

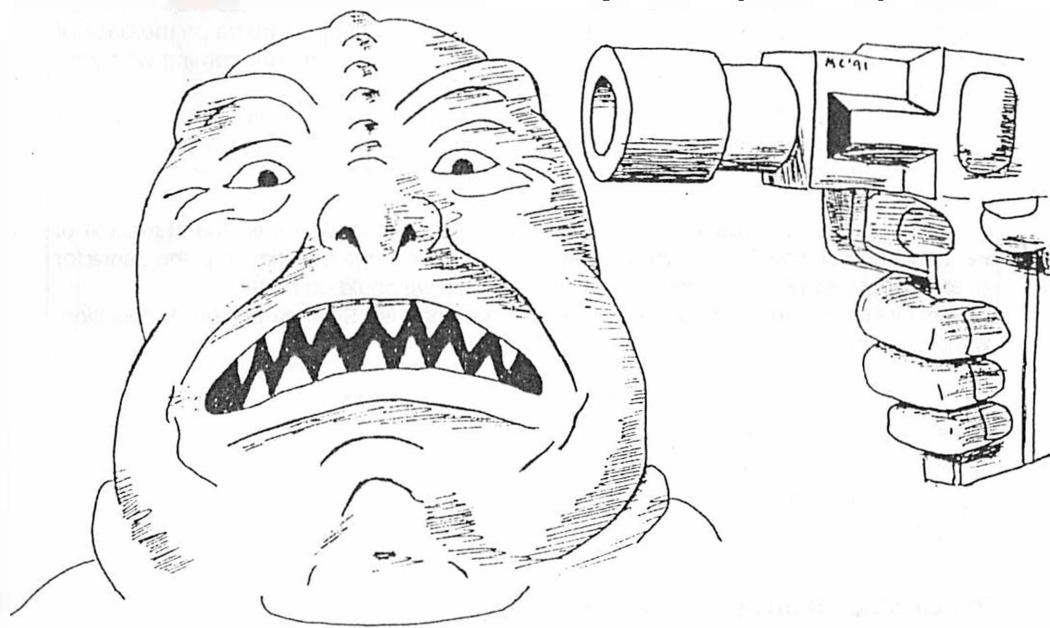
PFJ

Issue 0

October 1991

50p

Ireland's Only Phunny Fantasy Journal



Choose your own caption!

- A. Buy this magazine or we won't shoot the alien.
- B. PFJ - It's mind-blowing stuff!
- C. Gee, mister! That's a funny hairdrier!
- D. It's hardly worth a caption really.

INTRODUCTION

PFJ is dedicated to humour in all forms, but especially those of Science Fiction and Fantasy. Issue Zero is what you might call a dry run. Reactions to this magazine will shape the contents of all future issues, so we're asking you for your suggestions and contributions, anything at all, really. You'll find a response form elsewhere in the magazine - please fill it out and return as soon as you can.

This being a prototype issue, we don't as yet have any idea when (and indeed if) the next issue will be, but as soon as we're ready to go into full production we'll send out the relevant information to all those whose names appear on our mailing list (another good reason to send in the response form).

In the words of the Irish Times editor, keep the letters brief and write on one side of the paper only. Do not write on the edge, and if you're using ruled paper please write in the same direction as the lines. Marks will be given for brevity, neatness and size of contribution. We don't have a subscription policy yet, but we'll happily write your name on the back of the "gave us money" envelope should any monetary donation be forthcoming with your missive.

The PFJ guarantee - *we hereby pledge never to make fun of L Ron Hubbard, Wesley Crusher, Garret Fitzgerald or the BBC's broadcasting schedules, unless we really feel like it. And we wish to make it absolutely clear that we will not submit to blackmail.*

A brief history of this journal:

Once upon a time there was a widely-acclaimed publication called the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, which disseminated some of the best fiction in the genre for over 40 years. In 1991, one of us read it and decided we could do better.

This issue is dedicated to Brendan Ryder and the Irish Science Fiction Association, without whom none of this would have been possible.

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PFJ
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44 Leeson Park,
Dublin 6,
Ireland.

— PRAISE THE LARD AND THIN NO MORE —

By Robert Elliott

I don't care what anyone says. No matter how nice it is being away, there's nothing like getting back to your own body. Okay, most of the time, it isn't in the best of condition, but that's why I get paid as much as I do.

Don't go thinking that I'm boasting about the amount of money that I earn. Just because I'm a happy sort of dude with more money than he knows what to do with doesn't mean that life as an MT is a bed of roses. Far from it, in fact; the reason I get paid so much is that rich people will always need people like me, but we'll only do it for major remuneration.

I know what you're thinking. "He's an MT, he pretends to help people, and rips them off." That, dear friend, hasn't happened in thirty years. Most of the people who bitch about it weren't even alive during the scandal. I don't even think it was that bad. After all, it was proved conclusively that no-one actually got away with any money, yet we're all reviled as unscrupulous crooks. It doesn't bother me, but most MTs find it a large pain in the ass. Me, I take the view that it most of the time it's a pain in someone else's ass.

You know what a Mind Transfer agent does - he transfers minds. But do you know what sort of work he gets? Permit me to tell you - if there's a shit end of a stick, you can bet your last yen that there's an MT there, holding on.

"But what about all those famous diplomats?", you whine. Let me tell you something. There are over eighteen thousand registered MTs on the planet at this moment. Two hundred of them work for various governments in the Diplomatic

Corps. That leaves a hell of a lot of people like me, with a talent people don't like, but have no hope of possessing. Probably why they don't like it, come to think of it.

I think I'm beginning to sound bitter. Sorry about that - after all, I don't really have that much to be bitter about. As the public perception of an MT is somebody with an oversized head who goes around massaging his temple, I can walk around with a fair degree of anonymity. I even get to go up to people and say "Hi, I'm an MT." You'd be surprised at the number of people who stick their fingers in their ears to stop me taking control of their brain. If they stopped to figure out that they could do more damage to me than I could to them, most of them would... sorry. I'm bitching about nothing again. Still, you would too if you had to take half the crap I've put up with in the last six months.

Before I go any further, I'd better let you know what I do. I'm a professional dieter, one of those people who view will power as something other people could well do without. Of course, rich and indolent have always gone together. In other people, at least. I get paid large amounts of cash to swap into someone's body, spend the next six months getting it into tip-top shape, and returning to my own body. Which by this stage looks like something out of a freak show. Why is it that people who normally overeat a bit and get almost no exercise in their own body absolutely pig out to an obscene extent when in someone else's?

Most of my work is fairly routine - I spend six months fixing someone's body, the next six working on my own, and then live for a year on the profits before doing it all again. A surprising number of people will pay for the service; to the whole world it looks as though they suddenly decided to pull themselves up and live a long and healthy life. Surgery may be cheaper, but it isn't anywhere near as impressive. This only goes to tell you something about the state of the world - I can spot a mile away anyone who's playing host to an MT.

Anyway, on to the point. Like I said, most of the stuff is fairly routine; in fact the last case I took was the only one in seventeen years that deviated from the norm; all thanks to the excesses of one Mr James Alan Liddow III. OK, some of it was my fault, but I'm rich enough now to be able to blame other people for anything and get away with it.

You've seen big people before. Well, Jimmy was bigger. Much bigger. It'd been six months since he got out of bed, a huge, reinforced, custom made job that could double as a bomb shelter. God only knows what made him wait this long before calling an MT. I mean, he didn't look like the sort of guy who enjoyed floundering in bed all day.

But call me he did. He said he wanted to be in tip top shape in eight months, but would double the fee if I could do it in six. Normally, this wouldn't be a problem, but with Jimmy the Gut, I had to think a bit. I prevaricated for a while, and reluctantly agreed on two and a quarter times the fee. Which is a lot of money.

Of course, there was the odd string attached. I'm well known for the occasional tendency towards facetiousness, a trait which I would have to suppress for the duration. After all, so lofty a man as Jimmy 'call me Mr Liddow' the Gut couldn't be seen to be in any way pleasant. Fair enough; I could live with that. In fact, it might even prove beneficial. I'm a great believer in the school

of thought says that one's personality is much improved by being totally obnoxious for a year. And it's not every day one gets to rule a major crime syndicate.

Now we come to the problem. The reason Jimmy could afford to pay such huge wedges of cash was that he happened to be head of the local chapter of Heartlink Ltd which, as everyone except the cops knows, is the front for the local bad guys. However, I've always kept out of politics, and would cheerfully work for anyone who paid me. In this noble country of ours, I believe in the concepts of liberty, democracy and the right to fit into a size twelve without two weeks in an iron maiden beforehand. It's not only a job, it's a duty, a privilege and a handy way of working only one year in two. Anyway, back to Jimmy the Gut.

All was fine for the first month. I got out of that infernal bed after three days, and within two weeks was able to walk unaided. I might have done it in a week, but it never pays to take unnecessary risks when playing inside someone else's bod. After all, they've been in it a tad longer than I have, and know it slightly better. Within the next two weeks I had done incredibly well, and was down to elephantine proportions. In celebration I allowed myself an extra twelve millilitres of orange juice one morning. Of course, as far as everyone knew, I was James Liddow, gangster. Only his two bodyguards were aware of the switch, and seemed mildly amused at finally having a job description that fitted. They also guided me in my decisions as to what strategies to use in the various situations. I was used to this; having worked for executives, presidents and rock stars, I've learnt to take advice from people who know. There are benefits however; only modesty and the threat of litigation prevent me from naming the guy who got his first

Number One while, if you'll pardon the phrase, possessed. Usually, though, I was happy to follow orders.

Until I had to decide on whether or not to blow someone up.

I hasten to add that it wasn't scruples that kept me from following my bodyguards' advice and giving instructions to off the dude. It's just that it struck me as being a very handy way of someone passing the buck onto me for a murder - a polygraph would show in seconds who actually ordered the killing. So I ordered the guy brought in to me instead.

Needless to say, this caused a slight uproar. The guy had consistently refused to donate money to the right charitable organisations, and major chunks of his body had consequently become forfeit. Everyone knew that. So why was the great James Liddow flying in the face of tradition?

"Because", I said in my best Don Corleone / Jimmy Liddow accent, "I got other plans for this bum". My minders couldn't do a thing, as I was supposed to be the big banana. They did as they were told, and locked the poor unfortunate up. Great. Now all I had to do was figure a way of making him disappear.

This was not as easy as one might think. I not only had to make him disappear, I had to do it in such a way that the entire population knew that I wasn't wise to cross Jimmy the Fairly Large. There was only one thing for it. I sent out for The Equipment.

Most of what I asked for came back within half an hour. Nobody could find any avocado dip, so I made do with mayonnaise instead. It didn't really matter; the dip was mostly for effect anyway. But complete with glove puppet, string, mayo and a blunt thumb tack, I headed for the cellar.

I staggered out after two hours. I nearly collapsed, but my bodyguards caught me. This was no mean feat, even with my ever diminishing girth, and impressed me no end. As the aided me upstairs, the cellar guard looked into the room where I'd been busy. His strangled cry told me that my work was done well, and that within hours everyone would know what happened to people who crossed Jimmy. It was now safe to release my victim. He wouldn't talk; in fact I doubted he'd be able to stand straight for a couple of months.

But as one problem was resolved, another reared its head. Someone had seen one of my aides buying the puppet, and somehow the story had gone round that I'd bought a load of toys for the local orphanage. "Good", I thought, that'll increase his image no end." Hah! According to Jimmy, the only good kid was one who walked up to his enemies with a bomb between his shoulder blades. And if I wanted to keep my own back free from artificial additives, something would have to be done.

I'm sure you know all about what happened next. I can't take all the credit; one of Jimmy's bodyguards had a particularly sick mind that impressed me terribly. But apart from some of the fine details, the plan was all mine.

People have asked why we didn't just blow up the orphanage. I'd like to say that we didn't have the heart, that we weren't that evil, but the simple truth is we didn't think of it. Upon reflection, it would have saved a lot of hassle, but wouldn't have been nearly as much fun.

My favourite bit of the plan was what was termed by some hack 'Schroedinger's Firework'. These were difficult to make, and even harder to get into the toilets, but once there, they were great fun. It's amazing the way most little boys will aim for something floating in the toilet bowl. And when the urine reacts with the casing, dissolving it, the sodium was let loose in the water. For those

of you without a background in urban terrorism, the relevant formula is $\text{Na} + \text{H}_2\text{O} = \text{BooM!}$ The trouble is, half of them were defective, and sod all happened when they were 'fired' upon. Still, not bad for a night's work. It wasn't my idea to rub steak into all the jeans in the laundry room, by the way. And I didn't even know what a rottweiler looked like until that night.

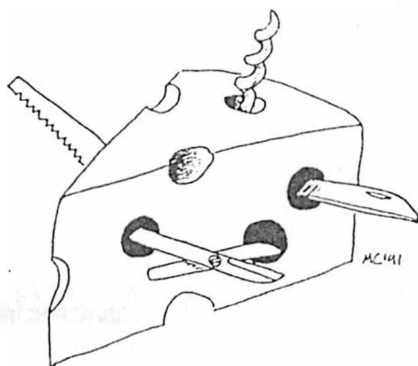
The press, of course, were delighted. So many horrified reporters on the verge of tears have not gathered in one place since Quayle announced he was running for president. It was moving, touching, and award-winning stuff. Of course, we did a lot of damage getting in and out, and that cost the Orphanage an arm and a leg to repair. Fortunately, they had plenty of spares.

Jimmy, needless to say, was delighted. In fact, he nearly had a heart attack, he laughed so much. And in my body, too. Still, he did give me a bonus by way of compensation.

Of course, Jimmy still takes all the credit. When it emerged during the investigation that the staff and most of the sproggs were sleeper agents from You Know Where, he came out a national hero. Ridiculous, really.

Evidence exists, of course. If too much hit the fan, there was no way Little Jimmy would take it all when the buck could easily be passed. But since the move turned out to be so popular, the buck remained firmly ensconced in his back pocket.

What about me? Well, Jimmy managed to retire from the crime business, and makes more money from television appearances than he ever did mugging little old ladies. He was so grateful, he gave me a massive three times my normal fee. Combined with what I had saved (no small amount, that), I've since retired myself. I figure it'll be five years before I need to hire a diotor.



Swiss Army Cheese

AUNTIE FRACTAL'S PROBLEM PAGE

Dear Auntie Fractal,

I have a problem. I've been going out with this great guy for six months. The other night he finally invited me to his house. While he was making coffee, I snuck down to the basement, and to my horror I found lots of weird chemicals and stuff. When I confronted him, he denied that he'd been manufacturing artificial life-forms, but I couldn't get him to swear it.

How can I know I'm not one of his creations? I like him, but I'm not sure I could bear a monster-scientist relationship.

Worried, Ballybrack.

Dear Worried,

There are several standard tests for determining whether you are a robot, cyborg or other such machine. To begin with, do you follow Asimov's three laws of robotics? Or you could try tracing your family tree. Are any of your relatives computers or household appliances? This is not as uncommon as you might think. If you find you are non-human, all is not lost.

Your creator has probably made you to suit his needs exactly, so compatibility is almost guaranteed. I think you should give it a go. I hope your friend has fully equipped you!

Dear Auntie Fractal,

I have a problem too. Whenever I shave I always slash myself on purpose. There is something about the feel of the blade slicing through my skin. I always end up a gory mess.

My question is: can this make me pregnant?

Even More Worried, Sallynoggin.

Dear Even More Worried,

Relax! There is no way you can get pregnant in this manner. You can slash away to your heart's content, and never will the merest hint of a zygote invade your tubes. A note of caution: if younger than eighteen, always slash yourself under parental supervision, kids!

Dear Auntie Fractal,

My son is extremely misbehaved. He answers back to me all the time, and makes fun of my aged parents. Last week I threatened to cut his pocket money if he didn't clean up his room, and he told me he had a doomsday machine in his closet.

Now if he doesn't get what he wants he'll blow up the world. What can I do?

**Worried to the Edge of Breakdown,
Maynooth.**

Dear Worried to the Edge of Breakdown,

For God's sake, give the kid what he wants! An extra 5p a week isn't worth thermonuclear holocaust.

Dear Auntie Fractal,

What is wrong with me? I can't seem to get anything right. All my relationships have ended in disaster. I get the feeling that people don't want to be seen in public with me. Whenever I ask a girl out, she always gets physically sick. I've been to several specialists, but they're usually sick too. I don't know where to turn. Last week I tried to commit suicide, but I couldn't follow the instructions. What the hell is wrong with me?

Worried Past The Brink, Dundrum.

Dear Worried Past The Brink,

Bugged if I know.

DAY TRIP TO DANGER!!!

(The original episode of Star Trek written by Dylan Thomas, but considered unsuitable for broadcast)

By Michael Cullen

Opening credits, music

Captain: Space, the final frontier. Black space, empty, bible-black space, with little dots like summer round the garden while the tide, bible-black, black as sloe berries in the song snug, but not quite as black as coal.

Roddenberry: Get on with it, Dylan.

Crag: Er. Our five year mission to seek out and explore, and, eh, boldly gogogoch where no man has gone before -
"Star Trek" title. Main theme.

Crag: A search party of myself, chief science officer Spock, communications officer Uhura and comedy officer Evans have beamed down to the surface of the planet Llanmudbit to investigate reports of a strange primitive life form worrying Mrs Gareth Gwynedd's sheep.

(To Spock)

Spock, what do you make of these strange boulder-shaped objects with which the planet is covered?

Spock: I don't know, Captain.

Crag: They might be boulders.

Spock: It's possible.

Crag: You're the science officer, possible is good enough for me. How about these footprints, you reckon they could have been left by lifeforms?

Spock: Maybe.

Crag: And what do you make of these balloons, Spock?

Spock: I can make a giraffe, Captain.

The ship:

Taffy: I don't like it. It's too - quiet. How far is it to Starbase 18, Sulu?

Sulu: Fifty light-years, sir. We turn left at that big bright star and then it's downhill all the way.

Taffy: Excellent. But what about on the way back?

Sulu: Oh. Well I'll just turn the map upside down. Llingon warship with two lls up ahead sir.

Taffy: Make contact.

Sulu: Aye aye.

(The Llingon, wearing cloth cap and glasses, appears on the screen.)

Taffy: I am Taffy, standing in for the captain of this vessel. Who are you and why are you firing at us?

Llingon: I be a Llingon with two lls, pronounced Chllington, and you be on moy land, that thou be'est boy 'eck. Get orf afore I set moy dogs after ye.

Taffy: I don't like it, Sulu. It's too - threatening. Arm the pun torpedoes, Sulu.

Llingon: Would you like to hear one of my poems? The junlper- shaped clouds be full of woo, that they be boy 'eck.
(The bridge is rocked under the onslaught)

Taffy: Mister Sulu, activate the poetry shields!

Sulu: Aye, aye, sir.
(The Llingon's lips move silently.)
Firing pun torpedo one.
(A hum from the torpedo of "Torpedo not torpee, that is the question")
A direct hit, sir!

Taffy: But what's that big black thing coming at us with all the holes in it?

Sulu: That's space, Mister Taffy.

Taffy: No, over therel It's - an asteroid! I don't like it. It's too - much like its going to collide with us. Fire another pun torpedo!

Sulu: Aye aye, sir.
(A hum from the torpedo of "If asteroid time I must be flying through space")
A direct hit, sir!

Taffy: The pun torpedoes are having a good day. But look! There's something else. It's a weirdly coloured planet, almost a riotous artwork. I don't like it. It's too - busy.

Sulu: Well we can always come back later sir.

On the planet:

Uhura: You mean, we only have two hours to live?

Evans: No, all I did was sneeze.

Crag: It's time to beam up again. Another successful mission completed. Nothing to do now but get back on the ship and have a good rest. Nope, it doesn't look as if anything else is going to happen here.

Spock: What are you waiting for, Captain?

Crag: Nothing. (Takes out communicator) Well, I suppose I'll just call Taffy on this little thing and then we'll be out of here. Mister Spock, have you ever noticed how the colour of space resembles - a bible?

Spock: Are you feeling all right, Captain?

Crag: Of course. Why are you looking at me like that? A bible, yes. And the stars are like children green children turning in the dew-filled fox-high grass, merry in the simple meadow, kicking light...

Sick bay:

Spock: I had to control him with my Vulcan pinch.

Dr "Jones": Are you sure that's what's wrong with him?

McCoy:

Spock: Yes. A classic case of similitis. At first I thought his use of the iambic pentameter was simply from tiredness, but then he started to suggest the meditational aura of sliding doors, and I put two and two together.

McCoy: Well I'll just run this pentlight over him and hopefully he'll be completely cured. (Operates. The captain doesn't come round)

That's strange. Oh well. They're like horses, aren't they?

Spock: Excuse me?

McCoy: His white-as-music eyes.

Spock: Oh no!

(Pinches the doctor, who falls asleep muttering "But not quite as yellow as corn")

On the bridge:

Sulu: Going at warp five, sir. That's as fast as sleep, but not quite as fast as a kiss.

Taffy: I don't like it, Sulu. It's too - watery, like the pebbles and slugs of the town where I added like a pram -

(Spock storms onto the bridge, looks around desperately, and begins to pinch everyone)

Spock: I've got to resist. I've got to maintain my logic. I am a Vulcan. I am prosaic. Time may be like a whirligig but frankly I can't see it. I've got to - got to -

(He staggers)

Space. The ship flies past a planet:

Spock: Mister Spock making an entry in the log of Captain Crag, stardate June and a bit. We are on a direct course back to Earth. All is peaceful on the Enterprise. I have just been in communication with Starfleet Command to announce our arrival. Morale is good. We have shared the gladness of a completed mission, and of troubles past. We are as blessed as ghostly flowers appearing in the mist, and space, you know, is not as black as it's painted...

The end. (Music and closing credits)

The PFJ Questionnaire

This is your chance to respond! Naturally, we don't want to produce a magazine that no-one wants to read, so your input here will be greatly appreciated. Please answer each section succinctly and honestly, but if you can't then please make your answers funny. The funniest answers may be published in a future copy of the magazine if we're really stuck.

Personal

- Name: ☐ Eddie O'Toole
☐ James Quentin-Bagel
☐ Johann Gambolputty de von Ausfern- schplenden- schlitter- crascrenbon-
fried- digger- dingle- dangle- dongle- dungle- burstein- von- knacker- thrasher-
apple- banger- horowitz- ticolensic- grander- knotty- spelltinkle- grandlich-
grumblemeyer- spellerwasser- kurlstlich- himbleelsen- bahnwagon-
gutenabend- bitte- mein- nürnberg- bratwustle- gespurten- mitz- weimache-
luber- hundsful- gumberaber- schönendanker- kalbsfleisch- mittler- aucher
von Hautkopft of Ulm
☐ Other (please specify) _____

Address: _____

Please
ignore
this
box

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Teleport: _____

Age: ☐ 12

☐ Not 12

Sex: ☐ M (Mná)

☐ F (Fir)

☐ X (Xenomorph)

☐ Y (Yes - I always answer "Yes" to this question)

☐ ? (I can't read Irish, so I don't know what you mean by Mná and Fir)

☐ O (I don't know what this answer means, but since I can't be funny I've decided to be obscure)

General

Why are you wearing that funny hat? _____

Will whoever stole my bicycle pump please return it? _____

How many books are there in the Bible? _____

Are you actually answering these questions? _____

Is there anybody there? _____

Where did you get this magazine? _____

I was sitting in a newsagents today. _____

Isn't the weather nice? _____

Do you hate it when people talk about Star Trek's Doctor Spock? _____

What did you have for breakfast? _____

My name is Jeremy. I am the questionnaire monster. _____

Is this a daggit which I see before me? _____

Add one to the previous answer and divide by five. _____

Now take away the number you first thought of. _____

What was the best thing before sliced bread? _____

I bet they don't print this question. _____

Oh, they did. _____

Would you actually pay money for this sort of stuff every issue? _____

And if so, how much do you think it's worth per issue? _____

How often do you think PFJ should be published? _____

Would you like PFJ to be 128 pages, full colour and only 30p? _____

I don't blame you. _____

Realistically, PFJ will be about 32 pages, A5 for the next few issues. _____

Would you prefer to see more fiction in PFJ? _____

Did you enjoy the cartoons in this issue? _____

Do you wish to read the rest of The Gobbies Plan? _____

Did you enjoy Auntie Fractal's Problem Page? _____

Who wrote David Copperfield? _____

Whoops! One of those silly things got in there by mistake. _____

It doesn't matter anyway, that's the end of this section. _____

Survey

Which of the following subjects or authors do you find amusing:

Never
heard of
it

Can't
stand it

Well, I like it

Couldn't
care less

Bloom County.....				
Monty Python.....				
Robert Rankin.....				
Terry Pratchett.....				
Calvin and Hobbes.....				
Douglas Adams.....				
Oclarine.....				
Robert Asprin.....				
Harry Harrison.....				
Cerebus The Aardvark.....				
Little Shop of Horrors.....				
Red Dwarf.....				
Dan McGirt.....				
The Far Side.....				
Craig Shaw Gardner.....				
Howard the Duck.....				
Freak Brothers.....				
Viz Comic.....				
Marx Brothers.....				
What The--!?				
Spike Milligan.....				
dBase IV.....				
The Goonies.....				
Not The Nine O'Clock News.....				
Fawlty Towers.....				

If there's something in which you are interested and you think that it should be covered by PFJ, but it's not listed above, please let us know.

— Reader Participation —

And now, another reminder that we're looking for contributions. At the moment, there is no payment for your offerings, but each person whose submission is published will receive a free copy of the magazine. As a special bonus, contributors are allowed to buy up to fifty copies each to give to their friends. Naturally, copyright remains with the contributors.

Cartoons and Artwork - We'd especially like to hear from any cartoonists out there who could produce something like the cartoons in this issue. Any subject you like, as long as it's original and funny. Well, reasonably funny. Okay then, as long as it's original. Or mostly original. As long as it's drawn in pen on paper. Other artwork, such as might be deemed suitable for an eye-catching cover, is also very welcome.

Stories and Sketches - Any fiction you'd care to contribute doesn't have to be based on Science Fiction or Fantasy (though that'd be ideal). PFJ is first and foremost a humour magazine, so if it's funny and we won't get sued for publishing it, send it in.

Parodies - Take a copy of Mad magazine, have a look at one of their parodies of SF or Fantasy movies. If your parody looks anything like that, throw it away. We don't want daft jokes about budgets or an someone's acting ability. We are looking for intelligent and insightful satires on existing works, whether it's a movie, a book, a comic (hard one, that), or anything you like. No rubbish please, unless it's hilarious, or unless it's been written by us.

Letters - This is the one section in PFJ that isn't necessarily going to be funny. Serious letters are definitely allowed; after all, other readers will want to know what you find amusing. It's through your letters that we'll know what your interests are, and - being rather market-oriented (or greedy) - we want to give our readers exactly what they want.

Advertisements - Not as such contributions, I'll admit, but any establishment wishing to advertise with us should contact us at the usual address. Advertising costs have yet to be finalised, but they shouldn't be too expensive.

Classified Ads - Readers are allowed to submit FREE classified ads! When we get a proper subscription service going, only subscribers will be allowed to advertise, but for the next issue, we're asking you to contribute something to PFJ, even if it's only a letter. Or money. Preferably money, come to think of it.

Please return the completed questionnaire to Michael Cullen, Robert Elliott or Michael Carrol (or anyone you see wearing a PFJ badge, or a PFJ T-shirt, or PFJ slippers, or Y-fronts, or whatever), or post to:

PFJ
Michael Carroll
44 Leeson Park
Dublin 6
Ireland.



In preparation for Star Trek VI,
Scotty tries on Kirk's corset.

THE GOBBIES PLAN

By Michael Carroll

Chapter One - Mission Dearth

Yaggi raced across the debris-covered factory floor, a .85 recoilless rifle in one hand, a large butcher's knife in the other, and a stuffed toy donkey protruding from his back-pack. He hurried over a workbench strewn with rusted tools just microseconds before it was blasted out of existence. The rusted tools suddenly became deadly pieces of shrapnel, and one of these managed to take the head off Yaggi's stuffed donkey. As the donkey's head soared into the air, another tool ploughed into the back of Yaggi's head, knocking him out instantly.

As Yaggi hit the floor, the automatic hostility sensors on the recoilless rifle burst into action and sprayed the back wall with bullet-holes big enough for sparrows to fly through. Unfortunately, none of the bullets managed to hit the large and dangerous Gobbie who had been terrorising the troops. The Gobbie aimed its OrphanMaker rocket-launcher at Yaggi, and was about to fire when its attention was distracted by a flock of passing sparrows. The Gobbie never noticed the donkey's head fall to the ground, covering Yaggi's head.

As the last sparrow fluttered by, the Gobbie raised its rocket-launcher once more, but was confused at the sight of Yaggi's body with a donkey's head. It paused just long enough for Yaggi's rifle to come to life once more, swinging around crazily. Several of the shots blasted holes in the Gobbie, which grunted and clutched at its chest in the manner of all shot-at Gobbies, before it fell backwards into a pool of its own innards.

Yaggi's consciousness returned suddenly, like a light going on in an outside toilet. He clambered to his feet, the donkey's head falling to the ground. He stood for a few minutes, wobbling slightly, then remembered his predicament. He turned quickly, and saw the Gobbie lying in several pieces on the floor. Yaggi picked up his knife and bravely walked out into the sunlight, pausing only to pick up the donkey's head and sew it back on to the donkey using the needle and thread that he always kept in the hilt of his knife.

The war with the Gobbies had been going on for as long as anyone could remember. The Gobbies were squat bipeds, generally less than a metre in height, and so stacked with muscle that they looked like a pile of sandbags with eyes.

No-one knew exactly why the war had started, after the first hundred years or so everyone gave up on the idea of a diplomatic solution and decided just to keep trying to wipe the enemy out instead.

The Gobbies had been discovered on a planet near the centre of the galaxy, and at that time had yet to develop any form of sophisticated technology. Thus, everything they had was stolen from humans. But in recent years the Gobbies science had advanced greatly, and slowly, almost unnoticeably, they were winning the war.

Outside the factory, Yaggi was met by a platoon of recruits. He recognised their commanding officer. He stood almost two metres tall, had sharp piercing blue eyes, a chin that took him over an hour to shave, and a very manly scar across one cheek, which

couldn't be seen because he was wearing his combat trousers. He was fully trained to seventy-two forms of hand-to-hand combat, he was an expert in all known weapons systems, he was an excellent tactician, but what impressed people most was his ability to gargle with gravel.

Yaggi had always suspected that Sergeant Clint Wayne was unstable - His squinting, chewing of tobacco and occasional muttering of "Reckon so" had given him a reputation of being the toughest soldier in the entire human army. That fate a decreed he and Yaggi should share the same planet, let alone the same regiment, was something they both found extremely grating.

"Hamstring!" Wayne yelled. "Get your kurking ass over here!"

Yaggi trudged overtowards the platoon. He waved his arm somewhere in the general direction of his head in a manner that only vaguely resembled a salute.

The Sergeant turned to the recruits and gestured at Yaggi with his gun. "Take a good look at this man. He is not a good soldier." Wayne pointed to himself. "I am a good soldier. His kind would not last more a day in a real war zone."

Yaggi was used to this sort of tirade from Wayne. The overbearing Sergeant firmly believed that "hand-picked" soldiers, such as the platoon of recruits accompanying him, made better fighters than volunteers like Yaggi.

After the ritual debasing was over and Yaggi had been dismissed, Yaggi marched solemnly over the hill, his one consolation being that the raw recruits would at least have been impressed with his image. The well-worn and scarred battle armour, the battered and used rifle, the huge knife swinging idly from his hip. The image had a simple, succinct message. This man, the image said, is a warrior.

Sergeant Wayne and his recruits watched Yaggi walk away. The recruits didn't notice his pitted armour, nor his menacing recoilless rifle, nor even his butcher's knife. They were all too busy wondering why he had a stuffed donkey in his back-pack.

"Volunteers!" Wayne spat, a string of brown saliva trickling down his manly chin. "Makes me sick."

Wayne moved his recruits onwards, carefully bypassing the factory from which Yaggi had emerged. They ran skillfully, quietly, swiftly. They ran through streets, over bridges, along the roof-tops. They ran with pride, with bravado. Unfortunately, they also ran into a patrol of Gobbies, and were taken hostage.

Wayne and his patrol were lead into the innards of a Gobbie ship and thrown into a cell. The door was locked and a dim red light came on, barely illuminating the room. Stripped of their weapons and uniforms, the recruits suddenly began to see Wayne as nothing but an old soldier with a higher rank. A few of the more impressionable initiates were disillusioned to discover that Wayne didn't have Sergeant's stripes on his underwear.

"Er... Sergeant?" Said one of the recruits, a short and thoughtful young man called Milo. "There's something I've been meaning to ask you... Why exactly do we hate the Gobbies?"

"Because they're the vicious, evil enemy of mankind, that's why!"

"But..."

"But what?"

"Well, it's just that they're actually quite pleasant."

Another recruit spoke up. "That's right! They were really polite, didn't rough us up or anything."

"Yeah," said Milo. "In fact, when we were pressga- I mean, when we were selected, the army gave us a harder time than the Gobbies have given us."

Wayne scowled to himself. In the near darkness, no-one noticed his trigger finger flexing like crazy as he levelled an imaginary gun at the traitors.

A third recruit spoke up. "I thought they were cute!"

Wayne exploded with anger. "Right! You collaborating asswipes are all on a charge! Conspiracy to be polite to the enemy! That's at least fifty years hard labour! You!" He roared at the last recruit to speak. "You pervert! So you thought they were cute, eh? The hell they are! Well, let me tell you a story about the time I first encountered the Gobbies!"

Sergeant Wayne's Story

Only three of us survived the attack on the platoon. Me, Charlie and Sparky the radio operator were saved by utilisation of a rare and little-known military tactic called "individualised evacuation".

As soon as we heard that we were expected to enter into hostilities, Charlie took off in the opposite direction. I went after him to bring him back. He'd run about twenty kilometres by the time I caught up with him. The two of us sat down to catch our breath, and saw Sparky running up to us. He had two pieces of card with him, one for me, and one for Charlie. They were birthday cards, a bit premature, but Sparky said that he decided to give them to us early because he figured he might forget. In the distance there was a large explosion that signified the end of our patrol.

So there we were, the three of us sitting on the ground singing a communal Happy Birthday, when we saw a large patrol of Gobbies heading our way. Now as you all know, the rule is that Gobbies should be attacked on sight, and that is what we decided to do. We wanted to get a good run at them, so we took a couple of steps back. Unfortunately the Gobbies had moved

nearer so we took another couple of steps back. After all, we wanted the attack to be effective.

The Gobbies were still moving nearer, so we ran behind a building to ambush them. Sparky saw another building a bit further on, and decided that it might be better to ambush them from there instead. So we waited for a few seconds behind that building, but I said that I thought that the really big building down the street might be a much better place to ambush them from. So bravely we ran for the really big building.

Eventually we found a ground car, and we decided that the best thing to do was to lead the Gobbies away from the battle zone, in case there were any more of our boys in there. After about three days we saw a whole squadron of our ships overhead. Sparky sent them a message about our situation, so they blasted the Gobbies for us. Which just goes to show that the Gobbies are cunning little bastards.

Sergeant Wayne finished his story, and looked around at the raw recruits who had been listening to his every word. "So, you see, we hate the Gobbies because they're the enemy. They're the enemy because we're at war with them. We're at war with them because we hate them. That should be enough reason for anybody."

Yaggi had managed to hitch a lift on a skimmer, and so he was refreshed and relaxed when, early the next morning, he finally arrived at the military command post to report on the success of his mission.

Yaggi had volunteered when he was quite young, and often regretted not having a normal life. He took his frustrations out on the army, by disobeying orders, deserting, cheating, framing his buddies and generally being bad tempered with his superiors. However, Yaggi wasn't stupid, and if the situation demanded it Yaggi could be very

pleasant, generous, helpful and respectful. Yaggi screwed the army for whatever he could get: He was rotten to the corps.

Yaggi had to wait for a few minutes until the briefing clerk was ready, but when he was called he walked into the briefing room and utterly failed to notice hanging on the wall the newly-erected photo of a distinguished, middle-aged man in a General's uniform. The photo bore the title "General Yaggi Hamstring" on a small brass plaque.

"Mission accomplished, sir!" Yaggi said to the briefing clerk, clicking his heels and snapping a salute. "Gobbie terrorist has been eliminated! Request permission to retire for the evening."

"Who are you?" Asked the clerk.

"Private Yaggi Hamstring, sir!"

The clerk reacted by looking astonished. "Don't move, soldier!". He pressed a large red button on his desk marked "Security".

It was Yaggi's turn to be astonished. "What? You're kidding! You know me! You sent me out only two days ago to annihilate that Gobbie!"

The door to the office was kicked in and three large uniformed men with white helmets rushed in, dived on Yaggi, wrestled him to the ground, stood him up and wrestled him to the ground again.

The clerk stood up from his desk and caught Yaggi's attention by kicking him in the head. He pointed to the picture on the wall. "You are under arrest for impersonating a General. You are hereby sentenced to one hundred years hard labour."

"Now wait a minute! You can't just -"

"I can. Resisting arrest: another fifty years. Since your sentence is longer than your expected life-span, and keeping you imprisoned would cost a lot of money that could otherwise be usefully employed making things that kill people, I'm prepared to offer you three alternatives. The first: death

by footwear." The MPs responded to this by deftly projecting Yaggi's body across the room with their feet.

"The second alternative:" The officer slyly unveiled a stained wooden spoon, and grinned evilly. "Death by kitchen-ware." Yaggi was more afraid of this than the kicking: The worst offenders in the army were sentenced to the kitchen, where cooking for fifteen hundred dangerous and hungry enlisted men with low opinions of army food was certain to bring a lot of bad luck to the cook. The sort of bad luck that was made of lead and came in a rifle.

"And the third?" Asked Yaggi from his position under the desk. He was strongly considering the first option.

"We'll send you on a mission to discover more about the new Gobbie prison planet and rescue some of our comrades who've been captured by the Gobbies."

"I'll do it, if I receive a full pardon!"

"Agreed. You might even find a bonus in your next pay packet, if there's anything left once we deduct the cost of the door."

"So who do I have to rescue?" Yaggi was getting intrigued.

"Sergeant Clint Wayne and his platoon of recruits who were taken hostage yesterday evening. The Gobbie ship is currently being tracked, we're pretty sure of its destination; one of the heavily guarded Gobbie prison planets which has just come into operation. To be honest, it's certain death for whoever goes out there."

Yaggi thought about this for a few minutes.

"So, what do you think?" Asked the clerk.

"Sergeant Wayne?"

"That's right."

"Certain death?"

"Correct."

"Ah. What was the first option again?"

After about twenty minutes of being violently kicked around the room, Yaggi began to think that it might not be a bad idea to choose the third option. He politely asked the MPs to leave him alone, and told the clerk that he'd decided to go.

"Excellent! You'll leave immediately! We'll give you one of our best ships and a pilot. We want you to be captured by the Gobbies, you're certain to be brought to the new prison, since, as far as we can tell, all captured humans have been shipped there, including Sergeant Wayne. You should be able to work out a way of escaping between the two of you." He picked up a patch from his desk and slapped it onto Yaggi's arm. The adhesive in the patch firmly welded Yaggi's new rank to his uniform. "Have a nice war, Third Lieutenant Hamstring!"

"Thanks, you too."

As Yaggi was lifted onto the stretcher and carried out, the clerk buzzed his secretary. "Who's next?" He asked.

"Private Boris Lurfin, sir."

"Ok, give me a minute."

He removed the picture from the wall, unscrewed the "General Yaggi" plaque, and opened his drawer. Inside were thousands of small brass plaques filed in alphabetical order. He selected one and screwed it onto the picture. He rehung the picture, and a benevolent President Boris Lurfin beamed down upon the room.

Yaggi walked through one of the largest hangers in the military installation. He was being escorted to his ship by his pilot, Tess, a tall and very attractive woman who was insolent and outspoken and who scared the hell out of Yaggi.

"Kurk this! The best, fastest, and most dangerous ship being sacrificed to rescue a miserable, worthless - though incredibly sexy - kurk of a Sergeant!"

Even though Yaggi was terrified of the woman, he felt a hot rush of jealousy when he heard her describing Wayne as sexy.

Tess was very brash, and she had muscles even the strongest trooper would be jealous of, yet at the same time she retained a certain classical femininity about her, purely by accident, Yaggi suspected. Even when she swore she was attractive, and some of her expletives could knock a man off a bike a forty metres. She hawked and spat ferociously at the ground, and Yaggi was extremely impressed at the little crater she'd knocked out of the packed dirt.

"The only reason I'm agreeing to this is that Wayne - the kurk - is such a kurking cutie." She sighed demurely, or at least as demurely as she could manage.

They reached the ship, the mighty starship Neophyte, and Yaggi grinned to himself as he gazed at the incredible array of weapons that covered every surface. The ship was over fifty meters long, and it basically consisted of a small cockpit, a huge armoury, and the engines. Of course there were the usual other starship accessories, like the secret compartments in which the crew can hide themselves in case they are boarded by aliens who have the technology to locate and board a starship, but not the technology to be able to check if there is anybody on board. There was also the bar. And the CosmiCrapper, a device best left undescribed.

Tess led him inside. She looked Yaggi up and down, and winked. She parted her lips, and pouted sexily. Then she undid the top three buttons on her shirt, and led him to the pilot's bunk. "We don't have to leave for another four hours," she said huskily. Yaggi missed these hints entirely.

"Great! I'll just go and get drunk, give me a call when you're ready." Yaggi turned to go, but was grabbed by the neck and hurled to

the floor. Tess pinned his arms down with her knees, and punched him in the throat to knock out any resistance he might have.

"I'm a modern, sensuous woman, Yaggi. I know you only see me as a lowly Flight Lieutenant, but I have feelings too. Feelings for you." She grabbed Yaggi by the short hairs at the back of his neck and pounded his head off the metal floor.

"Urrgh," Yaggi moaned, still only dimly aware of what was happening. The continuous pounding stopped, and he fought to wrestle himself free of her octopus-like embrace. Unfortunately, Tess

mistook the wriggling of his body and the flailing of his limbs for something else.

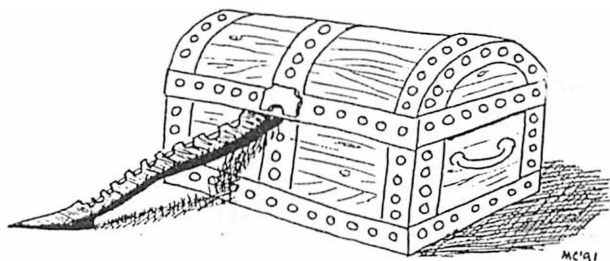
"Oh, Yaggi!", she said, ripping open his one-piece uniform. She took a good long look at him, and sighed happily. She pulled him forward and gave him a long and sensuous kiss on the lips.

"Oh, Yaggi. Be genital with me."

And as she had his wicked way with her, Yaggi could do nothing but lay back and think of England. Whatever that was.

To Be Continued...

Coming soon, **Grabbed by the Gobbles**, chapter 2 of *The Gobbies Plan*. To infiltrate the enemy's prisons, Yaggi and Tess allow themselves to be captured, but not all goes according to plan...



ALIENS

vs.

LUGGAGE

Coming never from Terry Pratchett and James Cameron

He Jars at Skirts (that never found a welt)

"Don't do it!" Baker shouted at Hepburn, who was on the ledge, having lost his shirt investing in contraceptives for bees. "There's too much to live for! Too many puns to crack!"

"You don't like my puns," Hepburn clucked, glancing down at the street.

"Of course we do. So anyway, who was your broker?"

"Common sense." (As if it was as plain as day).

"Eh?"

Hepburn bent towards the window and said "Isn't it said that booty is in the IUD bee-halter?"

Hearing this, Baker began to swoon, and then he pushed Hepburn out of the way and jumped himself.

Michael Cullen

By the Might of the Loon

A young married couple bought a quiet country cottage and moved in. Less than two weeks later they were both dead, apparently from simple domestic accidents.

After another few years, the same thing happened again. The cottage soon gained a reputation for being haunted. On several occasions when the local children were daring each other to explore it, some of the children simply never came out.

One day a parapsychologist examined the dates of all the deaths.

"Just as I thought," he said. "It only ever happens during the time of a full moon. It must be a ware house."

Michael Carroll

Indiana Jones and the Talented Member of the Stoat Family

I'd discovered the greatest novelty act in showbusiness. On a county council fact-finding mission to Siberia, a wizened old Mongol had sold me a mink who was able to hum "The Volga Boatman". And for a pittance, as well!

A nightclub owner booked the act, but said I'd have to do something too, so I bought some German trousers and a siphon.

Then on opening night - Disaster! Someone had let the mink loose behind the bar.

The owner had to cancel the performance, and broke it to me thus:

"You can water lederhosen - but your drunk mink can't hum!"

Michael Cullen

<p>A Drabble is a short story of exactly one hundred words. By their very nature they tend to be humorous, and as such are a natural for PFJ. If you think you can do better, send your drabbles in to us at the usual address.</p>

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I've just read this issue of PFJ, and I think it's the finest magazine I've ever read. I wish you all the very best in the future, both with the magazine and with your personal lives, and I hope that you all make lots of money and marry beautiful sexy women, and that all your novels get published and become instant best-sellers, and that your children grow up to be strong and healthy and do very well at school.

I think you are all really intelligent and handsome, and I just know you're going to be successful in everything you do. Yours Admiringly,

Isaac Asimov, USA.

Dear Editor,

I agree with Isaac, you are all really fab and I'm sure that even the cast of Star Trek look up to you. Love,

Arthur C. Clarke, Sri Lanka.

Dear Editor,

Yesterday I made up a joke: I really like Thunderbirds, but the acting is a bit wooden! Do I win a T-shirt?

Neville Miles O'Flanagan, Dublin.

Editor's reply : No.

Dear Editor,

I've just read this issue of PFJ, and I think all the letters are made up, even this one.

Barney O'Hanlon, Swords.

Editor's reply : Well done for spotting our mistake! We promise to correct it before this issue goes to print.

Dear Editor,

I've been reading the PFJ for six years now, and I think it improves with every issue. Over the years you have brought me interesting articles on just about every subject and in-depth interviews with all the leading lights of Science Fiction. I look forward to reading you for another six years, and maybe another after that.

James Quentin-Bagel, [Address Supplied].

P.S. This is not my real name.

Dear Editor,

I don't think you got my joke in my last letter which you printed elsewhere on this page. You see, the Thunderbirds are all puppets, and they're made out of wood. So you see... [Goes on for fifteen pages] So do I win a T-shirt?

Neville Miles O'Flanagan, Dublin.

Editor's Reply : No, no, no... [Goes on for seventeen pages]... no, no. Oh, okay, then.

Dear Editor,

From what I've read of PFJ so far, it's going to be pretty good, and I'm sure that it will achieve the recognition it deserves. Being the Assistant Editor of *The Federation Times* (the magazine of Starbase Ireland), I know how difficult it can be to produce an amateur magazine.

I really enjoyed the letters page, and just in case you print this letter and any readers are wondering how I could have read the letters page before it was printed, I'll just let them know I read a preview edition of the magazine.

At least we know *this* letter isn't made up!

Gary Nugent, Dublin 14.

Editor's Reply : Oh yes it is.

We've got a free back page so we'll give it to the ISFA without their knowing department:

What do the ISFA have that you don't?

- Ireland's only science fiction magazine (except this one, which doesn't really count yet).
- A monthly newsletter telling you lots of stuff you needed to know and some stuff you didn't.
- Brendan Ryder.
- A 10% discount in most of Dublin's science fiction shops (all right, two - The Alchemist's Head and The Modeller's Nook).
- Monthly meetings where you meet all sorts of famous and/or interesting people.

Amongst the people who have availed of a free drink in the past are such diverse authors as Diane Duane, Harry Harrison, Katherine Kurtz, Anne McCaffrey, Peter Morwood, Brian Stableford and a host of others.

Not content with this, the ISFA also runs or assists -

- Octocon (that's a convention, but then you probably already knew that).
- SFEX, an annual Art Show that's held every year
- Trips to parts of Ireland beyond the Pale (look it up). First was Cork; next... who knows?

Where, you cry, can I get details of this wonderful group?

Wonder no more - just write to

The Irish Science Fiction Association
30 Beverly Downs
Knocklyon Road
Templeogue
Dublin 16
Ireland

Please tick this box if you feel like it : ☐