

Masiform D 6

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Devra Michele Langsam, Editor

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Stokaline

An Editorial

"It'll put a little green in your cheeks."

I hope that none of you are suffering from nervous shock, receiving this issue less than a year after the previous one. Nasty surprise, eh? There are a lot of reasons for this unnatural speed and break with tradition: I'm not working on a convention any more, I've sold out all 500 copies of the previous issue, people have been standing over me with a whip. . . .

Selek is a male impersonator.

After I finish this issue (Joyce reminds me that I said whichever one was ready first would be printed first - I'd better look to my work!) I'll be printing Joyce Yasner's Fel-bird Banders' Bulletin--the first issue, which will be a humor issue. (Plug, plug.) She's reprinting two of Cara Sherman's Peter Sunn stories, with art re-drawn by the author. Price is estimated at \$1.25.

Joyce Yasner
140 Cadman Plaza West
Bklyn NY 11201

The incredible vanishing Cara is now located somewhere in the wilds of New Jersey, for those interested.

In the late winter, I hope to publish Fern Marder and Carol Walske's novella, Threshold, part of their Nu Ormenel series. This will be a special supplementary issue of MASIFORM D, and is tentatively priced at \$1.25. Weirdos wanting it sent first class pay \$2. Orders are now being accepted.

Since it will be a special issue, the novella won't be considered an issue of MASIFORM, although subscribers who want to can apply an issue of their sub to purchasing the special issue.

The novella is to be illustrated by Carol Walske.

It's a neat story.



I was going to start this editorial by saying that after ten months in our new apartment, I still hadn't hung up the porch bookcase, the little bookcase, the big mirror, and the paintings. Ah well--it would've sounded funny, but Barbara Wenk and I finally hung the porch bookcase, thus uncovering a whole set of cookbooks that had been languishing there. (Barbara says that she just sat and held the pencil, making snide comments. Quite true.)

From UNCLE S'REMUS' BOOK OF OLD VULCAN SAWS

Translated by Marian Turner

"Money can't buy logic."

"Too many assumptions spoil the hypothesis."

"Where there's smoke, there's smoke."

In a letter commenting on MASIFORM D # 5, Jim Meadows wrote, "Why did T'Irayne decide to risk her existence in order to be mistress of her own fate? The high logic or high illogic was left unexplained."

The above letter nearly drove me wild, when I received it. I can understand people objecting to the breaking of tradition, or to the idea that a Vulcan male can survive pon farr just through fighting (rather than through sex). I can't understand someone questioning why a woman would want to fight for her own life and preferred career/way of living. If the main character had been a male, probably this person would have said, "How noble! What a great liberated spirit! What a thirst for freedom!" Bull carp. Why is it unbelievable for a woman to risk her life for her freedom, and noble for a man? This is

the same attitude I encountered with my first Klingon story, to which some people said, "Justify this female's wanting to be the world's greatest Kershu fighter." No one asked me to justify the males' wanting to be fighters. GNAARSH! (The noise is the editor grinding her teeth in wrath.)

 Vaal is alive and making Japanese monster movies.

- Jeanne Powers

Speaking of this and that, working with Fern and Carol stimulated me to write down my own Klingon stories (as I mentioned above.) I intend to print the first of them in MASI-FORM D # 7 (March?) I'm not sure about the other two. It's always a difficult choice--whether to print your own stories (a source of great satisfaction for you, and wonderful material for your zine) or to offer/give them to another editor (thus proving that it's not just personal infatuation, since why'd someone else publish it if it's no good? /Subversion? Physical violence? Threats?/) Ah--life is full of rocky problems.

I do, however, as usual, need submissions. A couple of Vulcan stories might be nice, to help counteract all those kilingau.

 Kapitulate is a Klingon diplomat.

- Wendy Lindboe

And here is a bit of opinion that I love (as a children's librarian especially.) Sometimes I feel it applies to people in general. . . .

Of course, I have nothing against young people--apart from the fact that they are arrogant, spoiled, discourteous, incapable of compromise, and unaware of the price of everything they want to destroy.

POETIC JUSTICE,
 Amanda Cross

 katastrophe is a Klingon prophet. -Wendy Lindboe





Profuse apologies are due to Ros M O Ludwig, whose portfolio of Nightingale Woman art appears in this. It was supposed to illustrate Ruth Berman's sonnet sequence, which appeared in MD # 5. However, due to galloping stupidity on my part, I failed to give Ros a firm deadline, and received her lovely artwork the day I fastened the last staple into the last copy of MD # 5. DAMN. My apologies to both the artist and the author.

Samik loves brownies.

It seems like a while since we've had a contest, so--introducing

NAME THAT SEHLAT!

The winner (judged by me and a panel of friends, enemies, relations, and other biased acquaintances) will receive a free ish of MD and some suitable token (like a stink bomb in the mail.)

The first entry, against which all others will of necessity be measured, comes from my cousin Debbie (still plugging away at her doctorate in marine botany--freshmolds? watermolds? saprisites?) is:

Female, named: Winnie T'Pooh. Nickname: T'Pooh.

Deadline for receipt of your ghastly puns--November 15.

An Official Pome

PAULA SMITH

Brooklyn's viceroy plays the hautboy:
"Ah am jes' a Langsam cowboy."
At five foot nine her massy form
Deeds her the Smof in any form.
With three past number 2 ish,
She surely don't look newish.

MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE BRIDGE

BY CAROL HANSEN

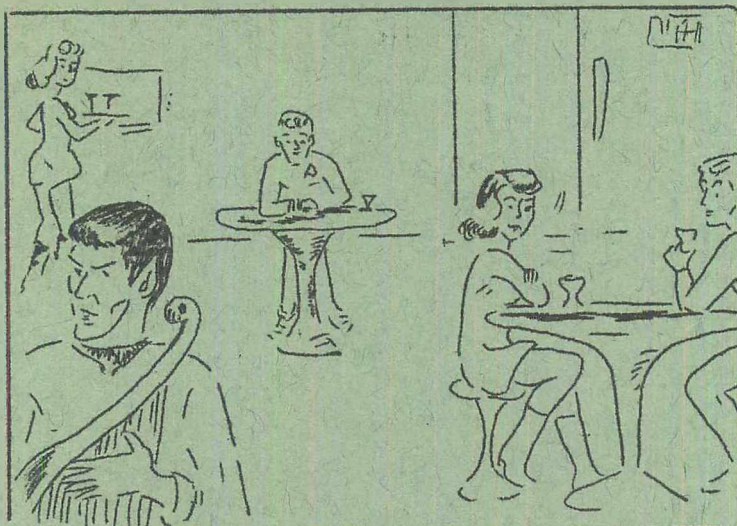
"Oh, Captain, Captain Kurd, there's a disturbance in the Transporter Room! It seems to be a fight between members of the landing party," Lieutenant Swalura's stand-in said, as she fumbled with the buttons on her console.

"Acknowledged, Ensign. Mr. Swat, you wouldn't have any idea about what could be causing this strange behavior, would you?" Kurd said sarcastically. Not receiving an answer, he strode impatiently over to where his first officer sat gazing into space. Momentarily forgetting Mr. Swat's almost paraxoid obsession with privacy, Kurd hit Swat's personal deflector screen full-tilt, and was hurled across the bridge, where he crashed into the viewscreen with the near-force of a photon torpedo. With an air of studied indifference, Kurd picked himself up, tugged his tunic into place, and limped back to where Swat was still sitting at his console, mentally noting on the way which of his crew were rolling around the deck clutching their sides and gasping with hysterical laughter, and which were managing to control themselves.

"Swat, this is the last time I'm going to warn you. Drop that shield, or I'll see to it that you're permanently assigned to the Space Port on Argellius! Now, would you care to give me an opinion, theory, extrapolation, or even a good guess about the aberrant actions of some of the crew?"

"I suppose it could be viruses or maybe even possibly spores, sir."

"Just once, Swat, I wish you would be more precise. Spores, you say? I hope not," Kurd said, cautiously touching



"HOME HOME ON the Range... where the deer
and the antelope play...."

a big bruise on his chin. "Go to Sickbay and help Dr. Annoy find an antitote. I've got a hunch we'll be needing one."

"Yes, sir; right away, sir," Swat answered, as he ambled over to the lift and pressed the down button.

* * * * *

Entering the almost deserted Sickbay, Swat was met by Nurse Chastel, who grabbed his hands adoringly and purred, "I've heard that Vulcans treat their women strangely, Mr. Swat. You wouldn't hurt me, would you?" she asked hopefully.

"Unhand me, you nymphomaniac!" Swat sobbed, reaching for a tissue as he lurched back into the corridor. He careened off crewmembers, and finally bounced into a briefing room, where he collapsed into a chair and cried big green tears.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, back on the bridge, Captain Kurd was listening to the second-rate Communications Officer.

"Lieutenant Swalura is running around Deck 8, telling anyone who will listen that 'she's the Captain's woman and will be until he tells her she's not'," the Ensign said.

"Well, I'm not about to destroy her illusions--that would be cruel! How do I get to Deck 8?" Kurd asked innocently.

"Try looking in the Directory like anyone else, sir!" Ensign Leftoff responded, grinning, as he happily pushed several buttons simultaneously, sending the ship into a wildly eccentric orbit.

"I'll find someone who knows, somewhere, somehow," Kurd said confidently, as he headed for the back stairs.

* * * * *

A few minutes later, while roaming a corridor at random, Kurd was stopped by Yeoman Clutss, who was almost in tears. "Lieutenant Smiley has locked himself in the crewmen's rest-room, sir, and he won't let me in. And if he sings 'Cool, Cool Water' just one more time, I'll not be responsible for the consequences, sir!"

Kurd, ever mindful of his crew's comfort, pounded on the door and ordered Smiley to unlock it. When there was no response, except for even louder singing, he shrugged and said, "I've tried, Yeoman; you're on your own. I've got important business on Deck 8. You wouldn't know how to get there, would you?" Getting only a groan for an answer, he continued his odyssey.

* * * * *

Later, down below in Engineering, Kurd heard loud clanking noises coming from behind the Arsenal Room door. "You can't go in there, sir," an unfamiliar Security Officer informed him. "Lieutenant Commander Sot has spaced all the phasers, and is pounding out claymores for everybody, sir."

"Well, it's about time he found a hobby," Kurd answered. "By the way, do you know where Deck 8 is?"

"Beats the hell out of me, sir. I was just assigned to the Big O a few days ago. I haven't even found my own cabin yet."

* * * * *



Deep in the labryinth of the crew's living quarters, Kurd rounded a curve and saw Lieutenant Tutu walking his barely intelligent ambulatory Klingon fighting plant, Karnage.

"Get him, get him!" Tutu hollered hysterically when he spotted the captain.

Kurd noticed he was in front of Yeoman Fancy's door, and he ducked in just in time to avoid a nasty bite on the foot. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your attitude, she was there, having just slipped on something comfortable--a pink bedroom slipper, to be exact--and was lying sprawled on the floor.

"Stay where you are, Yeoman; it'll save time--not to mention energy!" Kurd panted, moving in for the kill.

"When I say no, I mean no!" Jancie screamed, as she gave him a quick kick, and dashed out of the cabin, muttering, "I never did believe that story about a double anyway!" In her haste, she failed to see Karnage, and stepped on his stamen, incurring the wrath of Lieutenant Tutu, who took out after her in vengeful pursuit, waving his Samurai sword over his head. Luckily for Yeoman Fancy, Engineer Sot had just hove into view on the escalator as the parade was passing.

"Dinna fear, Mary, I'll save ye! For Queen and country!" Sot cried, clutching his claymore and taking up the chase.

Back in Jancie's cabin, Kurd carefully checked the corridor before hobbling out, somewhat the worse for the violence perpetrated on his person, but still game. Wisely avoiding Karnage, who was definitely out-of-sorts, Kurd continued his quest.

* * * * *

Nearly out of patience and breath, Captain Kurd tottered into a briefing room and thankfully noted that Mr. Swat was there. Swat looked out through a haze of tears and gulped, "Oh, Captain, Captain, did you know that I could never tell my pet sehlat that I loved it? Never!"

"You think you've got problems! I'm married to this blasted ship. And, on top of that, I can't find Deck 8!"

Swat sneered and said, "Get in a lift and say 'Deck 8', stupid!"

"Oh, bless you, bless you," Kurd wheezed as he staggered out of the door, almost tripping over the unconscious forms

of Tutu, Fancy, and Sot. They had run afoul of Notsobad, son of Nomad out of M-5, who was cruising the corridors seeking out and neutralizing psychological manifestations. "I must remember to tell Dr. Annoy about them--later," he thought thoughtfully. "Meanwhile, on to Deck 8."

* * * * *

Back on the bridge, Ensign Leftoff was the only crewman still at his post. Smiling maniacally, he said to himself, "Now's my chance to see just how close I can come to a planet and still break away! Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeee! Here we go. . . ." he said, pushing the control stick forward.



The Overpriced plunged violently down, glowing brightly, and would have crashed, if at that very moment Dr. Annoy had not stepped out of the lift, carrying a big cocktail shaker full of, among other things, an antitote to the virus. Running to Ensign Leftoff, he gave him a snootful, and Leftoff pulled back on the stick, sending the big ship zooming up and away, back into space.

At the exact moment when Leftoff was pushing the control forward, Captain Kurd had finally found Deck 8 and Lieutenant Swalura. They were embracing passionately when the ship suddenly lurched, sending them crashing to the deck. Kurd landed on his keister, knocking himself cold, and thus proving the old adage that all's well that ends well!

berserks gang.

by

Lee Burwasser



The berserker strode into Wakefield, and the folk made way. Grim and terrible he stalked among them. They looked at him from the corners of their eyes; they knew enough to be afraid, not enough to be desperate. They made way for him, the only berserker in West Riding.

Not that they called him that, any more than they called Yorkshire the Dane-law. Only the last priest of Yggr and his berserker initiate remembered. Two skinturners alone in a soft, civilized land. Ah, but he more than made up for his neighbors' softness; he'd been ready for the lessons of Yggr, and

Erratum . Page 15, add to top of page:

learned them quickly and well.

There was a notice posted outside the tavern. The berserker stood and stared at it, mumbling over the meaning of the degenerate runes. The true runes of Yggr, branded into the beast-skin and marked on the tang of his brown-steel blade, those he understood. He frowned over these ornate letters, which their writer doubtless considered a spare chancery script.

"Shall I read it?" said a voice.

The berserker turned his head to stare at the speaker. Unspeaking himself, he glared out from the beast-skin, from under his frowning brows, twisting his mouth to bring out the scars. The man made no response, neither cringing nor swaggering. From his dress, he was the henchman of some shire official.

As the berserker said nothing, the man continued to make conversation himself. "I put it up." And now there was a spark in the eys, a turn to the lips. . . . An invitation; no one had any notion how to hire a berserker, and they all propositioned him as though he were a harlot.

"Tell, then," he grunted.

The henchman nodded toward a knot of sumpter-horses ambling past the tavern. The hampers they carried might contain almost anything, but the most likely cargo was gold coins to pay the garrisons of the border forts in the north. The old Roman roads were the only safe tracks for such transport, just as the rich abbeys alone had so much revenue immediately to hand.

"A dozen archers is sufficient guard for a sumpter-train along the great roads of England," said the henchman. "In some places, there is no need for any. But a train when it goes between Pontefract and Tickhill needs a full score archers. Why is this?"

"Barnesdale." All men knew how well-suited it was for ambush. It was there the berserker had lain in wait to get his sword.

"Barnesdale. And a certain outlaw and captain of outlaws. The price on his head is no new tale, but now the respectable citizens have put up a purse of a hundred shillings to add to that price."

A hundred shillings for a man's head! And no one had earned it? "Is he a savage? A giant?"

"He is an elf. A gentle lamb, a cooing turtledove; a sly fox, a silent adder. I've heard of one man who might match him. A man who worships the devil--or is a devil. Who wears the skin of a beast--or is a beast. A strong beast: a cunning beast: a beast who loves the taste of hot blood."

The berserker tore down the notice from its fastenings. "I am the wolf to slay their lamb, the hawk to slay their dove. I am the dog for their fox and the club for their snake. I shall kill their outlaw for them."

"Come, then."

The berserker followed the henchman, fingering the hilt of his dagger. How much, he wondered, did the fellow really know? Mentioning devil-worship, and skin-turning. . . . Surely not another initiate! No, he would have won the hundred shillings himself if he were.

(The berserker drew his dagger and ran his thumb along the edge. The henchman was dangerously near the truth--dangerous for the henchman!)

The berserker strode through the forest. Grim and terrible he stalked along the path, and the birds ceased their singing as he came near them. His brown-steel blade was loose in its scabbard, his beast-skin close about his shoulders, and his twisted smile brought out the scars on his face.

The smile was from thinking on the omen he had seen as he left Ermine Street, the great Roman road that marched north from London to the Antonine Wall: four yeomen bearing the body of a fifth on a harrow. The eight-legged steed of Yggr, come to take his victim home. Though the days were gone when a berserker had armies to face, warriors standing as thick as the teeth of that harrow . . .

(The priest had spoken long and long of those days, when the initiates were the honored guards of kings:

' . . . armor of the Spear-sleet
knitted with iron, saved not
the saters of hungry ravens
from the Shaft-hail of the Bowstrings . . . '

(Then, they were presented with their weapons; no need to skulk with a dagger to slay a man with the money to buy good steel, but not the skill to use it. The priest marked

the steel with runes--ah, but on the blade, for all to see,
and to fear!

' . . .sated the Heath-beast's hunger;
the hoar howler in wounds gladdened;
the king reddened the Wild One's mouth-hairs---
the Wolf went to drink of the wound . . .'

(Now, the priest must unbind the hilt and mark the runes on the tang, where the re-bound hilt would cover them. Well, they worked in secret, but with no less power.

(And in those days, the horse-sacrifice was known to all. It was only the branding of the hide with runes, the shape-changing power, that was hidden from all save the initiate. And the power in those runes was weakened in these degenerate days; they gave a man the strength of a beast, and immunity to steel, but did not give him beast form. Which was as well, the priest had said, for wolves and bears were hard to find. The weakened power of the runes branded into the hide he wore over his own was enough. The horse-sacrifice he had done with his own hand, the deed marking his final initiation, that gave him what power he needed . . .)

But now he stood in a glade, and there was nothing to show him his path from there. A throstle sang at the far end of the glade. Did it not fear the berserker? The bow at his back, the quiver at his belt, would teach that bold songster --! But no matter. It was a man he had come to slay. How to find him?

The berserker looked about him, and smiled again. There on a fallen log were the red-and-white toad-hats. The priest had warned him again and again that too much would kill. But properly used, as the priest knew how to use them, they were the Road of Yggr!

Very well. He would wait by the Road for the outlaw to come to meet Yggr. First the eight-legged steed, then the path; his prey would come.

He sat on the log. Idly, he plucked one of the toad-hats, pulling the cap from the stalk and turning it over to stare at the gills underneath, without really seeing them. (The priest had refused to tell him how they could be prepared, to make a safe potion. He only said again and again that they were highly poisonous in their natural state.) The berserker crushed the stem between his fingers and dropped it at his feet. He broke the cap in two and pulled one of the thin gill-membranes loose, rubbing it between thumb and finger. (He had no need of the potion, the priest had told him. "Once,



to show you the Road. Now that you know the way, you can walk it yourself.") He broke the cap again and once again, turning the last wedge to look at the red upper surface and the white spots and streaks. ("Once, to show you the Road. If you cannot find it a second time on your own, you are no son of Yggr. I think you are." And he was right.) The berserker dropped the last wedge and reached for a second toad-hat.

("A true son of Yggr, the master of runes, rider of the eight-legged steed. Your deeds will be spoken of before his high seat; when your sword feeds the ravens, they will carry the word to him. His steed will carry off your foes for many years, before it carries you to his hall.")

The berserker opened his fist and stared at the crushed toad-hat. He was not yet ready for Yggr's hall. He would feed the ravens once more, give the eight-legged steed another burden. The god's messengers would bear news of his deeds to the high seat once again. He had no need of the toad-hats to bring the sacred frenzy of Yggr. ("No more than the skalds," the priest had said. "Yes, he is their god, too; madness of inspiration for them, sacred frenzy for you . . . The high roads of Yggr. . . .")

"Why dostow sit here, traveler? Hast come to meet someone in the forest?"

The berserker sprang to his feet and turned to face the one who had spoken. Surely the song of the throstle was not loud enough to mask human footsteps! Yet here the man stood beside him, and no sound had the berserker heard. Surely his tread must be as silent as an adder creeping through the damp sward.

The man spoke again. "Well, pretty chick, have I struck thee dumb? I had not thought my face so terrible as all that."

The man was clad as a forester, in good green cloth: Lincoln, or else Kendal. His hair and beard were sunset gold, his eyes a mild blue. An innocent, the berserker decided, no doubt spending all his days in the forest.

He looked away contemptuously. Any townsman so insolent as to 'thou' a berserker would be dead with the familiarity half-spoken, but an ignorant forester was not worth the trouble. "I ask no man leave to walk or to sit. If I am not to thy liking, go thy way." He let his voice show that from him the insult was intentional.

The forester seemed not to notice. His own voice remained friendly. "Nay, sweet cluck, thou'rt a very marvel, and I would know more of thee. Much do I wonder at thy pretty mantle, that wraps thy fair body 'round."

"Why, fool, dostow not see that it keeps me warm? And keeps off the rain and wind? And keeps off sword-strokes, too, as well as any hauberk?" He spoke with much arrogance, for he was uneasy at the directness of the question. First the henchman, now the forester! If ever the Christians learned the true reason he wore the beast-skin, the hide of the horse he had sacrificed to Yggr with his own hand, they would come at him in greater numbers than one berserker could hope to vanquish.

But the forester was speaking. "I see it well, sweet chick." And his mild eyes gazed on the berserker guilelessly.

"I seek a man, forester. A leader of outlaws that harries the travel of the sumpter-trains on Ermine Street. A man of thy calling must know what moves in the forest. Aid me to win the price on his head, and thou shalt win the price of a cask of ale."

"Whence this eagerness?"

"A purse as empty as thy head, which hath enough in it for a simple man. I would fill it with the price of the outlaw's. He is called a magician with the bow, but I and my sword have no need of such magic."

"Why we are all good archers in this forest. I would not fear to shoot against thee, duck."

"Nor I against thee. Set up a garland. If thou'rt victor, I shall tell thee my name. If I conquer, I have no need of thy name, so thou shalt tell me where I shall find my lawful prey."

"I like the stakes, gentle stranger. But only babes shoot at garlands, hereabouts. Let me set up a true mark for us."

The forester cut and peeled a wand, and set it at the far end of the glade. Returning to the berserker, he said, "Now, there is a proper mark. Do thou shoot, and I shall mend thy shot if I can."



"Ye must all be magicians in this forest, or fools, to shoot at such a mark." Nonetheless, the berserker braced his bow and let fly an arrow; it missed the wand by a palm's breadth. His second shot grazed the wand. His third arrow lodged in the wand for a moment, so near to the edge that the splintered wood gave way, and the arrow fell to the ground.

"Not entirely bad," said the forester. "Had I the training of thee in thy youth, I could have made an archer of thee."

The forester plucked an arrow from his quiver. He spun it against his thumbnail to check the straightness of the shaft, made sure the head was firmly fastened, smoothed the flights, stuck it point-down in the turf before him. He did the same with a second arrow, and a third. Only then did he brace his great bow.

Plucking the first arrow from the ground, he nocked and drew and released all in one motion. The arrow was still on its way when he caught up the second arrow and let fly again,

and so with the third. Thus the first arrow yet quivered in the wand when the last left the string. The second arrow then alighted on the first, shattering the shaft, but had scarce done so ere the third alighted upon it, shattering it as had the other. The last arrow stood alone in the wand, and the splintered fragments of the other two lay on the grass beside.

The forester whirled on the berserker and flung down his bow. The blue eyes were no longer mild, but stormy as the deep sea. "Do that," he cried, "ere thou call'st thyself an archer. As to thy prey, here I am!"

Quick as the berserker drew his brown-steel blade, the forester was as quick. They fell to battle; the berserker's blows fell thick and furious, but the forester calmly turned them all. Step by step he retreated before the berserker's assault. In a holmgang, he would have been out of bounds already.

"Come back here!" howled the berserker, stamping and frothing at the mouth.

"Come and take me," said the forester, gasping a bit as he took the opportunity to catch his breath.

Confident that he could wear down the skill of the forester, the berserker rushed again. (Sacred frenzy at its peak: face livid, scars standing out deadwhite . . . The berserker was a high wind and a sword. . . .)

But the forester was a flame. He flickered away from each rush, glittered against each blow. He let the berserker back him, step by step, the length of the glade, flashed aside and under the brown-steel sword at the far end and retreated back the way they had come. His sword-skill was entirely defensive, and his tactics were clear; he would concentrate on staying alive until the berserker's strength failed. He would have a long wait! and only a master swordsman could hope to put such a plan into action.

A master swordsman indeed; few fighters would have held out so long against even a natural foe with purely defensive bladework. What would have been folly for anyone less than a master was holding against the inhuman strength and speed of the berserksgang! Little good the berserker's immunity to steel did him, when the other's blade sought only to turn his own aside--and was crafty enough to do so, again and yet again. Where did a forester learn such skill?

* * * * *

The frenzy was fading. The berserker began to feel faintness crawl along his arm, iron bands grip his chest. The forester had done what no mortal man could do: outlasted the sacred frenzy of Yggr.

Now the forester ceased his constant retreat, took his stand and gave blow for blow. More and more he went onto the attack, demanding more and yet more from the berserker's failing arm.

The berserker flung the last of his strength into a final rush. The forester stepped aside from it . . . and his foot struck a root or a stone or slipped on grass damp with sweat or blood. Down he went on one knee, his sword falling out of line. The berserker wheeled with an effort that strained his right leg (he could feel pain, now, through the berserksgang) and chopped at his foe's exposed side.

With the flat of his hand the forester struck the flat of the blade, turning the blow. The swordpoint plunged into the earth and the berserker stood staring.

An elf, the henchman had said!

A true elf would have been burned by the steel, yet what less than elven-magic could have turned the blade? Then what--?

"You . . . " Unthinking, the berserker shifted to respectful address. He was in no position to 'thou' this being.

The forester smiled grimly. "Yggr is always faithless at the end. Hast never heard?"

"You know!" gasped the berserker. "What are you, that you know?"

"Who was called Rof Brehot Woden when the Angles ruled north of the Humbra?" (The berserker's eyes widened.) "I am Robin Hood."

As the blade tore up under his breastbone, Guy of Gisbourne remembered the four yeomen carrying the harrow, the eight-legged steed that all must ride in the end.



Nightingale Woman

—A Portfolio

by Mary Rosalind O. Ludwig

A Note on the Sonnets
by Ruth Berman

One of the odder bits of "history" in ST episodes was Samuel A. Peebles' bit of "Nightingale Woman" in "Where No Man Has Gone Before." The poem was written by Phineas Tarbolde on a planet of Canopus in 1996. Unless Tarbolde was a non-Terran who adopted a Terran pseudonym, and wrote in English for the fun of it, we don't have much time left to get him out to Canopus.

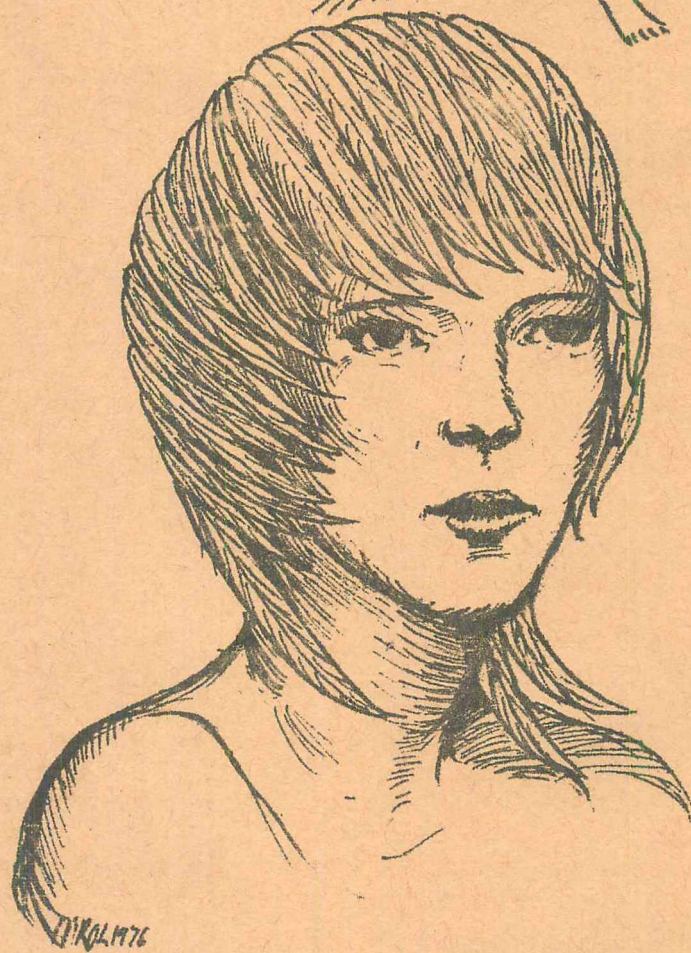
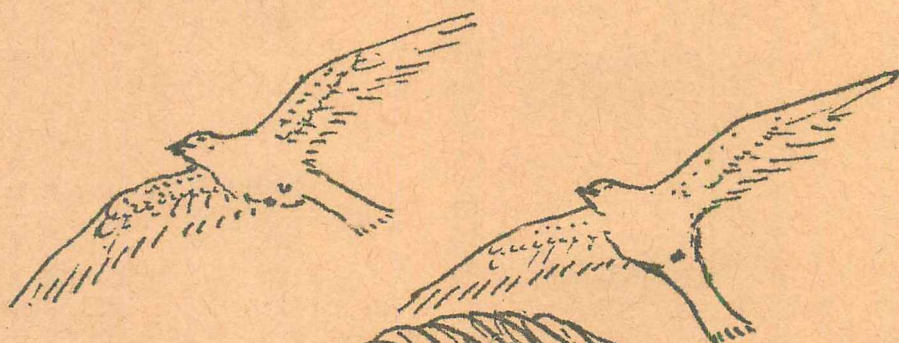
When I first saw WNM, I took it for granted that the poem was part of a sonnet sequence 387 plus pages long, and was flabbergasted. Later I realized that it didn't actually have to be part of a sequence at all, much less a sequence taking up a whole book. But the notion stayed with me that "Nightingale Woman" was a sonnet sequence.

Dorothy Jones (Heydt) pointed out, in the STAR TREK Concordance, edited by Bjo Trimble, that the so-called sonnet didn't rhyme or scan like one:

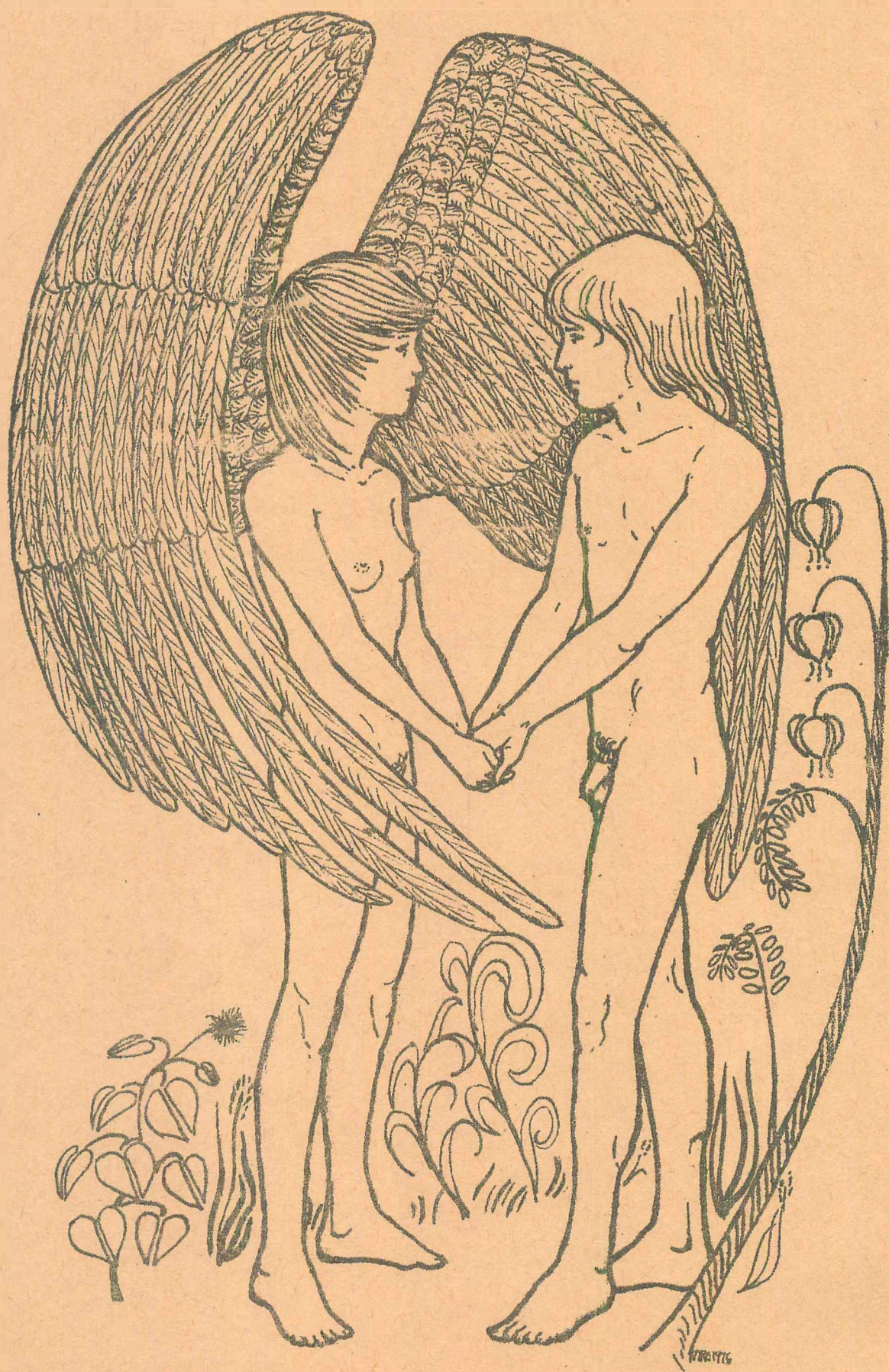
My love has wings,
Slender feathered things
With grace and upswept curve and tapered tip. . . .

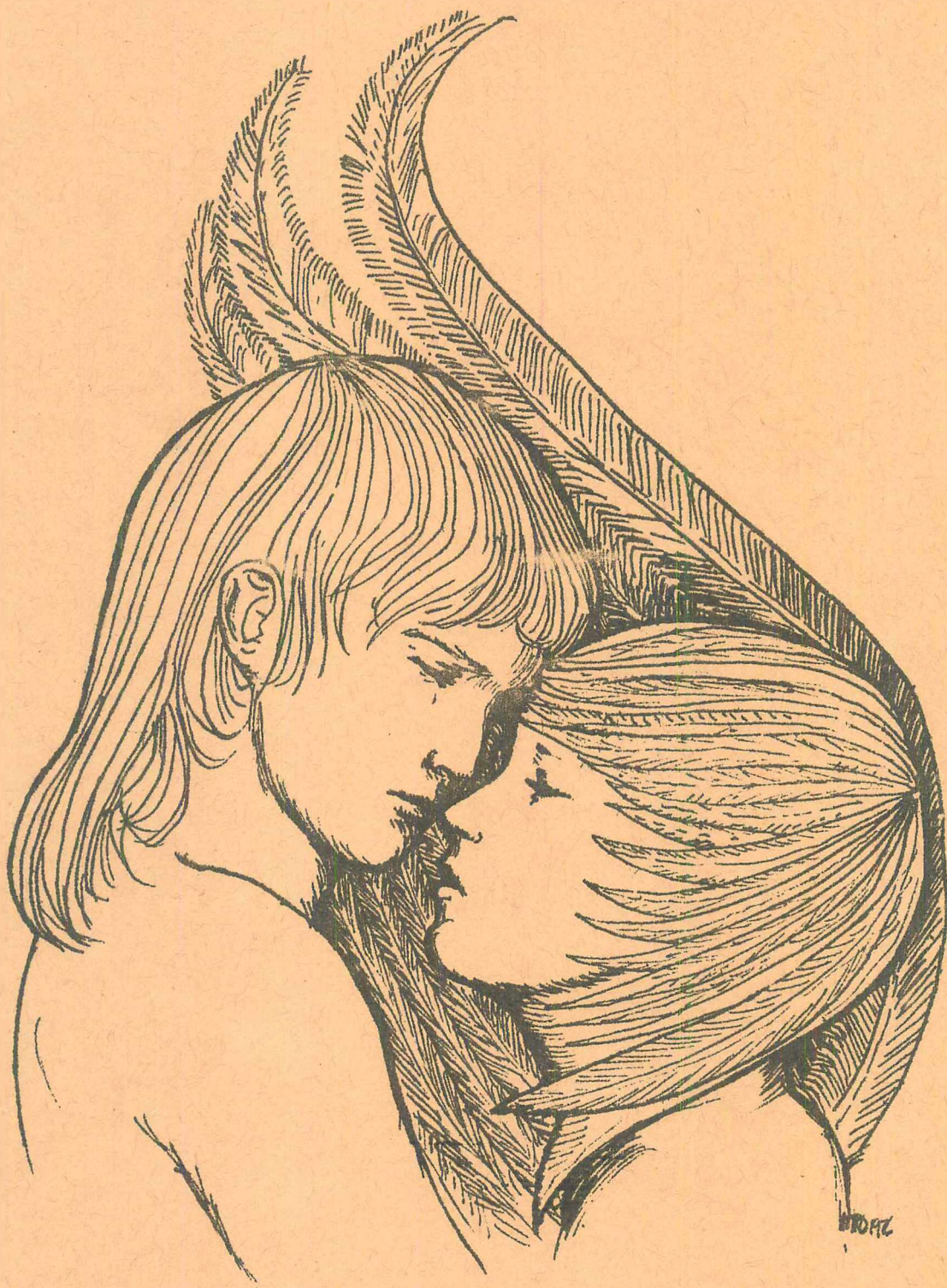
Maybe Tarbolde was an alien, after all, who knew that sonnet means "little song" and didn't realize that it had acquired a more precise meaning with a special format over the centuries? But then one day it occurred to me that if the first two lines were a single line with internal rhyme, the fragment could make sense as the start of a sonnet, after all. And I'd always wanted to try a sonnet sequence, so. . . .

Actually, what I wrote first was just the single sonnet. Then I wrote a story where it could be quoted, a sequel to "Who Mourns for Adonais?" I published "And Burned is Apollo's Laurel Bough" in my own zine, T-Negative (#24, 1974). I thought that was the end of it, but discovered that the idea of a sequence was still nagging me. I wrote a second sonnet (the second in the final sequence, too, "I cannot fly") and a second story to quote it in, "Pre-Occupation" (Grup #3, 1974, ed. Carrie Brennan), a sequel to "Amok Time" offering a guess at what T'Pol might have felt about Spock and why she so desperately wanted out. Meanwhile, the sequence grew, and it became obvious I couldn't go on writing a story to incorporate every sonnet. (I must admit it would be fun to try, but . . .) So it became a regular sequence, in the end. I hope Tarbolde would approve.









THREE QUESTIONS

demonstrated a great reluctance to discuss the sociological characteristics of their Vulcan environment.

Thus, our first question is this:

Why has Vulcan maintained this veil of mystery surrounding its culture?

This is not a study or a narrative. It does not propose to eliminate doubts about or explain characteristic traits of our subject: the Vulcan race. Quite the opposite; we intend to pose the three questions that have plagued Earthmen since they first contacted the Vulcans. It may be that a few Earth scientists have acceptable answers. Vulcans must, assuredly. Our research team has been unable to gain access to the data that will satisfactorily answer our questions.

Travel to Vulcan--at our team's expense, of course--has repeatedly been disallowed by the pertinent Federation and Vulcan authorities. Our research indicates that very few "outsiders" have been permitted to reach Vulcan itself. Trade is conducted through foreign ports in the vicinity of the planet, where goods are transferred to Vulcan vessels for the last leg of their journey. Those official Federation representatives stationed on the planet, and a number of aliens (human and humanoid) residing there, received as adopted members of native families initially,

Although it is a fact that numerous erudite essays of Vulcan origin are available at every library center, few reveal the sociological details of Vulcan life. We are seldom able to infer what the "average" Vulcan occupies himself with, or anything about his/her typical lifestyle. It would appear from the available evidence that the Vulcans pursue scientific endeavours to the exclusion of most other occupations.

If this is the case, then our next question is:

In view of the number of individuals involved in scientific research, why has their science and technology remained on a par with that of Earth and our Federation?

It is not possible to assume that the Vulcan race is far below the standard human norm in intellectual capacity, and that their scientific research is, at best, puerile. The opposite is cer-

tainly true, judging by the results of their research that have reached our Federation. During the short period we have been in contact with them, their scientific discoveries have had great effects upon us. Most technological advances mass-introduced in our Federation have had Vulcan origin. They may not have built a specific device but, almost without fail, theirs was the theory that permitted its construction and development.

Our last question must be:

Are they "hiding" from us lest we become suspicious of their obvious superiority and become belligerent before they have made ready?

We know, for example, that the Vulcan race is telepathic. We do not know, however, the extent of this ability, or the uses an "average" Vulcan makes of it. In Human-Vulcan exchanges it is restrained, or so we are told (by Vulcans). We cannot help but wonder if this is truly the case. After all, we must rely upon their word.

Consider what we have set forth and if you, as we, fear the Vulcan menace, write to our society for further information.

THE A.V.I.R. SOCIETY
Chute 18D60-N5
Section 71b33

THE PRECEEDING LEAFLET WAS DISCOVERED ON A PARK ON A MUCH-FREQUENTED SECTION OF EARTH. IT HAD BEEN DEPOSITED THERE BY A MEMBER OF THE ANTI-VULCAN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH, A RECENTLY ESTABLISHED RADICAL GROUP PREACHING ISOLATIONISM. THE YOUNG RADICAL WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE WAS LATER APPREHENDED ATTEMPTING TO FORCE THESE LEAFLETS UPON PASSERSBY. WHEN ORDERED TO DESIST, HE BECAME VIOLENT. HE IS UNDERGOING REHABILITATION, AND SPECIALISTS WILL NO DOUBT MODIFY HIS ANTI-SOCIAL ATTITUDE. OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SEDITIONOUS GROUP ARE BEING TRACED BY FEDERATION SECURITY, AND WILL SOON BE IN CUSTODY, CLOSING ONCE AND FOR ALL THIS REGRETABLE INCIDENT.

-ISABEL REAL
UFP PRESS RELEASE

The Fishpacking Plant

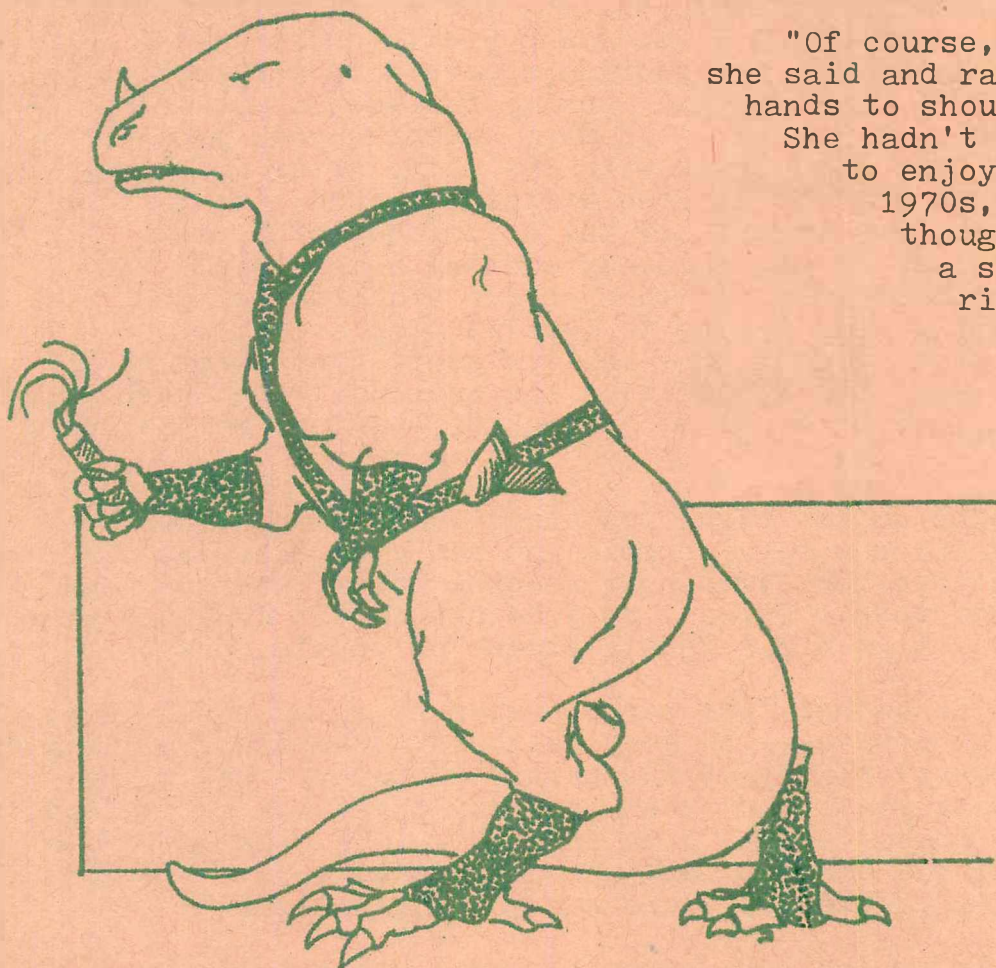
by Eleanor Arnason

It had been, she reflected, a bad year for the Motor City. First the Tigers had lost the pennant and now this.

This was a seven-foot-tall saurian wearing glittering armor and carrying a deathray. It was one of the multitude of such creatures, who'd poured out of silver space ships that had landed all over Detroit. More ships were even now floating down out of the smog-grey sky.

"SSSurrender," the saurian said to her in sibilant English.

"Of course, of course, she said and raised her hands to shoulder level. She hadn't expected to enjoy the early 1970s, she thought, while a second saurian shackled her hands behind her back.



Though, she had to admit, she expected to be bummed out, not terrified by invaders from outer space. Oh well, back to the drawing board to draw another portrait of the future. Or was it off to the salt mines?

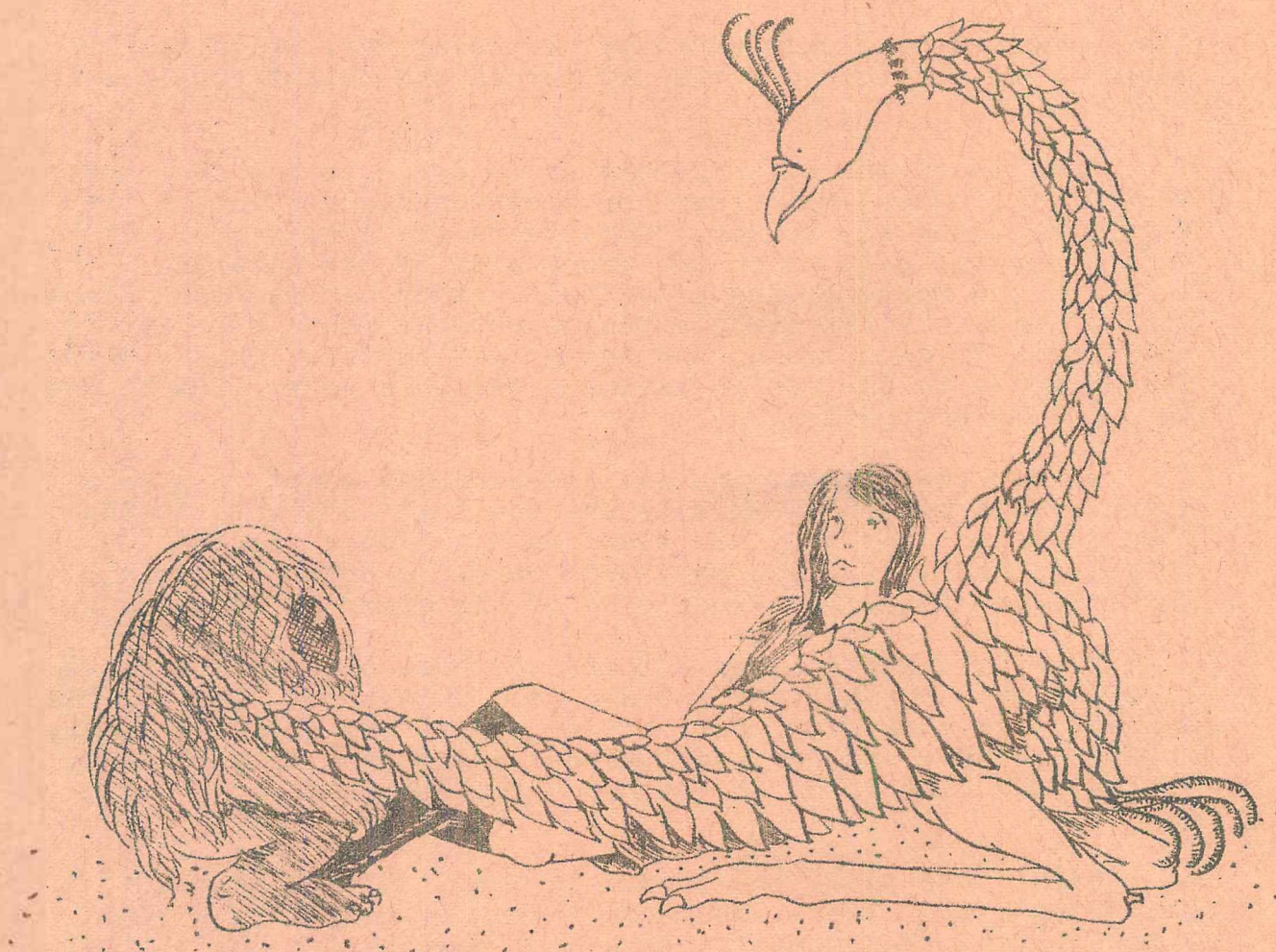
Some time later, she found herself on another planet. The sky was dark blue and the sea was blue-black, dotted here and there with little, low islands on which yellow jungles grew. She worked on one of the islands in a fish packing plant, operating a shellfish-shelling machine. She had always wondered what it was like to work in a factory. Now she knew. She decided she liked office work better.

Ka-thunk, ka-thunk, the shellfish dropped down into her machine. The empty shells rattled down a chute in the machine's bottom, and the shellfish innards were squirted out through a transparent plastic tube. Pretty repulsive they were, too; bright pink and slimy looking. Her job was to make sure the shellfish were being fed into the machine at the right rate; and whenever anything got jammed, she had to unjam it. A dull job, made worse by the saurian supervisors who prowled up and down with neuron whips, looking for people who talked or goofed off in other ways. If they caught anyone goofing off, they hit him, her, or it with the whip, after which he, she, or it spent fifteen minutes writhing around on the floor in agony. A typical example of the efficiency of bosses, she thought. They caught somebody wasting a minute and did something that took them off the job for a quarter of an hour. Maybe they were trying to terrify people into stopping goofing off. Didn't they realize goofing off kept them from going crazy? And a hard time the saurians would have had, trying to get work out of a bunch of leaping, shrieking loonies.

The machine on her right was operated by a squat person who was a magnificent royal purple and had eyes like jewels: bulgy and multifaceted, with half a dozen colors shifting and gleaming inside them. He was, he told her in the language of the saurians, a tree-troll from a planet of purple forests.

The machine on her left was operated by an extremely tall person, who was covered with grey feathers. She was a walking-bird from a desert planet at the galaxy's center. Her planet's star was a white giant, and the night sky there was so full of stars that it looked like a dome of light. The walking-bird's eyes were tiny and deepset, and she complained that she could barely see on this planet, there was so little light.

When their supervisors weren't around, they told each other about their home worlds. The tree-troll talked about



his happy nest high in an onatchi tree. In the spring, he had been surrounded by sweet-smelling scarlet flowers; and in the fall, he could reach out a hand and pluck a cluster of dark blue onatchi fruit. Sometimes, he began to make thrumming noises, which was a sign of distress. Then she'd tell him Polish jokes to cheer him up. Translated into saurian, Polish jokes had a surreal quality that fascinated him. "How many Poles does it take to install an illuminating device?" she would ask, then answer, "Three. One to hold the illuminating device and two to rotate the ascending-descending device." When she told him that the Polish national costume was a bowling shirt, she had to explain nations and bowling to him. Then she got depressed, thinking about her happy home in Detroit next to a bowling alley.

The walking-bird talked about her home in Atwee'a, the City of Stone Spires, which stood in the middle of a silver sanded desert. In the morning, she said, she had awakened when the sand-croakers began to sing, and had gone out into the square in front of her building. There she had performed

the morning dance, surrounded by her relatives, while the great white sun rose and the sky turned the palest possible blue.

Sometimes, the walking-bird would begin to hop from one foot to the other, which was her distress-sign. "Look," the Detrouiter would say to her, "some years are simply bad. The whole universe gets up on the wrong side of the sleeping location one morning, and after that nobody can find the right side of his, her, or its sleeping location. Then one day the right side is back again, and things get better. That's what has happened to us. We're having a terrible year. But things have got to get better."

On her own planet, the walking-bird had slept in a wall niche, which had only one side she could get out on. At the fish packing plant they all slept on the floor. So the Detrouiter had to explain what beds were, in order to explain what she meant by 'the wrong side of the sleeping location'.

How could her stories compare to those told by the walking-bird and the tree-troll? But she told them about Detroit, the smog-grey factory city, full of car plants and bars and drunken working people; and her heart almost broke from homesickness. How was she ever going to get home? she wondered.

Unknown to them, the people in the fish packing plant had friends and allies, who were trying to help them out of their present predicament. In secret headquarters on distant planets, revolutionaries plotted the overthrow of the saurian empire; and diplomats from star-systems not yet within the empire protested the saurian use of slave labor. The saurians, of course, denied that they used slave labor.

But the people in the plant knew nothing of these valiant efforts on their behalf. Their lives stayed the same. They worked and they slept, and had a few hours of something like freedom in between work and sleep.

Often, after dinner, she went down to the seashore with her two co-workers and watched the sun set at the edge of the ink-dark sea. The wind made the yellow jungle rustle; and blue-black combers rolled up a beach of pink sand. She was always surprised when the water retreated, that it left no stain. The sand was the same pale pink as before.

The walking-bird was fascinated by the sea. On her home world, she had never seen water except in waterholes and in rivers that ran, for a few hours only, after one of the brief



spring rains. She went down to the sea's edge and ran forward when the water retreated, then fled back when the combers came back in. All the while, she cried, "oowit, oowit," which was either a pleasure sign or a fright sign, the Detrouiter wasn't sure which.

Usually the Detrouiter felt pretty good walking on the beach, but sometimes she got depressed and thought, "I'll never get out of here. I'll be here 'til I die." If she wept, her co-workers would try to cheer her up, the tree-troll by

singing one of the songs he used to sing in his nest in the onatchi tree, and the walking-bird by dancing.

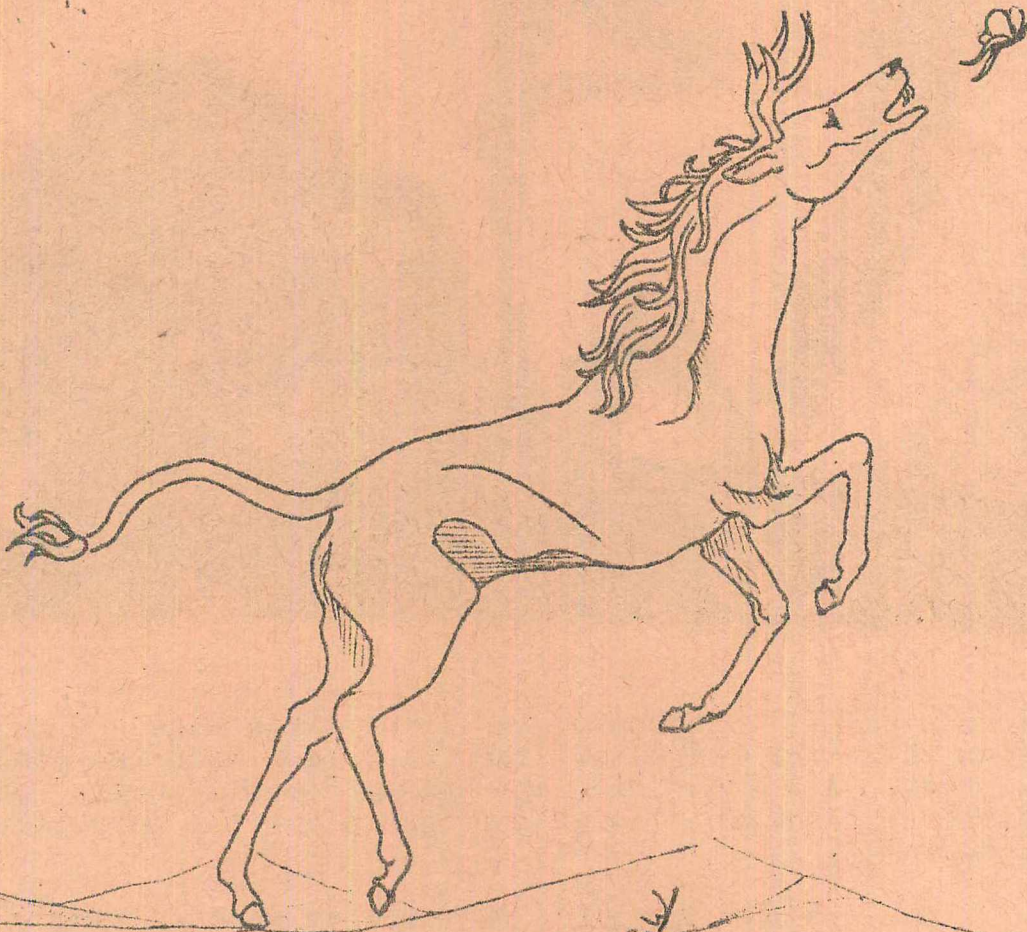
Her favorite song went as follows when translated:

Onatchi tree, onatchi tree,
Ha-ha, ho-ho.
Take care of me, take care of me
When strong winds blow.

Onatchi tree. onatchi tree,
Loo-loo, loo-lol.
Take care of me, take care of me
When thick rains fall.

She'd listen to the tree-troll singing and watch the walking-bird dancing slowly and stiffly in the pink sand and maybe after a while she would begin to feel better.

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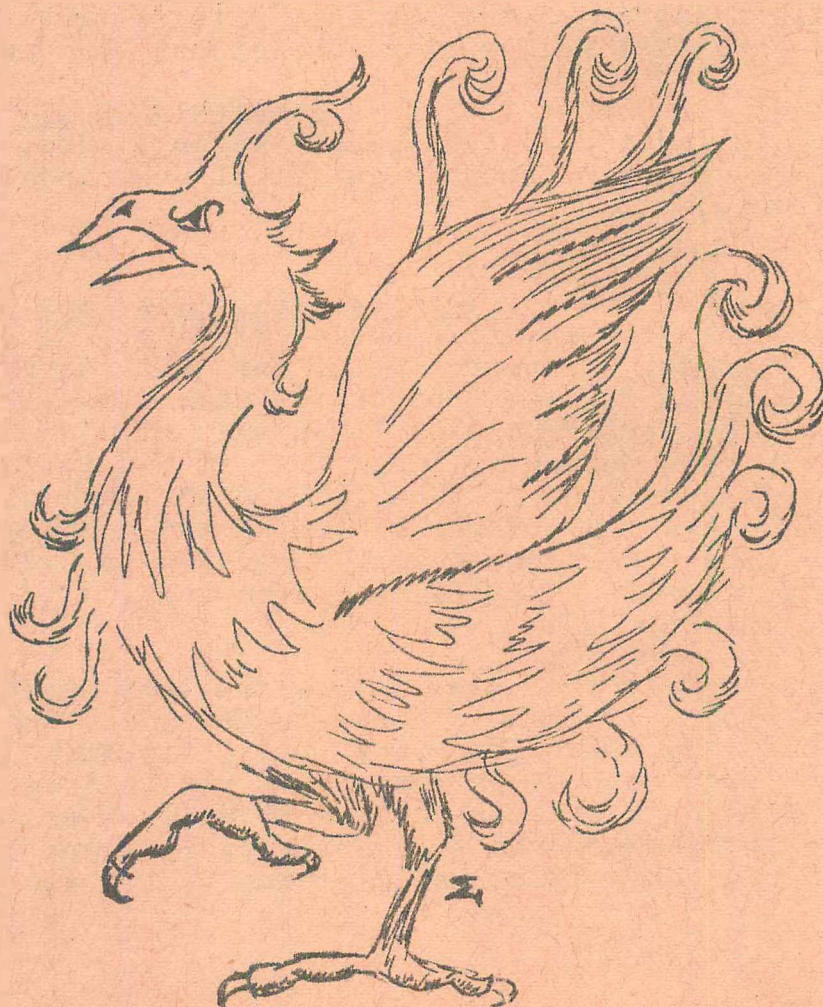


BALLAD 1

The wind was the fragrance of chickens along the dusty path;
The moon was a grey-white peasant that never took a bath;
The road was a ribbon of bacon upon a mouldy plate
When the Scarlet Knight came riding, riding, riding,
The Scarlet Knight came riding up to the castle gate.

Over the drawbridge he clatters and clanks in the dark courtyard.
His lance rattles on the portcullis, but all is locked and barred.
He whistles a tune to the window, and who should lean out in a hood
But Tom, the Baron's bowman,
The Baron's Senior Bowman.
He shoots the dark-red Errant
AND SHUTS HIM UP FOR GOOD!

Maude McEwen
Barony Versifier
Barony of the Flame
Middle Kingdom



A TALE OF TWO

'CITIES'

JEAN F KLUGE

(Author's note: I've expressed my opinions on "The City on the Edge of Forever" in this article; I'd enjoy hearing from others with feelings on the subject. Please send comments to me at 850 Hazel Valley Drive, Hazelwood MO 63042.

The original version of "City" is available in Six science fiction plays, edited by (who else?) Roger Elwood, Pocket Books, \$1.95. You can probably get it at your local library or bookstore.)

I have a habit of reading The New York Times Book Review whenever I visit the library, in hopes of finding a ST or sf book mentioned therein. Consequently, I was quick to catch news of Six SF plays a few weeks before it came out. At first glance, I caught the word "anthology" and thought, "Ho-hum, another one." *sigh* Suddenly, I saw that it was going to include the original version of "The City on the Edge of Forever." Oh, joy! Like many other Trekfen, I had wondered about Harlan Ellison's version, which, according to David Gerrold (THE TROUBLE WITH TRIBBLES) had been changed drastically.

When, approximately two weeks later, the book appeared at my local bookstore, I bought a copy, rushed home, tore off the paper bag, and read like crazy 'til I finished "City." My first comment upon completion was, "Boy, was that ever weird!" (That feeling has never quite left me.) There were so many differences between the two versions, in terms of appearances, scenery, characters, and dialogue that I was stunned.

To begin with, in Ellison's version, it is not McCoy who escapes through the Guardian, but a man named Beckwith. Beckwith is the futuristic equivalent of a drug pusher. He is selling the illegal Jewels of Sound--a crystalline narcotic that brings hopeless addiction with the first use. He has managed to introduce them to a fellow crewman aboard the Enterprise. This crewman's name is LeBeque.

LeBeque is not your average dumb, wishy-washy security man. He is a person one can identify with. Hooked on the Jewels, he is trapped in a situation beyond his control. He hates and despises Beckwith, but, mostly, he hates and despises himself.

Finally, after almost blowing the ship to smithereens, LeBeque confronts Beckwith, determined to turn him in, no matter what it may cost him. That is his mistake. (What a dummy!) Beckwith picks up a heavy block of crystal and follows LeBeque, who, realizing the danger he has exposed himself to, rushes out into the corridor. Beckwith catches up with him, however, and finishes him off. The murder is witnessed by two crewmembers. The chase is on, but Beckwith manages to escape, via the transporter.

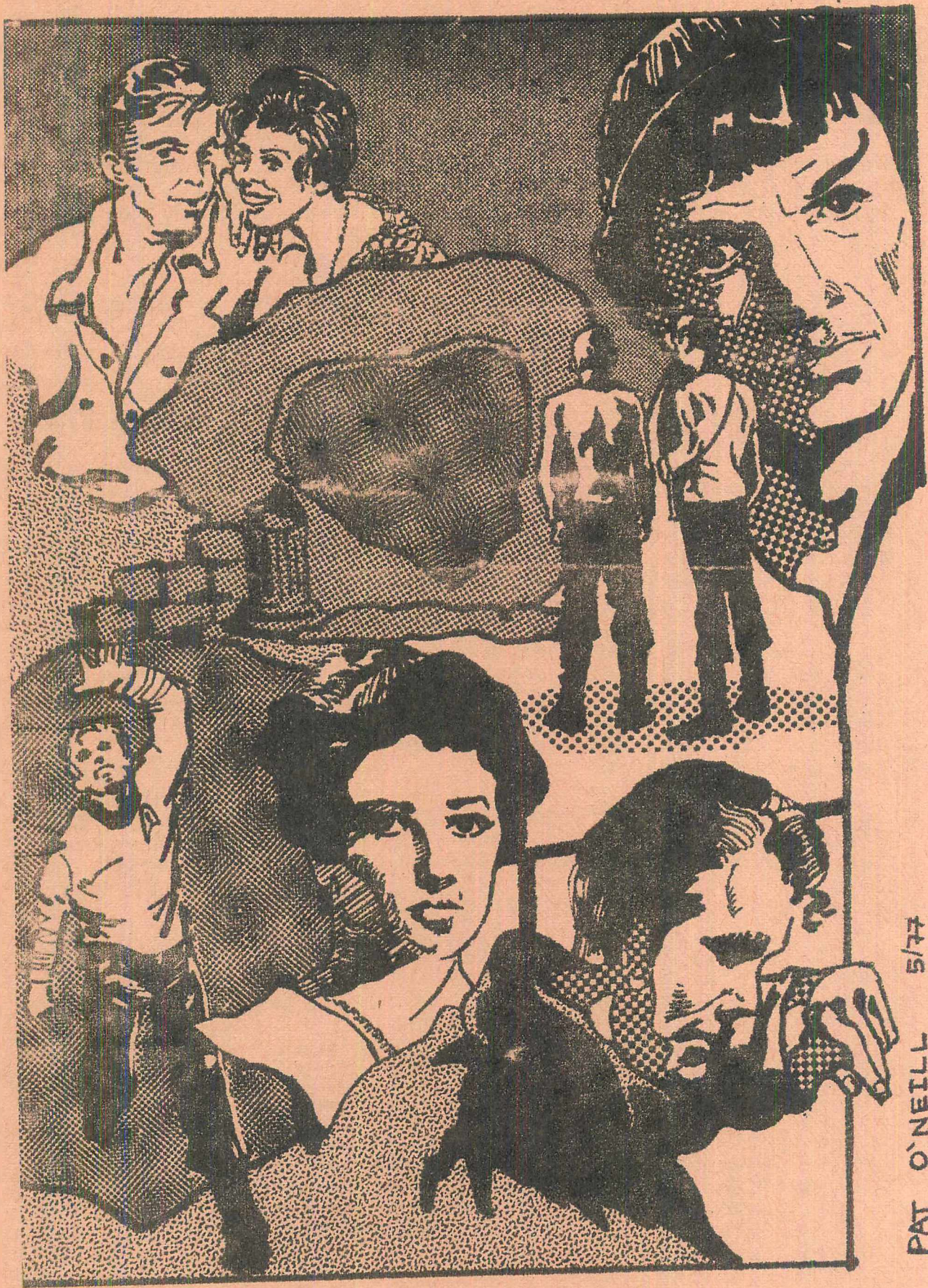
Kirk, Spock, Rand, a few assorted security men beam down to the planet after him. Once there, they meet the Guardians, who inform them that they hold the key to all history--a doorway to the past. In this version, there is more than one Guardian, and the Guardians are not part of the vortex, they only control it.

Kirk is hopelessly intrigued by the prospect of a "time-machine." The Guardians have seen no one else in four hundred thousand years, and are eager to display their craft. At Kirk's request, they activate the vortex, and the history of Old Earth is re-enacted within it.

Meanwhile, Beckwith has been hiding in a cul-de-sac nearby, and has heard every word that has been said, including the fact that a means of escape is now available to him.

Momentarily oblivious to the world around them, the landing party watches, enthralled, as Earth's history nears the 1930's.

Beckwith realizes that this is his chance. He makes a dash for the vortex, and, although the landing party tries their best to stop him, Beckwith escapes into Earth's past. The Guardians tell the landing party that they now reside in a universe totally different from what they once knew, for Beckwith has changed the past.



PAT O'NEILL 5/77

The landing party returns to the ship. It is now called the Condor, and is manned by renegades. They are held prisoner by the ship's captain, and a small portion of the crew, who fairly exude evil and viciousness. Rand saves the day, however, by shorting out a circuit in the transporter with her tricorder (or, at least, Ellison's version of one.) The distraction gives Kirk and the others time to jump the Condor crewmen and gain control of the transporter room. Kirk asks Rand if she thinks she and the security men can hold the transporter room until he and Spock return. Rand assures him that they will do their best.

Kirk and Spock return to the planet surface, and ask the Guardians for help in finding Beckwith. The Guardians tell them that, for his own purposes, Beckwith will seek that which must die and give it life. That is only one of a number of very vague clues given to them as aid in locating Beckwith and the focal point in time that he will try to disrupt.

Kirk and Spock, too, go through the vortex and enter the past. Upon arrival, they are sighted and chased by a crowd of hungry, depressed people, who are ready to vent their anger on anyone or anything that looks the least bit foreign. (If they only knew how foreign!) Reaching safety, the two men begin arguing, Spock contending that humans are barbarians--always have been and possibly always will be. Kirk protests angrily that the people were hungry and afraid. It doesn't last long. After a few moments of verbal fencing, they both simmer down and regain their good humor.

In my opinion, this scene should never have been written. It doesn't fit in with our knowledge of the characters. But the Kirk/Spock relationship shown in this version was often quite different from what I was used to. I think we can all agree that Kirk and Spock are friends. However, it seems as though Mr. Ellison couldn't quite make up his mind on this point. At times, the characters displayed the kind of easy, caring camaraderie I was accustomed to. At other times, though, they seemed engaged in a grim rivalry, a sort of 'human against Vulcan' contest, to determine who was born of the better race. True, such feelings were expressed during the run of the show, but in a light, teasing manner, that made it rather unimportant. No one could convince me that such an attitude, as portrayed in the Ellison script, is in character. And this is only one such instance of character inconsistency.

Up until this point, the script has been different from the aired version, but the characters were portrayed fairly well. In fact, Ellison grasps Kirk's character quite well throughout--not an easy feat, as I'm sure you'll agree--except, perhaps, in the ending. However, I found the portrayal

of Spock to be pretty far off base at times.

For instance, drawn to the focal point that they are searching for, Spock uses the clues given to them, and discovers Edith Keeler. He realizes from the beginning that she is destined to die. Kirk, however, is at first drawn to her, and then falls deeply in love with her. He refuses to face the fact that her death is imminent.

Spock's reaction to this is something I find hard to believe. At first, he tries to be understanding about Kirk's feelings. Okay, fine. That is in character. However, after the first confrontation, Spock becomes coldly logical, oblivious to his friend's need for sympathy, relentlessly forcing Kirk to realize what must be allowed to happen. It's as though Spock is resuming his part in the rivalry. And, when Kirk refuses to face the need for Edith's death, Spock gets a phaser rifle--don't ask me how--supposedly planning to make absolutely certain that Edith Keeler dies. (Shudder!) Sorry, Charlie, but I can't accept that version of Spock. No way!

All this happens over a period of time, of course, during which Beckwith appears and escapes a couple of times, as villainous as ever, Kirk and Edith are falling in love, and Kirk and Spock are trying to track down Beckwith.

During their search, Kirk meets a legless man named Trooper, who is sitting on the sidewalk selling pencils. A placard hanging around his neck on a string bears the legend "I FOUGHT AT VERDUN." Kirk asks the man if he has seen a man dressed in strange clothing, carrying a weapon of some sort. (One encounter with Beckwith ended with him getting and running off with the phaser rifle.) Kirk shows Trooper a bit of his own Starfleet clothing, which he has wrapped in paper. Trooper is reluctant to help him at first, not wanting to "narc." Kirk assures him that he is no cop, just "a Bo who needs some information." (How does he manage to pick up the local lingo so quickly?) Kirk then tells the man that there is two dollars in it for him. Bitterly, Trooper says, "I suppose I gotta find out before you give it to me."

Quietly, Kirk replies, "I think I can trust a man who fought at Verdun." A mixture of disbelief and self-pride appears in the man's face at being treated with trust and respect. He consequently does his best to locate Beckwith, and, after leading them to an alley where the crewman is hiding out, saves Kirk's life at the price of his own. This part was, of course, excised from the aired version.

Something else missing in the final draft--not as definable, but certainly as tangible--is that part of Ellison that is felt in every one of his works. It may not be much--perhaps the tone, or setting of a scene, but it is always



Mr.



there, and it can be perceived by the viewer or reader. However, in the aired version of "City", that "presence" of the writer was missing.

I feel that the author's "presence" was missing because of the omission of Trooper, and the absence of the emotional atmosphere of the time period--a sense of bitterness, fear, and hopelessness--that was incorporated so skillfully into the first draft. Also gone was the aura of mystery and alienness that surrounded the first Guardians. Both of these types of setting are employed in various other works by Ellison. They are a definite part of his unique style of writing. It was this style of writing that was missing in the "City" we saw, unfortunately for us.

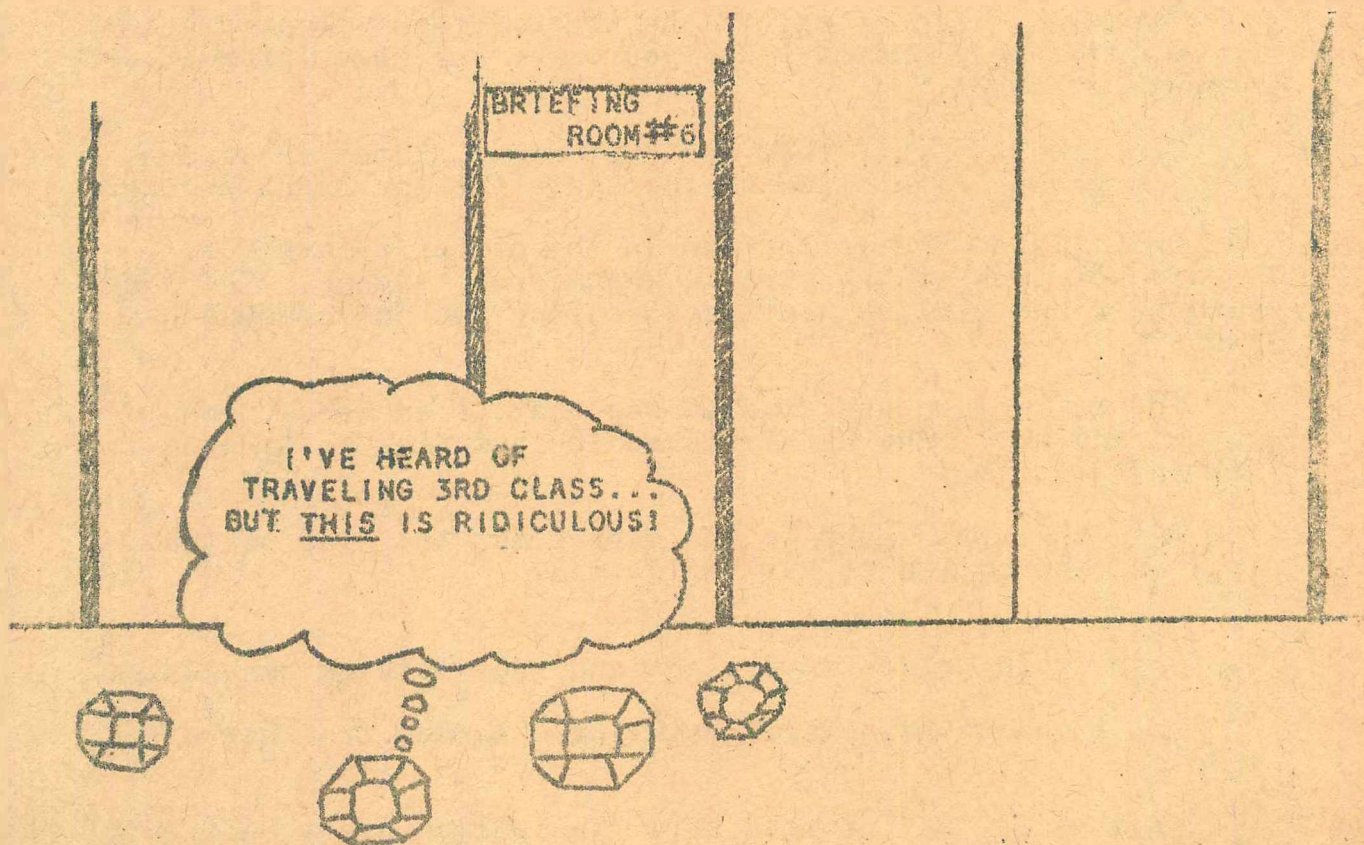
So what exactly am I trying to say? (Yes, believe it or not, there is a point to all of this.) I think that the two versions could have been combined more effectively than they were.

The Beckwith/LeBeque situation could have been left in, without doing any great damage to our hope for the human race. I mean, not all of us are heroes or heroines in the twentieth century; will humans be so different in the twenty-third? I doubt seriously that everyone will be able to resist the dark side of our nature all the time. True, this is entertainment--but can't we be realistic at the same time?

Trooper was a great character, but was probably taken out along with Beckwith, because he was no longer relevant to the story. It's too bad, really. I thought that the entire Kirk/Trooper interaction said something about all of us; the fact that everyone needs self-respect and peer-respect.

The ending of the script also raises some questions. In the original version, Kirk is willing to give up everything for Edith Keeler, and it is Spock who stops Beckwith from saving her. Would Kirk have done that? I don't know--and I am certainly glad that I didn't have to be the one to decide which version was correct! However, I feel that the aired version was much more dramatic. It hit one on a gut-wrenching level. Kirk had to allow the woman he loved to die. He forced himself to stick to his duty, despite every instinct. How many people could find it in themselves to do that? Not many, I'll bet. But then, Kirk is a hero, and heroes do things like that as a matter of course.

All in all, the final version was still a very good episode, but . . . but, it could have been better, if only it hadn't tried to give us such a sterilized view of the human race.



ESCAPE

ARTIST

by Elizabeth Carrie

The girl sat at her desk, a vanity cluttered with paint tubes and brushes. She concentrated on a blank piece of paper. The wording would have to be just right.

"Are you tired of life?" she wrote. "Want to escape into the world of your dreams? Now you can. For more information, contact D. Lawson."

Yes, she thought, that was just right. Just the incentive for prospective clients--the snare for the right people.

She studied the reflection in the mirror before her. She did not look at the girl in the mirror, though. The long brown hair and girlishly-attractive face did not command her attention.

The reflection she studied was that of an easel, some feet behind her. She had finished the painting resting on it just that morning.

Then the brown eyes in the mirror met the eyes of the girl, and she smiled at her reflection.

There were police investigations, but nothing conclusive.

She stood at her easel, painting. Across from her sat a reporter.

"You know," he informed her, "the police don't believe a word you say."



"I know." She smiled. "People accept so little of what they cannot understand."

"But, sixteen people just--disappearing into your paintings? I mean, isn't that a little . . . far-fetched?"

She shrugged. "It's the truth."

The reporter shook his head. "But how?"

The artist looked thoughtfully at her painting. "I guess," she said slowly, "you could call it 'advanced active-imagination'."

"Come again?"

"Well, active-imagination takes you beyond what is visible, in a picture, or even in a mirror. Like Alice through the looking-glass. I just found out how to take it a step further."

"I'm not sure I follow you," the reporter admitted.

"Haven't you ever sat staring at a painting or an advertisement, or just out the window, and actually been walking beyond the place you see?"

The reporter nodded unsurely. "I think so."

She pursed her lips, then tried again to make the reporter follow her thoughts. "Suppose someone interrupts you when you're daydreaming. You say you were a million miles away. Physically, you didn't move. But the real you, the conscious you, was far away."

The reporter nodded, the light of understanding dawning at last.

The artist smiled. "Well, active-imagination is taking a scene and consciously determining your direction. Instead of aimlessly drifting, as in daydreaming, you take a journey to the unseen. You actually explore the region just beyond the visible scene."

"I understand that. But . . . well, what happened to the bodies of the people who disappeared into the paintings?"

The artist sighed. "Nothing. The bodies are with the people."

"You mean, people actually vanish into your paintings?"

"I thought I just said that."

"Now wait a minute," the reporter insisted.

The artist waited.

"You said 'advanced active-imagination'. What does that mean?"

The artist looked at the reporter a moment, then seemed to change subjects.

"When I was young, I visited an aunt who collected books on witchcraft, the occult, tribal rites--like that. I learned quite a bit from them: principally, the ability to transform ordinary supplies into substances fit for such work as I do now."

The reporter smiled, writing in his notebook. "Could I have a ritual chant, say, for a canvas?"

He looked up at the silence. His eyes met the artist's frigid gaze. He cleared his throat nervously.

"Okay, so you learned the way to change ordinary artist's supplies through magic. When did you first find out they worked?"

"I was about ten. I had a girlfriend the same age, and we both loved painting. We were fooling around in my room one day, and I was kind of experimenting with the paints, to see if they would work the way the books said they would.

"My girlfriend had a bad home life, and she hated school, so she used to find refuge in fairy tales and fantasy stories. I painted a fantasy world for her. It was a castle on a hill, overlooking a small, happy village.

"Scared the heck out of me when she left." She smiled, remembering. "Her family never did find out what happened to her."

The reporter's brows knitted. "These people . . . your clients--they just walked into your paintings?"

"Well . . . not 'walked' exactly. More like--'transported'."

"Transported," he said under his breath as he made a note of it. Then he met her eyes. "What if they want to come back?"

She shrugged. "Why would they? They wouldn't have left

in the first place if there was anything to keep them here."

"What if the paintings were destroyed? Would the people die?"

"No," she said matter-of-factly. "They just couldn't come back. You see, they go to other worlds just as real as this one. The big difference is that there they can be the people they were born to be, without fear. Something they could not do here."

She tilted her head. "Actually, my paintings are merely portals to different time-space realities. The paintings exist in reality here only for the time the person becomes aware of the reality of the other world. Once there, life continues for the person there."

She pointed to the canvas on the easel. "Care to have a look?"

The reporter stepped around to see the painting. It was a park, circa 1900. He did not, could not, speak. He knew it--all of it!

There would be a little cafe down the street, and next to it, a bakery. He could even smell the fresh bread. Oh, for a taste!

He found himself standing in the park, and, without a thought, headed for the bakery. . . .

The young artist's reflection in the vanity mirror smiled back at her. Yes, she thought, that was how it would be, some day.

She heard footsteps advance to her door, then stop. After a moment, "De? Deirdre? Are you in there? It's so quiet."

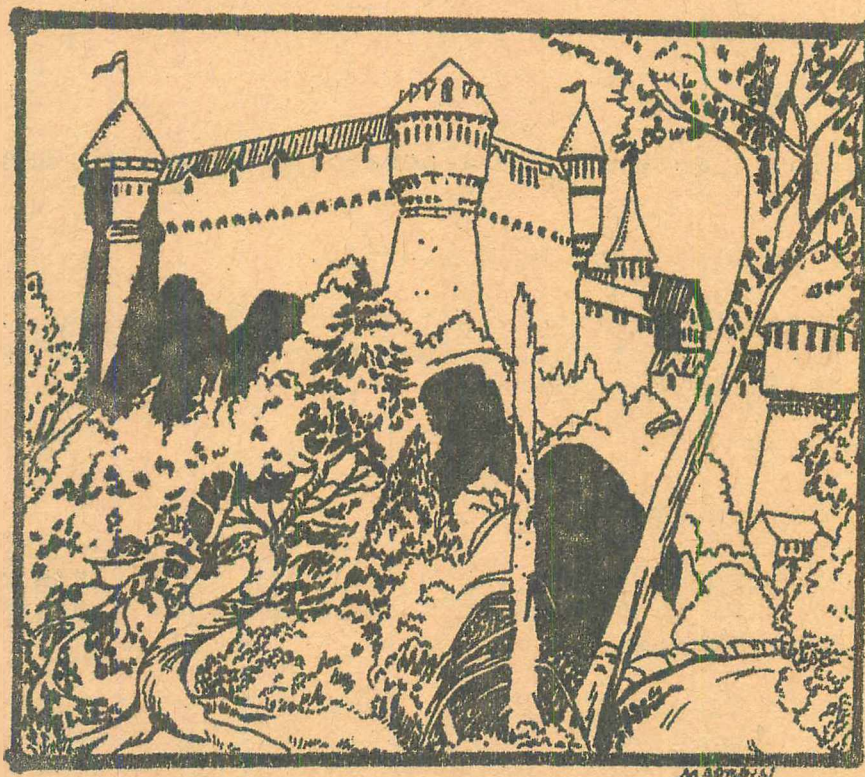
The artist sighed. "Yes, Mother, I'm in here," she said evenly.

"Well, your father is due home any minute, and you know that he likes you to be down when he comes in. Please."

"I will, in a little while. I have a surprise for you--both of you." She smiled, watching the door from the mirror's reflection.

"A surprise? What is it, De?"

"If I told you, it wouldn't be a surprise, would it?"



Besides, I want to wait until Father is home, so I can surprise you together."

"Well . . . I guess it's all right. But just don't be too long, will you?"

"As soon as Father comes home."

"Okay." The woman left the door.

She was in the kitchen when her husband came into the house. He was tired and hungry, as usual, which made him irritable. Mrs. Lawson poured his coffee as he sat heavily in his chair.

"Where's De? I thought I told her I wanted her to spend more time out of that room. You know, she doesn't have to be in a special place to daydream. She can do that anywhere."

"I reminded her that you wanted her to be around when you came home. She said she has a surprise for us."

"What?"

She nodded. "She said she has a surprise, but she wouldn't tell me what it is. She said she wanted to wait until you were home, so we could be surprised together."

"Now what? I swear, that girl is losing all touch with reality. Well, I suppose it can't be that she has a new friend.

You know, it isn't natural for a person to spend so much time alone."

"I know," Mrs. Lawson said wearily.

"Ever since she went to visit that sister of yours. Come to think of it, she must get it from your side of the family. Everyone in my family is normal."

"Oh, really?"

"Sure. You don't--"

They heard footsteps in the hall, then up the stairs. "De? Deirdre?" Mr. Lawson called. He looked at his wife when he got no response.

Going up to investigate, Mrs. Lawson found a painting propped up on a table near the stairs. Looking more closely, she recognized a farm which had been in a picture book she had cherished as a child. She had stared at that picture for hours, when she was young.

There was a farmhouse and a barn, and a grove of trees which she knew had a waterfall and pool at its center.

She could even hear the water in the distance. She found herself trying to look through the trees, just as she had as a child. But this time, there was nothing to stop her from finding out.

She was standing by the farmhouse, and she ran toward the trees. . . .

Mr. Lawson went into the hall, to find out what was taking his wife so long. He started up the stairs when he could not find her in the hall.

He never noticed the painting on the table.

He stopped near the landing, for there was a painting resting against the wall. It was a wooded lake, with a cabin at its edge.

He had always dreamed of owning a place like that. He knew there would be fishing in that lake--good fishing, and friends living just beyond the trees.

He could even hear them calling him. He hesitated, but could not think why. It was all too much to resist. So he didn't.

He found himself at the edge of the lake, and he could

see the friends who called him. He ran to join them . . .

Deirdre Lawson waited until she was sure they had found her surprise. The thick silence convinced her that she was now quite alone in the house. She walked from her room to the top of the stairs.

There were the paintings, just as she had left them. But the feeling of them was different.

Used.

She had no doubt, then, that her parents had left her for good. She walked silently down the stairs, picked up the two paintings and returned to her room. Once inside, she locked the door.

Laying the two paintings on the floor under her easel, she added a third--a fantasy painting of a castle on a hill. Then she set fire to a paint-soaked cloth, which she dropped on top of the pile of paintings.

With a satisfied smile, she picked up the paper with the ad she had written, then left the room for the last time by way of her last painting, finished only that morning. At last, she would have her own artist's studio, and the privacy to enjoy her painting.

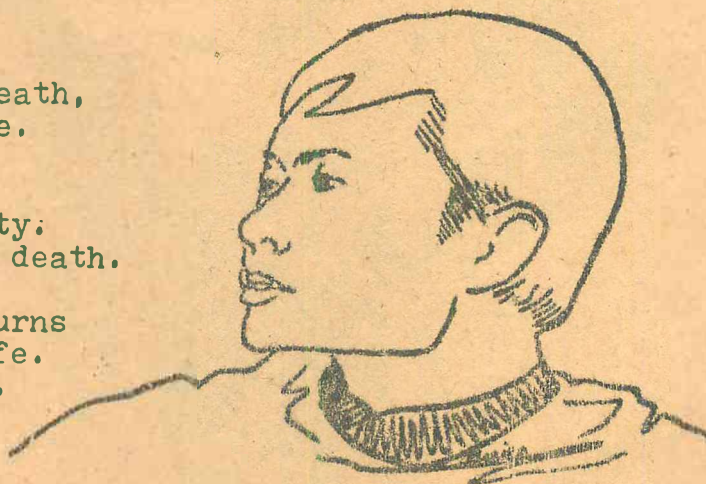
The house was beyond saving before the fire trucks arrived.

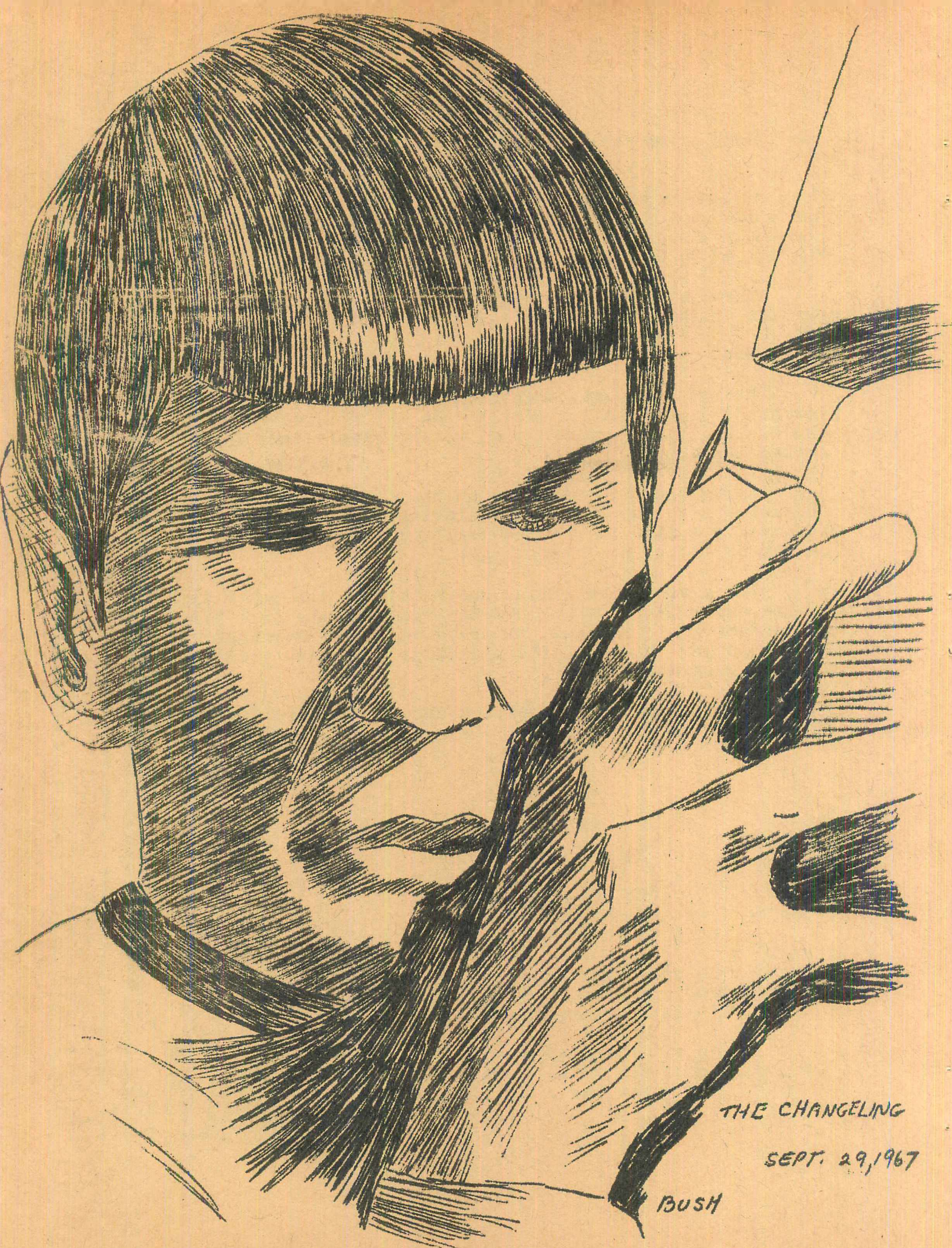
Sulu: Having Survived
Ruth Berman

"I am for Sulu."
Losira lied; she brought death,
And a touch of flame.

She was beautiful,
When alive, and loved beauty:
In death she brings death.

Her sad likeness mourns
Its falseness to gentle life.
Oh, my Losira. . . .





THE CHANGELING

SEPT. 29, 1967

BUSH

ESP-ER?

DALE KAGAN

In October 1975, the Scientific American printed an article on ESP research being conducted with a machine designed by a worker at the Air Force Cambridge Research Laboratories in 1962. They reported negative results. But were the results really negative?

Their tests were conducted using a machine which generated random numbers on a punch tape. The experimenter sat at a console and was expected to guess the number on the tape either by clairvoyance or by precognition. (Clairvoyance is defined as the ability to "see" an object hidden from normal sight. Precognition is defined as the ability to see the future.) The experimenter's choice was punched onto the tape next to the machine's randomly generated number.

The article said nothing about the procedures aside from this.

In the magazine article, a sample of a punch tape was printed, showing only "random" matches. The experiment was conducted 55,500 times. On the basis of the tape results, researchers concluded that they could find no evidence of ESP.

The tape included in the Scientific American article demands a second look, however. Every fifth choice by the experimenter exactly matches every fifth choice of the computer two attempts before it.

Since I don't have all of the tapes available, I don't know how many of these staggered matches there were. I tried to find out by writing to the author of the article, but he could not tell me very much. I doubt that they used the same subject for all 55,000 trials. I'd like very much to know how long the sequence of matching numbers continued. It does seem coincidence beyond the range of believability that of all those tapes, the ones selected for publication were the ones with this "random" pattern of matching on them.

0	0	0	0	0/4	— RESET
2	5	0	7	② 0	
2	4	0	7	1 2	
2	3	0	7	0 3	
2	2	0	7	3 ①	
2	1	0	7	0 0	— HIT
2	0	0	6	① 3	
1	9	0	6	0 1	
1	8	0	6	1 0	
1	7	0	6	2 ②	— HIT
1	6	0	3	0 3	
1	5	0	5	② 0	
1	4	0	5	2 0	
1	3	0	5	2 7	— PASS
1	3	0	5	2 ③	
1	2	0	5	3 3	— HIT
1	1	0	4	③ 0	
1	0	0	4	2 1	
0	9	0	4	2 2	— HIT
0	8	0	3	1 ③	
0	7	0	3	0 0	— HIT
0	6	0	2	③ 7	— PASS
0	6	0	2	2 7	— PASS
0	6	0	2	0 3	
0	5	0	2	2 ②	— HIT
0	4	0	1	0 3	
0	3	0	1	② 0	
0	2	0	1	1 1	— HIT
0	1	0	0	2 1	
TOTAL		SCORE	MACHINE'S CHOICE	SUBJECT'S CHOICE	

© Scientific American, October 1975, p. 116. The tape to the left is the sample tape printed in the article. The bottom of the tape represents the first choice of the computer. The numbers at the top represent later choices. The experimenter's choice is printed to the right of the computer's choice. Reading upwards, there is a consistent pattern where every fifth choice of the experimenter matches the fifth choice of the computer two attempts before it. What would cause such a consistent pattern of matches?

* * * * *

Two explanations are possible.

(1) The experimenter's choices appear after the computer's. If the experimenter were able to see the results as soon as they were printed, then the numbers selected by the computer might have acted as a hypnotic suggestion of some sort. This would make the Air Force Research Lab's entire run of tests invalid.

However, this seems most unlikely. I find it hard to believe that the researchers would fail to take the power of suggestion into account.

(2) It is possible that the experimenter did not get to see the results of the tapes during the test. If that is true, then the pattern appears to demonstrate ESP at work. Of course, without more information on how frequently this unusual pattern was repeated, you have to consider the possibility of coincidence. Still . . .

Moreover, assuming that the

results do demonstrate the use of ESP, it seems to suggest that, if a person uses ESP, there is some kind of a time limit before he/she can use it again. The Air Force Research Laboratory may have a store house of information on minimum trial or time requirements on ESP, and not even know it!

After the Scientific American article came out, I sent a letter to the magazine, asking if they had an explanation for the matching intervals on the tape. They did not have any.

Now I ask the researchers, wherever they are, to go back and check their results to see if they can explain this anomaly on their tapes, without ESP.

A BAKER'S DOZEN OF YOUR FAVORITES

Miriam Z Langsam

1. Who suffers from 'ringworm' and swears to seeing fuzzy pink after long sessions in the bar?
2. Who prefers desert or beach hills?
3. Who takes his initials too seriously?
4. Who worries about 'Black Roads' rather than yellow brick ones?
5. Whose name suggests an occupation?
6. Who stated the obvious when describing Terra's topography?
7. Who is famed for the hirsuteness of one portion of some of his characters' anatomy?
8. Who is obviously TV's YoYo's godfather?
9. Whose works are PR for the winged lizards?
10. Who has described where the denizens of All Hallow's Eve are during the rest of the year?
11. Who has immortalized future Henry Kissingers?
12. Who inspired jungle bunny jokes?
13. Whose sf script had more believers than any other?

The

ENTERPRISE

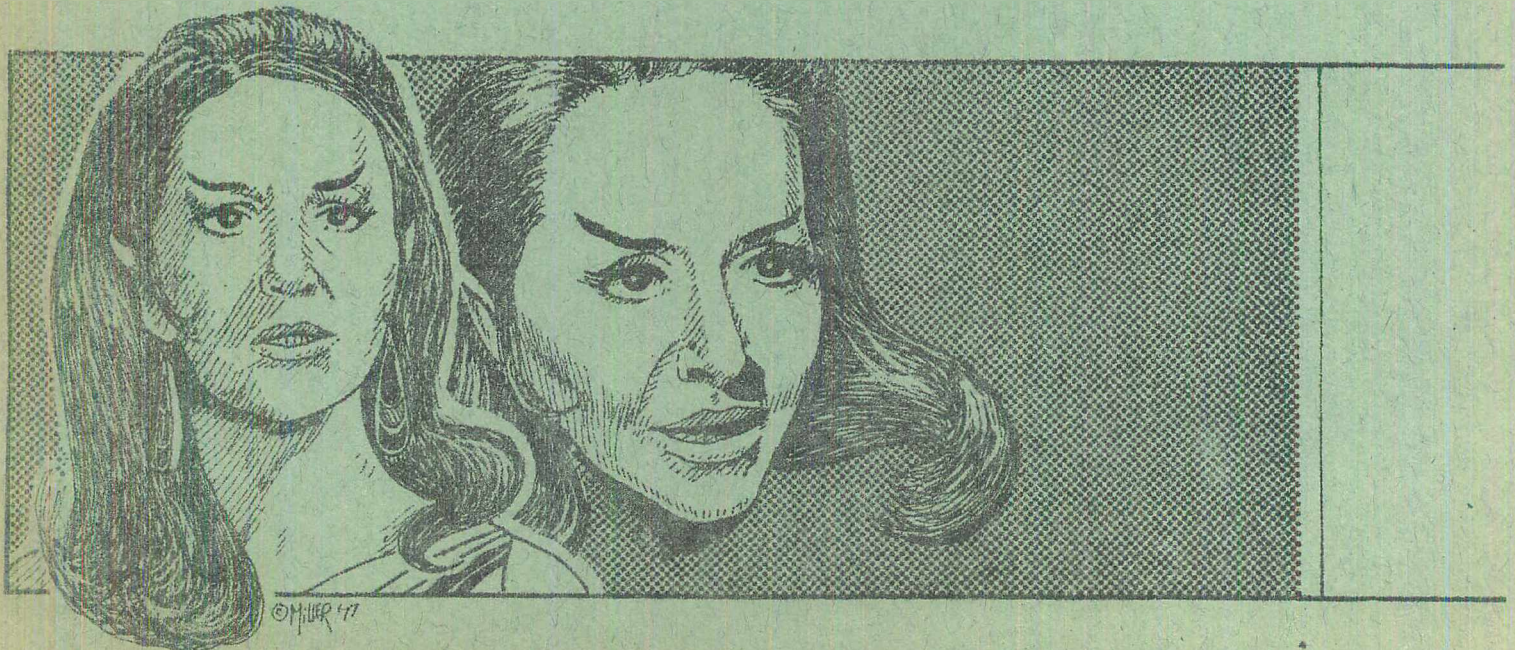
Coincidence

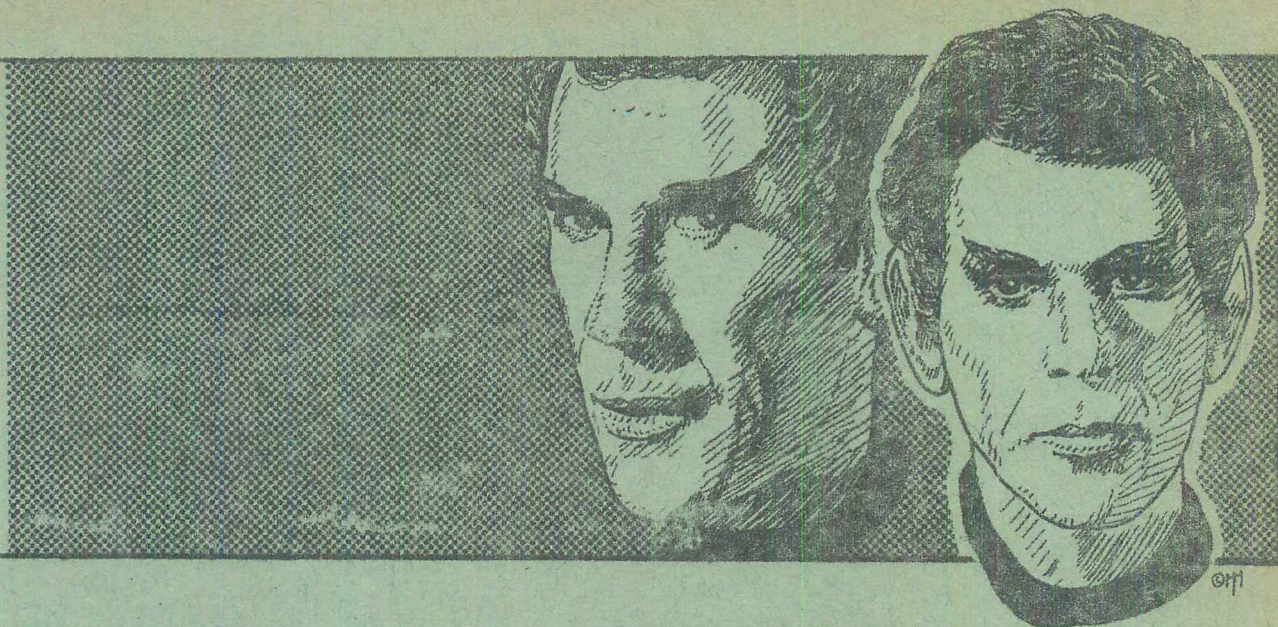
"I still don't think this is going to work."

"Pessimist," said the Commander, leaning back in her chair. "Our plans have been most carefully laid, I assure you."

Tal began pacing back and forth in front of the Commander's desk. "Carefully! This whole mission is a perfect way to get yourself killed. Or worse," he added as an afterthought. "They--"

"Might scratch the paint of your precious ship, which is what you're really worried about. All ship captains are alike--which is one of the reasons we think we can pull this off. Kirk will be so anxious to get his darling Enterprise back to Federation space intact that he won't wonder (I hope) too much as to how he did it." She glanced at the desk clock. According to the last report, moments ago, the Federation ship was now into Romulan space.





The Commander felt a squeeze of excitement at the pit of her stomach. After all the planning, all the careful laying of bait, the time for real action was almost upon her. The Commander was rather looking forward to a long, interesting, and comfortable sojourn at Federation expense. Unlike most planted agents, she would be entering enemy territory in a glare of publicity, and under circumstances that would make it clear that she would be unable to return to home space in safety.

Instead of the usual problems encountered in attempting to fund intelligence operations, she would be supported by soft-hearted (and equally soft-headed) Federation funding. Such support could doubtless be augmented by fees for tridee show appearances and articles for popular periodicals. The entire affair appealed to what several of her superiors and numerous fellow agents considered to be a peculiarly perverted sense of humor.

...or...

Things are Seldom What They Seem

by Barbara Wenk

There was a muttered comment from Tal.

"I don't believe I quite heard that, Captain."

An expression of deepest foreboding on his face, Tal said, "I said I still don't like it."

"Your approval is not required, Captain," the Commander said. "And I suggest that you go to the bridge now. We should be picking up our gullible intruders very soon."

Tal, looking unhappy, saluted and left. The Commander forced herself to remain seated, outwardly impassive. Although she had several tentative plans of action in mind, the actual events of the next few hours would be dictated by whatever ploys Captain Kirk would choose to utilize to gain the Empire's cloaking device--a very specially designed model--for his Federation.

She wondered, idly, whether Kirk would try to use his own personal brand of one-to-one diplomacy. She rather hoped he would. The Commander was not without expertise in Standard Information Gathering Technique Number One herself. Such a course of action, in addition to being a pleasant way to pass the time, would hold the added advantage of providing her with Captain Kirk as a ready-made champion. Kirk, if she judged the reports correctly, would never believe that a woman whom he had persuaded of the error of her political ways would ever recover her wits enough to backslide.

* * * * *

After the classic 'death' scene in the ship's brig, the Commander, hard put to maintain a straight face, hastily returned to her quarters. Tal followed shortly thereafter.

The Commander, swinging around in her chair as he entered, said, "It is really quite remarkable; they are reacting almost exactly as predicted. They have sent the--er--corpse back to the Enterprise?"

"Yes," Tal said. "By the way, Commander; I'm curious--what explanation did they give for violation of the treaty borders?"

"They--" The Commander stopped. When she began again, the incipient tremor had been banished from her voice. "The First Officer of the USS Enterprise has reported, 'on his honor as a Vulcan,' and as all the galaxy has been repeatedly told, a Vulcan cannot lie--"

"What a charming and convenient story," interjected Tal.

"Isn't it?--that the strain of command has driven Captain Kirk insane. Kirk has therefore ordered the ship into the Neutral Zone, without Starfleet's knowledge, to satisfy his craving for glory. Furthermore--and stop that laughing, Tal!"

The Commander's own vocal control broke, but she managed, with great effort, to finish the story. "And Spock stood there, l-lapping up all that n-nonsense about Vulcan integrity and--and s-s-superiority--he's as bad an actor as you are, Captain--" She choked slightly, and began coughing.

Tal, leaning heavily on the desk, managed to regain some measure of solemnity. "My favorite bit was that melodramatic murder scene. The famous Vulcan Death Grip . . . "

"Of which no one has ever heard," said the Commander unsteadily. "And now for the great escape, I think."

Tal was suddenly completely sober. "Let us hope that luck continues to favor us, Commander. Since only a few of us are aware that the Enterprise is supposed to escape, the Empire may find itself in the embarrassing position of presenting a decoration to some overeager helmsman who's wiped out a top agent and a year of work!"

"Not to mention that lovely custom-crafted cloaking device," she said dryly. "I hope they won't be too upset when it blows out half of the ship's circuitry within twelve hours. But then, they'll have me."

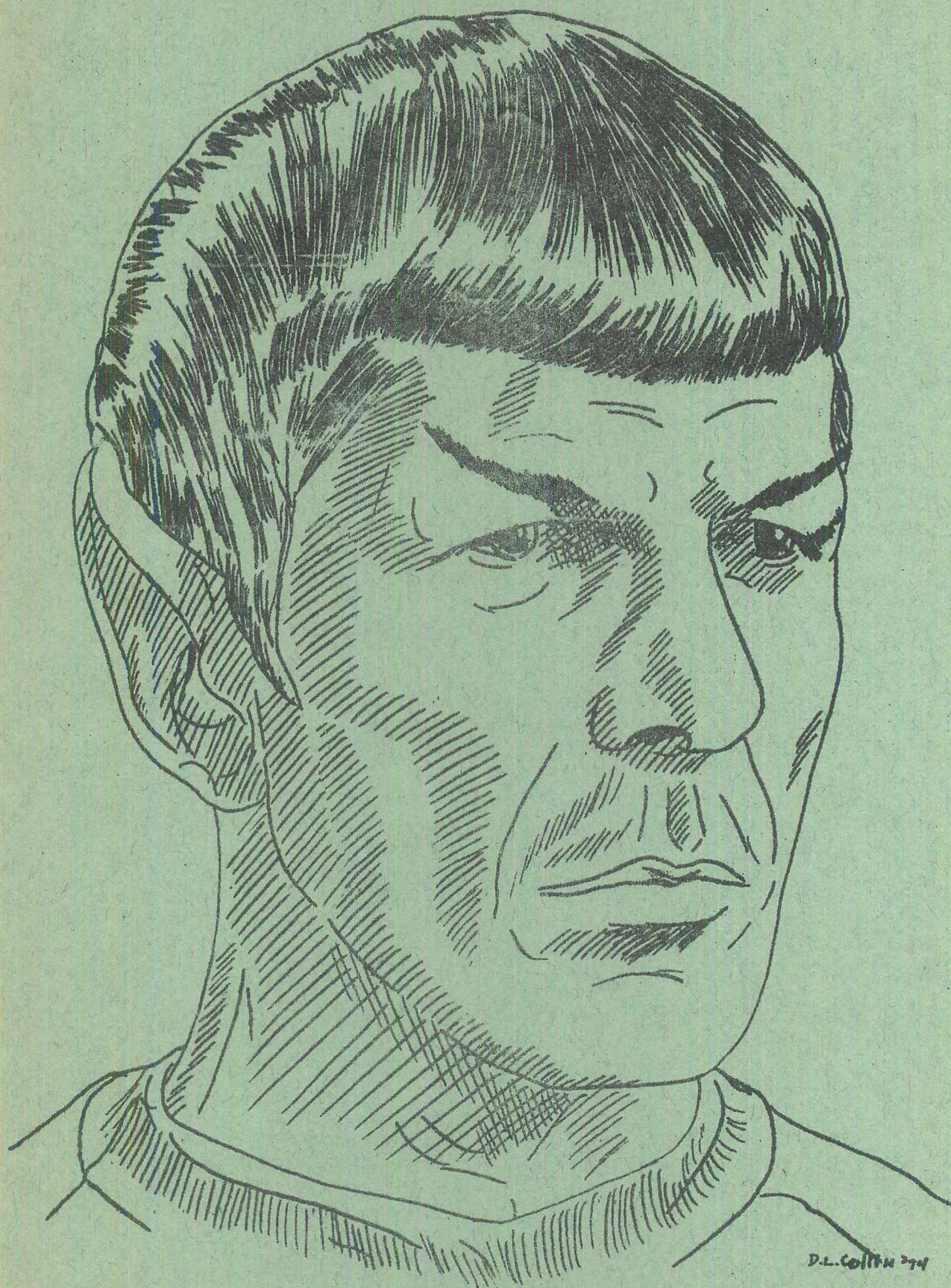
"Won't they wonder why such a top-secret device isn't surrounded by guards and alarms? Or why it WORKS on an alien ship?"

"Your job, Captain, is to press them so hard they don't have time to notice." The Commander had always felt that this was one of the weakest areas in the entire plan, but she wasn't about to feed Tal's anxieties.

There was a subdued chirp from the intercom. "That's your signal," said the Commander. "Spock will be here in a moment for our intimate dinner. Goodbye, Captain. It's been a pleasure."

"Goodbye, Commander." Tal hesitated. Obviously, 'have a good trip' and 'don't forget to tape' were inappropriate. He strongly suspected that 'be careful' would engender a withering reply. "Do you have everything you need . . . ?"

"Go on, Tal--I'm quite sure the Federation will manage to provide me with a toothbrush!"



The door slid shut behind Tal. It opened a minute later to allow Spock to enter.

The Commander, her mind primarily concerned with what might be happening elsewhere on the ship, managed to get through dinner with the Vulcan without remembering much about the conversation. She was rather worried about Tal's ability to act his role. Like most of the regular military, he felt that Intelligence work was sneaky and underhanded. Which, the Commander reflected, was quite true. . . .

* * * * *

"You state the obvious, Spock!" If she'd known that she was going to have to listen to almost half an hour of Spock's Romulan Right of Statement, she would have been tempted to refuse the whole assignment. How long could it take to hook in a cloaking device, anyway? Just as the Commander was afraid of falling asleep from sheer stupefaction at the Vulcan's incredible display of linguistic virtuosity, she noticed the beginning sparkles of a transporter beam surrounding Spock.

'And about time--I was beginning to be afraid they were going to leave him with us!' she thought. She stepped quickly around the desk and flung her arms around the Vulcan. With what she considered to be great restraint, she refrained from placing her hands firmly over his mouth.

* * * * *

"It will be our secret," the Commander said softly to Spock. 'And I'd love to know,' she thought, 'exactly what he thinks I'm talking about. Be obscure and everyone thinks you must be profound.'

She turned and followed Spock along the curving corridor. He stopped in front of a door. "Your quarters, Commander."

The Commander inclined her head gracefully at the Vulcan, and entered the cabin.

"Peace and long life, Commander." Spock gave the Vulcan salute.

She responded in kind, adding a soulful, yearning look for good measure. As the door closed, an expression of smug satisfaction covered her face. Despite her assurances to Tal and the other two ship captains involved, much of this operation had seemed to hinge on the unlikeliest of contingencies.

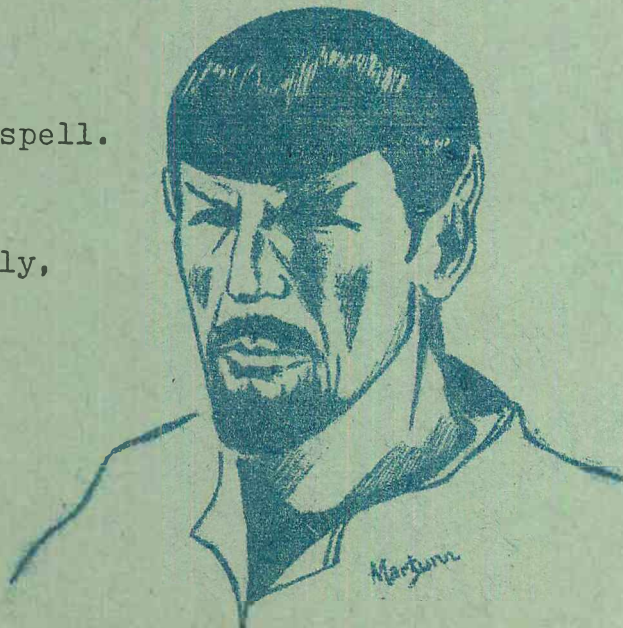
But the Federation had bitten, and so hard that it was going to chip some teeth. Feeding false information into their system was going to be simplicity itself--talk about gullible minds! How anyone, however well-primed, could believe that a device intended for an Empire ship would work on a Federation vessel, and do so without any alterations, was hard to understand.

Suddenly tired, the Commander kicked off her shoes and stretched out on the bed. 'Some people,' she thought, sliding into sleep, 'will believe anything.'

THE ENEMY
Nancy Giudice

I have to learn it, time and again.
You are my enemy.
Still I cannot understand,
fall back into trust by habit.
Oh, my valiant foe,
I am aching, aching,
wanting to rest,
wanting to know--peace.
Oh, you were my knight
in shining armor come
to release me from the evil spell.
How well you gave me
all I longed for;
Home, love, the chains
of children, golden and lovely,
to wrap around my throat.

My enemy, I would go
where freedom was,
whence you rescued me
so long ago.



ELIZABETH CARRIE LINES WE'D LIKE TO HEAR

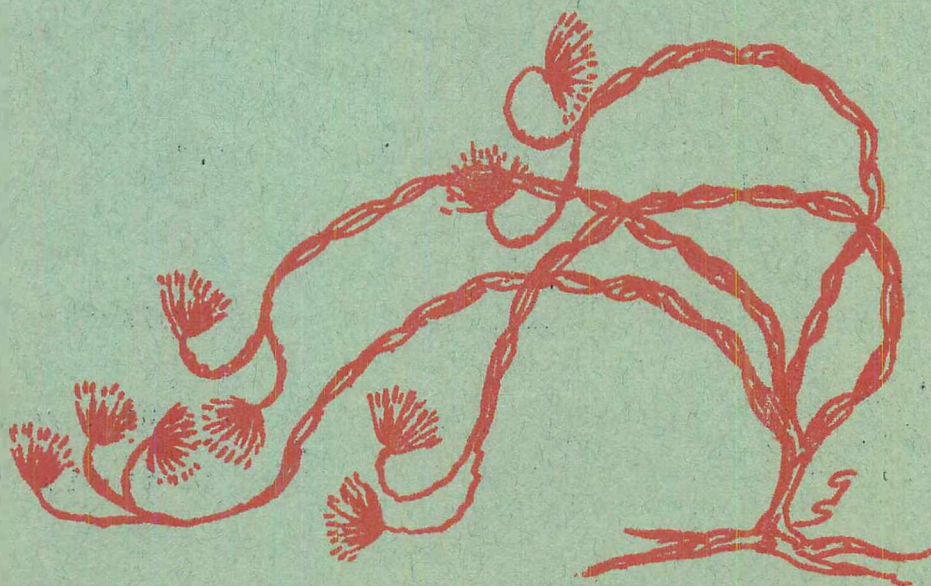
SPOCK: "Dr. McCoy said you were acting like a wild man."
KIRK: "That's the last time I try to teach him to dance."

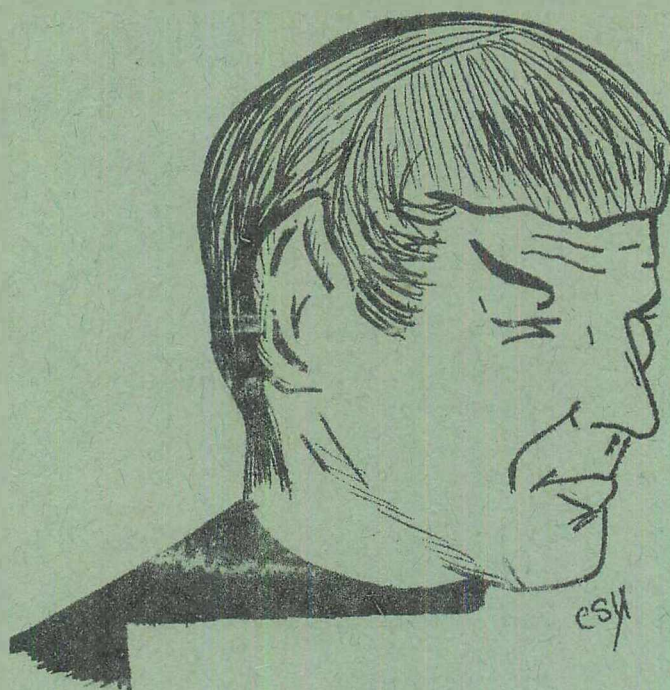
KIRK: "He has xenopolycythemia."
SPOCK: "Sure, that's easy for you to say."

KIRK: "Where'd you get the antiques?"
SPOCK: "Ambassador Sarek and his wife are my parents."

SPOCK: "We are in the hands of an adolescent."
MCCOY: "What do you mean--'we'?"
KIRK: "What do you mean--'adolescent'?"

KIRK: "He'll recommend those three words even over 'I love
you.' "
UHURA: "Open hailing frequencies?"





SPOCK: "Such opportunities are extremely rare."

CYRANO JONES: "Once in a lifetime. It not only slices and dices, it chops and peels. . . ."

SAREK: "He chose to devote his knowledge to Star Fleet instead of the Vulcan Science Academy."

SPOCK: "True. Vulcans never could appreciate a good elephant joke."

SPOCK: "It is a powerful recruiting inducement."

MCCOY: "A poster of Nomad?"

SPOCK: "Dr. Sevrin is insane."

KIRK: "Just because he said plomeek soup is for sissies?"

SPOCK: "I accept, on your word, that I did it. But I do not know why. Nor do I remember doing it."

UHURA: "Boy, that's the last time I accept an invitation from you to go see your etchings!"

SPOCK: "Something happens to us at this time; almost--an
insanity--you--no doubt would find it distasteful--"
KIRK: "Thanks for the warning. Let me know when it starts."

NOMAD: "The sterilization procedure against your ship was
unnecessary."

KIRK: "I resent that!"

SPOCK: "Don't take it so hard."

KIRK: "Sure, it's not going to make any difference to your
love life."

SPOCK: "I resent that."

KIRK: "He's dead."

NOMAD: "Insufficient response."

KIRK: "Oh, you've seen the show before?"

SALISH: "Behold a god who bleeds!"

KIRK: "I never said I was perfect."

SCOTT: "That thing did something to Lt. Uhura--"

MCCOY: "I am a doctor--I'm allowed to do things."

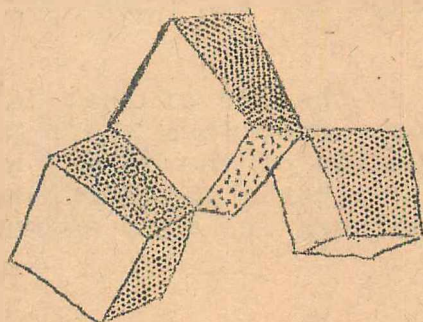
COMMISSIONER HEDFORD: "I feel infuriated, deeply put upon, and
absolutely outraged."

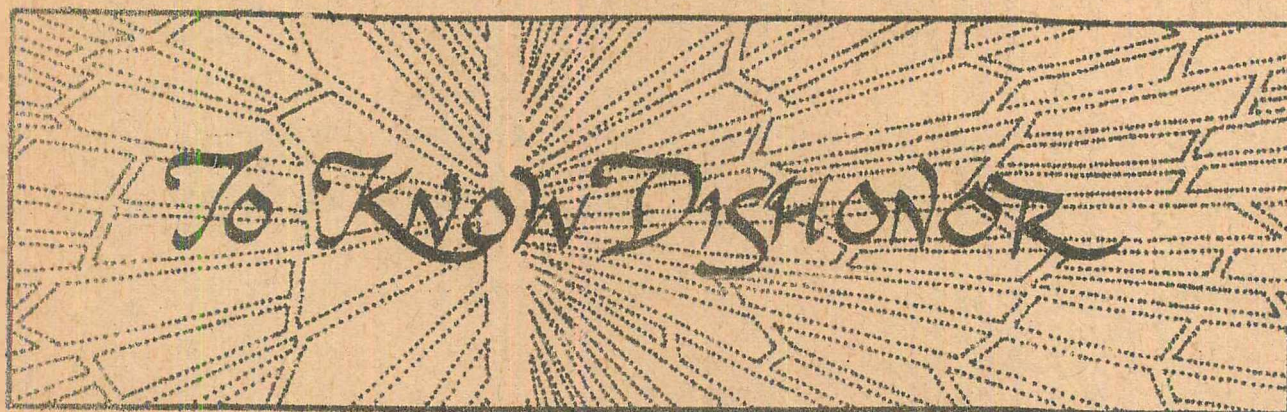
KIRK: "Listen, I don't like blind dates any more than you do."

MCCOY: "He was worse than dead."

KIRK: "You mean--"

MCCOY: "Yes. He was on SPACE: 1999."





C. W. WALKER

By FERN MARDER & CAROL WALSKE

THE PROTAGONISTS--

KOR ALKARIN--The Ormen, the Emperor of Nu Ormenel nu Kilin-garlan, the Kilingon Empire. Once known as Kor Kothir, famed warrior and member of the elite Legion of Honor, until boldness and arrogant intelligence made him a target for a cowardly, reactionary military, and a self-fearing Ormen Alargor. For his 'mistakes,' Kor Kothir was convicted of treason, in a quick military trial, and sent to Salisa Alsa Orunar--prison planet, place of Chaos. He escaped. He sparked the long-overdue revolution, unleashed all his pent-up energies on it, and found success and bitter glory. At the end, he killed the Ormen Alargor in Challenge and was named the new Ormen, Kor Alkarin Tertemisar.

After the revolution, at the end of that fated year, the Aurhkeenau (Organians) disappeared, when their planet's sun went super-nova. The nursemaids of the galaxy were gone, and the Treaty was invalidated. Alkarin made preparations for war with the Federation, and when the time seemed right, he struck.

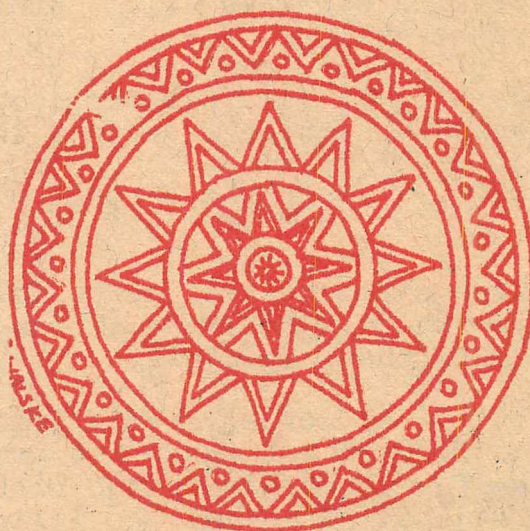
KARRAS KOTHIR--Kor's second son, 18 years younger than his brother Karan, the Emis of krasaia Kothir (Head of the Kothir domain). Karras chose to retain the name Kothir, given to him at birth, rather than call himself Taralkarin, son of Alkarin. He remained Karras Kothir until well into adulthood.

When his father was imprisoned, Karras was taken from krasaia Kothir for safety. He lived first in neighboring krasaia Kusseremi and later, during the revolution, moved west to the home of Kor's friend, Kang Keorl. Karras did not leave krasaia Keorl until after his father was named the new Ormen.

Like his father, Karras is sharpwitted and strongwilled. He is torn between the honor and the annoyance of being the Ormen's son.

KANG KEORL--Kor's oldest friend, close as a brother to him since childhood. Kang is a man of strong and capricious mood, easy prey to joy or fury. Before the revolution, Kang was a Kfar, or Commander, in the Tasrakirs--the Space Service--as Kor had been. Now, under Alkarin, he is a Vakkfar, or Fleet Commander, the Ormen's liaison for the planets of the Central Suns, and sometime Emis of krasaia Keorl.

In the years that Karras lived in krasaia Keorl, he grew very close to Kang, looking upon him as his sashakra, his 'parent not of the flesh.' Kang, in turn, openly accepted Karras as a son. Even after Kor returned, and Karras left the krasaia, Kang remained a dear friend, a mentor, who continued to see to some of Karras' training when his father, the Ormen, could not.



Kang Keorl woke suddenly. His eyes opened on darkness; he stayed quiet, waiting. It was an intruder; he knew it by its body warmth. He grabbed the stranger, taking him off-balance.

"A cold and dark night, isn't it?" said a voice just a few inches from him. Though the man was pinned in a rather uncomfortable position, he spoke easily, even amusedly.

Kang let go abruptly, as if burned. He said, very slowly, "Do you mind if we have light?"

"If you need it."

"I want you to see my face," replied Kang grimly as he fumbled for the small control set in the wall. One yellow light, dim enough to stare at without blinking, came on behind the wall.

The light revealed Kor Alkarin, sitting cross-legged on the bed, grinning. "Your ferocious expression lacks sincerity," he remarked.

Kang sat up. He leisurely leaned against the headboard and looked Kor over. His liege-lord and lifetime friend looked tired, a little unhappy, out of sorts with himself and the world's order. "Returned from the battlefield so soon, Black Wolf?"

Kor grimaced. "This war doesn't need wolves; it needs better equipment, higher-powered weapons, and much money with which to impress the other side. They don't want to fight, they merely want to scare us with their display of power . . . "

"In other words, the war goes ill." Kang's terse honesty cut through Kor's ramblings.

Kor looked wide-eyed at him, his expression vulnerable. "It goes about as well as sand in a parched throat."

Kang smiled briefly. He asked soberly, "When do you want me to go back?"

"Soon. But there's plenty of time to talk of strategy. You've not even welcomed me home, my sour-tongued, stormy-faced brother." Kor grinned impudently.

"You're full of clever words, aren't you?" asked Kang dourly, then reached forward and threw his arms around Kor. The hilt of Kor's knife jabbed him in the ribs and the black uniform felt rough against his skin. He felt a sudden rush of joy. "Be welcomed, brother. We've suffered without you."

"Dying man's courtesies," Kor remarked cynically, and was astonished to see Kang draw back a full foot, his mirthful grin disappearing. "Aya, aya--not so bad as all that, is it?"

"Too many have died this winter," Kang muttered, bitterly. "But damn you, you wolfish murderer, it's so good to see you that my life doesn't matter. Now that you're back, son of Wargod Maraku, can you lead the battle here?"

Kor stared at him, bemused, his features showing pity, alarm, and a reawakened, reassumed commitment. He declared softly, "I've just come from a war. But I've found I can command just as well from here as in the middle of it. I return to the Kilingarlan to give all my love and honor to it." He paused. "Speaking of love, where is my son?"

Kang laughed abruptly. "Where do you expect? Sleeping."

"How is he?" Kor's question seemed normal enough, even casual, but Kang caught the overtone of strained concern. All was not well between father and son.

"He works hard and never complains. He misses you grievously."

"I'm home now," said Kor quietly.

"With how much time to give to your son?"

"Swallow your words and discover how sharp they are!"

Kang subsided. Kor watched him for a few moments, and then a gleam came to his eye. He suggested, "Why don't you rouse Karras? But don't tell him I'm home; just summon him here."

Karras Kothir iyo Taralkarin, Kor's son but not his declared heir, stumbled into the room a few minutes later, hand to face hiding a yawn. He blinked sleep-filled eyes and smothered a shout. He leaped at Kor, all traces of weariness gone, full of fire. "Akra!"

Kor crowed with genial laughter at his son's discomfited surprise, grabbed Karras and wrestled with him playfully. "I hear your sashakra Kang has been treating you well," he said.



Karras looked from his father to his foster-father with equal delight. "Yes," he answered happily. "Since the Academy closed down this winter, he's been training me."

Kor's arm encircled Karras' shoulders. "Good. You need it."

Kang prowled off to find food and drink for an early-morning welcome feast. He came back with wine and dried meat, smiling rather apologetically. Kor looked at the short rations but made no comment.

For a while they toasted each other with wildly implausible stories of invasions and battles and family feuds. But Kor's peace was short-lived, one of his war councillors called and asked for him, politely but insistently.

Kor got up from his lazy sprawl on the bed and straightened his clothing. "I'm sorry," he said simply to Kang and Karras, and left.

They gazed at each other. Kang noticed Karras' visible disappointment. He said nothing.

"There are still a few hours before sunrise," Karras said eventually. "I think I'll return to my bed."

Kang was about to recommend that solution when an idea struck him. "No. I'm tired of salt meat--let's go hunting."

Karras' expression went from instant pleasure to doubt. "In this mirk, and in this weather?"

"Why not?"

"Why not?" Karras echoed, and ran off to get ready.

The roof of the exercise arena had been retracted with the coming of the sun. The sand floor was slippery with moisture and the walls felt cold and damp.

Karras stood shivering in the open air, wondering if it was worth practice-fighting today at all. He glanced longingly at the racks of swords near him, but didn't dare to touch them.

Kang trotted into the arena, wearing a sand-colored exercise suit, short-sleeved and open at the neck. "We're in luck; the air isn't frozen this morning," he said cheerfully. "My excuses for being late."

"I thought my father would come to teach today, not you," said Karras somewhat stiffly. It was several days since his father's return.

Kang sent the Ormen's son a brief stare, then answered, "He knows I'm better with a sword than he; he's grateful that I'm willing to teach you." He paused at Karras' doubtful look, added, "I'm sorry to say I can't do it much longer. Within a week I must return to war."

"What will happen then?" asked Karras half anxiously, half bitterly. "Do you suppose the Ormen will find time for me? Do you suppose he even cares?"

"Karras!"

Karras shut up instantly, but did not apologize.

Kang gazed at him at length, then smiled musingly. Karras was merely voicing an opinion he held himself. "You sound just as spoiled and arrogant as Kor was." Karras looked back at him, aggressive and uncaring. "Let's not waste time, friend. At our last practice, I was teaching you the lunge. Do you remember it?"

Immediately Karras was at the rack, pulling out a long well-made duelling sword. "Not that one," said Kang, lifting one of the shorter swords with a blunted point. "You don't know how to use that one yet."

Karras thought he caught a hint of mockery in Kang's voice, and glanced resentfully at Kang's unblunted, finely crafted sword. It never left him, not even for practice; the swordsman insisted he could use no other blade. Karras didn't believe it.

At seventeen, Karras should have known how to use a sword already, but up until three years ago, when his father became the Ormen, his life had been quick-changing and unpredictable. His fight-training had begun at five years; sword-practice had begun at eight. Two years later, the revolution had broken out, and the only ones who were left behind were too young to know skill with weapons, like himself, or too old to handle a sword. Though legally an adult, Karras was unable to defend himself.

Kang was a highly skilled swordsman and thorough teacher. But he had very high standards and was particularly intolerant of mistakes. Today he was in a genial mood and teased Karras as his pupil tried some of the more difficult running lunges. Their weapons were sensitive to the weather, looking dull and graceless, moving sluggishly.

As the sun rose over the east wall of the arena, it struck the two figures moving together in a slow dance, each keeping the steps and moves of the lunges and parries simple and controlled. For a time it was beautiful to watch, as the young fighter gained more confidence in his earned skill and was able to find the rhythm of sword-fighting.

Kang picked up his speed and pushed Karras back with a series of short leaping lunges. Karras didn't like the sudden show of skill and tried to match it; he jumped to one side, away from Kang's steady advance, but slipped on wet sand and fell.

Kang lowered his sword and laughed. "A quick route to death," he commented good-humoredly.

Karras got up, angrily brushing sand off of himself. Without a word he cleaned the sword and reassumed his defensive stance.



Kang was pleased to notice a new alertness in Karras. The youngling was a little wild in his attacks, but had a true talent for evaluating and meeting an opponent's skills. Precision and control would come with practice. Kang moved on the defensive now, meeting Karras' attacks effortlessly, not using any of his strength, allowing himself to be driven back.

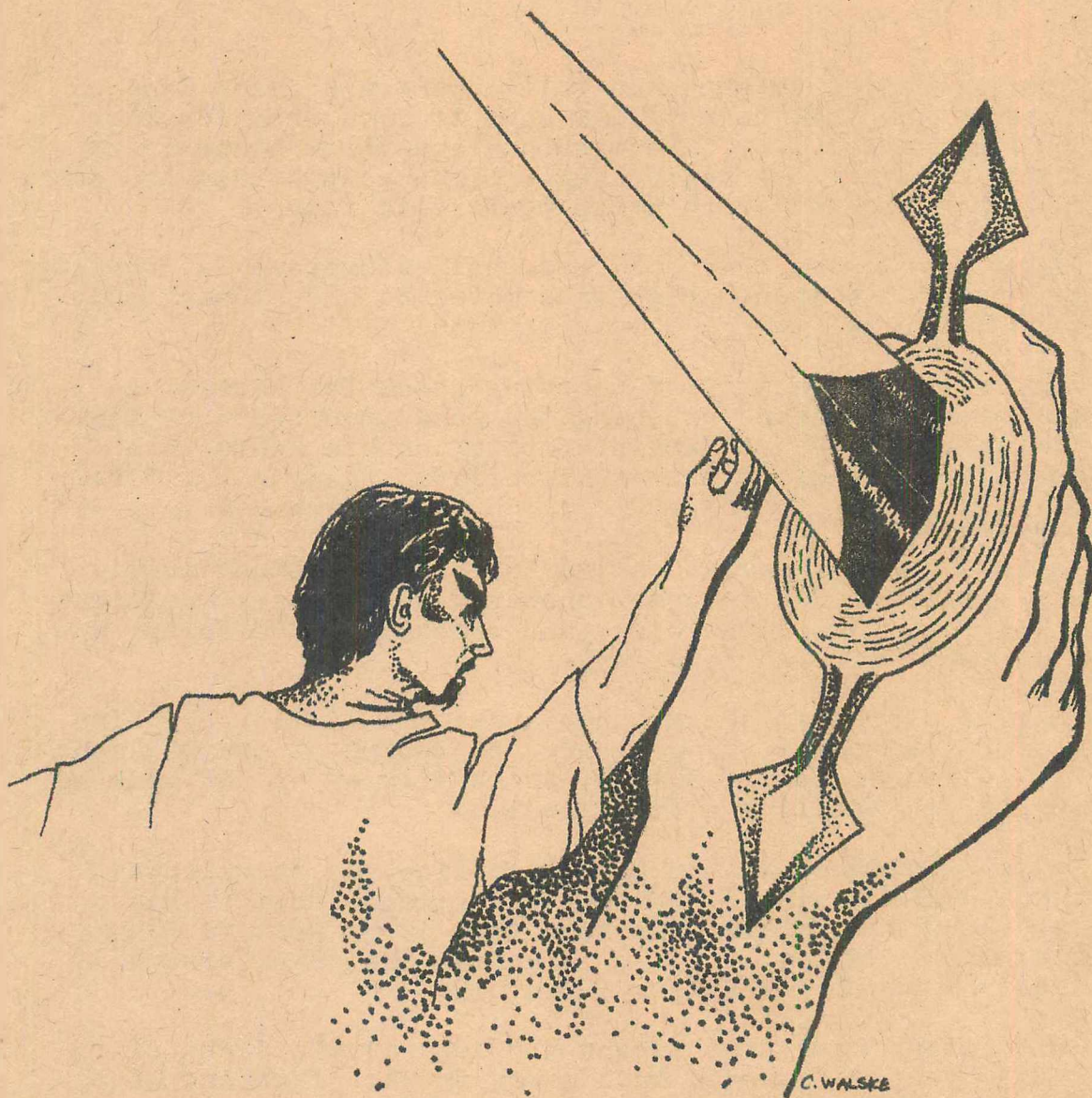
Momentarily he saw a weakness in Karras' guard. With a back-handed attack his blade met Karras' and swept it aside. Karras was suddenly unprotected and off-balance. In the same moment, Kang brought the sword up and followed through with a shallow sideways arc.

Karras yelled in surprised pain and nearly dropped his weapon as the point bit into his right arm. Kang drew the sword away and stood motionless, smiling a little.

"Guard your life," he said. "In a Challenge, you would have lost several minutes ago."

Karras' arm was already growing stiff. "I didn't know you had Challenged me," he retorted angrily.

Kang laughed drily. "I'm challenging your skill. So far, I think I've won."



They resumed their fight. Kang, ever a smile on his face, danced in his attacks, weaving a web of steel around Karras. Karras defended himself as well as he could, feeling slightly desperate, wondering if Kang would be fool enough to want his death. He was sweating, his breath was coming hard, and the sword was just not obeying his muscles' volition. He resented Kang's deliberate show of skill; his own moves were clumsier because of it.

When Kang narrowly missed pinking him for the second time, Karras became infuriated. He swung at Kang, who parried the blow neatly, grinning, then stepped back a pace and let his sword-point drop, relaxing his guard.

Karras wanted to show his skill, wanted to meet Kang on equal terms, so that he wouldn't have to face that mocking, patronizing smile He crouched and threw himself and the sword forward. He heard Kang's blade go past him too late, and felt his blunted sword's tip meet solid flesh.

Kang gave out a cry, a hissed, half-desperate "Ai Maraku!" and dropped his weapon. His hands moved to his stomach and clutched futilely.

There was an instant of unmoving shock for Karras, an instant of hearing wind brushing the sand underfoot, of feeling the sweat break out in his armpits, on his hands, his forehead; an instant of bitter disbelief. "Kang . . . " he whispered.

Automatically, Karras called for aid. He stood numbly by Kang until the doctor came, answered a few sharp questions about the striking of the blow, and watched as the doctor and two assistants carried Kang away.

Karras stared at the ground, shaking a little, cold inside. For the moment, Kang lived. He looked at the wet sand and the fallen weapons. Slowly, as stiffly as an old man, he walked inside, trailing a damp towel.

At the entrance to the Ormen's office, he recollected himself and his manners. He slanted a glance down at his sweaty, bloodied clothes, but knew that if he went to clean up he'd never come back. . . . Wrapping the towel around his neck, he knocked softly and went in.

His father rose from behind his desk at the sight of him. His eyebrows lowered into a wry frown. "Karras, what sort of trouble have you gotten into now?"

"I-I hope I'm not disturbing you, Akra."

"No." Kor walked to within six feet of Karras--a formal distance--and smelled the air full of worry and fear. He asked sharply, "Whose blood is that on you?"



C. WALSH

Karras looked down from Kor's eyes to the blood on his arm and the side of his tunic. "Mine. We were--I was sword-fighting, sir." As Kor gazed at him, questioning, Karras knew that time was stretching out and that it was entirely his own fault. He didn't know how to admit his stupidity; fear and exhaustion welled up inside him.

"Did Kang wound you for a mistake?" Kor asked, the slight scorn in his voice prompted by unease.

The words hurt, but Karras saw his opening. "Yes, Akra. He wounded me in the arm because I'd made a stupid move. So I got mad and attacked him."

Kor took a step--almost a lunge--forward, then stood rigidly, the barriers up in his face, his eyes fixed on Karras. He caught the full answer before it left Karras' tongue; he saw it in the droop of Karras' shoulders, the fear and self-reproach in his eyes.

"He was laughing," said Karras dismally. "I was angry. I lunged, the point of my sword taking him in the stomach above the hip-bone."

The Ormen stared, then turned his back on him. In an instant he was at the comm module at his desk, impatiently asking if Vakkfar Kang Keorl was at the hospital and what his status was.

Kor heard the doctor's words and closed his eyes in mute pain. He felt bitter fury at his son's folly, and despair at his friend's trouble. He opened his eyes and glared at Karras. "Take privacy in your rooms, stranger, and don't go past those walls!"

Karras stiffened at the formal anger in his father's voice. "Akra, how is--"

"Out!"

Karras knew that in another second his father, Kang's oath-brother, would strike him. "Yes, sir."

He fled to his apartment, speaking to no one, refusing to recognize the questioning glances of those he passed in the corridors.

As Karras stepped through the door to his outer room, he caught a glimpse of himself in a mirror. The bedraggled, bloody figure there looked neither like an honorable man nor like a skilled swordsman.

Almost mechanically, Karras headed toward the bathroom. After dropping the towel in a laundry bin, he cautiously stripped off his tunic. The bleeding from his wound had nearly stopped, but began again as he pulled away the sleeve.

He washed the cut carefully, as he, and every Kilingon child, had been taught at an early age. The wound was clean

and precise; the blade had found its mark expertly and had withdrawn without faltering. Kang had shown him what might have been done to him in real combat, without disabling him. The code of the practice fight; the code he had broken.

The idea of privacy, in word and thought and living-space, had been an automatic privilege for so long that Karras had never recognized its double-edged nature. His privacy was also an enforced seclusion, a lonely confinement that threw him against himself.

In three days, Karras rearranged his rooms twice. Scared, mad at himself, and blindly stubborn, he couldn't let himself relax; he threw his nervous energy into a dozen projects that went nowhere. At night he sat on the windowsill and stared out for hours. His view: the wide river Alruen and its source in snow-covered mountains.

He ate very little. A man brought him food, handing it to him at the door and leaving silently.

Whenever Karras grew tired, his mind was apt to wander into dangerous realms. He was plagued by thoughts of Kang, images of Kang and his father together. A well-developed sense of obligation refused to let him rest.

He asked himself what sort of penalty Kang could impose on him, but he had no way to know. His imagination was very fertile; so was his empathy. After an extremely vivid dream in which the roles were reversed, he knew exactly what revenge he would take, were he the victim of such an assault.

For all the blood and pain Kang had given, he must offer his blood, his pain. And, so that it would be a gift in addition to the required punishment, he should suggest it himself, and thereby make the needful sacrifice.

Even as he thought about it, he shuddered. His stomach felt numbed, his senses were dazed; as if in a sighted dream, he could feel the blow striking him . . . but the pain that would come from that blow he could not foresee.

"To go forward, into the dark, naked, knifeless, nerveless," he whispered, repeating one long-dead, proud warrior's definition of life.

The choice was his, of course. He didn't have to take that path toward honor. His status would be recovered if he took whatever punishment Kang demanded of him. What status is there, though, in being held in contempt by a father who

expected the highest honor of everyone? Could the son of the Ormen take a coward's route?

Karras stared down at himself. He was no weakling. Though the war had disrupted his training, the capabilities were all there, ripe for flowering. It was the stunting of his education, so to speak, that continually frustrated and hampered him.

I have the physical strength to withstand such punishment, he told himself. Have I the emotional courage to ask for it?

On the fourth morning of his imprisonment, Karras sent a formally worded appeal to the Ormen, that he be allowed to speak to Kang Keorl, with Kor present.

Karras walked the distance from his quarters to the hospital with quick, even steps. For all Kor's anger and disappointment with his son, he at least still held some trust in Karras' discipline; he had been sent for by message and permitted to make his way to Kang's room unaccompanied.

Karras stood a moment before the closed door, then knocked softly. The voice that answered was his father's. "Enter."

Karras opened the door and, for a second, lost the strength that had propelled him this far. Kor was sitting on a straight chair at Kang's bedside, looking tired, and as if he had been in that exact position for quite some time. A drawn face and over-tense muscles revealed his lack of sleep. Emotional exhaustion, though subtly marked, was evident to his son's practiced eye.

Beside him lay Kang. How terribly out of place the warrior seemed, confined to a sickbed. Kang's face was haggard; he had obviously lost weight, and there were lines etched in his face which bespoke the pain in his body. He lay under an insulating blanket, light enough not to put any pressure on his wound, but specially woven to ward off any chill. It also, of course, hid the wound from Karras' sight.

Kang gazed at Karras as he entered and walked over to the foot of the bed. Karras almost called him "Sashakra." "Good evening," he said, quietly.

Kang nodded slightly. Again, it was Kor who spoke. "Sinish, Karras."

"Sinish." It was better to avoid titles with his father as well, for, in truth, he did not know how Kor would answer: as father, the Ormen, or Kor Alkarin, Kang's brother.

Karras gave his attention to Kang. "How are you?" The words sounded inane.

"I wish they'd tell me," Kang began slowly. "I'm alive. I like to think I'll stay that way for a while."

Karras couldn't be sure whether the comment was meant to be sarcastic. He hoped it was simply motivated by Kang's usual light-heartedness; he would have given anything to see the grin that only a few days ago had so infuriated him.

"Well, Karras." Kor's words broke his reflection abruptly.

"Sir?"

"You asked for this meeting. What have you to say?"

Karras drew a deep breath and prepared himself mentally. He hoped that he would get through it with only minimal interruption from his audience. "Thank you for letting me come. I had to speak with . . . Emisrafkir Keorl, and I feel it's best that you hear what I have to say to him. I don't intend to make any excuses for what I did. I acted like a spoiled, undisciplined child. It was . . . it was stupid! I let my pride take the place of reason. It was like all the times I've thrown my knife at a wall when I've been frustrated, only. . . ."

Kang broke in, "Only there weren't any handy walls." There was an almost gentle tone in his voice; he knew that it wasn't easy for Karras to admit to weakness.

"No, sir." Karras looked down. At the time, Kang had been nothing more than the object of his fury. He hadn't been Sashakra Kang, the man he loved even as his father; he had been some alien tormentor who had dared to mock the Ormen's son.

Karras continued, "I have disgraced my status, and am without honor. All I have left is the right, the obligation, to bear punishment equal with my crime." Karras paused and slipped into a somewhat more formal mode of Agavoi. "I can't know what you have considered as a fitting penalty. If I might be permitted to suggest it myself, however, I would ask to be dealt a blow equal to that which I gave you, Emisrafkir Keorl. With the same sword, or one of your own choosing."

Kor and Kang started at the same instant, Kor stiffening in his chair and Kang, unfortunately, trying to sit up, only to fall back against the pillow with a groan. The fact of Karras' discipline was a foregone assumption. But there was something in his words that stirred up thoughts of Orashath-

navi, the patterns of Challenge. It was almost unconceivable that this young man, who only four days before had committed an act of unparalleled dishonor and irrationality, should now stand in front of them and, with all the presence of a statesman, pronounce such a sentence upon himself.

The concept of pain for pain was deeply rooted in kilingaven laws and tradition. But here there was an added measure for consideration; even with identical wounds, it was quite possible that, for whatever difference in physical stamina, one man, if not both, might die.

Kang looked up at Karras. The boy's feelings were so easily visible. Kang saw shame, fear, and a sort of bleak dignity. "In truth, Karras, reparation has not been the uppermost thought in my mind," he said slowly. "I'll need to consider what you've said."

Karras inclined his head briefly. He glanced almost pleadingly in Kor's direction. "Akra . . . ?" he ventured.

Kor raised his head slowly. No emotion at all showed on his face. "It is not my decision to make," he said, rather brusquely.

A familiar look of pain and disappointment crossed Karras' face. Kor didn't see it, but Kang did. Karras bent his head and turned toward the door.

Once Karras was gone, the two men found the atmosphere changed. Kang felt a good deal better. Karras, Kor's unpredicable son, had done what neither of them expected. Kang respected Karras' audacity and wholly approved of making Karras feel the kind of pain that he himself was feeling now.

Kor was weary past the point of humor. He could see the utter necessity for the discipline that Karras had described--yet he rejected it at the same moment.

Kang's voice broke into his thoughts. "He's right, you know."

Kor lifted his head and laid a hand on Kang's bed, a few inches from Kang's sword-arm. "Yes."



"I'm afraid to admit that I can't take the position of honor," said Kang lightly, his gaze wandering from Kor's eyes to his hands and to the tiny signs that bespoke his feelings. "Karras has suggested an obligation I'm physically unable to fulfill."

Kor didn't say anything. He looked away from Kang's face, lowering his head to avoid seeing him at all. Kang was asking him for a commitment that he couldn't make. "Who fills it then?"

After a silence he looked up again to find Kang watching him steadily, his brown eyes gently insistent. "Consider a few opinions," Kang said thoughtfully. "Someone will punish Karras; I don't know whom to ask yet. If the avenger thinks I will die, then his blow will surely kill Karras." Kor winced, but nodded. "There's a stronger truth, Raksha. It may be that Karras will die, and I live. When that happens we part company, you and I."

Kor stared at him. "I don't see that."

Kang looked at him compassionately. Kor was unable to face the truth, and Kang couldn't blame him for it. "Think it through, brother. You'd either demand my death or wish it privately. I'd probably offer it myself, if that came between us."

There was a pause. Kor stirred when the tension grew too much to bear. "You want me to deliver the penalty, don't you?"

Kang answered quickly and directly. "I'd be a fool to say no. You're the only man who can do it."

Kor came to some internal decision, and when he met Kang's eyes his gaze was direct and untroubled. "Especially considering that Karras' sword should have struck me, not you. It was me he was aiming at; your more than substantial shadow merely got in the way."

Kang couldn't resist. Dryly: "That more than substantial shadow is growing less and less, unsubtle friend."

Kor grimaced, then smiled with Kang. "There are less drastic ways to lose weight . . ." he murmured. His grave expression returned quickly. "Frankly, I offer this unwillingly, but if you ask it of me, I will do it."

Kang answered softly, "In truth, I can't ask it of you, Raksha. But if you offer I can most thankfully accept."

"I'll do it," said Kor simply.

Their eyes met. Kang nodded once, acknowledging Kor's commitment. "Agreed," he declared very softly and very wearily. "My thanks."

Kor noticed, at long last, the pain in Kang's face. His eyes were overly bright and his skin had lost its color; he was lying very still, very stiff. Kor looked down, worried and embarrassed. "I'm sorry for my thoughtlessness, Rakari. You should have been asleep long ago."

"Oh, shut up," Kang demanded peremptorily. "I'll die only if I feel like it, understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Kor meekly. "And I wish you a good night."

"Osta vinithald," replied Kang. As the door clicked shut, he cursed his pain in a whisper and tried again to find a comfortable position in the bed.

Kor paced across the wide empty room to look out the window. It was still snowing. He stook his head in grim wonder at the sight; Wintergod Olsovoru's punishment, snow and ice and deadly cold. His frustration at the weather only added to his frustration with Karras--a sense of outrage, of despair, of not being able to do anything for fear of doing wrong.

The doctor had practically drawn Kor a diagram of where the sword should strike. The blow should be delivered quickly, with sure aim. Kor picked up Kang's long, tapered sword and resolutely fastened its harness about his shoulders. Like a wraith, he silently left.

The shelter from the storm's fury was a place for dancing, for singing, and for the recognition of honor or dishonor. A fire blazed warmly in the center Well of the vast room. The warm color of the fire cast reflections and shadows on dark wooden walls and a flagstone floor.

Tonight the fire was a source of torment; unbearable warmth and a light that pervaded everywhere. Where Karras stood he saw directly into the fire's blue heart. Its blaze was further reminder of the impending punishment; to him the flames were as the bright pain of a sword's bite.

Patiently, but with mounting fear, Karras awaited his discipline. At the sound of footsteps, he lowered his head and stared determinedly at the patterning of stones in the floor. He heard the door shut, ensuring total privacy. The steps came closer to him and stopped.



Karras dared a swift glance upward, and regretted it forever. Bleak dismay sat on Kor's features, a look of anger and sorrow mingled. How could he have ever thought Kor would be happy to punish him?

"Are you cold?" asked Kor hesitantly, for Karras wore nothing.

"The fire keeps me warm, sir," Karras lied.

A law-enforcer of Orashathnavi challenges would have been able to give out punishment non-committally, but Kor knew he couldn't ignore the turmoil within. If the blow were struck with anger, Karras would die instantly. If the blow were struck with fear, again Karras would die, slowly.

Kor strove for a balance between the flame and the ice. He stared at his second son, his neglected favorite, in slow forced appraisal. He said the name softly, "Karras," and was relieved when the youngling did, finally, look up. He went on, in a spill of words, "I don't want to do this! If anyone

but Kang had required this commitment, I would have refused; how can a man take a sword to his own son?" Like an echo after the cry, his anguish reverberated.

"I should have been your target. Then I could have Challenged you, and struck you rightfully, accepting the consequences without question. But you stupidly chose to wound Kang, and stupidly I agreed to collect Kang's debt. You take Kang's life, I take yours, and I am left with nothing."

Karras understood Kor's fury, and accepted it gladly. Death was the easy solution. At the slither of a sword being pulled abruptly from its sheath, he straightened, and stiffened his back muscles. His hands moved once, convulsively, to protect his bare flank. He pulled them back and held them clenched in fists at his sides. So that the sword would not come like a burning arrow out of the dark, he forced himself to keep his eyes open, and looked directly at his father.

Kor flinched from those eyes and quickly bent his head to examine Kang's sword. It was a trifle longer than his own, but in design, weight, and balance, it was a perfect example of the type of sword he had trained with.

He automatically took a pace forward with his right foot and held the sword ready, his body muscles both relaxed and controlled. He whispered, "In Maraku's name, please stand still, Karras." He lunged.

Karras almost welcomed the blow. He tried to call out to his father, but all that came out was a wordless, incoherent cry of pain. Blindly he fell to the cold stone floor.

Kang stared at the unexpected visitor. "Sinish."

Kor gave him a perfunctory nod of greeting and sat down. He seemed utterly spent.

Kang looked at him. "Is it done?"

"Yes."

"Is Karras--"

"I put Karras in the doctor's care."

Kang sought out less dangerous ground. "Where did you leave my sword?"

The fury Kor had been trying to control erupted. "I broke it!"

"You what?"

"The next time you teach a beginner, use a practice blade!"

Kang thought about that weapon's history and grew hot with anger. "You broke my sword?"

Kor glared at him. He spoke very evenly, using words of insult, and the simple syntax one would use to instruct a child. "I snapped it underfoot and threw it across the room. It was not fit. Karras' stupidity was obvious, but what of yours, master swordsman? If you hadn't insisted on using that sword I doubt if Karras would have attacked you!"

Kang ignored pride and honor, knowing the inevitable outcome of any fight with Kor. He lay silent, his mouth closed over harsh words.

"When you're well I'm sending you to war, Kang. But if Karras dies, I don't expect you to come back."

Not able to bear it, Kang cried out, "I warned you of that! Don't you think I know all this? Don't you find the price I'm paying high enough?"

Kor gazed at him narrowly. "The price I pay is higher still. Karras injured you in reckless fury, but you goaded him into it." He sounded angry and bewildered. "I was caught against my will in this folly. Kang, was I the only one who could discipline Karras?"

"Yes," answered Kang fiercely. "You had a price to pay as well. The price for neglecting your own son."

Anger left Kor, replaced by dismay. He said, with a bitter laugh rising in his throat, "For neglecting him I should nearly kill him? That's about as warped a view as my father held, when he used to beat me for his errors--" he broke off and stared at Kang. All strength gone, he whispered, "That isn't fair."

Kang regretted they had come to this. "Karras doesn't understand what you're doing to him, just as a young Kor Kothir didn't understand Kesan Kothir."

"I am not my father!"

"No. But you are his son. Don't fall prey to other shadows, in avoiding his!"

Kor smacked his right knee with his palm. "My father enjoyed misusing me. I don't like what's happening to Karras;

I don't like what I've had to do. Tonight Karras and I both paid the price of your pain with pain!"

"Disciplining your son is a father's duty. Misusing or neglecting him is a disgrace." Kang let his wrath show undisguised.

"Karras, as the Ormen's son, is expected to be better than all sons. Are you not also expected to be better than all fathers?"

Kor didn't dispute that. He nodded, shocked into silence by Kang's tempter.

"I'm sorry," Kang went on biting. "Sorry for myself, sorrier for Karras and his future, and you I pity most of all. Because I don't think you can change what you feel you must do. In that, the price you pay is beyond measure, Ormen Alkarin. If I die, fighting, remember me."

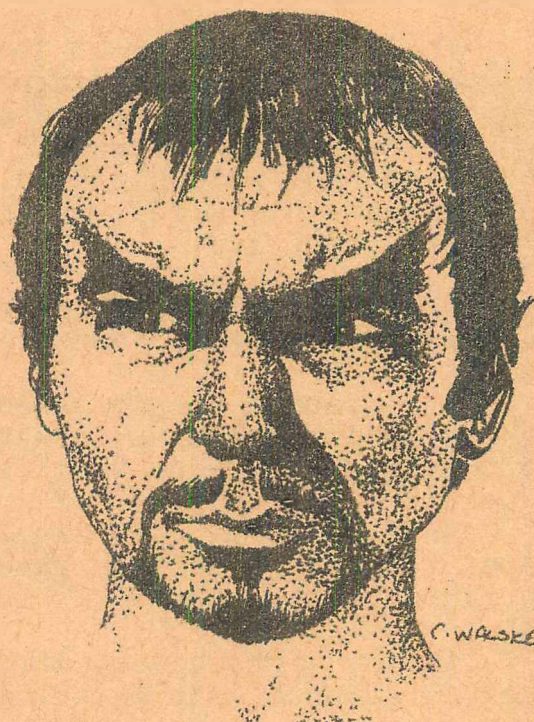
Kor's face twisted with shame. "I don't want to survive you or Karras," he said, almost in a whisper.

Kang sat on a bench at the edge of the arena, an unfamiliar role for him. He watched an equally unfamiliar scene: Kor and Karras at sword-practice. There was something in Kor's expression, perhaps the satisfaction of knowing that he was fulfilling his role as a father, that made Kang smile.

Karras lunged at Kor, who put the attack aside with an easy swipe of his blade. The parry sent Karras' sword sliding across the sandy floor to rest a few feet from Kang's seat. Kang reached over and picked it up as Karras approached. It was a different sword from the one Karras had used the day of their last practice, months before.

Karras slowed his step when he saw Kang with the blade, but was encouraged by his smile.

"Here, Karras. When you are good enough to beat your father, then I shall consider completing your training."



Kor grinned wryly at the words, sheathed his sword, and walked over wearing an exaggerated air of defiance. "Oh" he inquired sarcastically. "Who was it that taught you which end of your sword to grasp?" He turned to his son and benignly indicated Kang with his hand. "Kang was taught that his best weapons were his words, and so it's his mouth that has the greatest expertise."

"Then I shall teach Karras how to match the sharpness of his father's tongue," answered Kang composedly.

Kor assumed an expression of wounded dignity. "I asked you to train Karras as a swordsman, not as a diplomat. Or is it that you find your skill with a sword slipping?"

Kang rose, brought the blunted sword up, and pointed it at Kor with a certain gleam in his eye. "Would you like to find out the truth?"

Karras aggressively thrust himself into the middle of their argument. "Is watching you part of my training?"

Kor retorted sardonically, "Don't you think you could learn something from it?"

"Do you really want me to know which one of you is better?" challenged Karras.

Kang was a formidable opponent, even with a practice blade and after a long illness. Kor backed away from the idea. "We're both better than you are, and that's what counts. Let's get back to it."

"As you say." Karras reclaimed his sword. He didn't know if Kang and Kor were happy with the solution, but he was.



SWORDPLAY

by Fern Marder

Measure, lunge
parry, thrust.
The expert's skill,
the partner's trust,
Diligence and discipline
ever a must.

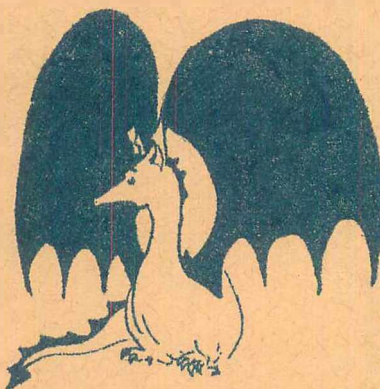
Face to face,
hand to hand,
Learn to fight
man to man.
Know your challenger
if you can.

See his eyes,
feel his fear.
For him as for you,
life is dear.
For you as for him,
death dwells near.

Honor, courage,
commitment, right—
Patterns of Challenge
rule the fight.
Disgrace to he
who acts from spite.

Answers to A Baker's Dozen

1. Larry Niven--Ringworld
2. Frank Herbert--Dune
3. Harlan Ellison (H.E.)
4. Roger Zelazny--Amber series
5. Philip Jose Farmer
6. Robert A. Heinlein--"The green hills of Earth"
7. J.R.R. Tolkien
8. Isaac Asimov--Caves of steel
9. Ann McCaffrey
10. Andre Norton--Witch world
11. Keith Laumer--Retief
12. Edgar Rice Burroughs
13. H.G. Wells and Orson Wells--War of the worlds



Why this mess comes to you

- ☐ You contributed, counceled, collated, aided, or assisted
☐ You paid cash ☐ You subscribe, and your sub just ran out
☐ You subscribe, and you're good through issue # ____
☒ You have an eyebrow fetish ☐ You have a knife fetish
☒ I felt like it

Last minute notes: Special thanks to Barbara Wenk and Joyce Yasner, who spent 3½ hours hand-cranking the walking bird.

Super-special thanks to the Rosensteins, who lent their mimeo when the Ol' Beast broke down Friday night. Apologies to those writers and artists whose work was mangled by Ol' Beastly.

