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Cover by Arthur L. Widner, Jr.

EDITORIAL ILLUMINATION

Polaris celebrates its entrance into the Fantasy Amateur Press Association by increasing its size to twenty pages. We hope you like it. And you FAPA members -- just because this is a FAPA magazine, don't think we aren't interested in hearing from our readers. We'd be happy to get comments and criticism from each and every one of you.

Next issue, as an experiment, we are devoting nearly half of the magazine to a single story--"The Tree on the Hill", a splendid weird tale by Duane W. Rimel. We think you'll say it's one of the
(Continued on Page 11)

LUANA THE LIVING

by Ray Bradbury

Before I conclude this mundane existence, bid the terrors of the alien farewell, and take my leave of all things light and dark, I must tell to someone the reason for my suicide. A horror clings malignantly to my brain, and far back in the recesses of the subconscious it burns like the pale flame of a candle in the tombs of the dead. It steals my strength and leaves me weak and trembling like a child. Try as I will, I can not rid myself of it, for the night of the full Moon forces its return.

I am seated here in the dark, silent room waiting. A few feet distant stands the huge grandfather clock that has been in the family for generations, its gaunt face glowing faintly in the blackness, striking out the hours with a low and gentle tone. The ancient timepiece shall accomplish the action I dare not trust to my shaking hand, for at the last stroke of midnight, fifteen minutes hence, a lever shall press the trigger of the revolver bolted to its side, and send a bullet crashing through my heart. While I wait I shall--I must--unburden myself of my tale.

I am an adventurer, my life not one of common experience. But now, at one score and ten, I am an old man, with silver hair and trembling fingers. Fear has chiseled its effects in my face through sunken eye and wrinkles like those in the skin of a mummy. I am a spent and tired ancient, ready to close my coffin lid down and rest for eternity.

Let me go back a year. Let me seek out the days that have passed, so short a time away, yet so hellishly removed by the constant torture that has made twelve months seem like a century.

In India, back along the mountainous spine of the Himalayas, in a dark region where tigers prowled, I had been deserted by my natives who had babbled of some superstitious legend about "Luana". As I broke my way through a thick wall of brambles, I came across a hirsute individual who squatted cross-legged beneath a tree, puffing gently on his opium pipe. Hoping to gain a guide, I accosted him, but received no answer.

I looked into his eyes, small almond holes in the midst of converging wrinkles, and saw no iris or pupil, just a small expanse of leaden flesh as if the eyeballs had been rolled back in hypnotic sleep by the opium. And he said no word, but swung gently from side to side like a sapling in the summer wind, spurts of smoke blowing from his lips. In a rage at his silence, I shook him until the pipe fell from his mouth. His jaw sprang down and his lips curled back, revealing a row of sharp, yellow teeth. My stomach revolted at what I saw. He could not talk, this stranger, for his tongue was blue and shriveled like a dried fig which someone had slit open, its blood withdrawn. A dreamlike gibberish issued from far in his throat, and I let him loose. Immediately the hands fumbled about on the ground, recovered the pipe, and replaced it in the mouth. He continued his tranquil puffing, blind and speechless, and I withdrew from the vicinity in haste.

For the remainder of the day I cut my way through jungle never explored by white man. Perishing from thirst and hunger, I tried unsuccessfully to follow barely discernible animal paths to a water

hole. When I tried to return to the point where I had hacked my way through the bramble barrier, both my path and the strange blind man had vanished. It was almost as if the brambles had grown together in the few scant hours. And when I saw the cut I had made in a tree earlier, I realized the brambles had grown, for the cut had moved upward visibly. This was a land of insanely growing jungle, where plants sprouted, grew, and died in a week or two. The carpet of vegetation was feet thick and strangely resilient, and the unpleasant jungle was hot and broad and quiet. Not even the bestial cry of a tiger broke the oppressive silence, which pressed its fingers in upon me until I shouted to please my ears, to shock myself back into sanity. When I could no longer stand the strange lack of noise, I would run through brush and mire, slipping and falling and sliding until I was bathed in perspiration, then I would sit and rest and watch the mud on my shoes dry and form into crooked cakes.

And still no sound. There was some grim thing that fettered this tree-bounded terrain in soundless monotony.

As the sun floated briefly on the ocean of leaves and branches and vanished in the west, I realized that this was a place apart, undisturbed by the outer world which it repulsed by its wall of thorns. There were few water holes and animals in the land of silence, and the natives were furtive and rarely seen. I dimly recalled strange tales of them and this region, about practices that took place in the light of the full Moon.

As twilight came the cavern of space sprouted points of light that were the stars. Hours passed and the hushed night became sprinkled with more and more of the silver points until a veritable blanket of light diffused the dome of heaven. As I sat and gazed upward through the trees toward them, I sensed a movement about me. It seemed that the whole forest was stirring to life. Little leaves slithered under foot, slender saplings wavered and shook, and the mighty jungle giants themselves bestirred and fluttered their leaves to the ground. In the dark it seemed that things grew three-fold the speed of daylight, shot up and bloomed by some mysterious means. The trees broke the silence with a faint rustling and the underbrush writhed with evil life. I arose and moved on as through a bog, the rot under foot hindering me until I fell forward and sprawled with my face in the soil.

Suddenly as I lay there, it seemed that tendrils swept up and clung to me, caressed my neck in an unrelenting grip until I strangled and gasped for air. Knotted vines wrapped swiftly on my forehead and pressed my temples until a stabbing pain flickered through me. I tore at my throat, freeing it with feeble gestures of the clutching things, and staggered to my feet. Desperately I stumbled on, until my foot struck water unexpectedly, and I ventured forward until the chill liquid reached my knees.

My terror was forgotten as I dropped to my knees in the scummy water and brushed aside the web-like debris. Ripples quivered under hand, and as I bent I saw the stars reflected in its surface like dancing fireflies. I gulped in huge mouthfuls and wetted my forehead and my temples to ease the heated pain that dwelt there. Then I lay back and floated in the pool, watching the water caress my battered boots and puttees.

How long I lay and relaxed I know not. When I emerged, dripping, I had found a new strength that grew by the minute. I

stripped the torn shirt from me and soaked it in the water, then twisted it and tied it about my head so that its moisture would keep me comfortable for a while. The water clung to my skin, shimmering like a grayish slime.

Intrigued by the dark now, my terror vanished, I moved forward among the leaping tendrils. Tiny rustlings, the secretive murmuring of water and soil, the high-pitched crackle of branches sounded, and the jungle was a living, breathing creature that I walked upon. Then before me I could see a clearing where dark shapes poised in a circle in its gloomy depth.

I stopped suddenly, as if frozen by a sudden blast of wintry wind. I squinted at the shapes crouching on the ground in the clearing. It seemed that I saw a double score of stone statues imbedded in the soil, squatting and waiting, malignant. In the center crouched another presence, alone on the sodden surface.

A light flecked the tree tops a moment later. As the seconds passed by the full sphere of the Moon ascended the star-sprinkled vault inch by inch. It saturated the clearing with silver and brought forth the crouching shapes like silhouettes on the jungle floor.

Something moved. A figure shifted, and realization of what I saw came to me. These were men! Men, waking as if from sleep, one by one. A soft sighing sound as of wind stirring through myriads of leaves arose as the Moon ascended. I advanced slowly, quietly, toward the clearing. The creatures on the ground stretched long, thin limbs, and knelt upon their knees, all bowing toward the Moon in the crystal-clear sky, all with their emaciated backs toward me.

They seemed creatures of some hypnotic spell, their movements drug-like, as they raised their fingers and gesticulated toward the lunar world that swung from the trees, a disk of blinding white. It was a scene painted in platinum. The Moon dominated the sky and the stars paled to insignificance in its white fire. Now the members of the cult arose and swayed from side to side, swinging their hands and lamenting with deep-chested sounds.

They swung about swiftly, undulated and leaped and danced, the ground throbbing under their bare feet. In a circle they moved, hurtling up and slapping their palms together and weeping. They chanted and screamed and beat their bodies and swept by me without seeing. Like gnarled trees sprung to life they moved, naked and brown. But it was their eyes that caused me to fear. For they were leaden and white without pupils, as if burned to that sickly colour by exposure to some changing light, as if dyed by the light of the Moon!

One man, standing in the center of the racing throng, stood and motioned to the Moon, and I recognized him as the stranger I had accosted that morn, the man with the shrunken tongue and blind eyes! He was gibbering and urging his comrades on, and strangely his words became gradually understandable in the tongue of the ancient Hindus.

"Great living Luana!" he intoned, and the writhing men echoed his jumbled words. "Living Luana! Give us strength! Protect us! Keep from us the unholy spirit of the white man! Destroy the ulcer of the earth, all mankind, those who poison the true faith with their ignorance!"

Overcome with anger, I foolishly stepped into their midst with my revolver in my hand, and commanded them to stop their ritual.

They stopped as if struck by lightning! But only for a moment. Then with cries of bestial rage they advanced toward me, imploring the Moon as it hung full suspended above the trees.

"Destroy this invader! Annihilate the ignoble savage who has seen the ritual of Luana!" they pleaded. "Luana lives and breathes! Luana, take revenge for us who are blind yet see your light." I leveled my revolver, praying that the water had not wetted the powder, and fired point blank into one savage heart. With a curse on his lips the man stumbled and fell, throwing me to the ground. From where I lay I saw the others scatter wildly, weaving and vanishing into the jungle. I fired and kept firing until the hammer of my gun clicked harmlessly. Then I glared about and saw the last native kneeling on the ground and praying.

"I curse this man in the name of living Luana," he sighed. Without another word he sank upon the sword and lay deathly still.

If I had but known the consequences of my action! A fountain of light spurted down as I let my weapon drop, and I looked full into the face of the Moon and gasped. It seemed that it filled the sky with its bulk, flamed with a radiance brighter than the sun, battered me and burned my eyes with its intensity. A wrathful, malignant sphere wavered over me as an evil god, and it seemed that the Moon lived and breathed as did the jungle. It was as though this jungle were the Moon's abode, these natives its disciples in some weird cult.

I remember screaming once, a half-hearted scream of unbelief, and then I ran! Tearing away branches and slogging through marshy ground, I reached the bramble barrier and raised my knife to hack away the thorns. A sudden dizziness whirled over me and I sank down into oblivion. The last thing I viewed was the pulsating pock-marked face of Luna glimmering hot on my eyes.

The next morning I found myself outside the bramble wall on a familiar trail. My gun was gone and my knife had vanished also, but my mind made itself believe that all had been a nightmare. God, if only it had been!

I returned to civilization immediately, and, chartering a special plane, reached America within the next twenty days. At home, here in the country, overlooking the California coast and the Pacific Ocean, I rested for a few days. But on the night of the next full Moon---

I could no longer sit upon my veranda. A vague warning issued from the vaults of the cratered Moon itself, and squat alien figures seemed to crouch in the shades of the pyramidal trees. A sibilant and throbbing song like gushing blood echoed and pounded in my ears. My friends left me alone to my musings because of the fear I displayed and an almost fanatical haste to escape the light of the Moon as it dangled, a crescent of unfilled light, in the heavens. The world has left me to my dreaming, my dreadful nightmares, and the terrors that assail me.

Of nights I sat bolt upright and quaked to see the moon in all its odious whiteness cling upon the curtain of night to bathe my chamber in platinum. So frightened I became that I summoned a maker of tapestries and instructed him to hang upon the windows curtains of ebon colour to shut out forever that pale and sickly-hued torrent of luminescence.

But even though the shades were drawn and the curtains clamped

tight, I heard the mourning of wind about the trees like the high-pitched mourning of those devil savages, stirring shadow creatures to life under the spell of earth's satellite. And, growing from full Moon to full Moon, I have heard other sounds, sounds of bestial activity springing up among the shrubs, as if those growths had been stung to life and they cracked and shook with warning. Leaves crunched brittly on the trees and tore away to flutter impatiently on the sill of my retreat. Noises--noises that confounded and worried me--that urged me to desperation until clammy sweat broke out upon my brow.

And then, twelve moons from that night in the jungle, I lay in the humid room in the dark, bathed in moisture, waiting for some cool breeze to bring me the sleep that I prayed for. A solid wave of heat crawled over me until all rational thought had fled and I was crazed for a breath of fresh air. I staggered to the curtains, shut my eyes tightly so as not to perceive the Moon in all its somberness. I swept aside the shrouds and threw open the tall window; sucking in my breath, waiting to quaff the chilly night. Instead, a river of noise and a wind born of fire struck me fearfully. The wind harked louder and tore my remaining garments from me as I stood in its beating flames, swept around and burnt as if by some equatorial daylight.

I clutched at the windows, seeking to shut them again, seeking to close off the chatter of leaves and wind and shadows, leaping with evil life. A noise like laughter descended from above, a song of hate from blasphemed Nature; chant of sea and aria of birds, trilling of zephyrs and thunder of tornado, mingled in a rising clangor which hammered at me. Fire burned through me, scorched open my eyes and made me lift my lids to view the Moon where it lay in rafters of clouds. Like some god, titanic and wrathful, silver, its surface boiling like a cauldron, it drowned the sky in bulk and stabbed its colorless disk into my brain. The tempest was a continuous straining to break my ear drums.

Somehow I closed the window, shut out the noise, pulled the curtains tight, and no longer saw the light.

I remember moving dazedly back to my dressing table and standing before my mirror as I switched on the light.

That was a fortnight ago.

The time draws near for the clock to strike twelve, as I sit and write these last few words. In one minute, as the clock sounds out the last note, I shall die.

For a fortnight I have been in this room, never venturing out though I am parched with thirst and hollow with hunger. I have not dared to venture forth.

I am committing suicide because---

Ah, the clock strikes twelve. One! Two! Three!...

I am killing myself because when I turned on the light in my room and looked at myself in the mirror, I saw--- Through a grey film that clouded my eyes I saw a gaping idiot, eyes leaden and white without pupils, face dead and thin, mouth dropped open, and my tongue---was a shriveled black mass lolling between my teeth like a twisted rag!

I bid you farewell! The clock tolls twelve!

THE END

UNCOVERED IN THE PRESS

by Bob Tucker

Having heard no mention of this in the fan press, let me come to the fore with a bit of information as to where some occasional weird and fantasy fiction can be found--in the free and untrammelled press.

It is the magazine-supplement to some newspapers scattered over the country, called "This Week". In Chicago and vicinity "This Week" appears with The Chicago Daily News every Saturday. Weird and fantasy fiction not of the type found in the pages of the pulps often appears here.

The latest (at this writing) is a story by "Dorothy Black" appearing in the issue for February 24th, entitled "Strange Things Sometimes Happen". "Dorothy Black" is, I should like to believe, our Dorothy Quick.

The tale concerns a woman who once wrote a book that never appeared....and then helplessly acted out every major and minor detail of that book in this saga we call Life. An old woman is telling the story, and she begins:

Once, when she was young she came to the necessity of needing new clothes; and reviewed the ways and means that proper young ladies obtain money. She decided to write a book, and that she did, spinning a romance about a handsome chap who entered the life of a farm girl (like herself), finally marrying her and carrying her away to India, where he was stationed. However, after a while garrison life palled on this miss, and into the book came a tall stranger with an auburn mustache. The stranger and the heroine fall in love, and after a border uprising in which a "Koto Khan" was revealed as the leader, the two sail away for England. They never get there--the ship sinks with the two lovers locked in each others arms. --End of book.

The book however was never published. The publishing house folded between the time of paying the authoress a "down payment" and publication of the novel. Meanwhile the lady who had written the book, on a lark, inserted a notice in the local "agony column" as her book heroine did, and lo! in came the handsome chap just as he did in the book!

The rest shouldn't be a big mystery to you. She married the man, it turned out he was stationed in India, and off they went. She was helpful in forestalling a little uprising there by revealing a local merchant named "Koto Khan" as the leader. Ultimately, the stranger came into her life, and he wore an auburn mustache.

Here the woman became frightened. So far, her own life had followed the life of the book heroine in every detail, and she knew what was ahead: she herself had written the two of them should die at sea. So, in an effort to balk fate, she refuses to go with the stranger when he proposes they run away to England. He goes alone, and his ship is torpedoed in the Mediterranean.

On this sad note the old lady ends her tale; there is no doubt left that she is the woman that wrote the book, and then unwillingly acted it out. She wishes she had gone with the mustached man.

THE TRUANT

by Hilary St. Clare

"I would sing a brief song of the world's little children
Magic hath stolen away."

--Walter De La Mare

Once a peewit rose from a nest hidden in the brown grass excitedly, and the little man looked up to see it plunging away into the blue hills. A flight of wild geese flew heavily seawards, their cries echoing in the dusk. But the traveller went on trudgingly, his face set against the sea-breeze, and his dull eyes straining for a first glimpse of the town he knew lay at the end of the road. He had seen the sun scintillate crimson on the sea for perhaps the last time in his life, and he wanted to remember it, and the strange proudness and inviolability of the hills that lay behind him, now lost in the blue haze of distance.

Presently, he came to a bend in the road, and then it dipped down to Morsham and the sea, and he could discern yellow rushlights in the windows. His eyes lost their dullness, and his face quickened. Somewhere, a duck thrashed the waters of the marshes that lay to the left. He entered ancient Morsham where it stretched long arms of boxlike wooden houses along the road, and welcomed him with silence and a light breeze in his hair. Again he saw the rows of old ships rotting by the quays and the ragged canvas flapping in the wind against the spars, again, a few hundred yards to the right lay the palace and grounds of an ancient king long since dreamed and recalled by the earth. To these grounds he went, and a little weed-covered garden shining dimly in the dark.

There he waited, while Night went about the gigantic business of drawing on her cloak of stars, and when it was done, pinning it to her shoulders by the jewel that was the evening star. And the sounds of the dark entered into deep conspiracy, weaving a spell round the little man's heart, filling it with a rich and deep content.

There was a mystery about the traveller. The knowing inhabitants of Morsham realised it as they peered behind faded lace curtains through their windows, as they sat at supper chattering while the rushlights flickered in their holders and even the shadows seemed to listen.

And the truth was, the little man waited for One who should reclaim him in the garden, and the truth also was that he would die there in the starlight when that One came. And yet another thing was that the man was very glad. So he waited in the deep shadows, and presently, he saw the little girl climb up a flight of stairs and creak open the wicket gate that led into the garden.

Not altogether sure whether this was to be his deliverer, he sank further back into the darkness, and saw her pink pinafore fluttering up and down the grass-grown pathways. Then she came towards him, deliberately.

For a moment he stood, indecisive, then he stepped forward, and as if a link had there and then been forged between them, they stared at one another, and knew at last their respective roles in the drama that was to follow.

"I knew that you would have to come," said the little girl.

"And I---didn't doubt it a moment," said the man. He took off his spectacles and put them in their case. Somehow, he could see just as well without them.

"You are just as I knew you would be," she said, and clapped her hands. In the starlight, her face looked...elfin. She had long dark hair pleated into pigtails. Her eyes were strange and pointed-looking as were her ears.

"Will you come?" she said, "it's been a long time, you know."

And suddenly, he remembered the woods at home as he had left them that day, brown and golden yellow in the sun. He remembered the great city and the white ways of it, the strange beauty of it and the horrible soullessness of it. He remembered a little daughter who was six and still at school. All the ordinary, familiar things mocked this strange destiny in Morsham by the sea. The words came pitifully from his lips...this little elf, what could she know of that life? "The World," he muttered, "The World--I--I am, somehow, part of it." He gestured vaguely.

"And you are part of me and mine. Oh, come, come," thrilled the little girl's voice, "and I will show you the secret places by the star-pools, and the lands of delight. Don't you remember our Mother--don't you?"

The sweet longing that had brought him there rose in the little man's soul suddenly, overflowed by his eyes that became full of tears. He said, "Oh, God!" He remembered very well.

"Listen! Sappho sings there, and still the little ships sail to the Golden Isles in the spring. And Israfil is king. Oh come, and I will make a wreath of star-lilies for your hair and you will lie where the star-pools glisten in the evening. I shall be your delight forever and ever."

And suddenly, it was true, and the little man knew that the star-child was his own daughter, and had secretly known him for what he was all his life. The surprising thing was he had never noticed before. Of course, the pink pinafore was her own! This was a strange meeting in an old garden.

He said, "I'll come."

Then he died.

They found him next morning there, lying on the brown leaves with a little girl in his arms. They crossed themselves at the look of peace on both their faces. But in Morsham by the sea, Faerie and Paradise are ever considered kingdoms very near, and since they died, those two, very near indeed. For there was singing last night in the palace grounds, and no...visible...singers.

THE END

EDITORIAL ILLUMINATION

(continued from Page 3)

best stories ever to appear in a fan magazine.

We aren't altogether certain about our summer address as yet. Up to June 10 we will be at the Pasadena address. After that, please write us at Box 234, Payette, Idaho. All mail will be forwarded to wherever we happen to be. And remember--please write!



IMAGI-MOVIES

BY

4S1

FROZEN-THERAPYARN

"The Man with 9 Lives" is the cat's whiskers. Body temperatures of 4 men & a scientist are reduced to -100° in this scientificiller. Just the thing for warm weather. Karloff turns killer that mankind may not surcease from cancer & other malignant diseases. Animation is suspended for 10 yrs in the mad doctor & his 4 human "laboratory animals". Best of all, believ it or not pic is pro-science! Originly was titled "The Man Who Woud Not Die".

DEVOLUTION

Karloff is sposed to do "The Ape" next for Monogram.

ZOO LOGICAL

Fillip was given to Philadelphia showings of ONE MILLION BC by press preview of the pic in the Reptile House of the city's zoo! Critx, however, next offering, combinedly commenting: "...a preposterous picture pipe-dream, too paleontological & too illogical, the most delitefully amusing tableau from a museum of unnatural history in the history of the cinema..."

ENIGMATIC INITIALS

--"D.O.A.", on the production skedule at Para, has had 'em puzzled. However, secret's out: Initials stand for "Dead on Arrival". Para, incid., wants Laughton for the centenarian scientist role in "The Man in Half-Moon St". & their Destinarrative with Rathbone, now completed, is noan as "A Date with Destiny".

TURNABOUT

turns out to be a funtasyarn in the Thorne Smith vein. Maybe adaptation from the novel of the same name by Smith had something to do with it. Tennyrate, when a household god causes husband & wife to switch sexes, some situations occur which may be banned in some States; but, as previewd, it's a Topper.

DEAD BLACK

Joe Louis to star in "Sign of the Zombies", 15-episode serial which also will be releast in a condensat feature-length form.

IRON THIS'UN OUT

name for feature-form of pseudo-science serial "rantom Empire" is "Men with Steel Faces". New

BUROZ BK BAWT

to "The Jungle Girl".

Republic has purchast rights

PUZZLE: FIND THE NAMES OF THE SCIENTIFILMS
TO BE MADE

When The Invisible Woman pursued Superman, poor Jekyll didnt noe where to Hyde! (Clue: Titles are underlined.) (Comment: This guy Ackerman is either simple-minded or a dead-pan comedian.)

"IT'S ALL IN YOUR MIND"

is an independently produced "different" pic of the little man who was so mild even the horn on his car didnt give a hoot, who undergoes a mental metamorfosis which, as seen on the screen, makes unusual fare, fit for the fantasy fan's consumption (no hacky puns, now!) Incidentally, there is an Elmer Smith in it. (Anything funny in this column is entirely punintentional.)

LIFE-LINE

"The Death-Predicter" is the translated title of a new French scientifiilm. From what I can make out with my limited comprehension of French, the picture is, according to the company that produced it, "...a work of perfection of imagination, of an audacity & originality sensational, posing the problem which in all times has intrigued mankind: that of Destiny.

"A young scientist, Jean Durand, has built a machine to measure life. This machine is capable of revealing - amidst rays & streamers - to him who possesses the secret, the hour exact of the death of another. The future is no longer a mystery.

"All the conceptions of existence are upset. The Govls are afraid. The Sûreté is in a mêlée. & we are launcht into a prodigious adventure! We shall experience the ultimate experiences!

"This fabulous invention has mankind sceptical but frightend. The action becomes impassiond, moving, fantastic.

"Paralleling the social consequences of this discovery, we follow the moral evolution of the young scientist who thru his own fault loses his adoring fiancée & best friend--bfor he loses himself.

"After that tragic romantic episode follows a comic part. Lafts constantly are provided the spectator for the proper relief. The action ricochettes & rebounds without end, like a ball adroitly thrown."

Well, that'll be about enuf of that, I guess, as no further fantastic sequences are described. I hope no one ever has the opportunity to check up on me as to how I translated the French. Howsomer, I felt a bit better when, in the French mag, I ran across a title in somebody's idea of English, speld this way: "Call of the Yukou". U may recognize Jack London's "Call of the Yukon"?

My Chicon Publication, according to present plans, will be another one-issue movie mag, like METROPOLIS #1, about a scientifiilm unknown to stfans.....

THE OTHER

by Robert W Lowndes

My friend Higgins says that it happened at a bar near the airport, about two hours before the Bermuda clipper was due to take off. He'd made an error and arrived early, so was idling as pleasantly as possible with Martinis and the radio.

He was nearing bottoms on the third when the stranger came in. He happened to be looking in the bar mirror, and his first impression was that the man had just seen a ghost. The stranger was white, snowy white, and taller and thinner than most. His hands were trembling, and he leaned against the wall a second, then slouched forward and flopped into the chair opposite Higgins.

"Narrow escape," the stranger -- Higgins never did get his name -- murmured weakly and a little breathlessly. "God, I was almost on that plane."

"Can I get you a drink?" asked Higgins. It was plain that the pale man was momentarily incapable of ordering. He nodded, mumbled thanks, and drained the glass at a single gulp as soon as the waiter had set it down.

"I'm really sorry," he said. "I suppose I'm intruding. . . . But I've had a shock. The Bermuda plane, you know: I nearly took it."

"But it isn't due to take off for another half hour," protested Higgins.

"I know." The other's breath was coming a little more normally now. "You see -- it's rather odd -- but, what I meant was: I nearly got caught. Fate. Half an hour margin, yes, but suppose I hadn't caught on when I did? Then I'd be on that plane when she takes off." He paused for a moment, lit a nervous cigarette, then leaned forward confidentially.

"I just learned that that plane won't reach Bermuda! Maybe a storm will hit it, or the engines will fail. But it's doomed. . . . All on board lost. . . . well, perhaps not all; some survivors perhaps; but not me."

"I beg your pardon," said Higgins.

"Of course," said the stranger, "you don't believe me. Few people do. . . . You're not booked on it yourself, are you?"

"I am."

"Then I'd better tell you the whole story. I've told it before, and it's usually been laughed at. Though those that didn't laugh, I think, are rather glad of it now. You see -- I'm psychic. I suppose that's what you'd call it."

Higgins began to smile, but the man was not even looking at him. He was talking to his reflection on the glazed table-top.

"The first time I remember anything like it was when I was swimming one day. I was about thirteen. Summer day, clear sky, lazy hot sun. Everything was all right, when suddenly I thought I saw someone in trouble about a hundred or two yards from me. It was strange, you see, because it wasn't a public beach and I hadn't seen anyone about. It was a boy -- I couldn't see his face -- and he was thrashing about, apparently in pain. He went down before I could get to him. I dove under, looked all around the spot, but nothing was to be seen. And the water was perfectly clear and not

much over my head. It scared me so that I swam ashore and went up to the cabin.

"I didn't go in the next day either. And about an hour before lunch, when I was ordinarily to be found in the water, I was taken with an attack of acute appendicitis. The pain doubled me tight: if I had been in the water I wouldn't have had the beginning of a chance to be saved."

The stranger looked up and lit a new cigarette from the stub of his old one. "That was almost twenty years ago. It didn't happen again for almost a decade, and at first I didn't connect the two.

"But when I was twenty-one and a senior at F.Y.U., I lived in a ramshackle, old-law rooming house, trying to live on not enough money. It was summer, or almost, and the place didn't seem to be too bad. One particular day I was walking a blond co-ed through the park, demoralizing the squirrels with peanuts, when I got the impression that someone was following us. Ever have that feeling sort of crawl in the back of your head? I looked around, but no one was in sight. Still, I couldn't shake it off.

"We dropped into a Chinese restaurant for won ton, which is cheap and tasty, and I still felt someone following us. Everyone around seemed perfectly busy with their own affairs, and I didn't want to attract undue attention. My girl felt that something was wrong, too, but I didn't want to tell her. I felt like a fool. . . It kept recurring all that night, particularly when we went to a movie. I could have sworn that somebody was staring at the back of my neck, someone I knew. But the seats directly behind us were vacant.

"On the way home it came again. I could even hear the footsteps. They were familiar to me, but not reassuringly so. Finally I stepped into a doorway, hoping it would pass by and I could see it. The night was rather misty, but I saw something.

"It moved slowly and, as it approached, I could see why. It was black and charred. A hideously burned thing. I saw the blackened lips and ruins of the face. It passed by, but, when it was just before me, it turned and looked squarely at me. Nothing was human but the eyes. . . . They were my eyes.

"I didn't go back to my room that night. I wanted company. I stuck to the always populated streets around Thirty-Fourth, near Penn Station. But I went there the next day, after morning classes, and I got an inkling of what it was all about. The fire department was still poking around what was left of the place. The papers had all the details. Nine people were incinerated."

"A premonition," said Higgins. "A damnably gruesome one, but I've had such things myself -- though not so vivid."

"That's right," agreed the stranger, "it was a premonition. Solidified. I swear the cinder I saw walking was as solid as this table.

"Well, I haven't had an important accident or sickness for twenty years. I've had a dozen narrow escapes, but each time one of these visions came a little bit before. Once I was going to take a train, the Allerton Flier, you've probably read what happened to it. But the day before I met my double, horribly crushed and mangled. I was warned away from 42nd Street the January day three years ago when five people were killed by ice falling from

(continued on Page 19)



OBSERVATIONS

by the Fans

Damon Knight, editor of Snide, the finest new fan mag, writes: Thanks for sending that exchange copy of POLARIS in advance. You California fans seem to be nice people... This month's cover shows unmistakable signs of excellence, but it seems to have been stencilled carelessly. The name-plate, very good; the stories, good for fan fiction; the poem, very good indeed.

Duane Rimel comments: Received Polaris yesterday and enjoyed it very much. Lowndes' yarn is the type I like, but it seemed rather too brief. Barlow's little sketch is excellent; he has captured a genuine mood seldom seen in commercial fiction. The cover was much better, in my opinion, and I hope Bok repeats. The Observations were interesting to say the least, and I'm glad that some of the readers liked my story. A fine editorial---have them every time. They add a personal touch. You're doing a fine job, and I hope the next issue will be larger, as you plan.

The skipper of LeZombie, Bob Tucker, says: I found Polaris in the ole' box last night, and chum, I couldn't be more delighted if I had found GOLD! Polaris is just that: gold. With me, again Doc Lowndes won first honors in fantasy-weaving (for, contrary to your expressed policy and some reader's opinions, I believe you print fantasy rather than weird material) with his "The Forgotten"... Second on the scale is "Root-Gatherers". After reading this sketch it came to me why some fan authors write for fan mags but not the professionals. (This does not apply to Barlow.) The reason is this: The fans write beautiful prose like "Forgotten", "Root-Gatherers" and "Gourmet" and take their sweet time and style to tell of something they see -- as an instance: the beautiful ruined city in some far and dark future. Whereas if they wrote for a professional, they should be allowed only to mention the city as background material while the hero plowed thru it with ray guns blazing. It answers the question I asked several weeks ago after reading "Gourmet": "Why isn't Doc writing for the pro's?" What pro would print anything as beautiful as any story you have yet presented unless a horrible monster roamed around in it eating citizens, and the plot was packed with sacred ACTION! Please point out the action to me in "Root-Gatherers." Now try and show me an action-packed "classic" I will like as well! All of which probably indicates I am getting fed up with action-drammers written for the younger readers, and the sooner we return to three or four magazines, the sooner about two of them (or more) will find the teenage has deserted them and realize they have an adult reader-class. Pat Bradbury on the back for improving "Maiden of Jirbu". No don't ...when he comes to the Chicago Convention this summer I'll thump him there myself. And more of Polaris! (Bob, we are overwhelmed!)

R. H. Barlow has this to say: Whatever Paro may suggest about devoting your columns to scoops on Walt Disney, Seabury Quinn, etc, I think your job is to stimulate experimental stories & poetry, and not to compete with the 4002 1/8th gossip sheets. Try to keep high standards, and serious ones. Your new cover is nifty. Bok does well within the exasperating limits of the mimeograph. You do de-

serve compliments on the quite uncommon clarity of your reproduction... Why don't you get A Book for a Corner (1849)--Leigh Hunt's anthology, cf. HPL's Supernatural Horror, and reprint from it "Sir Bertrand"? It's short and stimulating, though incomplete. (Does some collector who owns this book wish to cooperate?)

Lowndes writes: On the 2nd issue: I like it, however think that the movie review column should be eliminated, that editorials should be cut to the barest minimum and that the lion's share of space should be used for stories, poems, articles, etc., dealing with the weird and fantastic. It's very nice to see in the letters column that my "Courmet" was generally approved, but aren't you using an awful lot of space for letters? Suggest further that you let us know in each issue the general rating of each item in last -- sort of Analytical Lab. (If the readers are willing to rate each item by number, as they do for Spaceways, we will be glad to publish the average ratings.)

H. G. Koonig writes: You are doing a fine job with Polaris. The second issue continues the good work started in the first number. The stories were all enjoyable, as was Rimel's poem. Little more remains to be said. I am apparently waging a one-man war against Wacky-Acky, so the hell with any comments on his Imagi-Movies.

Jack Chapman Miske comments: The material in the second issue was all splendid. "I liked best Lowndes' story; it's about as good as anything of his I've ever seen, I think. Tucker and Bradbury were especially good in the first couple of paragraphs, and fair after that. Farlow's piece, on the other hand, I thought best in its later portions. "A moon had come up out of the chaos of stars" is very striking. Icky Acky is most informative, but I'm beginning to tire of his affectations of speech. I'll side with Koonig. Bok's cover was quite all right, I thought. Carelessly done, perhaps, but it has an aura of grotesquerie I like a lot. A cheer for the masthead, too. The editorial was interesting to me. You need not worry about Wright. As you'll see in the April Spaceways (don't say anything to anyone about this till that magazine appears, please), he's starting his own publication. And Derleth tells me that the Lovecraft volume is selling well, with 400 copies sold right now, and it's still going steadily. The second is tentatively scheduled for Sept., 1941, the third for 1942, late summer probably... My biggest kick about Polaris is the ink. It ruins a good part of the author's attempts to build up a mood I think. He attempts to conjure up a dark, sombre atmosphere, and the green ink makes the reader think of sunshine and spring! Hell of a thing! Incidentally, you'd better tell the LA gang that Shangri-La was a monastery, not a castle, and that it was located in a valley, not a mountain. (Referring to the advertisement in #2 Polaris, for which ye Editor takes the blame.) Luck, and don't give up Polaris if you can possibly help it. Now that it's here, it's indispensable. y Marvis Manning of the Literary, Science, and Hobbies Club, and publisher of Pluto, writes: We think your "Polaris" is one of the better of the fan sheets, and #2 even better than #1. The stories are pretty darn good, and the article "Imagi-Movies" by 43J swell. Hope you keep a column on the new fantasy movies a permanent feature. Likewise your own, editorial page, is nice stuff.

Jack Speer comments: Neat lettering. Cover illustrations fair. Lowndes unfair. He led us to believe we'd get an inkling of the solution to the mystery and then left us in the dark. Jirba pretty

good taken as a sketch. Not much story. Barlow good, and with a nice ending. From Imagi-Movies, it begins to look like the field of fantascience films is getting beyond proportions for unorganized individuals to keep complete records on, and the stream of fantasies thru Washington, & those mentioned in FN, confirms the impression. So what are we going to do about it? "Mood" was excellent in its way... On the whole your magazine is well worth reading, but is simply "good". It lacks some feature that will--what's the word I want -- give a punch to the whole magazine. Remember that "fair" and "mediocre" are synonyms.

THE WORM

by Duane W. Rimel

In fitful slumber came a bloated worm
 From saffron-colored depths of Alatan;
 Slime-covered, yet its slithering sides were firm
 And from the maws a bloody trickle ran.
 The eyes shone bright, with hues no tongue could term
 And seemed to beckon with an evil plan.
 I followed blithely on my knees and hands,
 Towards gulfs of gloom, and dim-lit faery lands.

The way was long---the purpose yet untold,
 And though I wallowed deep through reeking slime,
 I saw ahead the worm; long fold on fold
 Of writhing masses moving all in time
 To unheard measures, pulsing as they rolled
 From the Abyss in loathsome beat and chime.
 As I crawled on, the way grew foul and black----
 Nor knew I surely what would bring me back.

We crossed grim, yawning shams of ages past,
 And from one squirming, nightmare-ridden mound
 Black bony hands stretched avidly and cast
 Vague half-formed shadows on the teeming ground.
 And as I left those things behind at last,
 Once more I heard that nameless pulsing sound.
 The beating warned me of some direr plight,
 Yet on I ploughed into the festering night.

Gray, time-worn steps we shunned with stealthy tread,
 Deep-graven by the march of endless feet;
 Yet heeding not the things the worm had said
 Of infamies that we might haply meet,
 With quickened pace I dared to pass ahead
 And glimpse those febrile vistas we would greet.
 And then I knew that I must not keep on---
 But turning back, I saw the worm had gone!

THE SWEARING OF AN OATH

19

by R H Barlow

Said two conspirators who met, "When the king lolls bleeding over his throne, all our broad valley shall be free. His nephew shall perish and we shall appoint in all the provinces new collectors for the tax." And because they might die from some word said loud, each gripped the hand of the other. "We shall establish the golden city of our benevolence midway in the land, where it may be seen of mountain men, of threshers, and of catchers of whatever the sea chooses to give up. From it magnanimously our line shall rule, and not one man shall remember hungry days. There will be granaries filled with the gold of crops, and no one shall wear black at our coronation. Other lands will send ambassadors humble and desirous of instruction in our ways, for with us, once the king is dead, man shall be surely distinguished from the ape, and the earth shall know a new thing."

They nodded and swore again by the light of a star which earlier was known in Troy, and later in Chicago.

THE OTHER

by Robert W. Lowndes
(continued from Page 15)

the Chrysler and Chrysler towers. I met a frozen zombie of myself in the Rockies one fall and stayed indoors through a sudden cold snap.

"I've always been warned in time, so far, but the escapes have been getting narrower.

"You see," his voice went down to a whisper, "at first, at the very first, I had a margin of over twenty-four hours. I nearly punked out, at that. Then, afterwards, it was nearly always ten or twelve hours leeway. And today --"

"Today?" repeated Higgins with a cold feeling at the back of his neck.

"Drowned! A cold, drowned corpse with fish-eaten face and a strand of seaweed in its hand. I saw it just a minute or so before I came in here.

"I've got it figured out: my time's running short. Today, there was only about half an hour's warning. Next time it will be less. And then, one day. . . ."

He shuddered and took a quick gulp of the drink before him. "I'm all right now," he said. "Sorry to have troubled you, friend. I ought to be used to this by now -- but I guess I'm not." He stood erect. "A new lease of indefinite duration. I'm not taking that clipper today -- and I hope you're not." He waved his hand friendly and walked out.

Higgins felt like a corsage of idiots that night after he'd cancelled his bookings and was trying to enjoy a Victor Moore musical. Imagine being taken in by a tale like that.

But the next morning, when he went out for his paper, he saw, before crossing the street to the stand, that there were huge, black, screaming headlines.



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