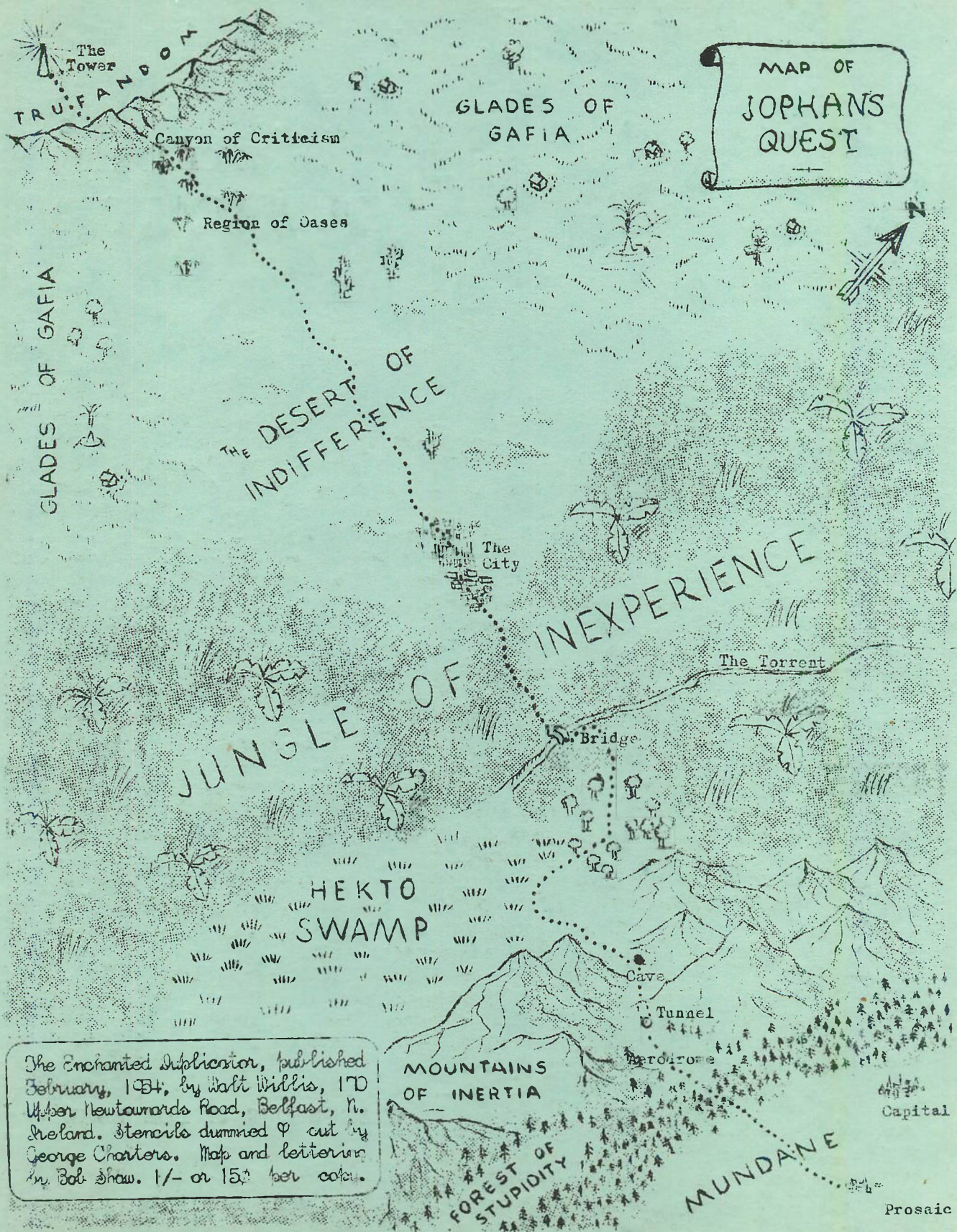


**THE
ENCHANTED
DUPLICATOR**

WALT WILLIS & BOB SHAW



The Enchanted Duplicate, published February, 1934, by Walt Willis, 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, N. Ireland. Stencils dummied & cut by George Charters. Map and lettering by Bob Shaw. 1/- or 15s per copy.

THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR Chapter 1

In Which The Spirit Of Fandom Appears To Jophan



ONCE UPON A TIME in the village of Prosaic in the Country of Mundane there lived a youth called Jophan. Now this youth was unhappy, because in all the length and breadth of Mundane there was no other person with whom he could talk as he would like, or who shared the strange longings that from time to time perplexed his mind and which none of the pleasures offered by Mundane could wholly satisfy. Each day as Jophan grew nearer to manhood he felt more strongly that life should have more to offer than had been dreamed of in Mundane, and he took to reading strange books that told of faraway places and other times. But the People of Prosaic mocked him, saying that the things described in his books could never come to pass, and that it was as foolish to think of them as to aspire to climb the great mountains that surrounded the Country of Mundane.

The mighty peaks that hemmed in Mundane were ever present in Jophan's thoughts, for since childhood he had loved to look at them and wonder what lay on their other side. At times in the late Summer he had seemed to see a curious luminescence in the sky beyond them and once he had even fancied that he heard the sound of happy voices singing, borne over the vast distance on the still summer breeze. But when he mentioned these things to the people of Prosaic they laughed at him and said his fanciful imagination was playing him tricks. Even if anyone could climb those impassable mountains, they told him, there could be nothing on the other side but howling wastes where no man could live except perhaps madmen and savages.

Jophan believed them, for they seemed older and wiser than he, and tried to put the strange thoughts out of his mind. But he still read the strange books that told of faraway places and other times, and in the long evenings of summer he would go away by himself into the fields and read until nightfall.

Now one day while he was reading in a cornfield the drowsy fragrance of the corn lulled him to sleep. In his sleep he dreamed that a fairy came to him, a girl of wondrous beauty and shining with a light brighter than the noonday sun, so that Jophan shrank away and hid his eyes. The fairy came nearer and spoke to him.

"Have no fear," she said. "I am your friend."

And now Jophan looked and saw that indeed the fairy gazed on him with kindness and love, and he took courage.

"Who and what are you?" he asked.

"I am the Spirit of Fandom," said the fairy serenely.

"What is Fandom?" asked Jophan wonderingly.

The fairy looked down on him with compassion. "Have you not been searching for it all your life?" she asked. "Watch!" So saying, she touched his forehead with

her wand, which was named Contact, and thereupon Jophan saw a vision that filled him with joy.

"This is indeed what I have been searching for without knowing it," he cried. "Oh, Fairy, tell me how I may reach your realm, for I wish to become a Fan more than anything else in the world."

"The way is hard," said the Fairy, "for it lies over the Mountains of Inertia which surround Mundane."

"But those mountains are unclimbable," protested Jophan.

"To a True Fan anything is possible," replied the fairy. "But wait. I have shown you only the superficial aspect of Fandom. Now I will show you something of its inner essence." With these words she touched his forehead with her other wand, which was named Fanac, and Jophan saw a second vision so glorious that he was quite overcome with the wonder of it.

As soon as he could speak he cried aloud, "Oh Spirit of Fandom, tell me how I may become a True Fan and publish the Perfect Fanzine, for that is what I desire more than anything in the world."

"I see I have chosen wisely," said the fairy approvingly, "but the way to your heart's desire is long and hard. To reach it you must obtain the Enchanted Duplicator, sometimes known as the Magic Mimeograph. It lies in the very heart of Fandom, on the top of the High Tower of Trufandom, and the path to it is long and beset with many dangers."

"I care not for danger," said Jophan stoutly, "so long as I can publish the Perfect Fanzine, for that is what I want more than anything else in the world."

"Very well," said the fairy. "Then take this shield, which is called Umor. If you polish it every day and keep it shining it will protect you from many dangers."

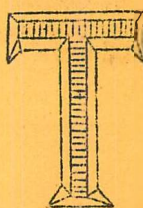
"But how will I know the way?" cried Jophan hastily, for the fairy was already beginning to disappear.

"If you are a True Fan you will know the way....." said the fairy faintly, for she had now almost completely faded into invisibility. For a moment a faint glow remained in the air from which seemed to come the whispered words "Good Luck," and then she was gone.

Jophan awoke from his dream and realised that night was almost upon him, for the sun was setting behind the Mountains of Inertia and their shadows were advancing swiftly on him across the level plains of Mundane. Behind the mountains there lingered a sea of glorious light, and a sadness overtook Jophan to think that his vision had been but a dream. But as he got to his feet he noticed that on the ground beside him there lay a shield of curious workmanship. Jophan picked it up incredulously and then turned his eyes once again to the mountains, his face transfigured with wonder and resolve.

Chapter 2

In Which Jophan Starts On His Journey



That evening Jophan told his parents of his intention to scale the Mountains of Inertia and enter the Realm of Fandom. His mother pleaded with him in vain, and in a fit of rage his father burned all the books that told of faraway places and other times, but nothing could shake Jophan from his purpose. As dawn broke he set out for the mountains, carrying all his possessions on his back and turning a deaf ear to the protests of his friends, who ran beside him begging him to return.

They soon fell far behind, and by noon Jophan arrived at the borders of Mundane. He found himself at the great arterial road that ran to the capital city. He was

confused by the traffic that roared along the road, and stood anxiously looking for an opportunity to cross. As he waited he noticed other travellers boarding luxurious coaches bound for fabulous destinations such as Wealth, Success, Respectability and other places, but none of them seemed to be going in the direction of Fandom. During a momentary lull in the traffic Jophan marched steadfastly across the road. Then he took the narrow path that led through the Forest of Stupidity, which forest grows all round the Country of Mundane and shelters it from the searching winds that blow out of Fandom.

The path was overgrown, and in several places Jophan had to cut his way through brush and thickets, but by mid-afternoon he had made his way to a beautiful clearing where he thought he would rest before continuing his journey. To his surprise he noticed that the clearing was laid out as an aerodrome, and that a beautiful silver flying-machine was even now landing. As he watched, the pilot and a passenger got out. The passenger seemed to fall to the ground and lie there motionless but the pilot came trotting over to Jophan. He was a fat, prosperous-looking man, and he eyed Jophan with calculating cordiality.

"Good afternoon, young man," he said genially. "My name is Swift. May I ask where you are bound for?"

"My name is Jophan," said Jophan, "and I am on my way over the Mountains of Inertia to enter Fandom and produce the Perfect Fanzine, for that is what I want to do more than anything else in the world."

"And so you shall!" said Swift, eyeing Jophan's bundle. "But, my dear young man, surely you are not thinking of climbing those mountains? Why, my beautiful machine will fly you over to Fandom in no time. And as for the Perfect Fanzine, my aeroplanograph will produce that for you too. No trouble at all. All you have to do is give me that bundle of yours."

"The fairy said I must get the Enchanted Duplicator," said Jophan doubtfully.

"That old thing?" jeered Swift. "Why, no one bothers with old-fashioned stuff like that these days. I've some proofs for you."

As he hurried past the aeroplanograph to his office Jophan observed that the passenger was crawling painfully over the grass, calling feebly to Jophan. Jophan hurried over to him and could scarcely restrain his tears as he saw the stranger's pitiful condition. The wretch was pale and emaciated, his clothes in rags, and his hair prematurely white. Jophan bent down to hear what he was saying. "Don't trust him," whispered the passenger through his parched lips, "neither him nor his brothers Offset and Litho. They will fly you over the Mountains of Inertia, as they claim, but you won't be able to land anywhere. You will fly around in circles for months looking down on Fandom until all your money is gone and you die of starvation like me. Be warned before it is too late. There is no easy way....."

His voice trailed off into inaudibility, and Jophan realised that he was dead. Solemnly he consigned his soul to Heaven and prayed that the Great BNF above would have pity on him. Then he ran across the aerodrome and resumed his journey through the forest.

Soon the trees began to thin out and the ground to rise, and Jophan knew he had arrived at the foothills of the Mountains of Inertia. As he paused to strap his bundle more tightly about him he was startled to hear what seemed to be a train whistle nearby. He went forward curiously and soon found himself facing a large and imposing notice. In clear and elegant letters it said: TO THE TUNNEL. LETTER-PRESS RAILROAD. MUNDANE TO TRUFANDOM TOWER DIRECT VIA TUNNEL. Beyond it Jophan saw a dark tunnel leading into the mountain, and before it a resplendent locomotive with a single tiny carriage behind it.

Had it not been for his encounter with the Passenger, Jophan would have bought a ticket and boarded the train, but instead he stayed where he was and watched the locomotive as it started off. With a deafening blow on its whistle and an impress-

ive clanking of gears it steamed toward the inky blackness of the tunnel, but it had barely reached the entrance before it shuddered to a stop. To his astonishment Jophan saw the driver, fireman and passengers get off and run to the back of the train. With immense labour they lifted the last section of the track and staggered with it into the tunnel. After some minutes they reappeared and boarded the train again. The train moved another few yards into the tunnel, and the process was repeated. Jophan watched them until they finally disappeared into the tunnel, marvelling at their obstinacy and patience. It may be, he thought, a wonderful railroad, but if they have to set every one of the lines by hand it will be years before they even reach Fandom, never mind Trufandom.

He listened for a while to the groanings and clankings still coming from the tunnel and then set off on the steep path up the mountain.

Chapter 3

In Which Jophan Joins In The Circle Of Lassitude

The path was steep, and by nightfall Jophan was near exhaustion. Worse, he had entered a region of thick fog, and he could no longer see the path in front of him. Afraid lest he would take a false step and fall down the precipitous slope, Jophan stopped helplessly and resolved to wait until the fog cleared. But as the sound of his own breathing subsided he heard voices above him. He felt his way inch by inch along the path and suddenly found himself at the entrance to a brilliantly lit, circular cave. It was full of people of all ages talking and laughing and playing games. As soon as they noticed his presence they hospitably invited him in, gave him something to drink, and then went on with their talking and playing.

After a while one of the youths finished his game and came over to him. "Where are you bound for?" he asked politely.

"I am going to Fandom to publish the Perfect Fanzine," said Jophan, "for that is what I want to do more than anything else in the world."

"But this is Fandom!" exclaimed the youth indignantly.

"Well, not exactly," said an older man who had overheard, "but it's good enough for us. Actually this is only the Circle of Lassitude. We've heard of Fandom, of course, but it's such a lot of trouble getting over those mountains that we don't know much about it. We have all we want here, you see, so we're quite happy. If you want to know something about it, though, I could introduce you to those three old men in the corner. They lived in Fandom for a time long ago, until they came back for a visit to the capital of Mundane. They were never able to tear themselves completely away or to face another journey over the mountains. It's easier to come back, you know. By the way, my name is Leth, Robert George Leth. They call me Leth R.G. for short."

The Circle was so pleasant and hospitable that Jophan decided to spend the night in the cave. But they had so plied him with drink that he slept most of the following day until it seemed too late to start. The same thing happened the next day and the next, and by degrees Jophan sank into a stupor, in which he forgot the object of his quest. Now and then he felt dimly that he had lost some precious thing but whenever he tried to recall what it was one of the Circle would press a drink into his hand and distract his attention with the latest verses of the wits of Mundane.

One day while Jophan was talking with the others in the cave a great wind blew from Fandom and a sheet of paper was whirled into the cave. Jophan picked it up and examined it curiously. Its appearance stirred half-forgotten memories of the

dazzling vision he had had from the touch of the wand called Fanac. "Why," he gasped, "it's.....it's a Fanzine!"

"So it is," said Leth R.G., idly. "They blow in from Fandom occasionally. We never pay much attention."

Without another word Jophan shouldered his bundle and marched out of the cave. The others watched him in silence, and after he was gone it was a long time before anyone spoke. Then they renewed their talking and playing twice as loudly as before, as if they were trying to convince themselves that they were happy.

Chapter 4

In Which Jophan Meets A Traveler From Fandom

Jophan had been weakened both in mind and body by the drugs he had imbibed in the cave, and he found the going very difficult. The path became steeper and steeper, and one by one he had to abandon all the possessions he had brought with him. Even so, by evening he was so tired that he had to rest on a ledge to regain his strength. Below him he could see the path winding down into the Region of Fog, strewn with his cherished possessions. Further down the green Forest of Stupidity was spread out below him, and beyond it the peaceful country of Mundane basking in the light of the setting sun. Shivering with cold as he was, for the Mountains of Inertia screened the sunlight from him, Jophan found the prospect enticing and it came to him how easy it would be to retrace his steps down the path, gather up his possessions, and return to the placid life of Mundane.

While he was musing thus he heard a terrible sound above his head, and cowered into the shelter of the ledge just in time to escape a deadly landslide of rocks and loose stones. Behind them down the path there slithered and stumbled the highest horse Jophan had ever seen, and on his back an angry little man, pulling at the reins and swearing continually. Every now and then the horse dislodged another stone which clattered down the mountainside, awakening a fresh landslide.

"Pardon me," said Jophan, "but you really should be more careful. You might injure some of the other pilgrims on the path."

"Serve them right," snarled the little man, without dismounting from his high horse. "My name is Disillusion — the Disillusion, y'know. Who are you?"

"My name is Jophan," said Jophan, "and I am on my way to Fandom to produce the Perfect Fanzine, for that is what I want to do more than anything else in the world."

"More fool you," sneered the other. "Only a fool would want to enter that place."

"Why, what's wrong with it?" asked Jophan.

"What's wrong with it?" repeated Disillusion incredulously. "Why, everything's wrong with it! They're either stupid or mad, every one of them. Why, they didn't even come out to greet me when I arrived — me, mind you! At first they even pretended not to see me until I got down off my horse, and when they did speak to me I couldn't understand a word they were saying. And their customs! I've never seen anything like them."

"Well, after all," said Jophan, "it is a different country. Maybe if you had tried to learn their language....."

"Nonsense!" snapped Disillusion. "They were just trying to keep things from me and laughing behind my back. Well, they can have their secrets. I don't want to have anything to do with them. They were all against me, I tell you. Imagine, not even thanking me for entering Fandom after all I tried to teach them....."

Speechless with indignation, he spurred the horse on again and vanished down the path. Jophan thought he was the most conceited and self-centred person he had ever met, but nevertheless the encounter refreshed him. It seemed to him that the dislike of such a person was a very good recommendation for Fandom. With this new vigour he set off again on his journey and by nightfall he had reached a point from which he thought he should be able to reach the summit tomorrow. Happy in the prospect of seeing Fandom so soon, he curled up in a little cave and went to sleep.

Chapter 5

In Which Jophan Enters Fandom

Next morning Jophan arose with the first rays of the sun and set off towards the now beckoning summit in good heart. He was overjoyed to see that there were no more gloomy people like Disillusion coming galloping by. They are probably very rare in Fandom, he reflected, and the thought put him in such a good humour that he redoubled his efforts to reach the top.

Thus far in his travels Jophan had been journeying alone, but now he began to overtake others on the same path. It pleased him greatly to hear their fannish talk, and by the time he had achieved the peak he had befriended several. The closest of these new-found friends were Mr Plodder and Mr Erratic.

The former was a slow-moving climber, who went straight at every obstacle with grim determination, sometimes losing ground but in the end winning through by the great quantity of his effort. He had no shield of Umor, as most of the other travellers had, but Jophan noticed that his skin was tremendously thick and it looked as though even the fiercest blow would but glance off it.

On the other hand Mr Erratic scorned to take great pains as Mr Plodder was forced to do. His method of progress was to wait for an opportunity to make some great and brilliant leap which enabled him to do in one second that which had taken the other a full minute. At times Jophan was greatly impressed by some unusually clever bit of work by Mr Erratic, but he noticed that the other seemed to have very little real strength and would rest for so long between leaps that Jophan left him far behind.

In a short time Jophan reached the top and felt compensated many times over for the arduous climb. A smooth green slope ran gently downwards into the most beautiful country Jophan had ever seen — Fandom.

It was a land of streams and meadows and valleys, over and between which ran meandering roads, dotted here and there with cheerful cottages. Beyond all this, in the mists of distance, he saw yet another peak which was too far away to be clearly seen. Jophan saw with wonderment that it seemed to have a golden radiance about its summit.

With glad cries the band of travellers in which Jophan had found himself ran down the gentle grassy slope. Each and every Neofan felt in his heart that he would soon reach the new peak which was called the Tower of Trufandom, for here they had no Mountains of Inertia to climb, and just the bright inviting land of Fandom to cross.

After a moment's hesitation Jophan ran after them, and so brightly did the sun shine on Fandom that he and the other Neofen (as they now were) were blinded by its light and quite failed to notice the hazards, of which in Fandom there are many.

As Jophan ran he was astonished and horrified to hear the eager cries of those in front turn to screams of fear and consternation. On shielding his eyes from the

sun he perceived that some distance ahead the verdant ground had become soft and treacherous underfoot, in the manner of a quicksand. And to his dismay he saw that many unfortunate wretches had broken through the surface and were being sucked down, drawing with them others who had sprung to their aid.

When Jophan saw the horrible purple stains that spread from underneath to clog the victims' mouths and nostrils he realised that they had blundered into the dreaded Hekto Swamp, and that there was no help for them. With a last pitying look he bore to the right onto ground which had at first seemed uninviting because of its slightly stony appearance, but which bore up underfoot, unlike the seductive smoothness of the Hekto Swamp.

Chapter 6

In Which Jophan Ventures Into The Jungle Of Inexperience

Jophan soon found out that the firmness of the ground was due to the presence of mighty trees whose roots spread through the soil, making it a secure if difficult surface to walk on. He learned that these great trees had flourished in Fandom since time immemorial, and were called Abydix, Roncaks and Ellam trees. There was another lengthy name beginning with 'G' which he was unable to remember.

Jophan had travelled but a short time over this difficult but promising path when to his alarm he found himself confronted with a dense jungle. This, the Jungle of Inexperience, had not been visible from the mountains, but apparently it stretched all round Fandom and there was no alternative but to try to find a way through it. Jophan plunged bravely into the undergrowth, but the numerous pitfalls and creepers so impeded his progress that he was eventually brought to a standstill.

As he paused to regain his strength he was startled to hear a heart-rending scream close by. He forced his way through a dense thicket and found himself on the brink of a mighty torrent which roared through the jungle in the direction of the Hekto Swamp. The waters that leaped and churned along its course were as black as ink, and Jophan realised that this was the notorious Torrent of Overinking. He was horrified to see that some yards downstream a Neofan, doubtless the one that had screamed, was being borne away by the flood.

The unfortunate Neofan's cries for help wrenched Jophan's heart, and he ran as quickly as he could along the bank in an effort to reach him. It was plain, however, that the waters were too swift-moving, and he soon fell behind. The calamities that Jophan had seen overtake his fellow-travellers began to weigh heavily upon his spirit.

He was, therefore, pleasantly surprised to see on rounding a bend that a number of people were gathered on the bank and had just succeeded in rescuing the Neofan from the clutches of the torrent. On coming closer he saw that there was a huge pile of sheets close to the edge and that the rescuers had knotted these together and lowered them to the drowning Neofan.

He discovered later that the sheets which had been used to rescue the Neofan from the Torrent of Overinking were known as Slip Sheets.

Jophan joined the group and they all set off down the bank, having agreed that it would be better to avoid the Torrent of Overinking altogether rather than depend on Slip Sheets to rescue them. Further along, however, they were overjoyed to discover a bridge across the torrent. Laughing happily they crossed the bridge which bore an inscription proclaiming it to be the Bridge of Moderation, and set foot on the other side in the confident hope that their troubles were now at an end.

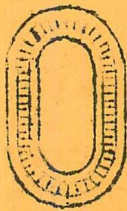
*Outside
Swamp*

However, it seemed that they were not yet at the end of the jungle. Indeed, as they progressed, the path became more and more difficult to follow, as it wound its way among overhanging vines and creepers, all of a sickly light green aspect which reflected itself in the wan faces of the travellers. This unnatural pallor was caused by the fact that it was very rarely indeed that a cheering ray of sunlight ever penetrated the converging vegetation.

It was in these unpleasant surroundings that darkness finally forced the band of Neofen to pitch camp for the night.

Chapter 7

In Which Jophan Encounters The Denizens Of The Jungle



n the next day Jophan observed a phenomenon which had hitherto escaped his notice. Here and there through the jungle were large swathes of flattened vegetation which bore the appearance of having been made by some huge monster which had smashed through the jungle and left a wake of uprooted vines and splintered trees. Alarmed by this ominous sight he warned his companions to keep together and to proceed with caution. But it was without avail, for as the day wore on first one of them and then another would grow impatient and stride on by himself. Others, again, would be unable to keep up the pace of the rest of the band and would fall discouraged and exhausted by the side of the path. From time to time Jophan tried to encourage these fainthearts, but he was amazed to notice that once they started to retrace their footsteps they seemed to disappear almost instantly from sight. He reflected that if the way into Fandom were as swift and comfortable as the way out, he would feel a great deal happier.

So it was that by the middle of the afternoon Jophan found himself alone on the path. He occasionally caught up with one of those who had rushed on ahead, but each of them had either fallen victim to one of the countless perils of the jungle or had collapsed in a state of complete exhaustion from their reckless expenditure of energy. Several of them he found crushed and bleeding in one of the swathes he had noticed before, and Jophan wondered with trepidation what sort of monster was this which could create such havoc by its mere passing. He kept an anxious watch on the path ahead but it was difficult to see far because of the swirling vapours that constantly rose from the dank vegetation. Jophan marvelled that in his first rapturous view of Fandom he had failed to perceive any sign of this dreadful jungle whose extent seemed to be almost boundless.

This thoughtful state of mind was rudely shattered by a dreadful crushing sound like that of the stampede of a hundred elephants, and the trees further down the path split asunder. Raising his Shield of Umor as bravely as he might, Jophan stared intently into the misty jungle.

A cold shadow of terror fell across him as he failed to see any cause for either the sound or the crushing of the trees. The Thing appeared to be invisible. As the mysterious trampling sound came nearer it took all of Jophan's courage to stand his ground. But then, as he peered ever more intently ahead, he suddenly perceived that it was not one great monster which was advancing on him, but a horde of smaller ones. His difficulty in seeing them at first was, he now realised, due to the fact that their markings and colouring resembled so closely those of their surroundings. They were, he could see now, hideous creatures resembling warthogs, but much heavier, and with dreadful spikes protruding all over their squat bodies.

As they drew near, Jophan's eye was caught by one of the Neofen who had earlier

rushed on ahead and now lay by the side of the path recovering his strength. As Jophan watched, the Neofan got to his feet to resume his journey, and, unable to see the monsters, staggered abruptly onto the path without looking where he was going. Jophan shouted a warning, but the creatures had already seen their victim. Their little red eyes gleaming cruelly, they changed direction and bore down mercilessly on the unfortunate Neofan, brushing aside his shield of Umor and crushing his bleeding body into the ground.

When Jophan saw that the Shield of Umor was of no avail against the monsters he was overcome with fear and would have turned to flee had not a wondrous thing occurred. In the distance he heard the sound of golden trumpets, and beside him the voice of the beautiful Spirit of Fandom.


"Stay, Jophan!" she whispered. "Do not run! These beasts you see are called typos and their attention is attracted by sudden movement. If you proceed slowly and with care you will not be troubled by them."

Despite this assurance Jophan was wary of passing the monsters, which were now moving slowly along the side of the trail as if watching for more unsuspecting Neofen. "But," he protested, "what if one of their spikes should accidentally strike me? The trail lies very close to them and they are difficult to detect in the undergrowth."

"If you go carefully enough this will not happen," said the Fairy confidently. "However, to set your mind at rest, here is a bottle of a magic liquid called Correcting Fluid. A touch of this will instantly heal any wound made by a typo." At these words a tiny green bottle appeared in the air before Jophan. Clutching it in his hand, he walked carefully past the herd and resumed his journey.

Chapter 8

In Which Jophan Meets Two Strange Neofen

n the days that followed, Jophan saw and heard many hordes of Typos blundering through the jungle, but, thanks to the Fairy's advice, he came to no harm. One day, however, he came upon a small herd of them on the path in front of him, moving slowly in the same direction as he. He overtook them carefully, meaning to pass them unobserved, when to his horror he noticed that there was a Neofan in their midst. He was about to call out a warning when he perceived that the Neofan was sitting, apparently unharmed, on a crude hurdle which was actually being borne along by the typos. At this sight Jophan cried out in astonishment, upon which the Neofan turned round and greeted him cheerily.

"Good morning, friend," he said. "What is your name and whither are you bound?"

"My name is Jophan," said Jophan, "and I am on my way to Trufandom to obtain the Enchanted Duplicator and produce the Perfect Fanzine."

"I also," said the Neofan. "My name is Kerles. Would you care to ride with me?"

"No, thank you," replied Jophan without hesitation. "To tell the truth I should be afraid of those horrible creatures."

"Horrible?" laughed Kerles. "Everyone fights shy of me on account of these typos, but actually they are quite agreeable fellows. Look, they will even do tricks for me."

So saying, he stretched out his Shield of Umor, which was large and brilliantly polished, and gave a word of command. Instantly several of the typos jumped neatly over the shield, performing somersaults and such other odd antics that Jophan burst out laughing.

"See?" said Kerles. "Quite cheerful fellows, really. I don't understand why

people dislike them so much."

Jophan was impressed, but he noticed that while Kerles was admittedly saving energy by this mode of travel, he was not proceeding very quickly. Moreover, every now and then the typos would wander off into the jungle, from which they were brought back with such difficulty that Kerles seemed in constant danger of losing his way altogether. Jophan felt it was impossible to press the beasts into any really useful service, and, reluctant to remain in the presence of the ugly creatures bade Kerles a friendly farewell.

He had not gone very far when he perceived another traveller on the path, and hurried to overtake him. By the speed with which he was able to do so he surmised that the other was standing still, but when he caught up with him he found that such was not the case. The Neofan was in fact moving forwards, but so slowly that quite a considerable time elapsed between steps. This time the Neofan seemed to spend in consulting various books from a pile which he carried under one arm, and in clearing away every tiny frond from the margin of the path before he ventured forward. On the Neofan's back was a huge rucksack which appeared to be crammed full with heavy objects, and a bundle of peculiarly-shaped swords, walking-sticks and umbrellas. Jophan's curiosity was aroused by this extraordinary mass of equipment and he addressed the Neofan politely.

"Good afternoon, friend," he said. "My name is Jophan, and I am on my way to obtain the Magic Mimeograph and publish the Perfect Fanzine. Could you please tell me what are these things you are carrying?"

"Good afternoon," said the Neofan. "These," he said proudly, pointing to the books, "are my guides. These swords and things are for cutting, shading, burnishing, and so on. A large number of all these are absolutely essential if one is to find one's way through this jungle safely. Although," he added mournfully, "I didn't want to come this way at all. I would have gone by the Letterpress Railroad if I had had enough money. My name is Perfexion, and I too--"

At this point there was a rustling noise in the undergrowth, and, panicstricken, the Neofan threw all his belongings to the ground. Rummaging in his rucksack he pulled out a peculiar-looking article made of wood and glass. Holding this to his eye, he peered intently into the jungle.

After some minutes he was apparently satisfied, and put the instrument back in his rucksack.

"What was that thing you were looking through?" asked Jophan curiously.

"That was my 'scope," said Perfexion. "I use it to watch out for those...animals."

"You mean the typos?" asked Jophan.

The Neofan seemed terrified by the mere utterance of the word and stared hauntedly into the jungle.

"Yes," he whispered fearfully. "Those dreadful Things. Er...would you like to travel with me? It would be so much safer if we could both watch out for...Them."

Jophan was filled with pity for the timorous Neofan, but he realised he would make very slow progress in his company.

"Thank you," he said kindly, "but I'd rather just take my chance with the typos. I want to get on."

He shook hands with the Neofan and continued on his way. At the next bend in the path he turned round to give a friendly wave, but Perfexion was so busy with his equipment that he did not notice.

Jophan slept fitfully that night, his mind being occupied with the events of the day, and was up and on his way before daylight the next morning. So adept had he become at negotiating the jungle, and so dexterous at avoiding the typos, that he had covered a considerable distance before the sun rose above the horizon. When it did so Jophan saw to his delight that the jungle seemed to be coming to an end. The trees were further apart, the undergrowth less dense, and the path stretched invitingly in front of him, clear and well marked. Jophan broke into an eager run.

Chapter 9

In Which Jophan Encounters The Hucksters

In a few minutes he was standing, breathless with excitement rather than exertion, at the very edge of the jungle. Before him he saw a broad well-surfaced road which ran gently through a fertile plain, towards where in the far distance gleamed the towers and spires of a splendid city. A few yards ahead of the point where he was standing a myriad of tracks such as the one he had travelled converged together to make the road, as countless tiny tributaries form a great river. Along these paths as Jophan watched, other Neofen came running with glad cries, to dash along the road in the direction of the shining city.

Mindful of the unseen perils to which such over-eager Neofen had fallen victims on a previous occasion Jophan resolved to be on his guard, and followed the others more soberly.

It soon became obvious that he was approaching civilisation. Although the city itself was still far away there were great hoardings in the fields by the side of the road covered with brightly-coloured advertisements from various establishments in the city. Jophan read each of these, impressed despite himself at the attractions they had to offer.

While he was staring at a particularly large and brilliant hoarding he was startled to hear what sounded like a cry of pain from behind it. Vaulting the low fence by the side of the road, Jophan ran quickly behind the hoarding. There, running around in little circles and uttering heart-rending cries of anguish, was one of the Neofen he had seen that morning. Jophan was horrified to see the change which had come over him. His once ruddy face had taken on a dreadful pallor, and his body was emaciated almost beyond recognition. Before Jophan could reach him the Neofan collapsed on the ground and began to moan piteously.

Jophan ran and knelt by his side. The Neofan looked up at him wanly. "Too late..." he murmured, "...dying....beware...don't buy...." His lips continued to move but no sound came forth.

"Don't buy what?" asked Jophan anxiously.

The Neofan summoned up his last reserves of strength. "....tin bug," he whispered. Then his eyes closed and he ceased to breathe. Jophan saw that he was dead and consigned his soul to the Happy Fanning Ground. Then, tenderly, he commenced to arrange the body in a more seemly position.

No sooner had he raised the Neofan's shoulders from the ground than Jophan started back in horror. There, on the back of the corpse, was clamped a hideous leech-like creature, bloated with the life-blood of its victim. Aghast, Jophan dropped the body and stumbled back to the road.

So stunned was he by the horror of what he had just seen that it was some time before Jophan had recovered himself sufficiently to resume his journey. Even then he was still worried and perplexed as to the meaning of the Neofan's warning, for so far in his travelling along the road he had seen no establishment where anything might be bought.

This last problem was soon solved when in a few moments he rounded a slight bend in the road. He had arrived at a crossroads where, among a small forest of hoardings there clustered a group of hucksters' stalls. They were heaped with gaily coloured and attractive objects, and behind each stall stood a huckster loudly proclaiming the merits of his wares.

As Jophan walked past, one of them accosted him ingratiatingly. "Greetings, young sir," he said, rubbing his hands together. "Might I make so bold as to

enquire your name and your destination?"

"My name is Jophan," said Jophan guardedly, "and I am on my way to Trufandom to obtain the Magic Mimeograph and produce the Perfect Fanzine."

"Then I have just the thing for you," exclaimed the huckster. "It is a long journey on which you have embarked, and a lonely one. Why not take one of these adorable little pets to beguile the tedious hours?"

With these words he held up a transparent case in which reposed a captivating jewel-like creature resembling a ladybird, gaily coloured and beautiful to look upon. Its appearance so fascinated Jophan that his hand went involuntarily to his pocket. "What do you call it?" he asked, in a last effort at caution.

"It's a Kolektinbug," said the huckster, holding out his hand for Jophan's money.

With the meaning of the Neofan's warning now made hideously clear to him, Jophan backed away from the deadly little creature and its insidious temptation. "No, thank you," he said, "I....I've changed my mind."

Pursued by the curses and imprecations of the thwarted hucksters, Jophan continued steadfastly on his way to Trufandom, pausing only at one of the less pretentious establishments to replenish his provisions.

Chapter 10

In Which Jophan Comes To The City



t now became obvious that the hucksters' settlement had been merely the outskirts of the great city. The towers and spires which Jophan had seen that morning now loomed directly ahead, and the green fields had completely disappeared behind a great wall of hoardings. Shortly these in turn gave place to a region of large barrack-like buildings, each backed by stretches of bare concrete and separated from one another by barbed wire fences.

As Jophan entered this district a great number of people came running out of the buildings to welcome him, pressing gifts into his hands, clapping him on the back and offering him hospitality. Meanwhile, others shouted greetings from the windows of the buildings and showered him with pieces of paper of varying size and in such profusion that Jophan could scarce see his way in front of him. He caught one of the pieces as it fell and saw that the message emblazoned across it was the same as that which was being shouted by most of the people around him. "WELCOME TO TRUFANDOM," it proclaimed. Jophan turned it over and found that the other side consisted of an advertisement for a club for fans, which was evidently what these buildings were. Curious, he turned his steps towards the nearest one. At once a howl of rage arose from the representatives of other clubs, and they shouted at him and plucked his garments in an attempt to divert his footsteps. However, reinforcements quickly arrived from the club in whose direction he was proceeding and he was hustled inside.

There his new friends welcomed him effusively and asked him his name. "My name is Jophan," said Jophan, "and I am on my way to Trufandom to obtain the Enchanted Duplicator and produce the Perfect Fanzine."

They looked horrified. "Do you mean," asked one of them, "that you were actually going to attempt that journey by yourself?"

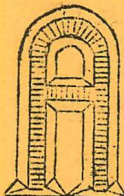
"Yes," said Jophan diffidently.

"But, my poor fellow," said the other, "that is quite impossible. You must, absolutely must belong to a club before you can even think about such an undertaking. Here we will train you for the journey, outfit you with all the necessary

very heavens. It was all so wonderful that Jophan could do nothing but stand there motionless, breathless with admiration. This, he thought to himself, must be Trufandom. True, it was not what the Fairy had led him to expect, but he could not imagine that anything more wonderful could exist.

Chapter 11

In Which Jophan Learns The Truth About The City



As he stood at the entrance to the great avenue, still transfixed with awe, a dapper, bespectacled young man came up to him. He eyed Jophan's tattered garments somewhat askance, but spoke to him civilly enough.

"Good day," he said. "Might I enquire your name?"

"My name is Jophan," said Jophan humbly, "and I was on my way to Trufandom...."

"You need go no further," said the young man. "Perhaps you would like me to show you around the city. My name is Dedwood," he added proudly, "and I am one of the City Planners. I am a Serious Construction Engineer by profession."

Taking Jophan's arm, he led him along the street, pointing out one great building after another. Before they had reached the end of the avenue Jophan was, if possible, even more overcome with admiration, but he began to feel out of place in all this elegance with his dirty clothes and tarnished shield. As Dedwood was pointing out yet another imposing building he took the opportunity to give the shield a surreptitious rub with his handkerchief.

"This," Dedwood was saying, "is the Federation Building--"

He broke off in alarm as a strangled sound came from his listener. In wiping his shield Jophan had caught a glimpse of the reflection of the building on its surface, and had been unable to suppress a cry of astonishment. Reflected in the shield was not the imposing edifice of the Federation Building, but a ramshackle affair, in visible danger of falling into the street. Seen in the mirror of the shield, the building was not even soundly constructed, but disfigured by cracks and faulty workmanship. Even so, Jophan would have been half inclined to dismiss the reflection as the result of a distortion on the shield's surface, had not the thought suddenly occurred to him that not once had he been allowed to see inside one of the buildings.

Before Dedwood could stop him, Jophan darted through the door of the Federation Building. As he had by now half suspected, it was not a building at all, but a mere facade. Although it reached high into the air, it was but a few inches thick and obviously unstable. Even as Jophan watched a little gust of wind produced several dangerous-looking cracks in the flimsy structure. At the splintering sound, two harassed Neofen appeared, pushing a tall scaffolding before them on wheels. Stopping close to the wall, they clambered up and hastily filled one of the cracks with cement. Then they pushed the scaffolding along to the next danger point, working more and more feverishly as the cracks seemed to grow in number more rapidly than they could be repaired.

Jophan tore his eyes away from this depressing sight, and went outside again. Dedwood was still standing on the sidewalk, but he now had an almost guilty expression on his face.

Jophan faced him accusingly. "What is the idea of all this?" he demanded brusquely, annoyed at having been taken in by such a senseless deception.

"Well, you see," said Dedwood awkwardly, "it's to impress the Public. They wouldn't be impressed by Trufandom, so some of us thought we'd erect this City of Serious Constructivism to give them a better idea of our importance...."

"But surely the Public never come into Fandom?" protested Jophan.

equipment, and in time send you out as part of a properly organised expedition. That is the way to go about things," he added proudly.

"How long will it take?" asked Jophan.

"Training is going on this very moment in the exercise yard," said the other impressively. "But first let me show you the benefits our club has to offer you."

He smiled kindly to Jophan and turned to speak to one of the other club members. Jophan could not hear what the latter said, but he saw him shake his head and point to another member. He in turn pointed to yet another with a great deal of muttering and whispering, and soon they were all arguing bitterly among themselves. Every now and then one of them would stamp angrily out of the room, alarming the door behind him, but another always seemed to come in to take his place. This went on for a very long time, and they seemed to have forgotten all about Jophan. He rose from his seat, tiptoed quietly out of the other door of the room, and found himself in the exercise yard.

Marching up and down the yard was a line of several dozen Neofen, under the supervision of a drill instructor. When they came to the barbed wire fence at one side the Instructor would shout, "About face," and they would turn round and march to the other side of the yard, where the process was repeated. Jophan watched for some considerable time, but this seemed to form the sole activity. At length one of the Neofen fell out of the line and walked tiredly over to Jophan.

"One gets a little bored with it at times," he said rather shamefacedly.

"I thought you were quite right," said Jophan. "I never saw anything so pointless in my life."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," replied the other defensively. "You see, there's to be an election shortly, and then it'll be the turn of one of us to give the orders. Why, it might be me," he added eagerly.

"But how will all this help you to get to Trufandom?" asked Jophan.

"Trufandom?" said the other, astonished. "Why, this is Trufandom!...Isn't it?"

"It is not," said Jophan firmly, and proceeded to impart to the Neofan something of the glory of the vision he had experienced from the touch of the wand called Fanac.

The Neofan passed his hand dazedly across his forehead. "Yes..." he said, "I do remember something like that. But I've been here so long I'd quite forgotten it."

"Leave all this marching up and down," urged Jophan. "It will never get you anywhere. Come with me to Trufandom."

"I'm not sure I'm strong enough yet for such a journey," said the Neofan hesitantly. "Maybe I had better let the club help me."

"No," said Jophan. "I am only a Neofan, but I know this: that the journey to Trufandom is one which must be accomplished by a Fan's unaided efforts."

"But," pleaded the Neofan, "couldn't you wait until after this election.....or maybe the one after it?"

"No," said Jophan firmly. "I must be on my way. He waited for a moment to see if the Neofan would change his mind, and then left him reluctantly. He slipped back again into the building, through the room where the organisers were still arguing, and back into the street, still unnoticed. Then, brushing aside the crowd of wellmeaning organisers and welcomers with a friendly but firm arm, he continued on his way towards the centre of the city.

The buildings now began to take on a more and more elegant appearance, and became ever higher and more imposing. The streets became broader and more smoothly paved. At each intersection the vistas were more and more beautiful and awe-inspiring, until at last he reached the centre of the city.

Jophan knew this was the centre of the city for the simple reason that his instinct told him that there could not be anything more beautiful still in store. He found himself in a broad, gleaming thoroughfare, beautifully paved. On either side there towered shining marble skyscrapers, their pinnacles plunging into the

"Well, no," admitted Dedwood, "but they sometimes send a representative in, usually a Mr Press."

He seemed to have difficulty in meeting Jophan's gaze, and the reflection from Jophan's Shield of Amor seemed to be hurting his eyes, so that while he was talking he glanced sideways up and down the street.

Abruptly he broke off with a cry of excitement. "Why, there he is now!" he exclaimed. "This is a great day...."

The rest of his words were lost as he ran helter-skelter down the street to where a little man with a notebook had appeared as if from nowhere, accompanied by another little man with an easel under his arm.

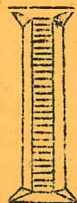
Jophan followed more slowly and found Dedwood already talking volubly to the stranger, while the other little man set up his easel and began to make sketches. At great length Dedwood expatiated on the glories of the City, on the Magnificent Work that was being accomplished there, on the grandeur of its buildings, on the intelligence and forethought of the inhabitants, on their sobriety of deportment and the importance of their work to Humanity, on the various functions and important duties they performed, and on the contributions he himself made to these mighty achievements. Jophan noticed, however, that the little man was writing very little of all this down in his notebook, and as Dedwood drew to the close of his impressive oration he sidled behind Mr Press and looked over his shoulder. The page was perfectly blank except for one cryptic sentence which Jophan could not understand. He knew only that it bore no relationship whatever to what Dedwood had been saying. It read, simply, "Gosh-wow-oh-boy-oh-boy." Puzzled, Jophan moved behind the artist, who had already completed several sketches. Jophan noted that they were all recognisable caricatures of Dedwood, but that for some reason the artist had in each case shown him as wearing a peculiarly shaped headgear which incorporated a small propeller.

Completely baffled by these quite extraordinary phenomena, Jophan withdrew and waited quietly until Dedwood had finished talking. Mr Press and his assistant thanked Dedwood effusively, promised to give the Public a full and accurate report of all that he had told them, and said goodbye. Their shoulders were shaking as they walked off, but Dedwood did not seem to notice. Becoming once more conscious of Jophan's existence, he turned to him with pride. "There!" he said smugly. "I flatter myself that this time the Public will learn the truth about us."

He seemed so pleased with himself that Jophan did not have the heart to tell him what Mr Press had actually written in his notebook. Instead he merely thanked him for his courtesy and left the centre of the city with a last glance of mingled contempt and pity for the preposterous erections.

Chapter 12

In Which Jophan Finds A Friend



It took Jophan a much shorter time to leave the City of Serious Constructivism than it had to enter it, and he was soon in the suburbs again. On this side of the city, however, they were of a very different character. Here there were no advertising hoardings, club buildings, or hucksters' settlements. Instead, the district seemed to be an exclusive residential area, entirely composed of enormous wooded estates surrounded by high walls. There seemed to be a limitless number of them, and as the evening wore on Jophan became very tired. The walls were too high to be climbed, and the gates were all locked, so that try as he might he could find no way to get off the road to make camp for the night.

At last he realised that he could go no further, and that he must spend the

night as best he could by the side of the road. Huddling up against the wall near one of the entrance gates, he wrapped his tattered garments about him and made himself as comfortable as the hard surface would allow.

Some time later he was awakened from a fitful sleep by a great blaze of light in his eyes. In his dazed condition it was a few seconds before he realised that he was staring into the headlamps of a huge motorcar which had evidently approached from the direction of Trufandom, and was now halted before the entrance gates. As Jophan watched, the driver got out and unlocked the gates. As he was walking back to his car Jophan called weakly to him. The driver looked round, startled, and then, perceiving Jophan lying against the wall, came over to him.

"Hello, young fellow," he said. "Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

So faint was Jophan with exhaustion that he could scarcely speak. "....Jophan" he murmured, "Trufandom....Magic Mimeograph....Perfect Fanzine."

"Ah, yes," said the stranger understandingly. "You have come a long way and you have a long way to go. You will be the better of a good meal and a night's rest."

He picked Jophan up and carried his limp body to the car. Then, stopping only to relock the gates behind him, he drove at high speed up the long entrance drive.

Jophan could not see much of the house in the darkness, but the bedroom to which he was carried was large and luxuriously furnished, and the meal which he was served was tastefully cooked and sumptuously served. Feeling comfortable and safe for the first time since he had embarked on his journey, Jophan fell into a deep sleep.

Next morning he awoke late, and found his way down to the breakfast room. His host had evidently breakfasted, and sat before a cheerful fire with a writing-machine on his knees. As Jophan entered he put the machine down and rose to greet him.

"Good morning, Jophan," he said. "Let me introduce myself. My name is Profan... you may have heard of me?"

"I have, indeed," said Jophan, awed, for before him stood the author of many of the books telling of faraway places and other times which he had read during his life in Mundane--a life which already seemed unreal to him.

He attempted to express his admiration and gratitude, but Profan waved the latter aside and motioned him towards the laden breakfast table.

When Jophan had finished breakfast and joined his host beside the fire he again attempted to express his thanks, but the other would hear none of it. "It is nothing," he said. "I am glad to be able to help any pilgrim on his way to Trufandom. As long," he added wryly, as they do not descend on me in too great numbers."

This was the first resident of Fandom Jophan had encountered who had really encouraged him in his quest, and it put him in good heart.

"Am I then," he asked, "getting near to Trufandom?"

"You have done about half the journey," said Profan, "but since you have come this far I have no doubt you will complete it. I wish I could take you there, but as you know, each Neofan must make his way by his own unaided strength."

"But you know the way, then?" asked Jophan eagerly.

"Indeed, yes," said Profan. "I go there for a visit at least once a year. This, you must know, is a colony of those who wish, and can afford, to travel frequently to both Trufandom and Mundane, and who have accordingly settled here, midway between the two places. Some of us, indeed, came here from Trufandom, for occasionally it happens that a True Fan will forsake the high and dedicated life of Trufandom for our more worldly community. They make their choice, as it were, between the Sacred and the Profan." He smiled at his little joke, and Jophan laughed politely.

"I will tell you all I can about your route," continued Profan, "but I should

first warn you that any advice I can give you will be of no avail unless you continue to exercise the courage and discretion which have brought you so far, and unless you keep your shield bright and shining. For you have many dreadful perils yet to face."

"I shall remember," said Jophan.

"Well," said Profan, "the first of these perils is the Desert of Indifference, which begins at the border of this community and stretches for a great distance, unbroken save by an occasional oasis. To carry enough food and water to cross this vast expanse is beyond the powers of any Neofan, so that you must enlist the aid of native porters from the strange tribe that dwells on the fringe of the desert. On the far side of the desert is a huge rocky defile, known as the Canyon of Criticism, through which lies the only known path to the plateau above where stands the Tower of Trufandom. Further I cannot help you, for the more subtle temptations and perils of the last stage of the journey assume a different form for each Neofan."

"Is that all?" asked Jophan.

"All?" said Profan, amused. "I admire your spirit. But, alas, it is not. On each side of your path, far away but always accessible, are the green, enticing regions known as the Glades of Gafia. Perpetually you will be pursued by the insidious temptation to turn aside and rest awhile there. But, should you do so, there is great danger that you will be unable to face the effort of resuming your journey, or that, roaming forgetfully through the beckoning glades, you will find yourself back in Mundane. Far better to proceed with moderation so that you will not be driven to the glades to recuperate from a too strenuous effort."

Profan went on to give Jophan much other helpful advice, to which Jophan listened respectfully. Then he thanked his host again and prepared to resume his journey. Profan went with him to the gate to wish him luck, and then stood watching Jophan march sturdily down the road. Once Jophan looked back to wave a final goodbye. He fancied that he detected in the other's face an emotion which, in the case of one less fortunately situated, he would have taken to be envy. But this cannot have been so, any more than that the raising of Profan's hand to his eye can have been to wipe away an involuntary tear of regret.

Chapter 13

In Which Jophan Recruits Native Bearers

Much refreshed by Profan's hospitality, Jophan stepped out briskly, and by noon had left the region of great estates far behind. He was now in open country again, a region of dry scrubland interspersed with bare sandy patches which became more frequent as he journeyed on.

As the country grew more desolate he kept an anxious eye open for the tribesmen whom Profan had mentioned. Then, as he was on the point of turning back to look more carefully, he espied a faint column of smoke rising into the still air some distance to his left. Threading his way through the scrub in that direction he was greatly relieved to come upon a group of tents which he knew must be a village of the strange natives.

The encampment contained several dozen of the Subrs, as Profan had said they were called, all sitting perfectly still on the ground before their tents and staring blankly into the distance. They seemed to be a sturdy and honest race, but with a strangely impassive cast of countenance, and their faces showed no emotion when Jophan made his appearance. Nevertheless he strode into the centre of the village and greeted them cheerily, expecting that they would spring to their feet and cluster round him. But instead they continued to ignore his presence com-

pletely. Surprised, Jophan raised his voice and greeted them again, announcing his name and the purpose of his visit. But still the strange people seemed unconscious of his existence. Indeed he would have judged them to be both blind and deaf had he not noticed one of them raise his eyebrows slightly when Jophan had finished speaking. Incensed at their apathy he lost his temper and flew into a rage, jumping up and down and waving his arms to attract their attention, and then launching into a loud and impassioned discourse, describing in detail the importance of his purpose and the impossibility of fulfilling it without their help. At this a few Subrs turned their eyes curiously in his direction, but none of them showed the slightest sign of answering his call.

In desperation Jophan went up to the native who had appeared to be the first to notice him, and pleaded with him for an explanation of the tribe's reluctance to co-operate.

The Subr looked indifferently at him and spoke.

"Many Neofen come," he grunted. "Many seek help. Many leave us in desert, our help wasted. You show difference."

For a moment Jophan could not understand what he meant, and then he realised he was being called on to demonstrate that he had the necessary stamina and strength of will to cross the desert. Resignedly, he began to run round and round the encampment.

The afternoon wore on, and Jophan continued to run round the encampment, watched impassively by the Subrs. Every now and then he would stop and plead with them again, and each time they evinced a little more interest.

Finally one of them rose and nodded at Jophan. Still without a word he picked up a skin water-bottle, and a package of food and stood waiting. His example was followed by several others until a small group had collected at Jophan's side. He thanked them gratefully, and the small expedition started off into the desert.

Chapter 14

In Which Jophan Starts Across The Desert Of Indifference



As they progressed ever farther into the wilderness the hot sun and scorching sand began to take their toll of Jophan's strength, and he realised more fully the magnitude of the task before him. He also came to appreciate more fully the virtues of the native porters. Although the Subrs preserved their unnatural silence, uttering no word either of praise or condemnation of Jophan's behaviour, whatever it might be, they showed their feelings clearly enough by their actions. Twice when Jophan, unnerved by the hardships of the desert, spoke tactlessly to them or made some error of judgment, some of them quietly left the expedition and were never seen again. But, on the other hand, whenever he exhibited his better qualities, reinforcements appeared to arrive from nowhere. Thus, by studying their reactions carefully, he was able to increase the strength of his party by quite a substantial number.

It would have fared ill with him had he not done so, for as day followed day the strain of the journey began to tell on him. The heat of the sun seemed to dry up the very marrow of his bones, and its setting brought only momentary relief, for with nightfall the air became bitterly cold, and he passed many sleepless hours shivering under the meagre protection of his blanket. The loyal support of the sturdy Subrs was a great comfort to him, but willing as they were they could carry only a certain amount of their dried food and it seemed to accord ill with his constitution. It was of a tasteless and insipid nature, affording only the merest sustenance and gravely deficient in energy-producing qualities. Jophan, though in no danger of actual starvation, began to grow weak and faint of purpose, and at

times his eyes strayed longingly to the green Glades of Gafia to be seen clearly in the distance.

So it was when after many days the party came upon the first signs of other life in the desert. It had appeared in the distance to be a small hut, but on approaching more closely Jophan saw that it was actually a species of altar before which crouched a pale and sickly Neofan. He seemed to be in the process of muttering some prayer or incantation, and Jophan waited patiently until he had finished before addressing him.

"Good day, friend," he said politely, when the Neofan seemed to have completed his mysterious rites. "My name is Jophan, and I am on my way to Trufandom to obtain the Magic Mimeograph, so that I may publish the Perfect Fanzine."

"Good day, Neofan," said the other, somewhat superciliously. "My name is Sycofan, and I am on a similar errand. I trust you will set up your altar at a reasonable distance from mine."

"Altar?" asked Jophan, surprised. "What for?"

"Why, to invoke the BNFicent spirits," said the other condescendingly. "Surely you don't imagine that you can cross the desert without their help?"

"I did not know it was possible for a mere Neofan to have any intercourse with the BNFs until he reached Trufandom," said Jophan wonderingly.

"Why, of course it is," said the other. "You must—" At this point there came a blinding glow of light above the altar, and Sycofan threw himself on his knees and began beating his head on the ground.

Jophan remained erect and gazed curiously at the phenomenon. In a few moments there was a loud clap of thunder, and a small solid object fell on the altar and rolled off on to the ground.

"There!" said Sycofan smugly, snatching it up and showing it to Jophan. It seemed to be a sort of thin pancake or waffle, rolled up like a scroll of paper.

"What is it?" asked Jophan.

"It's called a manna-script," said Sycofan, devouring it greedily. Jophan watched enviously until the other had swallowed the last succulent morsel.

"I suppose you will be resuming your journey now?" he asked.

An uneasy expression crossed the other's face. "Er...no," he said, rather shamefacedly. "I think I shall wait here until my strength is built up. The manna-scripts need a great deal of praying for, and I haven't enough of them yet."

Jophan looked at Sycofan's weak face and privately decided that it was doubtful if he would ever complete the journey to Trufandom. After pondering the matter for some minutes he came to a conclusion.

"I was told," he said earnestly, "that the journey to Trufandom is one that can be accomplished only by a fan's unaided efforts, and I believe this to be true. I cannot believe that if the BNFicent spirits give aid to one who merely asks it they would withhold it from one who shows that he deserves it. I urge you to leave your altar and come with me."

"Why, you're only a Neofan," sneered the other. "Why should I associate with you when I can have the help of BNFs?"

"Even they were once Neofen like me," said Jophan quietly. "Yet they are wise and will not waste their gifts. You may find," he warned Sycofan gravely, "that they will not continue to feed you indefinitely."

But Sycofan would not abandon his parasitic existence, and instead promptly embarked on another session of prayer.

Shaking his head regretfully, Jophan left him and resumed his journey.

Before he had gone much further, Jophan was both delighted and relieved to find that his surmise had been correct. To the accompaniment of a blaze of light and a clap of thunder a bulky manna-script fell beside him; and before disappearing the light moved on towards Trufandom as if in encouragement.

Thereafter the manna-scripts fell with increasing frequency during the remain-

der of his journey so that he had no longer any cause to worry on the score of food.

Chapter 15

In Which Jophan Enters The Region Of Oases

But Jophan's difficulties were by no means at an end. The scorching heat by day and the bitter cold by night made sleep almost impossible, and as time went on he became more and more exhausted. But he staggered on dauntlessly, searching ceaselessly through red-rimmed eyes for some sign of the end of this terrible desert.

Shortly before nightfall one day they came upon an oasis. Jophan let his feeble limbs carry him into the welcome shade of the tress and lay down to rest for the night, observing as he did so a flock of gaily-plumaged birds flitting to and fro among the trees, to the accompaniment of their sweet song. It sounded like "Bu! Bu!" Idly he asked one of the Subrs what the birds were called. "Bu-birds," replied the Subr laconically. Smiling quietly to himself at the ingenuous reply, Jophan went to sleep.

Whether it was the soothing song of the birds, or the fact that the oasis retained its heat longer than the open desert, Jophan slept unusually well. Nevertheless, he realised when he awoke next morning that he was in no fit state to resume the march. His limbs were stiff and enfeebled, and it was all he could do to raise his head and look about him. He knew he would have to rest awhile here in the hope of regaining his strength.

As he was about to lie back again, however, he noticed just a few feet away from him a beautiful, translucent egg, which must, he realised, have been laid by one of the Bu-birds during the night. It occurred to him that it would make a welcome addition to his diet, and, reaching out painfully for it, he pierced a hole at each end and raised it to his mouth.

As the first mouthful of the liquid passed his lips Jophan almost choked in his astonishment. This was clearly no ordinary egg. The fluid it contained was cool, refreshing, and intoxicatingly delicious to the taste. With each drop Jophan felt new energy flooding through his body. When the egg was finished he jumped to his feet and began to run eagerly round the oasis looking for more, so intent on the search that he scarcely noticed how quickly his tiredness had been replaced with boundless energy and enthusiasm.

Soon he had opened all the eggs he could find and poured their contents into one of the empty waterbottles. Then he called his party together and strode confidently into the desert at their head.

During the days which followed, he found that when his energy began to flag all that was necessary was to take a draught of the life-giving fluid. Instantly his vigour and enthusiasm were restored. Furthermore he had apparently reached an area of the desert where oases were plentiful, and each morning he usually collected a sufficient quantity of "Egg o' Bu," as he now affectionately called it, to sustain him for the day's journey. He was now able to dispense almost completely with ordinary food and water, and would indeed have been prepared to do without the help of the Subrs had that been necessary. The only ill-effects he noticed were that over-indulgence in the elixir was inclined to produce a species of intoxication and a painless but unsightly swelling of the head. These he resolved to guard against as carefully as he could.

Jophan now began to make very rapid progress, and with each day the change in the character of the desert became more pronounced. The days were cooler, the nights warmer, and oases increasingly numerous. Mirages began to appear of the high mountains of Trufandom, and though he was disappointed each time on finding

they were illusions, he consoled himself with the thought that they indicated he was approaching his goal.

At last his patience was rewarded. One morning he breasted a long, low ridge of sand-dunes, to see before him, far too clear to be a mirage, a stupendous mountain range stretching as far as the eye could see. Beyond those mountains, he knew with a thrill of awe, must lie the Land of Trufandom.

Chapter 16

In Which Jophan Enters The Canyon Of Criticism

Jophan now pressed on with redoubled energy, and by evening he could plainly see a deep rocky cleft leading into the mountains. This, he knew, must be the Canyon of Criticism, the only route through the mountains to Trufandom. He resolved to fortify himself with a night's sleep before attempting this new peril, and spent the night at an oasis.

Next morning, having partaken cautiously of the Egg o' Bu lest it should dull his perceptions, Jophan set out for the entrance to the Canyon. As he approached it he noticed other Neofen converging on the point from all directions. They rushed past, wild-eyed and eager, and plunged into the Canyon. They had obviously partaken too freely of Egg o' Bu, for their eyes were glazed, their steps unsteady, their heads unnaturally swollen, and their clothes and shields neglected and dirty. Reluctant as he was to let them overtake him, he took thought of his previous experiences and the warnings he had been given. He polished his Shield of Umor hastily, checked his provisions, and only then set foot cautiously into the Canyon.

The path proved to be along the side of the Canyon rather than at its foot. After he had travelled some distance Jophan noticed that while the ground still fell away sharply to his left, the cliff on his right had gradually merged into a more gentle slope. Along this the path split into several smaller paths which wound their separate ways along the mountainside.

As he picked his way over the rougher ground he heard a clatter of falling rock in front of him, and looked upwards in time to see several small stones bounding towards him over an overhanging boulder. Hastily he brought up his shield and covered himself with it. Most of the stones bounced harmlessly off it, but to his dismay one of them passed through as if the shield were made of vapour, and dealt him a severe blow on the shoulder. Suppressing a cry of pain, Jophan looked closely at his shield. There was, he now noticed, a tarnished patch which had escaped the hasty polishing he had done that morning. Retreating quickly to safety, he polished his shield to a uniform brilliance. Then he ventured again towards the danger area, looking curiously ahead to see how the other Neofen were faring.

It was a dreadful sight that met his eyes. Lying on the paths were the crushed and bleeding bodies of many of the Neofen who had passed him that morning. Among them others staggered about, panicstricken, trying to dodge the hail of stones. But their minds were so befuddled, and their swollen heads so vulnerable beneath their tiny and tarnished shields, that the efforts of many were in vain. Even as he watched, one of the unfortunate wretches was struck from the path by a particularly heavy stone, and with a heart-rending scream vanished from sight down the rocky slope.

On emerging from the lee of the big boulder which had been affording him some shelter, Jophan shielded his eyes from the sun and peered up the slope to try to discover why the falls of rock were so frequent. To his horror he saw, outlined against the sky, a row of dark, misshapen little men busily engaged in uprooting stones and hurling them at the defenceless Neofen below. He watched them for a

while, but they showed no sign of abating their activities. Indeed, they did not even seem to stop for food, for he noticed one dwarf hurling stones with one hand and with the other eating what appeared to be a bunch of small sour grapes.

This last sight caused Jophan to decide that there was no point in delaying further. As he ventured forth a savage howl arose from the dwarfs, and the grape-eater seized a particularly sharp stone and threw it with tremendous speed directly at Jophan. Without flinching Jophan held his shield firmly above his head. The stone bounced harmlessly off the shield and back to the thrower with undiminished force. With grim satisfaction he observed it strike the dwarf with deadly effect, dislodging him from his perch so that he fell screaming down the slope and vanished into the abyss.

Greatly pleased by the excellence of his shield, Jophan proceeded along the path. The dwarfs seemed to have learned a lesson from a taste of their own medicine, and such stones as were thrown in his direction were cast in such a tentative and half-hearted manner that he could almost afford to ignore them. He began to think that the perils of the Canyon were at an end.

This mood of over-confidence was soon rudely shattered. On rounding the next curve in the path he suddenly found himself in semi darkness. Thinking that some cloud had passed over the sun, he looked up casually. His heart almost failed him to see that the shadow was cast by several huge, swarthy giants sitting drowsily among the swarming dwarfs on the crest of the cliff.

Chapter 17

In Which Jophan Continues Through The Canyon

Even as Jophan watched, one of the giants awoke, snorting angrily. With no apparent reason, or even perception of what he was doing, the giant uttered a great bellow of wrath, seized a boulder as large as a house and hurled it down the slope. The huge mass of rock hurtled down into a line of Neofen, smashing several into the ground despite their upraised Shields of Umor, and continued on its way down the mountainside, bounding from path to path, and sometimes carrying away whole fan groups at a time.

When the last despairing cry had died away, Jophan looked back up the slope to see that the giant had settled back down to sleep, a contented, imbecilic smile on his countenance. Shuddering with disgust and fear, Jophan withdrew a few paces and sat down in the entrance to a cave to recover his nerve.

The sound of his own breathing had barely subsided when he was again startled by a clicking noise behind him. He turned round sharply, and, as his eyes became more accustomed to the semi-darkness, he could see that the noise came from a Neofan who was striking at a flat piece of stone with a tiny axe. He was so intent on his work that he did not notice Jophan's presence until the latter spoke to him.

"What are those dreadful beings?" asked Jophan fearfully, speaking the first thought in his mind.

"They belong to a race known as the Magrevoos," said the Neofan knowledgeably. "The dwarfs are called Fanmagrevoos and the giants Promagrevoos. Many of them are not really evil, merely thoughtless and stupid. The giants, for example, have no idea of their own strength, and do not understand half of what is going on down here. In fact they would probably ignore us altogether were it not for the fact that they are continually being prodded into activity by a strange and powerful tribe known as the Headeaters, who live in the mountains." As he spoke, he lifted up the flat stone, which Jophan now saw to be covered with neatly-cut lettering, and carried it to the mouth of the cave. He beckoned Jophan to follow him.

"Moreover," he went on, "there are other Magrevoos who do their best to make up

for the harm done by their fellows. They are known as the Fair Ones. Watch!"

Jophan looked again at the scene of carnage on the mountainside. He saw that groups of fair-complexioned and kindly-faced dwarfs were passing among the victims reviving them with draughts of Egg o' Bu, raising them to their feet, and helping them some distance along the path. There was even a beautiful, blonde giantess assisting in the work of mercy. Jophan noticed, however, that while most of the dwarfs carefully selected those among the survivors who seemed most likely to benefit from their help, the giantess showed no such discrimination. Instead, she would sweep up a random heap of Neofen, including some who were obviously already dead, drench them with Egg o' Bu from a large pitcher she carried slung over her shoulders, and with a few mighty strides deposit them far along the path. He saw that many of them merely sat in a daze where she had placed them, quite incapable of taking advantage of their good fortune.

"Who is she?" asked Jophan.

"She comes from a now almost extinct tribe known as the Fillips," said the Neofan absently. He had been swinging the stone in his right hand and now flung it with great force towards the crest of the mountains. He and Jophan watched it spin over the heads of the dwarfs and disappear from view.

"You missed," said Jophan.

"It was not a missile," explained the Neofan patiently, "but a missive. A message to the Headeaters who control the giants. It is important to propitiate them, for they are by far the most important tribe in Fandom. Indeed, there is a tradition that on their existence depends that of Trufandom itself."

"If that is so," said Jophan, impressed, "your work is obviously of the greatest importance, and I should like to help if I may. My name is Jophan, and I am, of course, on my way to Trufandom to find the Magic Mimeograph and produce the Perfect Fanzine."

"My name is Letteraxe," said the other cordially, "and I am delighted to make your acquaintance." With these words he gave Jophan a small axe, similar to his own, and they composed several messages to the Headeaters.

When the last of these had disappeared into the mountains Jophan spoke reflectively to Letteraxe.

"Since these mountains surround Trufandom on all sides," he pointed out, "it occurs to me that it would be quite as easy to send the messages from Trufandom as from here. Should we not continue our journey?"

Letteraxe looked doubtful. "Do so if you wish," he said, "but I have several more messages I want to write. I shall probably follow you later."

Privately Jophan doubted if the Neofan would ever stir from his peaceful existence in the cave, but he expressed the hope of seeing him again in Trufandom and wished him a cordial farewell. Then, having generously replenished Letteraxe's skimpy supply of Egg o' Bu, he started on the last stage of his journey to Trufandom.

Chapter 18

In Which Jophan Reaches The End Of His Journey

By the use of care and discretion, Jophan was able to evade the blind rages of the giants, and he found his shield an infallible protection against the malice of the dwarfs. Thus he emerged from the danger area unscathed, and soon reached the head of the Canyon. He now found himself on a pleasant, flower-decked path leading gently upwards to a pass between the mountains. The sky in that direction was tinged with a warm golden glow, and at the sight he quickened his pace, for he knew that the glow could come only from Trufandom.

However, the path was longer than it had seemed, and the sun had set before he had reached the summit. Regretfully he decided that he had better pass the night where he was. The grass beside the path was soft and the night warm and pleasant, but Jophan found great difficulty in going to sleep. Borne on the mild breeze he heard the faint sound of happy voices coming from Trufandom, and they filled him with impatience to complete his journey.

Next morning he was on his way at the first hint of light in the sky, and as dawn broke he had almost reached the summit of the pass. Gasping, he ran the last few hundred yards and flung himself down on the ground to drink in the beauty of the scene which lay before him.

Bathed in the mysterious, golden light of early dawn lay the fair land of Trufandom. Only its hills and spires were picked out by the questing rays of the sun, for the country was a sunken plateau ringed on all sides by mountains, so that it formed a secluded world of its own. A more wonderful one Jophan could not have imagined. Beautiful as it was, however, his eye was caught and held by the most wonderful thing of all. It was a tall, white tower which rose out of the rolling parkland, and soared into the sky. On the summit something glittered like a tiny sun.

This, he knew, must be the Tower of Trufandom — and on its top The Enchanted Duplicator!

All eagerness, he started down the grassy slope. He had taken but a few cautious steps when the thought came to him that here his Shield of Umor might have other uses than as a means of defence. Smiling happily to himself, he put the shield on the ground and used it as a toboggan.

Thus Jophan sailed gaily down into Trufandom.

At the foot of the slope he again took up his shield, now shining more brilliantly than ever before, and strade through the leafy lanes in the direction of the Tower. On either side of him were numerous parks and gardens, great and small, and of varying types of beauty, and in them walked shining, godlike figures whom he knew to be the Trufans. Now and again one of them would notice Jophan, and come to greet him and wish him well, and with each encounter his eagerness grew to reach the Tower and become one of their number.

So it was that late in the afternoon Jophan came at last to the Tower. There was a spiral staircase inside, and without hesitation he began to climb it. Up and up he went, round and round, higher and higher, long after he thought he should have reached the top. But the Tower was higher than he had realised, and he was giddy and out of breath when at last he reached the head of the stairs. Above him now there was only a short ladder leading to a trapdoor.

Jophan sat on the stairway for a while until his dizziness had passed, and he had regained his breath. Then he climbed up the ladder and pushed at the trapdoor. It swung open easily, on a concealed counterbalance. Above him was the blue sky.

Though he had come so far, and braved so many dangers, for this moment, his heart almost failed him now that it was at hand. But at last, pulling himself together, he stepped quickly up the ladder and onto the roof.

He was on the very top of the Tower. Far beneath him was spread out all the Land of Trufandom as far as the now distant mountains. The top of the Tower was a sheet of burnished gold, and in the centre was a cube of solid gold. On the cube there stood a mimeograph.

At the sight of it Jophan felt a sickness in the stomach, and his legs almost failed to support him. Whitefaced, he stared at the mimeograph. He had expected a gleaming, jewel-like machine. Instead he saw a rusty, battered hulk. The framework was filthy with ink, the drum was caked, and there was obviously something wrong with the self-feed. It squatted on the gleaming, gold cube, an obscene eyesore.

Jophan tried to pull himself together, telling himself there must be some mis-

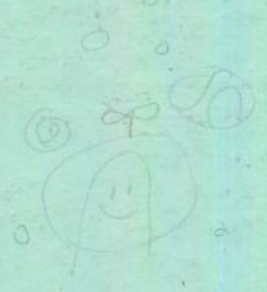
take. But there was nothing else on the roof, just the trapdoor through which he had come, the gold cube, and the old mimeograph. Dazed by the shock of his disappointment, he wandered aimlessly across the top of the Tower.

As he did so his hand brushed against the handle of the mimeograph, and something like an electric shock coursed through his body. Amazed, he took a firm grip of the handle. A current of some potent force seemed to flow between him and the machine, feeding back and forth from one to the other until Jophan felt every particle of his being suffused with a strange new life. The mimeograph had also changed. There was no difference in its outward appearance, but he knew that the potent force had also taken possession of it. It was subtly changed, as if it had been dead and was now alive. The handle seemed to throb in his hand. Still uncomprehending, Jophan looked down at his own body. His skin was glowing with the same golden radiance he had noticed in the bodies of the Trufans. His limbs were being invested with the same godlike strength.

As the revelation came to him, there was a sound of golden trumpets in the air, and he heard again the voice of the Spirit of Fandom.

"Yes, Jophan," it said, "you are now a True Fan: and it is yourself that has made you so, as it must be. And now you will realise the second great truth — that this is indeed The Magic Mimeograph, and it will produce The Perfect Fanzine. For—" and now the song of the trumpets filled the air, ringing out across Trufandom to the far mountains—"FOR THE MAGIC MIMEOGRAPH IS THE ONE WITH A TRUE FAN AT THE HANDLE."

And Jophan found that it was so....



THE END

200 copies of this book have been
produced on Strathesk Old Gold
duplicating paper and Cordelia
Anvil Finish cover stock, of which
this is Number 198.

The type used in the text is that
of Mr Charters' Standard Monarch
Visible Writing Machine. Chapter
headings by Varsityper.

This is a Serious Constructive
Insurgent Publication.