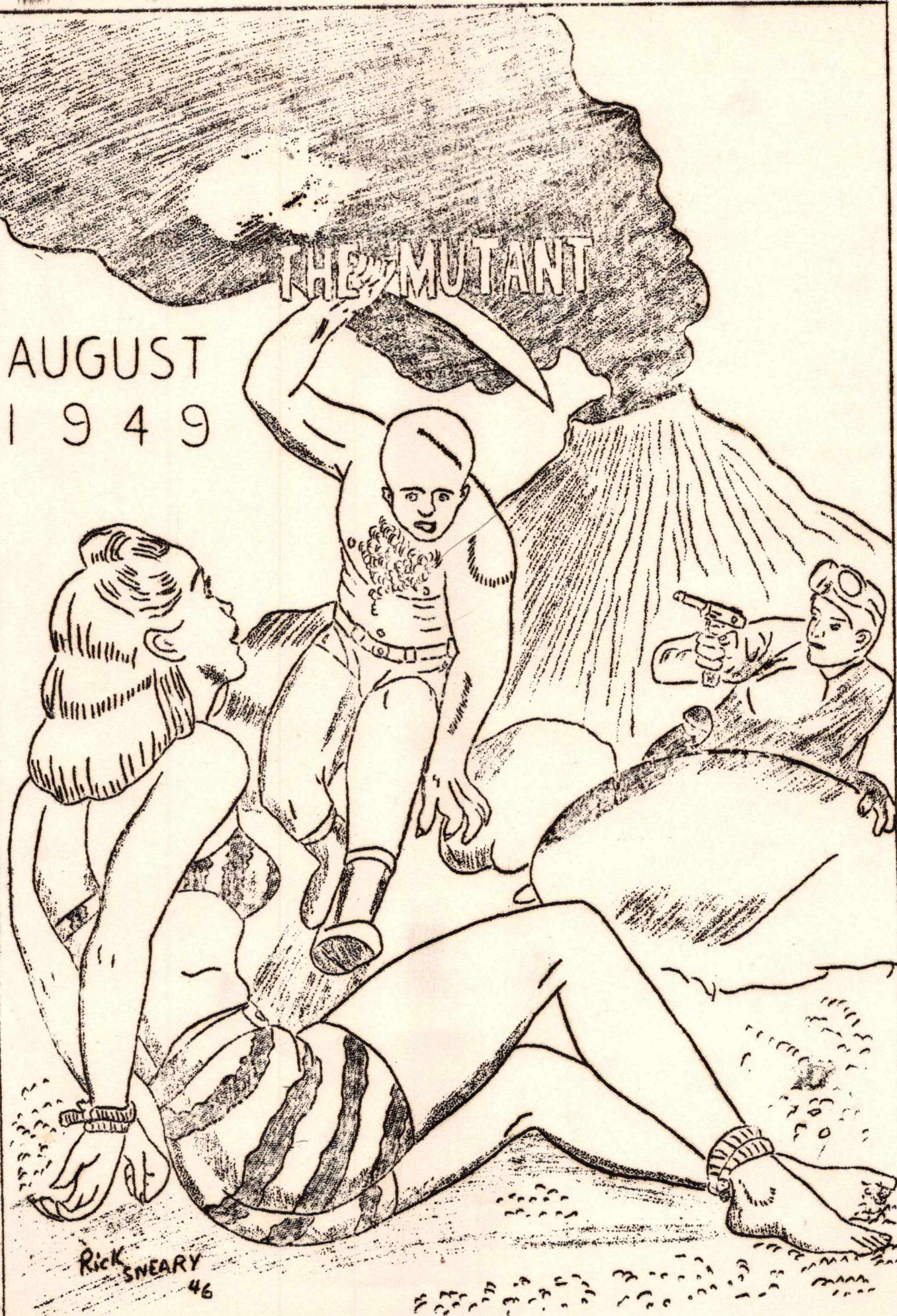
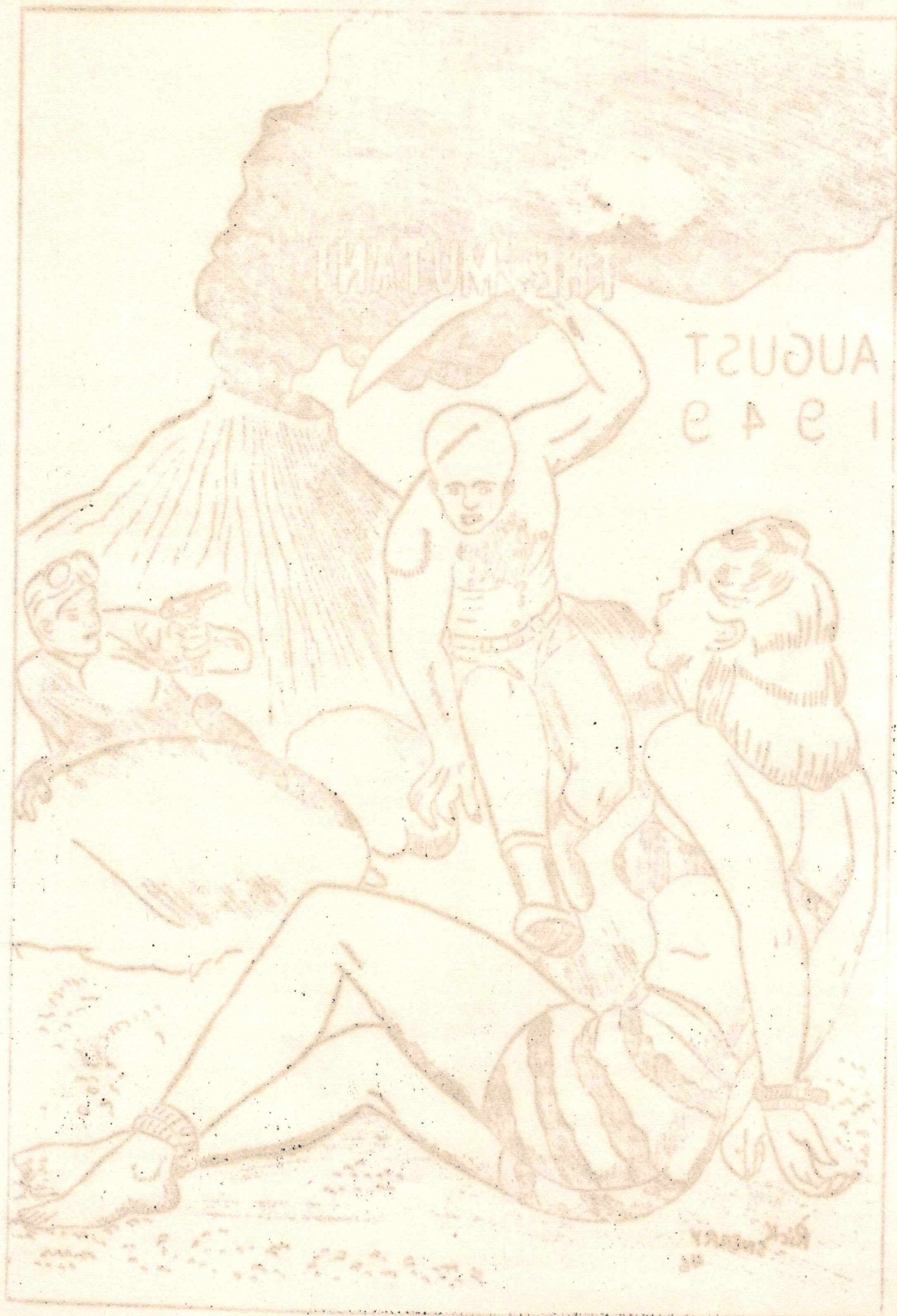


# THE MUTANT

AUGUST  
1949







AUGUST  
1941

REPRODUCED  
BY



# SLAN NOTES

by The Editor

MUTANT, the unpredictable fan-zine, is back again. Surprised?

As this is being written, we are informed the June issue is nearing completion. We're beginning to creep up on our schedule! Perhaps in the not-too-distant future we'll actually catch up. No promises or predictions, though. We'll wait until it happens.

If we don't get our hands on some material pretty soon, though, we're going to be held up. Mutant's backlog is almost non-existent. We're scraping the bottom of the barrel for this issue, and we haven't half enough material on hand for the October issue. Come, come, surely some of you people can write?

Needed primarily are articles and fiction, preferably material that runs two or three pages. Also some poetry. At present we have a fair amount of artwork on hand, but we can always use more. Full page cover drawings in particular.

The letter department will be back next issue. Are you glad? We have several letters on hand, commenting on the April number, that arrived just too late to squeeze in this time. They'll be in next time with, perhaps, some commenting on June.

WE'VE BEEN doing a bit of thinking, lately, on the subject of modern science fiction as compared to old-time science fiction, and one thing bothers us.

Why is it the stories of today (or most of them, anyway) don't have the same "feel" that a great many stories of the past had?

Admittedly, the modern stories are more smoothly written and more carefully plotted. Characters have become more human. But the old-time atmosphere is missing.

For all their wooden characters and crude writing, the old-time stf stories had that atmosphere. Something in those old stories, something in the careful descriptions of space and of alien worlds, made one feel that he was far away from Earth and actually on another planet. Something that is lacking in most of modern stf.

No, it isn't nostalgia on our part. For we recently reread several of those old stories, and we still get the "feel" of those alien worlds.

NEXT ISSUE will have a cover by Ray Nelson, a lovely drawing of the first landing on the Moon. Also featured will be a story by Jim Harmon, "A Matter for Decision"; a personal experience yarn by Isabelle E. Dinwiddie called "What Was It?", that ought to make interesting reading; a story, "Song of Love", by Ray Nelson; and an

(Continued on Page 6)

# BYRON'S BLACKOUT

by  
ARTHUR  
H.  
RAPP

OF ALL UNLIKELY places to find stf, I came across a neatly-plotted little tale of grim horror in my last year's English Lit textbook while on a hunt for a cover-quotation for a SAPSzine.

The epic is titled "Darkness" and consists of 82 lines of blank verse by George Gordon, Lord Byron, of whom you may have heard. It reads like the plot for a Bradbury tale--but see for yourself:

He describes it as a dream--a dream of the blackout of the sun and stars and moon. "...the icy earth swung blind and blackening in the moonless air". Morning comes--but the sun does not rise, and humanity is horror-stricken. In frantic effort ot dispell the darkness, buildings are torn to pieces and used as fuel for bon-fires. Whole cities were burned, and men gathered by the light of their blazing houses gazed at each other in thankfulness.

"Forests were set on fire"--but as the supply of fuel grew less and less, men began giving way to hysteria. Some wept; some smiled vacantly; some hurried to and fro gathering fuel, or wallowed in the dust and howled.

As the darkness continued, the wild creatures, even snakes, lost their fear of man and crept nearer and nearer the fires.

Then war, anarchy, murder broke loose among the humans, each trying to kill the others both from blind, irrational hate, and later, for food. The animals joined in the slaughter.

Out of one enormous city, only two survivors remained, two men who were deadly enemies. "They met beside the dying embers of an altar-place where had been heaped a mass of holy things for an unholy usage." Frantically they claw at the cold gray ashes, and eventually manage to rekindle a tiny flame. By its light, they gaze at each other's faces for the first time--"saw, and shriek'd, and died--Even of their mutual hideousness they died, Unknowing who he was upon whose brow Famine had written Fiend."

Then Byron describes the desolation that covers all the Earth after the last creature has died. The waters cease to run, for there are no winds, no seasons. "Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea." "The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave, The moon, their mistress, had expired before; The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air, And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need Of aid from them--She was the Universe."

THE END



# THE Circle

by Hal Shapiro

IT WAS an ordinary Sunday afternoon. Ordinary, that is, until the explosion blew out all the windows in the Strom residence and startled Mrs. Strom into a fit so violent, she had to be subdued with the aid of a straight jacket. This was a sad state of affairs, to say the least. For when society matrons are seen in straight jackets, the results can be disastrous. Especially if an enterprising reporter had taken a photograph, and it had appeared in the society column with more than a hint at the DTs.

Needless to say, the young reporter was fired. But that did not decrease Mr. Strom's resentment of the paper, or of newspaper people in general.

The explosion, it turned out later, had been caused by a time bomb exploding in the Strom's driveway as the postman was delivering it. "Clock. Fragile. Handle with care" were the labels pasted on the offending package.

But in another way, the death of the postman was a blow to the youngest of the Strom daughters who had been secretly engaged to him for the past four days. Her parents, she knew, would never consent to such a marriage, so she sent her father the time bomb to convince him, but timed the bomb incorrectly.

The death of her lover caused her to lose her senses completely and elope with the reporter whom she really loved, and who had been fired for writing up the story of her mother's DTs.

At this point the story begins to sound like a soap opera. But you needn't worry. I haven't a sponsor as yet.

While the young people were spending a happy honeymoon and her father's money, riding over Niagara Falls in a barrel, her mother, thinking daughter was with her tutor, was carrying on an extensive campaign to have all daily newspapers barred from the mails. Completely unsuccessful in this endeavor, she took to reading science-fiction. Her mind snapped once again.

THE PRECEDING paragraphs have nothing to do with the story. It really starts with a young man in the city of Niagara Falls, New York, who had never seen anyone go over the falls in a barrel. Having nothing to brag about, he never went visiting, made no friends, and became quite an introverted fellow. His father was jailed on a murder charge two years before his birth, and his moth-

er had to work hard for everything she gave him. He repayed her one sunny afternoon by slitting her throat so she would no longer have to worry about him. Then he began (and we shudder to think about it) to study the occult.

Soon after, his father went over the wall, cutting out the eyes of one of the guards, and joined his son on Pike's Peak where the latter had his workshop. The elder became the first wall-eyed pike to enter that door.

Together they began to experiment. Every night blood curdling screams issued forth from the peak. The local dairymen didn't like this. It curdled their milk too. After a week of blood and milk curdling, the sheriff was called in. He started toward the shack and when he got there, found it completely empty. Leaving a deputy on guard, he left saying he would return that night to stop the unearthly noises.

And that night he did return. Halfway up the peak he heard a scream that contained the essence of exquisite terror. Ten minutes later something fell from a cliff and landed squishily at his feet. It was the lifeless body of his deputy, with the heart torn out. Asking himself what manner of fiend could have done such a thing, he lost no time getting to the shack.

But where the shack once stood was--it could only be described as a circle of light. A light so brilliant that one could not look at it. But one that had no radiance; that made no shadow; that was self-contained and ringed with darkness as total as if moon and stars did not exist. In fact, it was rather unusual.

And then, from out of the circle came a parade of witches and others that were beyond description. Leading the procession was the town's most noted author, Dero S. Barber--and he had been dead for the past three months. He had died, in fact, on the very night the shack had been built. And then, as if it had never been, the light was gone and the shack was there.

Regaining what was left of his senses, the sheriff rushed in, to find the place as empty as it had been that afternoon. There were three peculiar things on the floor, however: a light bulb, a circular mirror, and a smoking hole.

#### THE END

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EDITORIAL

(Continued from Page 3)

article called "Asexual Humanoids", by Warren Baldwin.

That's all we have planned for October thus far, and all we can plan until we receive some more material. So write something for us, please!





We sat entranced, my friend and I, in the crowded Blackstone Theater. Our eyes were glued to the portrait of classic Greek tragedy and myth. A choking, strange sensation rose in my throat.

Before us Judith Anderson (MEDEA) portrayed a proud woman scorned by Jason, a husband no longer interested in his barbaric wife but enthralled by the princess of Corinth. From deepest sorrow to a horror almost beyond description, her role ran the gamut of emotions. Anderson's creative art, fortunately of our time, is undoubtedly the finest exemplified upon the American stage.

From the opening curtain (adorned with an enormous snake trailing from one side of the stage to the other), the play MEDEA startled us with its symbol of tragedy: An ancient slave woman, Medea's early nurse, screaming her woes and scorn--the source of her miseries being Jason.

In somber, weird outline the darkened sky and Grecian harbor afford a grim background to the temple, its broad marble steps, its tremendous doors and lofty pillars. Medea's home. Grays and black and faint tints of a spectral green display the color motif.

Dawn rises and the decrepit nurse wails and beats her withered forehead on the marble court.

Medea's boys, two tender children, are soon shown with the nurse. Then they learn of the King Creon's plans for the banishment of their mother and themselves to the outer world.

Originally from Colchis, a prince's reverer by her people, Medea slew her brother to escape with her be-



loved but unfaithful Jason. Giving up her barbaric kingdom, she abandoned every thought for the love Jason, whose life she twice saved.

Yet Medea has psychic powers. She is gifted with alchemy and other eerie arts, and procurs for Jason the Golden Fleece. When King Creon banishes this grieving woman and her children from Corinth, her hate-filled shrieks are the forerunner of a ghastly revenge.

With a pretense of friendship Medea invokes her witchcraft and sends her loathed rival a golden crown and robe. Or to quote the words of Robinson Jeffers, beautifully spoken by Miss Anderson:

" . . . I have great joy in giving these jewels  
to Creon's daughter, for the glory of life  
consists in being generous  
To one's friends and--merciless to one's enemies "

A slave of Jason's brings the news, screaming the horrid words upon the steps of Medea's lamented home: Of the gifted robe and crown whose adornment burned the princess and Creon (he tried to save his daughter) to blackened, skeletal crisps.

Jason returns to Medea's home. He retreats in shame and in horror when Medea throws wide the mighty door, showing her worthless husband a special kind of revenge.

Lying on a table are Jason's murdered sons, while Medea shrieks macabre laughter at her Jason's grief.

Medea's reason for murdering her sons, and her gloating answer to Jason, will be better understood upon seeing the play.

Bearing the lifeless bodies she leaves Corinth forever.

This mystic tragedy has been played by actresses: Mrs. Yates, Mrs. Siddons, Janauschek, Adelaide Ristori and Margaret Anglin. But it took 2,378 years to give MEDEA its poetic playwright, Robinson Jeffers, and its greatest actress: Judith Anderson.

Miss Anderson packed a New York theater with worshipping audiences for 214 performances, then took the play on a triumphant cross-country tour. Her sheer artistry makes a myth believable.

Said John Mason Brown, in The Saturday Review Of Literature:

"Medea is a special kind of tragic heroine. Although Jason may have sinned against her by deserting her for Creon's daughter, her own sins are multitudinous. She is as accomplished at murder as she is at sorcery. She is not, and could not be, Tragedy personified in the more exalted sense. She is no goddess but an animal in agony. She is a ruin rather than an ornament; a wretch whose heart is cracked and whose sole obsession is revenge. Hers is the fury of hell no less than a woman scorned. She is hate incarnate; misery broken out of all control; loathing unleashed until, hurricane-wise, it sweeps everything and everyone before it."

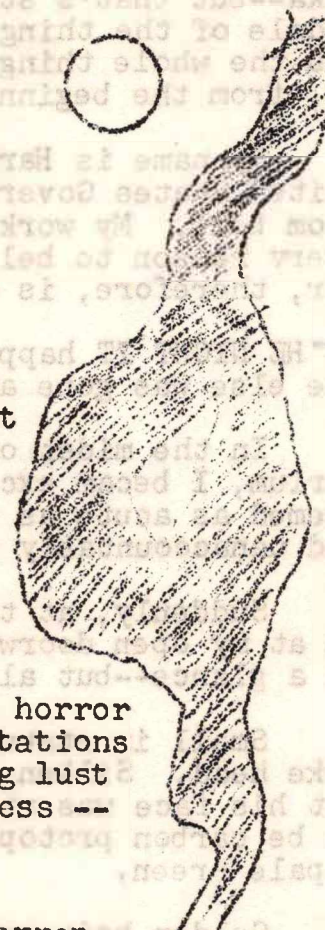



curtain after curtain-call. We can offer no better suggestion to the lover of the fantastic than to see MEDEA when it makes its next cross-country tour.

We would see this play ten times more (rather than the stupid slush from Hollywood--un-subtle, yet called fantasies) and still enjoy MEDEA.

THE END

### SPIRIT - MISTS



I know the danger  
that lurks ---  
seen, yet unseen ---  
in the growing darkness  
of the night.

They beckon ---  
slavering creatures  
of the shadows;  
hideous spirit-mists  
of the nether-regions  
that live with evel lust  
on the thought-cells  
of the brain,  
and feed  
with rapacious glee  
on the sanity  
of the mind.

I know this --  
and yet the unspeakable horror  
of their shispered invitations  
draws me with slobbering lust  
into the cloying blackness --  
the screaming solitude  
of godless insanity.

Bill Warren



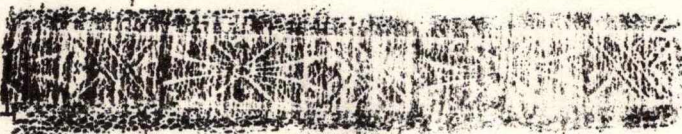
AT FIRST I thought it was all a dream. It certainly seemed like a dream, and I gave it very little thought at the time. But now that I have read the current Astronomical Newsletter, I'm not so sure--not sure at all.

# A MATTER OF KNOWLEDGE

by Bill Warren

For, you see, what happened in my dream--I call it that for want of a better name--has now been concluded in the cold reality of my waking life.

What I was afraid of in my "dream" has happened. You see, I seemed to know that disaster would be inevitable if Jeda Rika--but that's starting in the middle of the thing. Let me tell you the whole thing, as I know it, from the beginning.



My name is Harvey Yust. I am a scientist, commissioned by the United States Government to work on the further perfection of the Atom bomb. My work is most essential, for this year--1952--we have every reason to believe that Russia has perfected their own bomb. War, therefore, is on the verge of being declared.

THE NIGHT IT happened, I was working late at my office. Everyone else was gone and I was alone.

In the midst of my calculations on the potency of radioactive barium, I became exceedingly drowsy. Though my powers of vision seemed as acute as ever, everything else became decidedly unreal and unaccountably vague.

Suddenly, at the zenith of this dreaminess, a creature appeared at my open doorway. An intelligent creature--this could be seen at a glance--but alien . . . alien in every respect.

Small in stature, he was equipped with a large, watermelon-like head. Silken, hair-like stuff covered his scalp and his body. But his face was utterly bare--he even had no eyebrows. He seemed to be carbon protoplasm, and he was a vertebrate. But his skin was a pale green.

Golden hair superimposed on a pale green skin. Do you wonder that I thought it a dream?

And when he spoke, his lips didn't move; but his voice rang deep and vibrant in my brain.

"You are the Earthling, Harvey Yust," he stated, confidently. "My name is Jeda Rika. My home is the planet you know as Mars."

This casually-put information was astonishing, yes; but somehow it never occurred to me to doubt that Jeda Rika spoke the truth. The only question I could seem to bring to mind was:



"How does it come that you are here on Earth, and in my office?"

A smile crossed his not unhandsome face. "I am really not here, Harvey Yust," he said. "I only exist in your mind as a thought-projected image." He laughed outright. "Earthling, you are gazing at nothing but rather heavy atmosphere."

This left me stunned. I could no longer seem to grasp anything long enough to puzzle it out. And after a while, I gave up the effort. I wanted desperately to sleep, but all I could do was sit there, watching Jeda Rika and listening to his words.

"I have projected myself into your brain, Harvey Yust, for one reason only," he said, his voice ringing clear and loud in my head, though my ears could hear no sound.

"Yes?" The one word was all I could think to utter.

"I want every scrap of knowledge your brain possesses in the field of nuclear physics," he said. "It is imperative that my race has the mystery of the split atom revealed to them at once. We have a war between the two races on our planet, and we, the Elders of my race, have concluded that the atom is the only key to victory."

"But my knowledge is of a highly confidential nature," I sputtered, "and I couldn't possibly--"

"Oh, but you will," Jeda Rika insisted. "You have nothing to say in the matter. I will simply take the information. You are helpless to stop me."

"But you would use my knowledge against Earth," I cried, horrified.

The alien shook his head. "No," he replied quietly. "Mars has no desire to indulge in interspace aggression. If we had, Earth would have long ago been a possession of my race. We would have simply blasted every Earthling brain with thought vibrations. You would all be dead now, and Earth would be an ungoverned planet, ready for colonization. Fortunately, the race we fight does not have that power, and they are immune against us in that respect."

| SAID NOTHING. I had no reply, for I knew that Jeda Rika stated facts beyond my comprehension.

Then, as the alien smiled kindly, my brain began to go completely blank. I was not unconscious--just a body, no longer in possession of a mind. As Jeda Rika had said, I could do nothing to prevent it. I was as a child in the talons of a mighty eagle.

Later, I don't know how much later, the Martian gave me back my intellect. He stood before me again, his pale green face animated with triumph.

"You have just saved an entire race," Jeda Rika announced. "You have our eternal gratitude, Harvey Yust."

"Then you have my knowledge?"



"Yes, Earthling."

"May I have your promise on one thing, Jeda Rika?"

The alien nodded gravely. "Of course, Harvey Yust."

"I must have your word that you will never use the atom against my race."

"You may be assured of that," Jeda Rika said. "We have no thoughts of aggression. We only wish to protect ourselves."

And I knew he spoke the truth.

"But," he continued, "the race we fight on our planet does entertain aggressive ideas. Should they win this conflict, their next logical conquest would be Earth. So it is also in your interest that my race be victorious."

This put a new light on the whole thing. It also made me feel much better.

"After finding out your knowledge," Jeda Rika said, "we have already hit upon a refinement that will make the bomb infinitely more effective. I have planted this new knowledge in your mind by way of showing our gratitude for your help to us."

Then the image of the alien began to fade. "Goodbye, Harvey Yust. You will think all this a dream, and when you discover the knowledge we have put in your brain you will think it is your own idea. Again, Harvey Yust, thank you." And I could no longer see Jeda Rika.

He was gone and I was asleep.

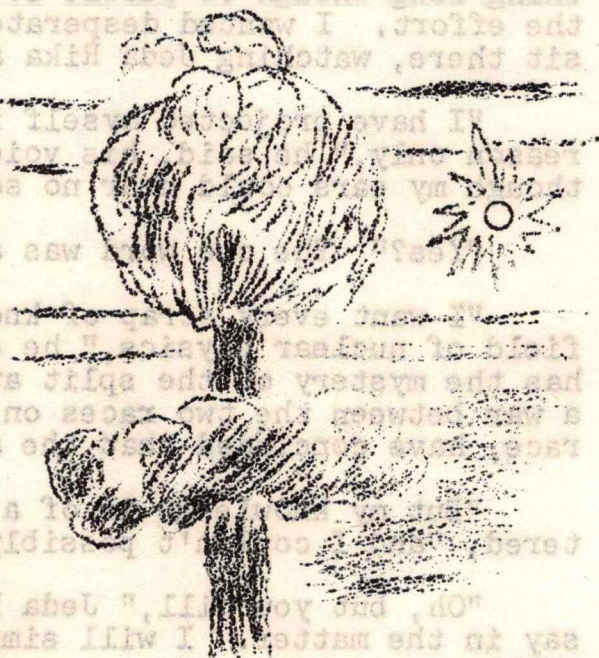
This all happened several weeks ago, and it almost ends my story. The only thing remaining is the article which I have just read in the Astronomical Newsletter.

You see, according to the most reliable sources, Mars has started a chain reaction in her elemental components that will result in complete atomic disintegration.

In other words, Mars is becoming a star!

Luckily, the planet has also left her orbit and is plunging away from Earth at great speed. Had this not happened, all life on Earth would die in the indescribably terrific heat.

I hardly know whether it is all a coincidence, or--what.





But really, I have very little time to think about it at all. You see, I've just hit upon an idea that will make victory over Russia a certainty.

It is a new idea, a refinement for the A-bomb that will . . .

THE END

### ABOUT SUBSCRIPTIONS

by Norman Ashfield

I have been looking forward to that grand day when British fan will be able once again to subscribe to American fantasy magazines, and I have been thinking about the subscriptions we shall have to pay. Comparing them with what our US friends have to pay, I am frankly astonished! So to start with here are some representative annual subs

	In the States	In Great Britain
A S F	2.75 (23¢ a copy)	3.25 (27¢ a copy)
F A	2.50 (21¢ a copy)	3.50 (29¢ a copy)
F N	2.50 (25¢ a copy)	1.88 (31¢ a copy)

--and a couple of non-fantasy magazines for comparison:  
Argosy 2.50 (21¢ a copy) 3.25 (27¢ a copy)  
(The British Argosy, which is entirely different from the US one, has the following subscriptions:  
US 19/6d-3.90 (32½¢ a copy) and GB 1 (33¢ a copy)

You can see that British fan will have to pay anything from 4¢ to 8¢ extra per copy above what our American friends have to pay, whereas they can get our British Argosy at ½¢ a copy cheaper. Why is this? As regards British Argosy, the reason is that our inland postage rate is ½d more in every step than that for overseas destinations. We may not like it, but we have to lump it!

Coming to the U S mags, however a different position obtains. The postage on a copy of FA is 6¢; but we here have to pay 8¢ more a copy than the Americans pay, and the price they pay must involve some postage. It may be the case that the U S internal postage is very small compared with that for overseas destinations, but I still cannot see the need for a difference of 8¢. Even FN charges 38¢ for sending the mag which is 2¢ more than the annual cost of postage. There must be some reason for this charge, but to us it looks as though the publishers are charging us at least the whole of the postage over and above the cost of an internal subscription. If this is so, it does seem a bit hard on us, particularly in view of the general shortage of dollars in the world, which is unlikely to disappear for many years(if ever). Can any American fan tell us the need for this difference in subscription costs? (A further example of this is the annual subscription to SCIENCE ILLUSTRATED--3.00 in U S A, but 9.00 in G B--6.00 extra for sending it overseas. Gosh!)

I doubt whether this difficulty will have any effect on our enthusiasm for American fantasy magazines, but we are interested, as this affects our limited pockets!

THE END



JULIUS JERQUE WAS the black sheep of an old family. Brothers and cousins were in the Interplanetary Patrol, high in the cosmic government and generally useful or ornamental. But Julius was a pirate of space.

When his streamlined, jet-black spacer swam into view in the visi-plates of some helpless freighter or slow mail, passengers screamed and prayed. The guard and gun crews slipped silently to the deck in most cases. In the rare cases when they didn't, Julius used to open them like cans of sardines--the whole ships that is, not the men individually.

This is a short story about one of the adventures of the Brutal Bum of the Cosmic Clouds, as Julius was known, not familiarly, because no one dared to get familiar with the Dark Destroyer of the Densest Deeps. No, the Ferocious Fiend of Farthest Fields was not a man to court familiarity as is borne out in this tale.

Julius had been hanging around Jupiter for some months, evading the notice of the Interplanetary Patrol, trying to gain time for hardening some innocent lads (comparatively) whom he had recently added to his crew.

These innocents were quartered in a separate compartment of the pirate spaceship, safe from their older and more brutal comrades. There, they received several daily periods of training and indoctrination. In between periods, they disported themselves boyishly, playing rough games, shooting craps, and biting each other's throats out. Later, when they were hardened enough to protect themselves from their older and more ferocious companions, they would be permitted to take training at their battle-stations.

At that time, Julius intended to speed sunwards and with consummate speed and daring, pull off the biggest job he had attempted up to this time; nothing less than kidnapping the King of Kondoria when that monarch was leaving Earth for the long journey homewards.

The day finally came when Julius received the message for which he had long been waiting. The king was a-wing.

The recruits, having been hardened to the point where a steel cutlass shivered on their jawbones, were, necessarily, ready.

The Black Beetle bounded through space, bearing proudly her cargo of fiends, responding at a touch to every whim of her ferocious commander, Julius Jerque himself.

Halfway between Earth and Mars, they intercepted the cruiser of the Kondorian King.

WELL THE CREW of the Kondor knew what dread black shape had signaled them peremptorily to heave to. They stopped dead in space, and the Black Beetle drew alongside and halted its engines.

# CONNIKER BY THE CONDOR

by Raymond L. Clancy



Julius employed his usual technique. Half the crew entered the lifeboats and cast off from the spacelocks. The others abandoned their guns--suicidal to fire atomic weapons at such short range--and took up the new stations necessary for a quick piracy in space.

At the psychological moment, the Kondor belted the huge belt of the Beetle with a repulsion ray and hurtled off homewards.

The maneuver had scarcely been accomplished when the bells began clanging and the whistles blowing and buzzers buzzing all over Julius's ship.

The lookouts had sighted a sleek cruiser of the Interplanetary Patrol.

It was a time for quick decision. Julius took steps, his men aboard, and his being outwitted with a good grace.

It was only when they had outrun the patrolship and given up all hopes of finding the trail of the Kondor, only then, that a flash of the Brutal Bum's temper illumined the murkiness of a corner of space.

The newest first mate, in his innocence, joked Julius coarsely on the misadventure.

"All that thought put to naught!" he cackled demoniacally, wiping the back of a hairy hand across his grinning, tobacco-juicy, thick lips.

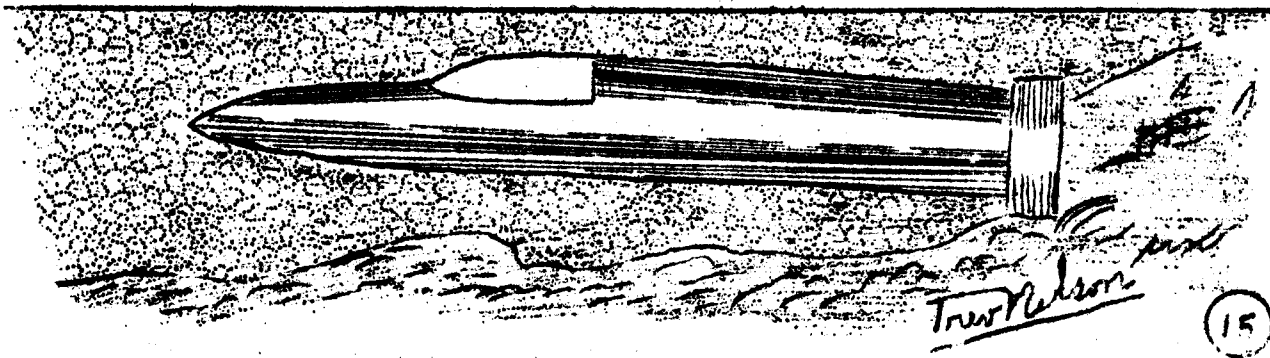
"No," answered Julius slowly and murderously. "I hadn't expected to succeed in this enterprise. It was just a means of discovering which incompetant jackass to weed out of a fine crew."

He suddenly pushed the first mate backwards over a wall-entrance leading to the pool of his pet eighteen-foot alligator, two decks below.

They heard the splash.

"Always remember," said Jerque, turning and addressing the nearby members of the crew, "I may not always be right but I am never wrong!"

THE END



# MUTANT

by Bill Groover

PROFESSOR RANDAUF VON JAMMERVOLLSTER'S large frame rambled sadly down the street with visions of tripolar grids and extensive formulea running through his brain, while cars climbed trees and crashed through store windows to avoid hitting the concentrating professor. Suddenly he heard a voice at his shoulder: "I'm terribly cold and hungry. Could you please give me something to eat?" a small voice shrilled.

The august professor absently reached into his pocket. "No, no, I can't use the money, and I'm so terribly hungry."

"Okay, come along with me," Professor Jammervollster said, still thinking of his pet student's confusing research paper with a sort of puzzled disgust.

"Gee, thanks a lot," the voice said, but it might as well have not. It was already forgotten.

He got home without further incident or thought of his invitation. Going to the icebox he got a piece of cheese for a sandwich, but when he returned with the bread the cheese was gone. "Must be getting absent-minded," the professor said to himself as he got more cheese. No bread! Absent minded indeed. More bread--no cheese! Wow--demons! His thought was swiftly confirmed when he saw HIM.

"Gee, thanks. I was so very hungry!" the malignantly grinning creature shrilled. "Call me Joe; everyone else does." The professor sat heavily and stared at the small cruel features grotesquely punctuated by a pair of dull black eyes and long pointed ears.

"At last I have a friend," Joe said. "Everyone else seems to be afraid of me." He folded his fingers around his head and scratched his weird looking ears. "I'm so happy."

"My goodness gracious!" the professor exclaimed, looking at his reflection in a mirror. "I'm going crazy. Nutty as a fruitcake!" The professor tried to dismiss the morbid thoughts by writing a fanzine. No matter what subject he tried, it always wound up on the subject of insanity and wound up in the wastebasket.

He had almost forgotten about Joe when there was a crash from the library. When he got there magazines were lying on the floor and Joe was industriously putting them back in place.

"Forgive me," Joe said politely. "I was only trying to find something to read." He was caught in the act of putting the latest copy of Astounding in the middle of the shelf.

"I THOUGHT YOU WERE 'sposed to be blind," the professor said. The doorbell rang.

"Hi, Rand, how's tricks?" came the merry voice of Jammervollster's associate, Inner Innman. "The rest of the fen will be here shortly."

"What's going on here?" the professor asked innocently.



"You were given the privilege of providing the meeting place at the last meeting," the little man said with his usual gay look.

"But I wasn't at the last meeting."

"Precisely, my dear professor."

"But-- Oh well, if I seem to act a little strangely-- Well. I've been working hard lately, and-- I have a difficult student who-- Okay, have some beer. --Double 'X'. --Imported," What if the fans saw Joe? Or still worse, what if they didn't see him?

"Hey, have you been reading too much Gertrude Stein lately? You're getting just as confusing as she."

"We shall have some beer, eh." The merry clink of bottles sounded after they had retired to the kitchen. Jammervollster filled a glass and handed it to the good professor Innman, who drank some.

"Whoosh! --Alcoholic!" Professor Inner set the glass on the table and watched Jammervollster's face light up as the black fluid poured down his throat. It was something to see, that. First he would delicately sip the beer and an expression of complete ecstasy would light his usually sad face.

When he got back to his own beer it was gone! Suds still clung to the side of the glass. "What--!" an incredulous expression clung to Innman's face like the suds to the side of the glass. Rich creamy suds.

"What's the matter? Is the beer too strong?"

"No, it's all gone," Inner said, viewing the empty glass. There was a slight burp from the direction of the window. The bell rang. If Jammervollster had not gone to answer it he would have seen Innman pass out.

"This way, gentlemen. I'll get some beer. Hey, where did Professor Innman go?"

"Look, he's under the table. Too much beer, I guess," one of the stfen laughed. "Jipe! Look at the BEM."

"Morning, fellows. Hic!" The intoxicated Joe spread out his wings and glided to a perch on the empty glass.

"Ain't that the most vicious looking bat you ever saw? Where did you collect him, prof?"

"Ja, an' he talks too."

"Wait until the other fan clubs find out we have a talking bat," the fan petted Joe softly on the head, avoiding the needle-sharp teeth.

THE END

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