EDITORS *Announcement*

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That address again:

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26

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and don't my name is Shootmove Mead!